

You – me – both of us?

Insights into German couples' plans and practices
of dividing paid work, housework, and childcare
at the transition to parenthood

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1. Introduction

When couples become parents, their lives change fundamentally. In the family life cycle, they turn from living together as a couple without children to being parents of a newborn. They have to adapt to a new situation in which they have to take care of their child who is entirely dependent on them. The birth of the first child often changes how couples organize their lives and affects how they define themselves. In earlier research, the transition to parenthood was perceived and studied as a crisis as “the addition of the first child would constitute a crisis event, forcing the married couple to move from an adult-centered paid type of organization into child-centered triad system” (LeMasters, 1957: 355) consisting of father, mother, and child. LeMasters (1957) showed that couples perceive the transition to parenthood as troublesome and a threat to their intimate relationship. Authors around Belsky (1983; 1985; 1988) on the other hand showed that the transition to parenthood does not necessarily have negative consequences for the quality of marriages, but that there are differences between women’s and men’s perception which also depend on the expectations before the transition to parenthood. Cowan *et al.* (1985) argued that in order to understand how becoming parents leads to changes, five domains have to be studied: The effects on the individuals, the partners’ interaction and especially their roles, the relationship between mother and child as well as between father and child, the relationship across the generations including the grandparents, and the stress and support from others outside of the family. Furthermore, they also focused on gender as an essential category for understanding the changes related to the transition to parenthood as becoming a mother is different from becoming a father.

The process of becoming parents starts when the partners learn about the pregnancy. According to Gloger-Tippelt (1988), there are seven phases of the transition to parenthood. The first phase is uncertainty; it usually lasts for the first 12 weeks of the pregnancy. Then there is a phase of adaption that ends approximately after the 20th week of the pregnancy. It is followed by a phase in which the pregnancy becomes more and more concrete and visible; this phase lasts approximately until the 32nd week. The fourth phase is the birth. The latter is followed by a phase of exhaustion and overload which lasts until the eighth week of the child’s life. Approximately until six months after childbirth, the parents are in a period that is characterized by challenges and adjustment. For the rest of the first year of the child’s life, the parents are adapting to the new situation. In the course of this process, the partners’ personalities, their attitudes, beliefs, and expectations change to some extent (Antonucci and Mikus, 1993; Palkovitz and Copes, 1988).

The transition to parenthood does not merely affect the relationship of the partners, their ideas about themselves and their roles, and attitudes, but also how they organize their daily lives and divide paid and unpaid work. It is well-known that with the transition to parenthood women tend to reduce or interrupt their labor market participation while men tend to stay in their full-time employment (for Germany see for example Gjerdingen and Center, 2005; Huinink and Reichart, 2008; Kühhirt, 2012). The division of household labor often alters when

couples become parents: Women tend to do more housework in this process (for Germany see for example Cooke, 2007; Dechant, Rost and Schulz, 2014; Gjerdingen and Center, 2005; Grunow, Schulz and Blossfeld, 2012; Huinink and Reichart, 2008; Kühhirt, 2012; Schulz and Blossfeld, 2006). The mothers also usually assume the primary responsibility of caring for and rearing the child (Kühhirt, 2012; for Germany see for example Geisler and Kreyenfeld, 2011 (focused on parental leave which can be seen as an indicator for paternal childcare)). These changes in the division of paid and unpaid work lead to a “second shift” for women (Hochschild and Machung, 1989).

Even if the research on the division of paid and unpaid work has a long tradition (Coltrane, 2000; Davis and Greenstein, 2013; Shelton and John, 1996; Bianchi and Milkie, 2010), the question why couples tend to specialize in their division of paid and unpaid work in the transition to parenthood has not been answered sufficiently. This is particularly true if one takes into consideration that the living situation of women and men changed in the last decades and that the theories which aim to explain the divisional arrangements of couples would expect more diverse divisions of paid and unpaid work in couples with children than could be observed. Especially for women the chances to achieve higher educational levels, to participate more in the labor market, and to have careers increased (see for example Drobnič, Blossfeld, and Rohwer, 1999; Blossfeld, Drobnič, and Rohwer, 2001; Hofmeister and Blossfeld, 2006). These changes have led to higher incomes and higher resources for women and thus to more economic independence (Blossfeld, 1995). Furthermore, there are more couples with similarly high educated partners (Blossfeld and Timm, 2003). Economic theories about the division of labor within couples would lead to the presumption that women’s higher resources should also translate into altered divisional arrangements. Nevertheless, the transition to parenthood continues to be one central stage in the life course at which couples’ division of paid and unpaid work becomes more specialized than it was before.

Against this background, the research question of this book is to analyze in which ways and why the division of paid and unpaid work in highly-educated couples changes during the transition to parenthood. The focus is on paid work, both employed and self-employed, housework, i.e., routine and non-routine tasks, and childcare. Other spheres of unpaid work such as care for relatives, voluntary work, or emotional work are not taken into consideration. Since the existing quantitative research has not been able to answer these questions sufficiently, the present study analyzes qualitative interviews with both partners of fourteen German couples before and after parenthood. The couples were interviewed once during the pregnancy and about one year later in order to capture the pre-birth arrangement of paid work and housework, their pre-birth plans of dividing these domains as well as childcare duties upon arrival of the child, and the actual execution of these plans once the child is born. The qualitative, longitudinal and event-centered approach facilitates the analysis of the couples’ interpretations of and explanations for their actual and planned arrangements.

Structure

In order to explain and categorize the informants' explanations, chapter 2 will accommodate important theories concerning couples' division of labor. First, theories that explain couples' arrangements based on resources will be presented and discussed. Second, gender and identity theories will be addressed, paying due regard to gender as an important factor not only to explain the division of paid and unpaid work in general but to understand new normative ideals that come into play at the transition to parenthood. Furthermore, and different from much other research on couples' division of paid and unpaid work, equity theory will be presented; this strand of theory explains the divisional arrangements within intimate relationships with perceptions of fairness.

Chapter 3 describes the German welfare state and relevant policies as well as gender cultures which help to understand couples' decisions concerning their division of paid work, housework, and childcare. The parental leave legislation and the provision of public childcare places are of particular importance. Parental leave legislations facilitate parents to stay at home for up to three years to take care of their child. The provision of public childcare for children below the age of three influences possibilities to return to the workplace. These policies shape decisions of soon-to-be parents and parents of young children when it comes to both partners' participation in the labor market and childcare arrangements.

Chapter 4 will provide an overview of the existing research concerning how partnered, cohabiting women and men divide paid work and unpaid work. The particular focus is on changes during the transition to parenthood and couples in Germany. Findings from other Western countries serve to ascertain how particular or universal the findings for Germany are. A further focus is on longitudinal research is presented since it is unparalleled in explaining changes across the transition to parenthood and over time.

The following chapters 5 and 6 will accommodate the explanation of the methodology: The qualitative approach, the use of the semi-structured interviews and how the existing research and theories influenced the interviews. Furthermore, the sampling and analyzing strategies will be explained. These explanations will be followed by information on the sample including the couples' socio-demographic characteristics, short descriptions of the private, educational, and occupational background of both partners.

Chapters 7, 8, and 9 will present the findings based on the qualitative, longitudinal, and event-centered interviews. The three different fields of work, namely paid work (chapter 7), housework (chapter 8), and childcare (chapter 9), will be analyzed separately. For each of these domains, the informants' divisions, explanations, plans, and realizations of their plans will be analyzed. For paid work and housework, the outline is as follows: The interviewees' explanations will follow the descriptions of the pre-birth arrangements. The next step will be the analysis of the plans for the first year of the child's life and the corresponding explanations. At the end of both chapters, the arrangements at the time of the second interview and the

corresponding explanations will be presented. Following the aforementioned pattern, the plans from before the transition to parenthood will be compared with the eventual realizations. With regard to childcare, this structure differs as there is no need for the division of childcare before the birth of their first child. Therefore, couples' plans and rationales before birth will be compared with the corresponding realizations and their rationales after birth. At the end of the chapters that describe the informants' explanations of their arrangements, individual arguments will be put in relation to theoretical expectations, determining whether the discussed theories facilitate to understand and interpret the interviewees' explanations.

Chapter 10 will conclude with the findings for the relevant fields of work and will integrate the explanations concerning paid work, housework and childcare. Furthermore, conclusions will be drawn on the explanatory power of the different theories and resulting ideas concerning family policies. The final section of this work will provide the room for a discussion on its present limitations and prospective research questions.

2. Theoretical explanations

Different theoretical approaches aim at explaining the division of labor in couples. There are different types of work, and the term work or labor had different meanings at different points in time which were dependent on societal configurations (Becker-Schmidt and Krüger, 2009: 14–24). Krebs (2002: 23–51), for example, describes eight different ideas of work: Work can be (1) instrumentally rational, (2) an effort, (3) a paid activity, (4) the production of goods, (5) the production of goods in which the producer could be replaced with another person, (6) an activity that is necessary for the society, (7) an activity for others, and (8) an activity within the social exchange of services. Since the focus of this study is on the division of employment, housework, and childcare within couples, the discussion of the theories focuses on these fields of work and ignores other types of work, like emotional work or care for elderly family members. The economist Mincer (1962) was the first to promote the importance of distinguishing between different types of work (Beblo, 2001).

Usually, the theories concerning couples' division of labor are divided into two strands (see for example Blossfeld and Drobnič, 2001; Schulz, 2010; Coltrane, 2000). The first strand explains the household division of paid and unpaid labor with resources such as income while the second strand takes gender and gendered identities as explanatory factors. The following two subchapters present different theories that belong to the resource theories – namely new home economics, bargaining theory, social exchange theory, and time availability – and gender and identity theories – namely doing gender, identity formation, the dependency approach and the egalitarian values model –, respectively. Furthermore, equity theory is discussed; it cannot be subsumed in one of the two theoretical strands.

2.1 Resource theories

Resource theories use the distribution of resources like income, education or time within a couple as the central explanatory mechanism for the couple's division of paid and unpaid labor. The absolute and relative resources of each partner and the related human capital allow for a decision about which partners should do which kind of work and which task to which extent. Resource theories often focus on economic and thus monetary resources, but also the exchange of non-monetary resources in social exchange processes can explain the division of paid and unpaid work within intimate relationships.

2.1.1 New home economics

The economic theory of the family was developed in the early 1970s and 1980s to explain the consequences of economic change – i.e., risen female labor force participation – on social change – i.e., family as a social institution (Blossfeld and Drobnič, 2001: 16). Gary S. Becker is one important representative of the economic theory of the family focusing on the formation

and function of the family as a social institution that is characterized by role specialization (Becker, 1998).

The central assumption of Becker's (1998) new home economics – that was formulated at the beginning of the 1980s – is that a household aims to maximize the joint household utility function; this function describes the preferences towards goods. A means to maximize this utility function is an efficient division of the household members' time to housework and market work. Individual calculations and utility functions are not important in these considerations as the joint utility function is assumed to guarantee that all household members are satisfied since they share the returns in an altruistic way that is satisfactory to all of them. A household can maximize the joint utility with an optimal division of time devoted to the market and the domestic area as a household needs both, market income and the production of so-called commodities within the household. "[C]ommodities include children, prestige and esteem, health, altruism, envy, and pleasures of the senses" (Becker, 1998: 24). They are "produced by combining the home time of family members with goods and services purchased in the market, using labor market earnings." (Blau and Ferber, 1986: 40). In households of two or more persons, the decision on who generates market income and who produces household goods by doing housework is based on sector-specific human capital (for the concept of human capital see: Becker, 1975) and comparative advantages. Human capital is acquired through time allocation, and there are sector-specific human capitals for the labor market and the household; the higher the human capital of a person is, the higher is his or her efficiency in generating income – in case of labor market related human capital – or producing commodities – in case of household related human capital. A household decides on the time allocation of its members based on their comparative and relative efficiency for earning income or producing commodities. This is beneficial for all "[s]ince all persons are intrinsically identical, each member would receive an equal share of household output" (Becker, 1998: 32). The assignment of a household member to producing commodities and another to earning income increases the returns for all since a specialization in one area increases the related human capital and efficiency. If two members of one household have equal productivities in paid and unpaid work, the time of one household member in the market or the household can be substituted by the other's time. Therefore, it is theoretically irrelevant who specializes in which area. However, specialization of one partner in the market and the other in the household is beneficial as it increases human capitals, efficiencies and the household output. If the productivities of the household members are different, each of them specializes in the sector in which he or she is more efficient as this maximizes the output of all household members. Becker (1998) argues that it is inefficient if more than one member of the household invests time in both the market and the household production, as the members of the household have different comparative advantages and decide upon them where to invest time. For some couples, a complete specialization is the most efficient solution.

Besides the purely economic and gender-neutral logic that the new home economics in general have, it also includes a gendered logic for the division of labor within couples: Becker (1998) describes that biological differences between men and women affect the maximization of the joint utility. One central difference is that only women can give birth as women have to spend more time and energy on the transition to parenthood than men due to the different physiological involvements in the process:

“A man completes his biological contribution to the production of children when his sperm fertilizes a woman’s egg, after which she controls the reproductive process: she biologically houses and feeds the fetus, delivers the baby, and often feeds the infant with her own milk.” (Becker, 1998: 37)

Furthermore, when women are mothers they can “produce [...] additional children” (Becker, 1998: 38) while they rear the older offspring. Thus, the sex of the partners is an explanation for who takes care of the children and “perhaps also in other household commodities and in the market sector” (Becker, 1998: 38). From intrinsic biological differences between men and women follows that they invest their time to different extents in the household or the market to increase their human capital in the area they already have comparative advantages. These different investments start during childhood, whereas educational investments in boys and girls are more similar in rich countries and thus there are fewer differences in human capital. Furthermore, gender affects the productivity of men and women differently in different phases of their family life: Mothers of young children are less productive in the market compared to the household than childless women or mothers of older children. Therefore, it can be assumed that women are only active in the market when their income is higher than their household productivity. A (further) specialization is often already prepared in the choice for jobs; Becker (1998) assumes women in the current social surroundings to look for jobs they can easily combine with household obligations and thus to invest less energy in the market than men since they know that they will care more for the children than their partners will. To sum up:

“Increasing returns from specialized human capital are a powerful force creating a division of labor in the allocation of time and investments in human capital even among basically identical persons. Increasing returns alone, however, do not imply the traditional sexual division of labor, with women having primary responsibility for many household activities, unless men and women tend to differ in their comparative advantages between household and market activities. Whatever the reason for the traditional division [...] household responsibilities lower the earnings and affect the jobs of married women by reducing their time in the labor force and discouraging their investment in market human capital.” (Becker, 1998: 77)

Even if there were no intrinsic differences between men and women, a specialization of one partner in the household and the other in the market would be beneficial to the returns of the investments. Then, the division would not be linked to sex but human capital (Becker, 1998).

2.1.2 Bargaining theory

There are two substantive critiques concerning Becker's new home economics. One regards the formation of the joint utility function from two individual utility functions with the household formation (Beblo, 2001). Specifically, it argues that the new home economics do not specify as to how two individuals who start to live together or who marry combine their individual utilities to one joint utility function. Instead, it stresses alternative explanations for the distribution of joint-utility benefits that do not propose the unrealistic assumption of altruism (for example Pollak, 1994): If the model is interpreted game theoretically, it reveals that the person who contributes most to the utility function can decide on the allocation of benefits while the other has "take-it-or-leave-it choices" (Pollak, 1994: 148). The heart of this critique is that the new home economics neglects, on the one hand, the occurrence of power in relationships and, on the other, the existence of individual interests. The second critique concerns the "distributional aspects of time use decisions" (Beblo, 2001: 13). The new home economics' assumption is that two persons, who want to form an intimate relationship and marry, decide, at that specific moment, upon all future issues to maximize the returns to specialization. This assumption implies that the actors agree on binding contracts and have constant preferences (Beblo, 2001). Economic models that do not take these factors for granted, in contrast, are bargaining models, specifically cooperative or – less often – non-cooperative ones. These models take into consideration that both partners have their individual utilities and try to maximize them:

„In general bargaining models are characterized by the object of bargaining, the identification of the payers' objectives, the set of feasible outcomes, the associated payoff for each player and the specification of rules by which outcomes are to be determined. With regard to household decisions the players, who are family members, bargain over the allocation of time, particularly the division of labor time and the distribution of leisure." (Beblo, 2001: 15)

Ott's bargaining theory (see also for the following 1992) is one way to model a couple's division of paid and unpaid work as a cooperative and dynamic game. According to this bargaining model, both partners have an individual utility function that they try to maximize. Time investments in three spheres – namely in the market, in work within the household, and in leisure activities – affect the utility function. Each of the three spheres produces a specific outcome. Market work produces income; housework produces household goods – like a cooked meal for example – and "[l]eisure can be interpreted as a good in itself because it generates utility directly" (Ott, 1992: 10). The outcomes of time spent in the three spheres differ regarding their transferability to other persons: Leisure outcomes are intransferable. Every individual has to spend time in leisure production. The outcome of work at home is transferable only within a household, not to someone outside the household. Each household has to have a specific outcome of household work, and since this outcome is transferable from one household member to another, not all members have to invest time in work at home. Thus, not every person in a household has to spend time in the labor market, but the person who does can easily threaten to withdraw that outcome, thereby putting pressure on the other person while emphasizing his or her bargaining power. Ott (1992) expects individuals to bargain according to

their individual utility functions and their bargaining power over the partners' time investments in the three spheres.

For the division of market work and household labor, the bargaining theory assumes that work at home is unpleasant and that each partner tries to do as little household labor as possible (Ott, 1992). Since the maximization of the individual utility function also depends on the outcomes of housework cohabiting partners within an intimate relationship bargain over which partner does how much household labor. In this bargaining process, the individual bargaining power determines the outcome. Bargaining power increases with individual resources and especially with resources that are transferable to other relationships. Thus, these resources determine the effectiveness of the threats one partner makes. The resource that is best suited for transfers is income. Within a bargaining process, individuals can use threats to achieve their goals, such as having the other person do more household work; the ultimate threat is to end the relationship. The individuals have different threat points which determine what they have to lose if they do not come to a solution with their partner. If one partner has little bargaining power and threatens to leave the relationship if the other partner does not undertake more household tasks, the other partner who has more bargaining power might be unconcerned by this threat as he or she can easily engage in another intimate relationship if the current one does not maximize his or her utility. Instead, the partner who depends more on agreements is more likely to make concessions and to react to the partner's threats. In case of the division of household labor, this implies that the partner who has less income and thus less bargaining power should agree on doing more housework since he or she gains more from the continuation of the relationship than the other partner would lose.

As market income influences the bargaining powers, the individual market related human capital and its accumulation in the past affect couples' division of paid and unpaid work. Investment in the labor market simultaneously increases the human capital, future earnings prospects and bargaining power. Unemployment lessens market-related human capital, future earning power, and also the individual bargaining power. Therefore, all individuals should be interested in being active in the labor market to secure their bargaining powers, their alternatives outside the current intimate relationship and their threat point. Time investments in housework increase the household-specific human capital. This human capital does not influence the earning power. Since household goods and the accumulated household-specific human capital cannot be transferred to other relationships, work at home reduces the extra-familial alternatives and individual bargaining power. This implies that the specialization within a couple that is postulated by the new home economics (Becker, 1998) has different consequences for both partners: It affects the relative bargaining power of the spouses in different directions. The partner who earns (more) money becomes more powerful in comparison to the partner who earns less or no money as a consequence of the specialization in household labor. Therefore, bargaining theory explains a specialization in case of income differences not with different productivities but with the related bargaining powers that enable the partner with the higher

income to avoid doing household labor. This is why it is important to model couples' decisions on the time use of both partners not only as a bargaining model but also as a dynamic model. Dynamic means that bargaining processes in the past do not necessarily hold in the future since the partners' bargaining powers may increase or decrease over time. For example, if a couple agreed upon an equal division of housework, but one partner's income rises more than the other one's, the bargaining powers shift, and the now more powerful partner might no longer agree to share housework equally but try to re-bargain over the division. The birth of a child might lead to new bargaining processes. The desire to have a child can – according to Ott (1992: 105–09) – often only be realized if one partner stays at home for some time to rear the child. This reduction of paid work would decrease the bargaining power of the partner in question. Therefore, the partners agree on a division of paid and unpaid work before the transition to parenthood and decide that the partner whose bargaining power increases due to his or her continuous market work will not demand new bargaining in the future.

2.1.3 Social exchange

The new home economics and the bargaining approach assume that couples decide upon their division of labor on the basis of economic resources and especially on income differences between the partners. Blau (2008) criticizes this notion as purely economic arguments, in his view, fail to explain long-lasting exchange situations. In economic exchange, the exchange goods and the exchange time are pre-defined, and sanctions follow if one exchange partner fails to fulfill his or her duty. Such a concept of exchange is not fruitful if it comes to explain couples' division of labor as within intimate relationships exchanges without pre-defined exchange goods and time take place. Furthermore, Blau argues that assuming a break-up to be a threat point does not reflect the reality of long-lasting relationships or marriages. The theoretical concept of social exchange (Blau, 2008) instead provides different explanations that take into consideration that exchange processes within an intimate relationship differ from other purely economic exchange processes.

Theoretically, social exchanges take place when one individual needs others to satisfy the needs and desires. Social exchanges usually take place over an extended period and consist of repeated interactions. This is different from economic exchange processes. Another difference is that social exchange includes not only the exchange of economic rewards but also the exchange of social rewards like support or social approval. The bases for social exchange processes are trust between individuals and the need to reciprocate received benefits. The basis for this ongoing exchange is that receiving benefits or rewards obligates the receiving person to reciprocate (Blau, 2008). “Social exchange is here conceived as limited to actions that are contingent on rewarding reactions from others and that cease when these expected reactions are not forthcoming” (Blau, 2008: 6). In contrast to economic exchange, there is neither an agreement on what the reciprocation is nor can the person who started the social exchange claim to receive the reciprocation. Reciprocation takes place as the exchange partners profit

from the ongoing exchange. If there is no or only an insufficient reciprocation, the relationship can come to an end which would diminish the profit for both sides. However, the reciprocation of the received reward is not only a good means to make sure that the social exchange will continue but also a means to avoid imbalance, i.e., unequal inputs and outcomes, within the relationship. When one exchange partner is not able to reciprocate but wants to continue to profit from the social exchange, the other exchange partner consequently holds power over him or her. Power, in this case, means to be able to force another person into action. Therefore, “imbalance of power establishes reciprocity in the exchange” (Blau, 2008: 28) as nobody wants to be the exchange partner who can be forced to follow and thus everybody tries to avoid such a situation by reciprocating received rewards. Beyond that, individuals strive to have power over other persons by giving much more than they have received themselves.

Social exchange can explain the division of labor in couples as the partners in an intimate relationship provide services for each other. Furthermore, the foundation of intimate relationships is trust in each other; the partners have trust that they will receive help and reciprocation if they need the partner's support. Therefore, an intimate relationship is always social exchange according to Blau (2008). This is particularly true since, regarding the exchange of income for housework, there are no clear definitions of the timing or the amount of money or housework that is exchanged:

“Distributive relations within the family differ sharply from those in the labor market. The housewife does not exchange a specific amount of labor for a specific amount of money; no connection exists between monetary rewards and amount of work, skill, experience, or effort. Although husbands benefit from housewives' domestic work, greater or lesser benefit does not modify a husband's obligation to support, in contrast to the wage contract in which the obligation to pay usually dissolves when the worker does not work. Conversely, the housewife's obligation to work is not contingent on benefits from the husband and the husband's obligation to support is virtually unenforceable, reduced within the marriage to whatever the husband chooses to give.” (Acker, 1988: 486)

As both partners cannot force the other to return given favors, but trust in each other, intimate relationships can also be described as implicit contracts (England and Farkas, 1986: 47). The partners cannot claim the return of their given services, but as both partners' action is reliable and recurrent, the basis for the individuals' actions is the unspoken understandings of what each partner does. The central factor in implicit contracts as well as in social exchange processes is trust and trustworthiness. The consequence for the division of labor in couples is that no partner gives too much in advance if the other partner has not proven his or her trustworthiness. Besides, there is one particular characteristic for trusting intimate relationships, namely the fact that the exchange per se can be perceived as rewarding as the partners enjoy spending time together, thereby further deepening their relationship (Blau, 2008).

One additional aspect of social exchange processes and intimate relationships is that options for other exchange processes outside the current relationship can influence the exchange processes within the couple. These options determine how much value a received reward has in comparison to what the recipient has to reciprocate and how strongly the

recipient is dependent on the exchange partner to receive a given reward (Blau, 2008). Connecting this social exchange assumption to the division of labor within couples, this means that the partner who exchanges a more generalizable good like income has more other exchange options than the partner who exchanges a less transferable good like housework (Stauder, 2002: 29–30; Schulz, 2010: 85–86).

2.1.4 Time availability

Another theoretical approach that uses resources to explain couples' division of work is the time availability approach. It focuses on how different family members allocate their time in different areas like paid and unpaid work. Unlike the previous theories, this approach takes into account that a person who spends lots of time in the labor market can spend not so much time in doing housework, therefore this person should engage less housework than a person who spends less time on paid work as time is a restricted resource (England and Farkas, 1986). Additionally, a person who spends much time with childcare has less time to perform other kinds of work (Perrucci, Potter and Rhoads, 1978). The allocation of time to different areas is restricted by the fact that all households have to do a certain amount of paid work, housework and childcare (Coverman, 1985).

Coverman (1985) specifies the theoretical mechanism behind the argument that the available time influences the division of labor in couples, and adds three ideas. First, housework and childcare are socially primarily assigned to women: Women are generally thought to do housework and childcare as long as they have the time resources to do so. Second, men's housework time is dependent on demands to fulfill housework chores. It implies that men do not do housework chores on their own but only if others – and mostly their partner – ask them to do so. Women's employment situation and especially their working hours, as well as children in the household, affect the demand for men to participate in housework and childcare. When women work more hours in the labor market, they have less time to do unpaid work and consequently ask their partners to engage more in housework or childcare. The number of children in the household affects the demand as it reduces the time that is available to do housework since childcare needs time (Perrucci, Potter and Rhoads, 1978). This implies that the demand for men to do housework is lower before couples became parents. The time needed for childcare varies with the children's age which thereby also affects the demand for men to do more household work. Thus, the demand for men to engage more in household work should be highest in the first time after a child is born. Third, men's housework time furthermore depends on their capability to react to the demands posed by their partners. According to Coverman (1985), men's capability is determined by their available time and thus by the time they spend in the labor market. This implies that men are differently capable of reacting to demands. For example, men who work full-time with overtime hours or men in shift work have more time constraints and are therefore less capable of engaging in unpaid work.

The time availability approach thus assumes – in contrast to the theories discussed before – a rank order in the decisions on partners' time use: In general, women do the unpaid work, their time investment in this sphere depends on their time spent in the labor market. Men, in contrast, engage in paid work. Within the domain of unpaid work, the time a woman can spend on housework depends on the time she spends on childcare. The working hours, the existence of children in the household, and their age determine the male partner's housework share.

2.2 Gender and identity theories

Gender role and identity theories explain couples' division of labor in a different way than resource theories. They refer to the social context as well as the society couples live in in order to understand their division of paid and unpaid work. Each social context has a shared set of rules of how members of the social context should behave. These rules, or social norms, are constructed by the members of the social context in order to ease the interactions. They can be changed as the members of the social context produce and reproduce them constantly by their actions. Social norms influence behavior as they provide orientation for thoughts and actions and define rules of how to act which reduces the complexity of the world (Popitz, 1961, also for the following). Sanctions follow norm non-conform behaviors as norms would lose their validity otherwise. However, sanctions vary greatly regarding different deviant behaviors. As most individuals want to avoid being sanctioned, they follow the rules and further the existence of the norms. Norms can change when deviant behavior is not sufficiently sanctioned and enough members of the social context act in a deviant manner. Some of the norms are targeted at men while others are targeted at women. Members of a society share ideas about what characterizes men and women – gender stereotypes – and how men and women should behave – gender roles (for a discussion see for example Alfermann, 1996: 7–46).

2.2.1 Doing gender

The underlying assumption of gender theories is that sex, gender and gender ideology constitute one norm set that influences the behavior of individuals (West and Zimmerman, 1987). Being part of a specific biological sex is connected to certain societal assumptions about 'right' behavior and characteristics that are assigned to this sex (Bem, 1981; Goffman, 1994). This implies that there are specific and different socially accepted behaviors and characteristics for women and men. West and Zimmerman (1987) criticize that gender is often conceptualized as roles; that is problematic as roles are situation-specific. Therefore, the definition of gender as a role includes the assumption, that gender is only important in certain situations. Instead, gender is important in all social interactions and is not only one sort of identity like others but crosses all other identities: "gender is not a set of traits, nor a variable, nor a role, but the product of social doings of some sort" (West and Zimmerman, 1987: 129). This means that gender is constructed and reconstructed in every interaction with others. Drawing on Goffman's (1994)

idea of gender display, West and Zimmerman (1987) argue that individuals expect of each other to demonstrate the own “essential nature” in all interactions. Being male or female is not only considered one part of this essential nature that has to be displayed but as the essential nature itself. Individuals can do gender in their everyday interactions as they can draw on socially shared ideas about right behavior for both sex categories. Some behaviors are socially constructed as female while others are categorized as male and if somebody acts in a way that is assumed for women or men, the person is characterized as belonging to the respective sex category. This categorization is done automatically if there are no reasons to doubt that the person who shows a specific behavior is not to be characterized in the sex category that corresponds to the behavior. This also implies that there are irritations when an individual shows a gender display that does not fit to the assumed sex category.

Doing gender is to follow the scripts of female or male behavior: “Doing gender means creating differences between girls and boys and women and men, differences that are not natural, essential, or biological. Once these differences have been constructed, they are used to reinforce the ‘essentialness’ of gender.” (West and Zimmerman, 1987: 137). The division of paid and unpaid work within intimate relationships is an area to do gender: In general, taking over housework is linked to the female sex category while not doing housework is linked to the male sex category. Beyond that, some household tasks are considered female tasks while others are considered male tasks: Female tasks are routine chores – like cleaning or preparing food – while male tasks are non-routine or technical chores – like disposing of crafting and repairing the car (Koppetsch and Burkart, 1999). These ideas also affect how individuals perceive the division of labor with their partner; divisional arrangements that are based on sex categories – i.e., the man is responsible for earning income, and the woman is responsible for routine household tasks – appear as natural. Sex categories are perceived as natural, essential, and normal; they are created and re-created in interactions, and thus shape the notion of what behavior is perceived as natural. Thus, the link between sex category and couples’ divisions of paid and unpaid work is perceived as if the social constructs follow natural differences while both are the results of interaction processes over an extended period of time.

2.2.2 Identity formation

Bielby and Bielby (1989) observed that women are mainly doing the housework and childcare regardless of their employment status. They, therefore, provide an explanation for why women stay responsible for the domestic area even when they are active in the labor market. This explanation combines identity theory with commitments in two areas – the labor market and the family: When individuals spend time and energy within the labor market or the family, they identify with their paid work or with the family. This way, being active in the labor market or doing family work “build *commitments* to work and family identities” (Bielby and Bielby, 1989: 776). Commitment is defined as the binding of individuals to their behavior. If individuals are committed to their previous acts, their behavior is more stable as they feel attached to what they

did before. The commitments are influenced by “past and current experiences, responsibilities, and statuses at work and in the family” (Bielby and Bielby, 1989: 777). This means that the more time a person spends in the labor market, for example, the more committed he or she is to the labor market and the stronger is his or her work identity. However, not all individuals build the same degree of commitment by spending the same amount of time in one area. The building of commitment is mediated by the meaning individuals assign to a behavior. If a certain behavior is meaningful for an individual, he or she will identify with the field of action and build a work and family identity, respectively. The individual’s self-concept, in turn, is influenced by their work and family identities. As individuals aim at behaving in a consistent manner and consistent with their self-concepts, their work and family identities lead to persistent behavior.

Sex role norms affect the identity formation for men and women in different ways. This is important as Bielby and Bielby (1989) assume that commitments are distributed across different activities and that this distribution is influenced by these roles. When assuming separate sphere sex roles, there are different expectations what women and men in relationships or what mothers and fathers should do. Women or mothers, for example, are expected to be responsible for everyday family work while men or fathers should be responsible for working in the labor market in order to provide the family income. Being a parent affects a woman’s family identity stronger than a man’s because her family identity is built upon caring, whereas his stays consistent with being a successful provider of income. When individuals identify with separate sphere gender roles, they act accordingly and build their commitments correspondingly which makes their behavior even more consistent.

Besides the time devoted to work or family and besides the prevalent societal roles for men and women, other factors that are linked to family, work, and the individual affect the building of identity, and some of them have gendered impacts (see for the following: Bielby and Bielby, 1989): Children strengthen the family identity for men and women, but more so for women as being primarily responsible for children is considered women’s work. Work identity should be positively related to having an interesting job, autonomous work, work matching the individual’s skills, being intrinsically motivated or being self-employed. A higher education strengthens the work identity as it improves career chances. Other factors influence both the work identity as well as the family identity – but the effects differ between men and women: One is the partner’s employment situation. If the female partner is not working, traditional men perceive their partner to specialize in the domestic sphere which allows men to identify stronger with work and family at the same time. If the male partner is not working, he is often unemployed. While this does not affect women’s work identity, it “is likely to have a negative impact on family dynamics [...] [which] decreases [family identity] for women.” (Bielby and Bielby, 1989: 779). Working part-time goes along with more available time for the family, thereby decreasing work identity while increasing family identity for women as women often choose part-time to balance work and family. For men, part-time is often not a choice but given by external factors. Therefore the effect on men’s work identity is assumedly negative; the effect on their family

identity is assumedly positive but weaker than on women's. The same is true for continuous versus interrupted work careers. Similarly, individuals with a higher work identity work even if there is no financial necessity. Thus, a partner's additional income is also thought to affect an individual's identity. As the breadwinner role is attributed to men, their work identity should be less influenced by their female partners' additional income than vice versa. For women, having a partner who earns enough financial resources is thought to strengthen the family identity, in line with the gendered idea of male providers.

There are not only factors that influence the work and/or family identity; these identities are also related to each other. Assuming opposite sphere gender roles, "working wives are embedded in a set of role structures that require them to sacrifice a strong work identity if they are to identify with a traditional family role (and vice versa)" (Bielby and Bielby, 1989: 780) while men can combine both identities easily. This means that women would spend more time in the family, strengthening their family identity while men would focus on the labor market as they can strengthen their work and family identity in doing so.

2.2.3 Dependency and gender display approach

Brines (1994) provides another explanation for the observed discrepancy between women's increased labor market participation and their stable responsibility for the housework. Her approach combines core ideas from economic dependency theories with doing gender and gender display: According to dependency approaches, a spouse who relies on the income of the other partner has to exchange unpaid household labor against the provision of income in order to make sure that this exchange will continue in the future. This explanation is per se gender-neutral. However, due to societal structures, being dependent has different consequences for men and women; a dependent man has better chances in the labor market to become economically independent than a dependent woman. Brines (1994) argues that the different chances of men and women to end their dependency have consequences for their behavior in case of economic dependency. Besides the exchange of income against housework, there is a second, a symbolic exchange. Arguing with West and Zimmerman (1987), it can be assumed that the interactions within marriage – like the exchange housework against income provision – are a way to display masculinity and femininity ongoingly. The division of household labor is a way for men and women to behave according to gender roles as doing routine housework is connoted as feminine and not doing housework is connoted as masculine (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Berk, 1985). Brines (1994: 663) criticizes doing gender "has been put forth to account for the 'unexplained residual' difference that persists between wives' and husbands' housework contributions, net of labor force participation levels, professed sex-role attitudes, and the like" without showing empirical evidence for the doing gender assumption.

This unexplained residual difference can be addressed and empirically tested when the dependency perspective is connected to the doing gender approach and the idea of gender

display like Brines (1994) suggests. Housework is considered as women's work, while men's work is to be the provider for the family and to earn the income. Male providership and female dependency are not only widespread on the individual level but also incorporated in institutions: "wives, as women, confront occupational, legal, and political or policy structures that accentuate the status of dependency and its consequences for future life chances more powerfully for them than for men." (Brines, 1994: 659). Therefore, the question arises what happens if the norms of dependency and providership are violated. When the female partner is the provider and the male partner is dependent, both partners act against their 'essential natures' (see chapter 2.2.1), thus risking their social accountability as the men are perceived to be losers and not masculine while the women are considered dominant, manipulative and not feminine. The couple has fewer possibilities for symbolic exchange, and therefore the gender display perspective suggests that this couple finds other areas for "traditional-gender behaviors elsewhere" (Brines, 1994: 665). One such area is the division of housework, i.e., by women taking over the housework and men not doing housework in order to be gender accountable in this regard.

Resulting from the combination of dependency and gender approaches, Brines (1994) expects a u-shaped relationship between a woman's share in the household income and her proportion in household labor. An economically dependent woman can reduce her housework share if her income rises until it is equal to that of her partner. If it exceeds his income, she takes over more household labor to fulfill gender roles in this area as she acts against them in economic terms. Similarly, a man who provides the income can do more housework without threatening his gender accountability when his partner's income increases as long as his income exceeds hers or is if the same amount.

2.2.4 Egalitarian values model

Another theoretical approach that combines ideas from economic with gender theories to explain the discrepancy between changes in the work sphere and persistency in couples' division of housework was proposed by Van Berkel and De Graaf (1999). They link couples' educational level to values about gender equality. In doing so, the focus is on the cultural dimension of education as a central explanatory mechanism for the division of unpaid work within intimate relationships. In economic theories, education is an important factor since the partners' educational levels influence their market-related human capital and thus their income potentials; income differences that stem from different educational levels lead to different shares in housework. In Van Berkel and De Graaf's (1999) model, this economic view is supplemented by another notion of education: Education as a socialization process. During their education, individuals do not only learn skills but are also confronted with ideas about equality and gender equality. The longer they stay in the educational system, the more contact they have with these ideas and the more they internalize them. Therefore, high and low educated people have different ideas about gender (in)equality: "Whereas for the lower educated inequality between the sexes is given, the higher educated are aiming at gender equality in public and private

spheres as much as possible” (Van Berkel and De Graaf, 1999: 790). Partners’ ideas about equality or inequality of men and women affect their divisions of labor. Since men and women develop their ideas about gender (in)equality during their education, both partners’ educational levels – and the related ideas – influence how equal or unequal they share work and especially the least enjoyed household chores in which gender differences are the highest. The egalitarian values approach assumes that the division of housework is most equal if both partners have high educational levels, thus holding gender equality ideas, whereas it is most specialized if both partners have a low educational level as then both partners believe that the female partner should do the household work. Partners with different levels of education can be assumed to have a division of labor between the two extremes (Van Berkel and De Graaf 1999).

Taking Brines’ (1994) argumentation of gender display and gender asymmetry into account, Van Berkel and De Graaf (1999) argue that the effect of the educational level on the division of household labor also depends on the specific educational level held by each partner. The woman’s educational level is less influential on a couple’s division of labor than the man’s education. This means that a highly educated woman with a low educated partner takes over a higher share of the housework than she would if she were in an intimate relationship with a man who has a middle or high educational level. She does more housework to compensate for their atypical educational relation.

2.3 Equity theory

Another explanation of couples’ division of labor – equity theory – focuses on the perception of fairness in the division of paid and unpaid work. Within this theoretical framework, couples’ division of labor is also modeled as a social exchange. Social exchange theory – as described in section 2.1.3 – and equity theory differ in how they refer to imbalances within exchange processes. Blau (2008) describes that imbalances pose continuity and stability problems that have to be reduced when the exchange partners have an interest in the continuation of the exchange. Adams’ (1965) equity theory proposes another perspective on imbalances: Imbalances are embedded in the ideas of relative deprivation and distributive justice. The concept of relative deprivation was formulated by Stouffer *et al.* (1965) and applied to sociology by Merton and Kitt (1974). Relative deprivation within a process of social exchange means that there is an “unfair violation of expectations” (Adams, 1965: 269) about the outcomes of the exchange situation. Individuals have different expectations regarding exchange outcomes. The individuals evaluate their role within an exchange process based on comparisons with others or comparisons with previous exchange situations. From their role evaluation follows which outcome the individuals expect. When a person has the impression that the outcome of an exchange is too little, the feeling of injustice arises due to the unfair violation of the own expectations regarding the exchange outcomes. The evaluation of the fairness of an exchange process is always in relation to significant others. According to Homans (1974), distributive justice in exchanges means that profits or rewards are proportional to investments or that the input-outcome-ratio is equal for

the exchange partners and that thus no partner profits more than another. When the proportions between input and outcome are unequal for different exchange partners, feelings of injustice, deprivation or guilt arise. In addition to these theoretical concepts, Adams (1965) describes the antecedents and consequences of inequity; “[t]he term *inequity* is used instead of *injustice* [...] to avoid the confusion of the many connotative meanings associated with the term *justice*, and [...] to emphasize that the primary concern is with the causes and consequences of the absence of equity in human exchange relationships.” (Adams, 1965: 276)

Feelings of inequity arise when there are unfair returns for an input in an exchange process. However, it is not necessary that both exchange partners perceive an exchange process as inequitable; the inputs are not necessarily perceived and weighted identically by individuals. The same is true for outcomes. Another reason for the feeling of inequity is that another exchange output was expected than received. As successful exchange processes are important for societies, normative expectations concerning the values of inputs and outcomes and the expected correlations between inputs and outcomes are parts of socialization processes. These fairness expectations always refer to specific persons or a particular group (Adams, 1965).

Inequity is perceived when the ratio of the own outcomes to inputs is different from the ratio of outcomes to the input of the reference person or reference group while equity is perceived if the ratios are the same. Inputs and outcomes are relevant for the equation in the way they are perceived by the individuals who engage in an exchange process. Inequity is perceived from both exchange partners regardless of being over-benefitted or under-benefitted (Adams, 1965).

Inequity leads to dissatisfaction and tension, proportionate to the magnitude of the inequity for both exchange partners. This tension motivates the exchange partners to try to achieve equity or at least reduce inequity. Means to achieve this goal are the change of the inputs or the outcomes, cognitive changes regarding the evaluation of the inputs or outcomes, leaving the exchange process, the attempt to motivate the exchange partner to perform one of the previous means, or the change of the reference for the evaluation of equity. (Adams, 1965)

These theoretical assumptions of equity and inequity are usable for intimate relationships (see for example Hatfield and Traupmann, 1980) and couples’ division of paid and unpaid work. The time and energy the partners spend in employment, housework or childcare is the input in this regard. The outcome differs in relation to the context of work. Regarding paid work, the outcome consists for example of income, career development, and status. Some outcomes are available for paid and unpaid work; they produce for example social acknowledgment and appreciation of the work. High appreciations can influence the perceived equity heavily so that a very unequal ratio between the partners is perceived as equitable. (Klumb, Hoppmann and Staats, 2006: 870–71)

Furthermore, according to Braun *et al.* (2008), legitimizing beliefs help to understand why unequal divisions of labor are not perceived as inequitable. Drawing on the theories of time

availability (Coverman, 1985; Bianchi *et al.*, 2000), economic dependence (Brines, 1994) and gender ideology (West and Zimmerman, 1987), it can be explained how the perceptions of equity regarding the division of labor in couples are shaped (see also: Walster, Walster, and Berscheid, 1978). The time availability theory suggests the legitimizing that the partner who has more time available due to fewer time investments in the labor market should do a larger share of the housework. This is true if both partners decided jointly on each partner's time in the labor market. Drawing upon resource dependency the legitimizing belief is that "individuals who (are able to) contribute less to the household income should assume a larger share of household work" (Braun *et al.*, 2008: 1147). Taking gender ideology into consideration equity perceptions derive "from the reflexive enactment of gender displays of masculine or feminine accountability" (Layte, 1998: 517). Women with a nontraditional gender ideology aim at more egalitarian divisions of paid and unpaid work and are more successful in achieving this than women who hold separate sphere gender roles. The relating legitimizing belief for the latter women would be that an imbalanced division of labor in which they perform more housework than their partner is part of their gender identity and thus equitable (Braun *et al.*, 2008: 1146–47).

3. The German welfare state and gender culture

Couples' decide upon their division of paid and unpaid work against the background of the institutional and cultural specifications they live in. These specifications set normative and institutional opportunities on the one hand and boundaries on the other hand. Institutions, as well as cultural ideals, gain importance in the transition to parenthood: Institutional settings, like the public childcare system or parental leave policies, as well as normative expectations, like ideals about mothers and fathers, become relevant for couples. This chapter describes the German welfare state and relevant policies and institutions for the division of labor of couples during their transition to parenthood. Furthermore, a brief overview of prevalent gender roles follows. In these descriptions, some background information about the German history and consequences for the welfare system and gender and especially parenthood roles are provided.

Esping-Andersen (1990, also for the following) characterizes Germany as a conservative-corporatist welfare state in his classifications of welfare states. The other two types of welfare states are called social-democratic and liberal. According to this classification, welfare states provide different degrees of rights, de-commodification, and stratification as well as different configurations of the relationship between the market, the state, and the family. Commodification or de-commodification measures how strongly individuals are dependent on the market and paid work or "if a service is rendered as a matter of right, and when a person can maintain a livelihood without reliance on the market" (Esping-Andersen, 1990: 22). Germany's social security system generally provides for an individual when he or she is unable to participate in the labor market, e.g., for reasons of bodily impairments, lack of matching jobs, or caring duties. However, access to the social security system is channeled through the labor market: For example, the amount of social security benefits depends on former employment. The de-commodification is compared to other states on a middle-level since the welfare state secures an individual's independence of the market to a certain degree. The second aspect of Esping-Andersen's classification of welfare states, stratification, takes into account how strongly the welfare state reduces or stabilizes the existing inequality. The German welfare system reproduces, to some extent, the status of a person and thereby society's existing strata. The relatively impermeable tracked school system is a prominent example, just like the stratification of the social security system which impactfully differentiates between, e.g., civil servants and other employees. Another characteristic of conservative-corporatist welfare regimes is that the traditional family model is seen as the ideal. Subsidiarity, the principle that the lowest level, such as the family, assumes responsibility for its members before the state intervenes, is a key principle shaping this family ideal.

The classification of Esping-Andersen (1990) was criticized for not regarding the dimension of gender¹ (see for the following, for example, Orloff, 1993) which is important to fully understand how welfare states affect the lives of women and men. This is especially important since integrating gender into the analysis of welfare states allows examining if women and men are equally de-commodified and if stratification is also gendered. Gender is an especially important dimension for the analysis of welfare states since social rights are tied to paid work and men and women are unequally active in the labor market, and there are different cultural expectations as to who does unpaid work. In reaction to the critique, Esping-Andersen (1999) broadened his focus and included familialism and de-familialization as characteristics of welfare states. Familialism means that the “welfare regime [...] assigns a maximum of welfare obligations to the household” (Esping-Andersen, 1999: 45). The term de-familialization is used “to capture policies that lessen individuals’ reliance on the family; that maximize individuals’ command of economic resources independently of familial or conjugal reciprocities” (Esping-Andersen, 1999: 45). This amendment also considers the amount of welfare that is provided by the family, like care for children or elderly relatives. Leitner (2003) criticized that the measurement of familialism and de-familialization as suggested by Esping-Andersen (1999) focus on the outcomes and not on the welfare policies supporting the outcome. She suggests the differentiation of welfare policies into optional familialism, explicit familialism, de-familialism, and implicit familialism, depending on if the welfare state works in favor or against familialization as well as in favor or against de-familialization (Leitner, 2003: 358–59). The German welfare state is an example of explicit familialism:

„The *explicit familialism* not only strengthens the family in caring for children, the handicapped and the elderly through familialistic policies. It also lacks the provision of any alternative to family care. This lack in public and market driven care provision together with strong familialization explicitly enforces the caring function of the family.” (Leitner, 2003: 358–59)

Ostner (2010) compares different German family policies over time and finds that, while the West German policies of the 1980s were aiming at familialization, the policies from 2002 onwards strengthened de-familialization. Grunow and Veltkamp (2016) relate to Saraceno and Keck (2011) and describe that Germany only weakly decommodifies through de-familialization as there is a low provision of childcare places, while the welfare state supports familialization with long parental leaves.

Pfau-Effinger (1999) adds culture to the analysis of welfare states. Culture “includes stocks of knowledge, values and ideals; in sum: ideas” (Pfau-Effinger, 1999: 4). A welfare state’s policies follow a specific welfare culture as the welfare state itself and its policies are embedded in the culture of its society. There are six key elements of the welfare culture (Pfau-Effinger, 1999: 8–9): The first is shared beliefs about to what extent and at what time in the life-course

¹ For an overview concerning more criticism towards Esping-Andersen’s conceptualization of the welfare states see for example Arts and Gelissen (2002). Since the focus of the recent study is on couples in their transition to parenthood within the German welfare state, criticism not relevant for the research question is not discussed here.

somebody should be active in the labor market, and how paid work should be connected to social security. Second, every welfare culture includes ideas on who should be included in or excluded from the welfare system. Third, it contains ideas on the perceived justness of redistribution kinds and practices within a society, such as taxes and the social security system. Fourth, the welfare culture incorporates an understanding of poverty, of who – the individual or the society – is responsible, and of how welfare policies should address it. The fifth key element is cultural ideas on how the state should or should not intervene in the market. Sixth, the welfare culture is linked to ideas on social services as well as how and by whom – the state, the market, or the family – they should be provided. The relationship between the policies of a welfare state and the societal culture can be described by the theoretical approach of welfare arrangements (Pfau-Effinger, 1999: 4–6): The policies of a welfare state are connected with the welfare culture within a society, the given institutional system, social actors and social structures. All these are also interrelated. The welfare culture influences which policies are put into practice, but it also influences the impact of welfare policies. If the welfare policies and the welfare culture do not fit together, the policies might not have the intended outcome.

An important aspect of welfare culture are motherhood and fatherhood ideals. Regarding motherhood ideals, several studies identify the ideal of the ‚good mother‘ in Germany (Geissler and Oechsle, 1996; Merkle, Henry-Huthmacher and Wippermann, 2008; Schütze, 2010): Mothers are expected to focus on intensive mothering (Hays, 1996), to do most childcare, and to be available for the child for the first years at least. Mothers are expected to spend substantial amounts of time with their children. Expectations on mothers have risen since the 19th century (see: Schütze, 2010): Then, motherhood ideals focused on mothers’ activities regarding the child’s body. It was assumed that mothers feel a special motherly love that guides their actions. In the 20th century, an ‘ideal mother’ was always present for the child and prioritized the child’s needs over her own; furthermore, she felt satisfied by caring for her child. In recent years, mothers also had to care for the child’s development right after the birth and go to special educational programs for toddlers. Schütze (2010) distinguishes three motherhood ideals: The first assumes that a mother focuses on children and household, the second promotes „super mothers“ (Schütze, 2010: 192, translated by Anna Dechant) who can be successful in their paid work and good mothers at the same time, and the third seeks compromises between work and family with part-time employment. Diabaté (2015) identifies four different motherhood ideals for the 20 to 39-year-old population in Germany: A work-oriented ideal, which emphasizes that a mother should be active in the labor market, a child-oriented ideal, which encourages a mother to forgo her employment and not to use public childcare facilities, a moderate ideal, which frees a mother from both high standards concerning the family and paid work, and an ideal that orients towards reconcilability by expecting mothers to be committed to their children and their paid work at the same time. Motherhood ideals suggest mothers to interrupt their paid work for some time after childbirth, not to involve public childcare too early, and to breastfeed their babies; mothers who do otherwise are perceived as deviating from the norm (Schütze, 1986),

labeled with a dismissive term for mothers who neglect their children: 'Rabenmutter' ('raven mother') (Ruckdeschel, 2009; Diabaté, 2015).

In contrast to the motherhood ideals, fatherhood ideals always include being full-time employed and active in the labor market; a father cares for his family by earning the family income (Baur and Luedtke, 2008; Scholz, 2008). However, in contrast to earlier years when the prevalent fatherhood ideal focused on the father's employment, there are now more differentiated fatherhood ideals that also include taking part in housework and childcare (Kassner, 2008). Fathers who pursue these new fatherhood ideals are often labeled with the term 'new' fathers (see for example Abel and Abel, 2009; Gumbinger and Bambey, 2009; Meuser, 2009; Possinger, 2013; Werneck, 1998; Zulehner and Volz, 1998). The ideal of new fathers includes being active in the family and the labor market; fathers are expected to take part in housework and everyday childcare. However, Kassner (2008) distinguishes 'active' and 'new' fathers: Active fathers build their relationship differently by orienting towards the child, while new fathers shape their whole life in a different way by sharing work with their partners and reducing their labor market participation. Lück (2015) identifies two fatherhood ideals: The breadwinner who is responsible for the financial security of the family, and the active father who is – like the mother – responsible for caring and rearing his child and behaves accordingly. Even if new ideals of fatherhood are more often discussed on a societal level, several studies show that these discussions did not affect how fathers spend their time; most of them follow the breadwinner ideal and work full-time while taking care for their children in their leisure time (Döge, 2006).

When assigning Germany to one welfare state category, describing its welfare policies, or its gender culture, it is important to consider the former division into two states, namely the Federal Republic of Germany in the West and the German Democratic Republic in the East, from after World War II until reunification in 1990. During this time, two different political, economic and welfare regimes existed, along with different ideologies and welfare cultures and, thus, two different welfare states. In the Federal Republic of Germany, the policies after World War II aimed at setting the country apart from the policies that were present during the time of the national socialist Third Reich as well as in the socialist German Democratic Republic (Ostner, 2010: 220). The basic principle in West Germany with regard to family policies was to strengthen the – supposedly reproductive – male breadwinner marriage by relating it to social security benefits and tax allowances but without intervening directly using pronatalist policies. In East Germany, in contrast, the state provided universal social security and implemented pronatalist policies (Ostner, 2010). Therefore, the policies also differed with regard to promoting gender equality in labor market participation (Rosenfeld, Trappe, and Gornick, 2004), reverberating in different work-care arrangements in East and West Germany (Pfau-Effinger and Smidt, 2011). In the East German centrally planned, socialist economy, men and women were active in the labor market full-time, in line with national and private economic requirements as well as socialist ideals of gender equality and the dual-earner model (Trappe,

1996). Childless men and women, as well as fathers and mothers, were actively involved in the labor market. In the West German market economy, full-time labor market activity was the prevalent pattern for men, regardless of whether they had children or not, while women's labor market activity was strongly dependent on their family life: Childless women tended to work full-time while mothers were, in earlier years, mostly inactive in the labor market and, in later years, mostly in part-time employment. These patterns correspond to the prevalent gendered roles of a male breadwinner and a dependent female homemaker (Leitner, Ostner and Schmitt, 2008). The differing ideals of families and gender relations were reinforced by different institutions and policies in the two welfare states of East and West Germany. With the reunion in 1989, a rapid change of East German institutions and policies took place, adapting them to the West German situation. The restructuring of the labor market reduced the labor demand massively and leading to high unemployment rates which resulted in the expulsion of, above all, women from the labor market (Rosenfeld, Trappe, and Gornick, 2004). Furthermore, the provision of childcare places was reduced.

Nonetheless, the differences during the separation, strongly amplifying preceding differences (Arránz Becker, Lois and Nauck, 2010), are still significant nowadays since they had effects on attitudes towards public childcare (Goerres and Tepe, 2012) and its infrastructure for children under the age of three (Statistische Ämter des Bundes und der Länder, 2016), for example. Until today, different ideals persist concerning motherhood and fatherhood in East and West Germany (Schiefer and Naderi, 2015; Lück, 2009). Schiefer and Naderi (2015: 162–68) show that that women in East and West Germany differ with regard to the perceived importance of biological children for the own life, and the rejection of public childcare; women in East Germany are more inclined to have own children and to use public childcare than West German women. Lück (2009) shows that the acceptance of separate sphere gender ideals declined but that they remain prevalent. This implies that, on the societal level, mothers are perceived to bear the primary responsibility for childcare while fathers account for the family income (Diabaté, Lück and Schneider, 2015).

Policies affecting the division of paid work, housework, and childcare

In the transition to parenthood, policies that were not important before gain importance for the division of labor within couples. Such policies concern, for example, the availability of parental leave and parental leave benefits, or childcare facilities.

Since the 1920s, there have been policies particularly for mothers in Germany. Women have been having the right to take maternity leave to stay at home from paid work around the time of childbirth (Leitner, Ostner and Schmitt, 2008). After World War II, employed mothers in West Germany were granted the right to stay at home six weeks before the birth of their child and eight weeks afterward from 1952 onwards. Mothers-to-be have been able to decide if they want to stay at home before the birth, the time after the birth has been mandatory. For the time

of maternity leave, women have been receiving a wage replacement that covers 100 % of their wage. From the 1950s until the reunification of Germany, the German Democratic Republic also had a maternity leave law that allowed women to stay at home for two months after childbirth with compensatory payments (Drasch, 2011). Since reunification, the West German maternity leave policy has been valid for reunified Germany.

There were also differences regarding the implementation, duration, and benefit regarding parental leave between East and West Germany. In the German Democratic Republic, the length of the parental leave depended on the number of children. Mothers with one child could take six months of paid leave; the payment was calculated from the average net income. Mothers with two children could take twelve months of paid leave. From 1984 onwards, East German mothers with three or more children were allowed to take 18 months of paid leave. In 1986, a so-called baby year was implemented for all mothers, regardless of the number of their children. The leave legislation excluded fathers. In West Germany, the enactment of the first policy that allowed mothers to stay at home for six months to take care of their children while they received some pay took place in 1979. From 1986 onwards, both parents had the right to take leave from their paid work. During this leave, they have the right to return to their employer in an equitable position. Both parents had the right to stay at home for up to ten months after the child's birth. In the following years, the entitlements were expanded, first to twelve months in 1988, then to 15 months since June 1989, to 18 months since June 1990, and lastly to 36 months since 1992. From 1990 onwards, the West German policies were implemented in unified Germany. In 2001, the parental leave was made more flexible; parents could take the third year of their leave between the child's second and eighth birthday, given that their employer agreed. While on parental leave, parents could receive a universal and flat-rate parenting benefit, since 1986. From 1986 to 1991, parents on parental leave would, at maximum, receive 600 DM (which roughly equals 300 €) of parenting benefit per month for the time of the leave. From the sixth month onwards, however, the payment depended on an income test, and only couples with lower incomes would receive the parenting benefit. After the parental leave length was extended to 36 months in 1992, the parenting benefit was extended to 24 months in 1993. From 1995 onwards, it was income-tested from the first month onwards and aimed at supporting parents with lower incomes. In 2001, it was introduced that parents could receive income-tested 450 € parenting benefit per month if they only take twelve months of leave. In 2007, there was a substantial reform concerning the income replacement during parental leave. Ever since parents have still been entitled to take up to 36 months of parental leave, but now they could receive a replacement of 67 % of their previous net earnings with the minimum benefit being 300 € per month, the maximum being 1,800 € per month. Furthermore, the duration of the leave benefit was reduced to twelve months, though allowing for two additional partner months if both partners took parental leave and benefits. Additionally, during parental leave, the parent in parental leave has been allowed to work up to 30 hours per week for pay, though the resulting income reduces the leave benefit. In 2015, another reform of the

parental benefit policy (see for example Ahrens, 2017) made the combination of part-time work and parental leave even more flexible and rewarding as it reduced the financial loss that came along with paid work while receiving parental benefits. Furthermore, the new reform has been aiming at promoting more gender-equal divisions of paid and unpaid work as a bonus was introduced for if both parents work part-time (between 25 and 30 hours) simultaneously for four months.

Besides the parental leave legislation, policies regarding *childcare services* are also important for parents' arrangements of paid and unpaid work. The German Democratic Republic implemented its first law that regulating the provision of childcare places in 1950 (Grandke, 2001); the East German centrally planned economy included in its plans the expansion of the childcare places for young children. The use of a childcare institution was cost-free and the opening hours were supposed to be oriented towards the working hours of mothers (Grandke, 2001). The policies in the West in the Federal Republic of Germany regarding the provision of childcare were very different from the East German ones after World War II. A change can be observed after the Federal Republic of Germany signed the UN Convention on Children's Rights of 1989 (see Leitner, Ostner and Schmitt, 2008 also for the following). While the kindergarten, starting at age three, was formerly seen as a place where children could spend time with other children and play with them, in the mid-1970s, the institution became more important to enable otherwise stay-at-home mothers to work part-time. Kindergartens did not enable both parents to work full-time employment as the opening hours of the childcare places did not fit to a full-time working day. During this time, there were no public childcare places for children below the age of three available in West Germany. Thus, the family was expected to provide care for young children. Since 1995, children have been entitled to a place in a public kindergarten; since that year, the law acknowledges besides the children's needs also the parents' need for daycare. Following that reform, the need for more childcare places for children below the age of three was discussed publicly. The actual provision of childcare places for children in this age group, however, depended strongly on the municipalities, which finance childcare. An act was passed in 2004 to raise the availability of childcare places for children below the age of three. It defined that the municipalities should create 230,000 new places until 2010. This law not only supported places in institutions but also the number of registered childminders until they provided one-third of the places. As Blum (2014: 365) states, this was an ambitious goal for West Germany: It started from a level of 2.7 %, the act implied a quota of 17 % in 2010. The East German federal states, in contrast, already provided places for 37 % of the children below age three due to the different welfare state histories. Another law increasing the number of childcare places was enacted in 2008. It formulated the goal to provide childcare places or childminders for about one-third of the children below the age of three until 2013; from August 2013 onwards, children have been entitled to a place after they turned one year old.

There are other policies, that influence the division of paid and unpaid work in couples during the transition to parenthood, that are usually subsumed under the so-called

‘Familienlastenausgleich’, literally ‘compensation for families’ encumbrances’, which aims at reducing the financial burden families have as opposed to persons without children (see for example: Gerlach, 2017). These measures include, for example, tax allowances for children, direct monetary transfers like child benefits, the recognition of parental leave for the pension, and other services like the free insurance for married partners who are not active in the labor market. Another policy is the tax splitting option for married couples (see for example Leitner, Ostner and Schmitt, 2008). This policy allows married couples to sum their incomes, divide them by two and pay taxes on these averaged incomes. This reduces the tax compared to individual taxation for couples in which one partner has much higher earnings than the other partner. This law is criticized for setting high burdens for a partner who is not or only marginally employed to increase the working hours as the rising tax forfeits the additional income. These policies show that the logic of the German welfare state is still, to some extent, oriented towards the male breadwinner model and thus supporting gendered divisions of paid and unpaid work in couples, especially when they become parents.

4. Division of paid and unpaid work in couples before and after becoming parents

The division of paid work, housework, and childcare within heterosexual couples has been studied for many decades. At the beginning of this research, mostly cross-sectional analyses were conducted (see for an overview, for example, Künzler, 1994); nowadays, there is more and more longitudinal research on the development of couples' division of labor over time (see for an overview, for example, Dechant, Rost, and Schulz, 2014).

Regarding the data and the methods used for analyzing the division of paid and unpaid work jointly or separately, there is a considerable variation. Cross-sectional analysis is based on surveys (see for example Breen and Cooke, 2005; Zabel and Heintz-Martin, 2013) or on time use studies for one point in time (see for example Bittman *et al.*, 2003; Bonke and Esping-Andersen, 2011; Haberkern, 2007). There are different ways of examining couples' division of paid and unpaid work over time; one way is to compare different cross-sectional surveys. This method allows observing if there are changes in the arrangements of couples in different years in the same country (Bianchi *et al.*, 2000; Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (BMFSFJ) and Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis), 2003; Chesters, 2013; Chesters, Baxter and Western, 2008; Dribe and Stanfors, 2009; Gershuny, Godwin and Jones, 1994; Gwozdz, 2008; Gwozdz *et al.*, 2006; Neilson and Stanfors, 2014). Another way is to focus on changes within the life courses of individuals or couples and to use longitudinal survey data on individuals or couples (e.g. Artis and Pavalko, 2003; Baxter, Hewitt and Haynes, 2008; Cooke, 2007; Cunningham, 2007; Dechant, Rost and Schulz, 2014; El Lahga and Moreau, 2007; Evertsson, 2014; Evertsson and Nermo, 2007; Evertsson and Nermo, 2004; Gershuny, Bittman and Brice, 2005; Gjerdingen and Center, 2005; Grunow, Schulz and Blossfeld, 2007; Grunow, Schulz and Blossfeld, 2012; Huinink and Reichart, 2008; Kan, 2008; Schober, 2014; Schober, 2013a; Schober, 2013b; Schulz, 2010). In quantitative analyses, the division of paid and unpaid labor within couples is most often measured with time use diaries, time estimates and task participation indices (see for example Coltrane, 2000). A third way of analyzing the divisions of labor within couples over time is with qualitative interviews. These can be retrospective and thus reconstruct couples' arrangements (Rüling, 2007; Peukert, 2015; Maierhofer and Strasser, 2016) or accompany couples over a specified period to capture changes more closely to the time when they happen (Dechant and Schulz, 2014; Dechant and Blossfeld, 2015).

Findings based on quantitative research

Regardless of the methods used and of analyzing cross-sectional or longitudinal data, studies find that couples in Western societies divide paid and unpaid work in non-equal ways; this pattern can also be found in Germany (for example Coltrane, 2000; Dechant, Rost and Schulz, 2014; Huinink and Röhler, 2005; Künzler, 1994; Shelton and John, 1996; Sullivan, 2011; Bianchi and Milkie, 2010). Women usually do more household labor than men do and also do more

routine household chores, like cooking or cleaning (e.g. Artis and Pavalko, 2003; Baxter, Hewitt and Haynes, 2008; Bianchi *et al.*, 2000; Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (BMFSFJ) and Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis), 2003; Chesters, 2013; Chesters, Baxter and Western, 2008; Dechant, Rost and Schulz, 2014; Dribe and Stanfors, 2009; El Lahga and Moreau, 2007; Evertsson and Nermo, 2004; Evertsson and Nermo, 2007; Gershuny, Bittman and Brice, 2005; Gershuny, Godwin and Jones, 1994; Gwozdz *et al.*, 2006; Huinink and Reichart, 2008; Schulz, 2010). The most recent German time use study from 2012 and 2013 (Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis), 2015) shows that women spend on average 24 hours and 47 minutes per week on unpaid work; this is approximately 10 hours more than men do. Women spend on average 24 hours and 18 minutes per week on paid work; men spend approximately 9 hours more on paid work per week. In comparison to the previous time use study from 2001 and 2002, men spend nowadays approximately 30 minutes more on paid work and approximately 40 minutes less on unpaid work than they did approximately 10 years earlier. Women increased their paid work time by almost 3 hours per week and decreased their unpaid work hours by approximately 3.5 hours. The differences between the time use are even more pronounced if the family situation is taken into consideration. Women and men who are either single or living with a partner but have no children are more similar than women and men with children. Women who live alone or with a partner and without children spend on average 24 hours and 18 minutes per week on paid work and 24 hours and 47 minutes on unpaid work in 2012 and 2013. Men without children spend per week approximately 4 hours and 40 minutes more on paid work than women without children. At the same time, they spend approximately 6 hours and 40 minutes less per week on unpaid work. In contrast, women who are mothers of at least one child below the age of six spend 13 hours and 47 hours per week on paid work and 45 hours and 56 minutes on unpaid work. Their male equivalents spend 38 hours and 46 minutes on paid work and 24 hours and 9 minutes on unpaid work. Thus, the time use of women and men without children is more similar while mothers and fathers of young children spend their time to very different extents with unpaid or paid work.

Chesters, Baxter, and Western (2008) showed for Australia, based on the comparison of cross-sectional data, that the time men and women spend on doing *household labor* converges more and more from one measurement time point to the next. Mothers do more unpaid work than women who do not have children (Bianchi *et al.*, 2000; Chesters, Baxter and Western, 2008; Cooke, 2007; Dribe and Stanfors, 2009; El Lahga and Moreau, 2007). Based on panel-data with the same respondents at different points in time, it was shown for multiple countries that with the transition to parenthood, the absolute times or relative shares of female and male partners in household work change; women do more household labor (Baxter, Hewitt and Haynes, 2008 [for Australia]; Cooke, 2007 [for Germany]; Gjerdingen and Center, 2005 [for the USA]; Huinink and Reichart, 2008 [for Germany]; Kühhirt, 2012 [for Germany]; Grunow, Schulz and Blossfeld, 2012 [for Germany]; Sanchez and Thomson, 1997 [for the USA]; Schober, 2013b [for the United Kingdom]). That change of the housework division has effects in the long run, even

if mothers increase their labor market participation later after childbirth as they continue to do more of the unpaid work (Cooke, 2007; El Lahga and Moreau, 2007; Kühhirt, 2012; Grunow, Schulz and Blossfeld, 2012).

Several mechanisms that explain the different shares or time uses of women and men are discussed in the literature (compare chapter 2). One of these factors is income. Killewald and Gough (2010) found for the USA that an increase in wives' income has different effects on their household labor time for different income levels; when women with a low income increase their income, this changes the couple's division of household labor to a greater extent than if a woman with a high income increases it. Other studies found a u-shaped correlation between the individual income and the share of household labor in the US: couples with equal incomes share household labor most equally (Evertsson and Nermo, 2006). Schober (2013b) showed for British women that absolute incomes have an impact on the division of unpaid work; when becoming mothers, women with higher absolute incomes increase their time in household labor less than women with lower incomes. Sullivan (2011) shows, based on a meta-analysis of previous research, that an u-shaped relationship like it was expected by Brines (1994) often disappears after excluding outliers from the analysis. This finding implies that women with high incomes do not do more household work. Income is also used as an explanatory variable in studies focusing on the change of the division of household labor with the transition to parenthood. Some studies take the relative resources of the partners into consideration (Dechant, Rost and Schulz, 2014; Schulz and Blossfeld, 2006) while others use the absolute income of women before the birth of their first child (Schober, 2013b). Studies taking the relative earnings in German couples into consideration either do not find an effect of the income relation on the division of household labor (Schulz and Blossfeld, 2006) or showed that there is an effect of relative earnings on not doing as much household labor if women have higher incomes than their partners during the transition of parenthood (Dechant, Rost and Schulz, 2014).

Both partners' paid work situations also influence a couple's division of household labor. Couples in which both partners are active in the labor market to similar extents seem to have a more equal division of household labor (Cunningham, 2007; Huinink and Reichart, 2008; Evertsson, 2014; Klaus and Steinbach, 2002). Some studies find that men's share in household labor is higher when their partners are employed (Evertsson, 2014). Others show that own paid working hours reduce the time spent doing household chores; this effect is stronger for women's paid work than for men's (Cunningham, 2007; Huinink and Reichart, 2008). This is especially the case for couples in which the woman was not active in the labor market and then started to work or returned to her paid work after a phase of non-employment (Cunningham, 2007; Gershuny, Bittman and Brice, 2005; Schober, 2013a). Upon their return to the labor market after childbirth, mothers in Great Britain and Germany can especially reduce their housework share when they work full-time hours; a return to part-time work hardly affects the gendered division of household labor (Schober, 2013a). Gershuny, Bittman, and Brice (2005)

show that men's adaptation to changes in their partners' paid work is lagged; when women increase their paid work, men tend not to alter their share in household work directly but after some time. Bünning (2015) shows for German fathers who took parental leave after the 2007 reform that they only increased their time investments in housework if they stayed at home for more than two months or stayed at home while their partners were active in the labor market.

Education also has an effect on the division of household labor. German couples in which both partners are highly educated share household labor more equally than couples with other educational attainments (Dechant, Rost and Schulz, 2014; Schulz, 2010). Sanchez and Thomson (1997) show for the USA that education has an impact: Women in couples in which both partners have higher educational attainment spend fewer hours on household work than women in couples with lower educational levels; men's housework hours are not affected by their own or their partners' education. Evertsson and Nermo (2007) show for Sweden that women who achieve higher educational levels during the observation period reduce their share in household labor.

Gender role attitudes and egalitarian ideas also influence the division of household labor. The more egalitarian the gender ideology is, the more equal is the division of household chores (Baxter, Hewitt and Haynes, 2008; Evans and Baxter, 2013; Evertsson, 2014; Kan, 2008; Bianchi *et al.*, 2000; Chesters, 2013). Evertsson (2014) shows that the effect of an egalitarian gender ideology on the division of household labor is gendered in Sweden; men who have egalitarian ideals do more household labor, and their partners do fewer chores; for women with an egalitarian gender ideology, there was only an effect on own household labor but not on their partners'. British women who have egalitarian ideals before the transition to parenthood do not increase their housework share as much as women with other gender role ideas do; women's gender ideology does not have an influence on their partners' time for household labor and men's ideals also do not affect their partners' time use (Schober, 2013b). In Germany, sex role attitudes continue to differ between East and West Germany as a consequence of different political regimes during the phase of separation into two countries (Bauernschuster and Rainer, 2012).

To sum up, couples' divisions of household labor are characterized by a higher female share in housework in Western countries that is often reinforced by the transition to parenthood. Regarding the theoretical expectations, there are findings that support all explanations. Absolute and relative resources, available time, gendered ideas and ideologies, and ideas about gender equality all contribute to understanding the division of housework. Davis and Wills (2014: 817) show on the basis of a content analysis of housework research for the USA that "there has not been a declining significance of influence of measures of time availability, relative resources, or gender ideology as predictors of the division of household labor." Policies also play a role for the division of housework since they often support specific arrangements more than others; the ideal-worker norm that includes many working hours and

parental leave policies that grant an extended stay at home period lead to more gender specialized divisions of housework (Hook, 2010).

Along with the transition to first parenthood, not only the division of household labor is affected by traditionalization processes, but the *paid work* arrangements also change in most cases. Berghammer (2014) shows for Austria based on cross-sectional comparisons of the micro-census data that during the period from 1980 to 2009, highly educated mothers with children below the age of three increasingly chose a male breadwinner model. Regardless of the couples' educational attainments, it became increasingly common over time that mothers of pre-school children (age 3 to 5) work part-time, and that couples have a modernized breadwinner model. Konietzka and Kreyenfeld (2010) also show, based on cross-sectional comparisons of micro-census data for Germany, that from 1976 to 2004 mothers involvement in part-time and marginal employment increased while especially low-educated mothers' full-time employment decreased. Men's share in paid work within the couple usually rises when women reduce their paid work hours (Gjerdingen and Center, 2005; El Lahga and Moreau, 2007). Kühhirt (2012) shows that women reduce their paid hours with the birth of their first child while men's working hours are hardly affected by this event. Later, women who had similar or higher incomes than their partners increase their working hours more pronouncedly than women who earned less money before the birth of the first child. However, in all constellations, the increase is slow. Schober (2013b) shows for Great Britain that the reduction of mother's paid work time is dependent on their absolute income before birth and her gender ideology; higher earnings and an egalitarian gender ideology lead to less reduced working hours. Langner (2015) studies the long-term effects of the transition to parenthood on couples' paid work arrangement based on the German Socio-Economic Panel; for the female birth cohorts of 1956 to 1965, she analyzes the paid work arrangements until the youngest child was 20 years old. She found that one-fifth of the analyzed couples had a fully specialized division of paid work later in their lives while about one third had an arrangement in which both partners worked full-time. Bünning (2015) shows on the basis of the German Socio-Economic Panel for fathers who took parental leave after the 2007 reform that taking parental leave had an influence on their working hours after their leave. Staying at home to care for the child reduces the time fathers spend on work upon their return to the labor market. Childcare-related employment interruptions are often followed by career consequences. Uunk, Kalmijn, and Muffels (2005) analyze mothers' paid work in 13 European countries. They show that the reduction of women's paid work when they have children is country-specific and influenced by policies. Institutional support for mothers' employment like the availability of public childcare affects mothers' paid work. The authors show furthermore that egalitarian gender role values on the country level lead to higher working hours for mothers if the provision of public childcare is not controlled for in the model; when it is included in the model, gender role values are not significant. Aisenbrey, Evertsson, and Grunow (2009) show in a comparison of Germany, the USA and Sweden that German mothers who stay at home for a long time after the birth of a child return less often to their previous

positions, but have almost equal chances for an upward or a downward career move. In another study, Evertsson and Grunow (2012) compared the impact of women's career interruptions due to parental leave on the one hand and unemployment on the other hand on occupational mobility in Germany and Sweden. For German women, there is no effect for longer parental leaves on upward mobility, while Swedish women face negative career consequences for longer leaves. Unemployment has a negative effect on German women as it increases the risk for downward career mobility – but no effect for Swedish women.

Bünning and Pollmann-Schult (2016) analyzed if and how family policies affect fathers' working hours in 24 countries based on EU-SILC data. They show that supported familism that is targeted at fathers leads to a more gender equal division of labor. Especially parental leave that targets towards men has an effect. As gender-neutral family allowances lead to fewer work hours for fathers, Bünning and Pollmann-Schult (2016: 270) conclude that "the association between family allowances and a traditional division of labor is not as straightforward as assumed by previous research". Other scholars found that family allowances lead to female full-time carer models. A further finding is that fathers' educational levels influence how they react to policies compared to childless men: Lower educated fathers react to family allowances by reducing their working hours. Medium educated fathers work fewer hours with more generous paternal leave policies. Highly educated fathers increase their work hours when there are long parental leave periods assigned to the mother. The study could not disentangle if the effect of education is based on socio-economic aspects or ideas about gender roles.

Regarding the discussed theoretical mechanisms and expectations for couples' division of paid work after their transition to parenthood, it can be summarized that resources like education – and especially women's education –, but also ideals about maternal and paternal employment, gender ideologies, and policies play a role.

Concerning the division of *childcare*, there is evidence that men who participate more in household labor also do more childcare (Evertsson, 2014; Ishii-Kuntz and Coltrane, 1992). Bonke and Esping-Andersen (2011) show using time use data that time for childcare tends to be equally distributed among couples with educational homogamy on a high level, in particular, because the men in these couples are considerably more involved than men in couples with other educational constellations. They stress the significance of values and attitudes in interpreting their finding. Averett, Gennetian, and Peters (2000) analyzed patterns and determinants for fathers' childcare for the USA when the mother was working. They found that families in which the mother is employed do use not only paternal childcare but also other types of childcare. Gender roles influence fathers' involvement; fathers are less likely to provide childcare when the mother holds traditional roles. Flexible work schedules enhance father's childcare involvement. Boll, Leppin, and Reich (2011) analyzed time use data for eight countries over time and showed that an increase of the parental leave length decreases the time fathers spend with taking care of their children. They argue that in the countries studied long parental

leave periods with low leave benefits lead to mothers' specialization on childcare which reduces fathers leave and thus their time spent on childcare. A high wage compensation during parental leave reduces mothers average time for childcare significantly as mothers in countries with high compensation rates return earlier to their paid work. High educated men and women spend more time on childcare than medium or low educated parents. Kühhirt (2012) shows for Germany with Socio-Economic Panel data that women spend more time on childcare than men do; the higher share of women is not influenced by the pre-birth income situation of the couple. However, men's time for childcare is affected by the income: Men whose partners earned more than they did before the birth of the first child spend more time on childcare than men who were main breadwinners or who had similar incomes to their partners. Schober (2014) studied the effect of the 1992 and 2007 parental leave reform on childcare time on the basis of the German Socio-Economic Panel for twenty years. She found that the first reform that extended the parental leave length reduced fathers' childcare; the 2007 reform that introduced two partner months increased fathers' involvement in this area.

Couples divide childcare mostly in gendered ways; mothers do the larger share of the childcare. Again, there is evidence of several theoretical arguments; gender roles, income resources, the educational background and paid working hours affect the division of childcare. Furthermore, there is an effect of policies.

Findings based on qualitative research

Qualitative research that focuses on couples' arrangements of paid and unpaid work often uses a retrospective design to explain changes and patterns in their arrangements. Fox (2001) studied how the transition to parenthood related to gender inequality based on interviews with Canadian couples in the period when they became parents. They draw on were separate interviews with both partners at three points in time: The first of these interviews took place during pregnancy, the second two months and the third twelve months after childbirth. Only the women were interviewed shortly after the birth, and there was a joint interview six months after the birth. In general, the interviewed couples seemed very inclined to share the childcare; nevertheless, they often described gendered patterns after childbirth. The main findings are that becoming a mother and assuming responsibility for the child was perceived as a matter of fact. At the same time, active involvement in childcare is more of choice for fathers and fathers' participation was described as help. The mothers described themselves as responsible for the relationship between their partners and the child.

Rüling (2007) analyzed how German couples managed to have an egalitarian arrangement of family and focused on structural constraints that hinder couples from balancing work and family. The analyses based on retrospective interviews with both partners of couples with children. She found that there are two patterns of couples: One pattern featuring couples who have egalitarian arrangements and the other subsuming couples who have a specialized

arrangement. Egalitarian couples have gender egalitarian ideals about their lives and ideas about achieving an egalitarian arrangement; it was especially important that the male partners supported egalitarian ideas. Equal arrangements are not stable over the life course but threatened by pitfalls to traditionalization such as unsupportive family policies; couples have to actively avoid traditional arrangements in order to share paid and unpaid work truly equally. Maierhofer and Strasser (2016) used joint interviews with both partners of Austrian couples shortly after the parental leave and studied whether active negotiations, the couples' contexts, or gendered roles influence couples' division of childcare and household labor. Within their sample, most couples had an equal arrangement of paid and unpaid work before the transition to parenthood. This changed after the birth of the child; then, most couples lived an arrangement in which the man was mainly doing the paid work and the woman the household labor and childcare. The explanations for this change are context situations, like different incomes, but also gendered ideas of childcare competencies, such as maternal gatekeeping. Fathers' involvement in parental leave is dependent on the fathers' own strong desire to participate in childcare and economic constraints.

In contrast to the studies by Rüling (2007) and Maierhofer and Strasser (2016), Peukert (2015) focuses on the negotiation processes concerning parental leave. She studied how German dual-earner and dual-career couples explain their negotiations and negotiation outcomes concerning their division of parental leave. The data basis was retrospective individual and joint interviews with both partners. The study explicitly focuses on negotiations as then the systematic interrelatedness of different factors, like income or gender ideologies, can be described. In doing so, four explanations are found for the division of parental leave: Hegemonic mothering, maternal gatekeeping, sameness taboo, and equally shared parenting. Within the first two negotiation patterns, ideas of gendered differences are prevalent while the in later two, in general, both parents are seen as equally responsible or competent for the care for the child. 'Hegemonic mothering' means that the mother is seen as the natural caregiver who stays at home for the maximum length of the parental leave scheme while the father is seen as less competent. The negotiation processes that are labeled 'maternal gatekeeping' differ from hegemonic mothering as here while the mother sees herself as most competent and wants to take as much parental leave as possible the father perceives himself as equally responsible and argues against the maternal gatekeeping. The 'sameness taboo' describes argumentations in which both partners are in general seen as equal caregivers with the same duty to take parental leave; however, the father tries to reduce his parental leave time with gendered ideas about childcare responsibilities. Couples referring to 'equally shared parenting' describe both partners as equally competent caregivers who want to share parental leave. The economic situation of the mother or both parents is not relevant for the negotiation processes that are described with hegemonic mothering, sameness taboo and maternal gatekeeping; within the equally shared parenting, the occupational or income situation of both parents is in some cases relevant and leads to skewed arrangements.

Dechant and Schulz (2014) analyzed the same data the present study is based on. Thus, they used qualitative interviews with both partners of couples before and after their transition to parenthood and studied the overall division of paid and unpaid work. They showed that highly educated couples express egalitarian values, but that it is difficult for them to put these values into practice in the actual division of paid and unpaid work. They showed that couples need special conditions besides egalitarian values, like job flexibility or the option to work from home, to put an equal sharing of paid and unpaid work into practice after their transition to parenthood.

Grunow and Evertsson (2016) edited a volume that focused on how couples in their transition to parenthood anticipate their future as parents in eight European countries. The analyses for Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Italy, Spain Poland and the Czech Republic used qualitative interviews with couples that were conducted with similar interview guidelines. The comparative perspective allowed to understand how the interplay of institutions and policies and gendered mothering and fathering ideals affected couples' plans for their arrangement of paid and unpaid work in the first year after the child's birth. The study shows that couples' plans are influenced by family policies, like the parental leave system or the availability of public childcare, and the country's gender culture that suggests specific work-care arrangements for young parents in which becoming a mother is often a natural process but becoming a father is an actively constructed. Gender culture and policies influence what parents-to-be perceive as the best for their child and thus affect how they plan for dividing paid work and childcare.

Research gaps

The discussion of previous findings on couples' divisions of paid and unpaid work during their transition to parenthood shows that becoming mothers and fathers affects these arrangements. While most German couples have a paid work arrangement in which both partners work full-time before the birth of their child, there are more specialized arrangements after this transition: Mothers tend to take parental leave more often than fathers do and they also take longer leaves. Upon their labor market return, they often reduce their working hours; fathers tend to work full-time, they only seem to reduce their hours if they took longer parental leave and stayed at home while their partner was active in the labor market. Couples divide routine housework often more equally before the transition to parenthood; after the birth of their first child women tend to engage more in housework. This is also linked to their reduction of working hours. Mothers tend to spend more time with childcare than fathers do.

Quantitative research showed that all theories discussed above could explain certain aspects; there is evidence for economic resources, for time availability, for gendered explanations, ideas about gender equality and equity. Qualitative research showed that the pathways into a gender-specialized arrangement are often easy to follow and that achieving a

more equal division of labor is connected to more discussions, ideas about gender equality, and the man's wish to be an actively involved father. Furthermore, it shed light on hindering and supporting factors couples face when they decide on how to divide paid work, housework, and care for their child(ren).

Still, the question in which ways and why couples decide to change their former more equal division of paid and unpaid work in the transition to parenthood is not sufficiently answered. How do couples themselves perceive the transition to parenthood and its potential consequences for how they organized their paid and unpaid work? Previous research often focused on the explanation of one field of work – paid work, housework or childcare – and considered the other fields as explanatory factors. However, in doing this, it is assumed that, for instance, paid work affects the division of housework in the same way before and after the transition to parenthood without allowing for potential changes in the effects or interconnectedness of paid work and housework. Furthermore, it is an open question if the individuals' and couples' rationales for their paid work arrangement, their housework arrangement, and their childcare arrangement are similar or different. For example, it is unclear if economic resources have different effects on the decisions concerning which partner spends how much time in the labor market compared to the decision concerning which partner spends how much time on housework. Another open question is to which extent two partners within a couple agree or disagree about the reasons for their arrangement.

The present study aims to overcome these shortages by explicitly studying the division of labor at the transition to parenthood with regard to prior intentions and their underlying explanations as well as their actual implementation and adduced rationales regarding the interrelated domains of paid work, housework, and childcare. It also contributes by including the perspectives of both partners.

5. Method

The following chapter explains the choice of a qualitative approach to answer the research questions about why couples who become parents plan and realize certain divisions of paid and unpaid work. The chapter continues with a discussion of semi-structured interviews as a research tool and a description of the sampling strategy. It concludes with the description of the analyzing strategy that takes into consideration the longitudinal structure of the qualitative interview data and the perspectives of two partners of each couple.

5.1 A qualitative, longitudinal approach

In general, research problems can be addressed using qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods. The decision about the appropriate research methods has to be based on the research question since all approaches have advantages and disadvantages (Strauss and Corbin, 1998: 11). Regarding the research question addressed here, there is extensive empirical evidence (see chapter 4) that couples tend to have more and more gender-specialized divisions of paid and unpaid work after the transition to parenthood. There is also research regarding the proportions of paid and unpaid work done by the female and the male partner in a heterosexual couple and about the number of hours women and men with or without children spend on paid work, housework or childcare. Nevertheless, it remains still quite unclear, why couples decide on their division of paid and unpaid labor when they become parents in the way they do. There is partly contradicting evidence concerning the discussed theoretical mechanisms. Open questions on the micro level are for example: What are couples' reasons for the decision for their division of labor? Which factors affect these decisions? How do these decision-making processes take place? Are there different explanations for paid work, housework, and childcare? As has been shown, the discussed quantitative studies cannot answer these questions in detail. Research questions about individual reasons and explanations cannot be answered on the basis of fully structured quantitative data. Instead, a qualitative, open method that allows individuals to explain their perspective and their rationales allows for new insights. They allow to get a better understanding of the social reality and to analyze processes and individual interpretations (Flick, Kardorff and Steinke, 2004: 14).

The research question addresses changes in couples' divisions of paid and unpaid work during their transition to parenthood as well as their explanations and decision-making processes. Therefore, it is necessary to capture couples' perspectives at least before and after their transition to parenthood. Thus, a qualitative approach at multiple points in time matches the research question best (for a discussion of challenges and advantages of qualitative longitudinal research see for example Holland, Thomson and Henderson, 2006; Thomson and Holland, 2003). In general, qualitative research can be undertaken with very different paradigms of seeing and accessing the object of research as well as multiple methods of collecting and analyzing qualitative data (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 5–8). Positivism, postpositivism, critical

theory, and constructivism are possible paradigms – or systems of basic beliefs – that affect for example the research question, the nature of knowledge or the accumulation of knowledge (Guba and Lincoln, 1994: 107). What is common for the different approaches and independent of the paradigm is the advantage that qualitative research is generally more open with regard to the social phenomena as it can use less standardized instruments than large-scale quantitative approaches (Flick, Kardorff and Steinke, 2004: 17). A deeper insight into the analyzed processes is possible as the data collection methods are in general characterized by a greater openness and variety; some examples of these methods are narrative interviews, semi-structured interviews, group discussions, ethnographical methods, collection of documents, and observations (Strauss and Corbin, 1998: 11–12). Furthermore, it is possible to address research questions that cannot be analyzed with standardized methods or to enter new fields where too little knowledge is available to design standardized instruments.

A qualitative approach fits the research question on individual explanations for the division of paid and unpaid work and related changes during the transition to parenthood as well as evaluations of the situation. This design implies that individuals who are in the process of transiting to parenthood are asked about their specific ideas and views on the division of labor with their partner. This is done at two points in time, during the pregnancy and approximately one year afterward to be able to gain insights into the division of labor before the child's birth, the plans for the time after this event, and the actual division when the child is approximately one year old. With this qualitative longitudinal and event-centered approach, it is possible to observe and analyze change and to compare the interviewees' ideas and explanations before and after childbirth. In contrast to a retrospective design, the longitudinal aspect allows for finding discrepancies, for example, between the pre- and post-birth explanations.

5.2 Semi-structured individual interviews

Semi-structured interviews are the best data collection method for addressing the remaining research gaps regarding the division of paid and unpaid labor within couples in their transition to parenthood (for a general discussion about interviews see for example Deppermann, 2013). This is because there is already a substantial amount of knowledge about the division of paid and unpaid labor within couples with clearly identified research gaps. Furthermore, there are many potential mechanisms for the explanation of the division of paid and unpaid labor in couples (see chapter 2) that can be included in the design of the qualitative approach (Hopf, 2016). Therefore, it is possible to develop questions addressing exactly the research gaps while allowing for open answers, explanations, and narrations. With the theoretical explanations in mind, it is furthermore possible to ask follow-up questions when interviewees talk about explanatory mechanisms in their own words. Additionally, it is possible to follow the interviewees' structure of explanation as the sequence of the questions is flexible and is designed as being adaptive to the interview conversation.

What are semi-structured interviews? Similar to large-scale quantitative surveys, the interview guideline contains pre-formulated questions. However, there are two major differences to quantitative fully-structured interviews. The first is related to the strictness of the interview questions: Even if they are formulated beforehand, the interviewer is free to reformulate the questions in different ways to fit the concrete interview situation. Usually, most questions are not posed as pre-formulated. Also, the order of the questions is flexible: If it is more suitable during an interview to ask a question that is in the guideline further ahead, the interviewer should bring up the relating question. A semi-structured interview also allows for follow-up questions to clarify answers. The second difference in comparison to quantitative fully-structured interviews is that there are no answers provided. The interviewees formulate their responses in their own way and with their own words, and they include as many details as they wish. In case of narrative questions, they also can decide upon the start and the end of their narration, providing further information on more or less important aspects of individual considerations, rationales, and decision making processes.

There are some prerequisites for the method of semi-structured interviews: Questions in an interview guideline can only point to conscious aspects (Flick, 2007: 203); the division of labor within a couple fulfills this precondition as it can be assumed that both partners know more or less precisely which partner works how many hours in the labor market and which partner does which household chores. They should also be able to express their division of paid and unpaid work verbally during an interview. It can be assumed that individuals make decisions about their division of labor and have explanations for why they decided, for instance, to share the cleaning equally. Hence, they are able to talk about their division of labor, their rationales and potential conflicts in the interview as all these aspects are present in their minds. Especially regarding the plans, the couples make during the pregnancy for the time after the child's birth; it can be assumed that the partners talk about their ideas and decide together how they want to arrange paid and unpaid work in the future. Thus, the interviews connect to discourses and discussions the couples have.

To analyze the division of labor within couples during their transition to parenthood, it is in general possible to interview only one partner of an intimate relationship or to interview both partners jointly or separately. In the present study, the data consists of interviews with both partners separately as this allows determining the views and explanations of each partner. Thus, it is possible to reconstruct the individual perspectives, narrations, and explanations of both partners within one couple. This also enables finding discrepancies in the evaluations and descriptions of both partners.

The interview guidelines (see Chapters 11.1 and 11.2) cover a range of topics related to the couple's history and their division of labor. The first interview contained questions about each partner's educational and employment history, the history of becoming a couple, when they moved in, how they divided household labor at the beginning of living together, and if and how this changed over the course of their relationship. The interviewees were also asked about

reasons for their arrangement of paid and unpaid work. Then, there were questions about their plans and ideas for the future as a family; how they imagined sharing paid work, household labor, and childcare and why they planned their future as they did. In the second interview, the interviewees were asked about their current division of paid and unpaid work and their explanations for their arrangement. Furthermore, the interviews covered developments since the first interview and potential changes regarding the interviewees' plans. In both interviews, the informants were asked questions about supporting and hindering factors such as if their parents live nearby who could potentially help with the unpaid work, and if they have role models among their friends or family. The theoretical explanations informed the questions, and the interviewers bore them in mind during the interviews and included follow-up questions when the interviewees raised a theoretically expected mechanism.

5.3 Sampling strategy and realization of the strategy

For the selection of interviewees, a couple of considerations were important. As the research question is about the rationales and individual explanations of the division of paid and unpaid work in couples during their transition to parenthood, it is evident that only interviewees in intimate relationships who were becoming parents should be in the sample. Furthermore, the interviewed couples should have some further characteristics (Schulz, Jabsen and Rost, 2008: 8):

- The couple had to share one household.
- The expected child had to be the first child for the couple.
- The woman should be in the fourth to the seventh month of her pregnancy.
- Both partners had to be active in the labor market.
- Ideally, both partners should have similar and high educational backgrounds.

There are several reasons for these restrictions. The first criterion is necessary as only couples sharing one household have to decide on their division of paid and unpaid work. Therefore, couples who lived in separate households had to be excluded. All couples that were interviewed fulfilled this criterion.

The restriction to couples expecting their first child was set as several studies have shown that it is the transition to the first child that changes the division of labor (see for example: Baxter, Hewitt and Haynes, 2008; Grunow, Schulz and Blossfeld, 2012; Gjerdingen and Center, 2005; Cooke, 2007; Dechant, Rost and Schulz, 2014; Huinink and Reichart, 2008; Kühhirt, 2012; Schulz and Blossfeld, 2006). Applying a life course perspective (Mayer and Müller, 1984; Blossfeld and Huinink, 2001), the birth of the first child is a crucial event in the lives of women and men which affects the division of labor in couples. Regarding the division of paid and unpaid work, the birth of a child adds childcare to the amount of unpaid work that has to be done. Furthermore, the presence of the child increases the amount of housework as, for example, more clothes have to be washed. Beyond that, the time spent on childcare cannot be

spent on paid work which implies a reduction of the total amount of working hours or at least a different allocation across the day if the childcare is not outsourced.

The rationale behind the decision to prefer couples in which the pregnancy was in the middle phase is that these couples are in the phase of planning the future. As the central inquiry of my research is how couples decide about their future division of paid and unpaid work, it is crucial to capture the point in time when they make their decision in the interviews. It can be expected that this is precisely the phase of planning as expecting parents are in the phase of adapting to the pregnancy which becomes increasingly concrete during this time; it is in this stadium of the pregnancy that couples inform their social environment and their employers about their situation (Gloger-Tippelt, 1988; Gloger-Tippelt, 1985). Furthermore, this is the time when the employer but also family and friends ask about plans for the future and that the partners discuss their ideas among themselves and with significant others. In contrast, in the first months of the pregnancy couples often need some time to realize what the pregnancy means for their lives. According to Gloger-Tippelt (1988), the feeling of uncertainty is the central characteristic for the first twelve weeks of the pregnancy; the uncertainty is mediated through the level of planning the pregnancy. Therefore, couples in this early stadium of the pregnancy are not yet in the phase of making the decisions for the future but rather coping with the cognitive and emotional challenge of this situation (Gloger-Tippelt, 1988). On the contrary, couples expecting the birth of their child in the near future mostly have rather fixed plans for the future. This makes it impossible to get an insight into the decision making processes while they occur. Here, interviewees can speak retrospectively about their decision making. This may be influenced by the actual decisions they made.

The last two criteria for sample selection are based on the theories discussed in chapter 2. Both partners had to be active in the labor market before the birth of their first child as, for example, the economic theories would not expect that a couple would change the arrangement with the transition to parenthood if they had a specialization of the paid work with one partner not being active in the labor market. Also, couples in which at least one partner was still in education were excluded as this is also a particular situation and most transitions to parenthood take place in couples in which both partners are active in the labor market. Furthermore, as the focus of the research is on developments in the division of paid and unpaid work during the transition to parenthood, it is reasonable to select couples with similar starting points and options to get an insight into their descriptions of the decision processes.

The theoretical implications and the reduction of diversity were also the rationales behind the last sample criterion that the partners within an intimate relationship had similar and high educational attainments. Education is important for several theoretical reasons. First, higher educational levels concur with higher income potentials (Hadjar and Becker, 2011: 214–15). Several of the discussed theories recur to both partners' incomes and the difference between the incomes in explaining the division of labor in couples (Becker, 1998; Brines, 1994; Ott, 1992). As education is a proxy for income, it is reasonable to select couples with similar educational

backgrounds to be able to determine how these couples decide upon their arrangement; this also allows for finding gendered rationales behind similar incomes within one couple. The focus on couples with higher education is furthermore derived from the egalitarian values approach (Van Berkel and De Graaf, 1999); it assumes couples with educational homogamy on a high level to have egalitarian gender ideals and to divide housework equally. Since previous research has shown that couples tend to have non-equal arrangements especially after the birth of the first child, the selection of couples who should – according to the theoretical mechanisms – have the economic and ideological prerequisites to deviate from this pattern are most promising when it comes to gaining new insights.

Different strategies were used in order to recruit couples fitting in this scheme. First, midwives were contacted and asked if it was possible to come to preparation courses to present the project to expecting couples and to leave leaflets in the midwife office. Second, flea markets for baby clothes et cetera were visited and parents-to-be were contacted there; they were told about the study and asked if they were interested in participating in it. Finally, snow-ball recruitment was used starting with couples who were interested in participating. Due to financial restrictions, it was decided to seek couples only in South Germany in order to reduce travel costs. This was also a means to restrict the different gender cultures since the ideals about motherhood and fatherhood still differ between West and East Germany (Kessel, 2009; Schiefer and Naderi, 2015).

5.4 Analyzing strategy

For the analysis of the interviews, a combination of different analytical methods was employed. First, Mayring's (2015; 2008; 2000) qualitative content analysis was used to reduce the content and to summarize the most important themes and explanations. Second, to make use of the design elements of interviews with partners nested in couples and the longitudinal design, several comparisons between different actors and the interview before and after childbirth were undertaken. And third, according to Hopf and Schmidt's (1993) and Hopf's (2016) suggestion, the single cases were compared with theoretical expectations derived from the theories discussed in chapter 2.

Qualitative content analysis “is a method for describing the meaning of qualitative material in a systematic way” (Schreier, 2012: 1). The qualitative content analysis following Mayring is a systematic and rule-based analytical procedure to analyze qualitative data that contains communications (Mayring, 1994). The method starts at the manifest content of the qualitative material and draws conclusions upon latent content from that basis. The qualitative content analysis is a stepwise procedure where the steps are set before the analysis begins. This implies that the data is defined as part of a “model of communication” (Mayring, 2000: para. 7), this definition refers to which is the level of analysis, for example – in the present study – the interviewee, certain aspects of the interviewee like experiences, the couples or the social-cultural

background. Furthermore, the analysis follows pre-defined steps and procedures; this procedure is not universal as adaptations to the research question and the material are central (Mayring, 2015: 51). Mayring differentiates three different procedures: The summarizing, the explicative and the structuring content analysis. The general procedure of a qualitative content analysis follows these steps (translated from Mayring, 2015: 62):

1. Definition of the material
2. Analysis of the context of data generation
3. Formal characteristics of the material
4. Aim of the analysis (author, socio-cultural background, effects)
5. Theoretical differentiation of the research question
6. Definition of the corresponding technique of analysis (summarizing, explicating, structuring or a combination), definition of the concrete procedure and decision upon and definition of the categories
7. Definition of the units of analysis (unit of coding, context, and analysis)
8. Analyzing steps following the procedure and the coding system, checks of the categories with the material and the theories and in case of changes another round of data analysis

After this step: back to step 5 and 6

9. Compilation of the findings and interpretation regarding the research question
10. Application of quality criteria

In the application of qualitative content analysis, the focus is on categories: “The aspects of text interpretation, following the research questions, are putted [sic] into categories, which were carefully founded and revised within the process of analysis” (Mayring, 2000: para. 7). It is possible to derive the categories inductively, thus based on the material, and deductively, thus based on theoretical aspects. The categories ensure that the findings are comprehensible and the procedure is inter-subjective (Mayring, 2015). In the present study, the categories were derived both deductively and inductively. First, there was the construction of deductive categories based on the findings of previous research and the theoretical expectations discussed. Examples of such categories are economic arguments, discussions and gendered arguments. Then, inductive categories were derived from the interviews. Examples of such categories are breastfeeding, motherly feelings and pragmatism.

On the basis of the codes and themes derived in the qualitative content analysis, several comparisons of different analytical levels were conducted. First, only the pre-birth interviews were taken into consideration. For each of the interviewees, all information concerning, for example, the division of household labor for the present situation was taken into consideration in the analysis; this included the explanations for the division and problems or conflicts. Then, the conclusions based on every single interviewee were compared to the findings based on the partner. In these comparisons, the focus was on similarities as well as differences in the descriptions and perceptions of both partners within a couple. This also allowed determining if

and to which extent the partners of one couple had different views on the overall division or on specific tasks. The next level of comparison was the couples. The divisions of labor and explanations of the different couples were compared with the focus of finding patterns. The information about if and how much the perceptions of the partners within one couple differed were also used to find patterns. Furthermore, to determine if there were gendered ways of describing and explaining the division of labor within the couple, only the interviews of the women and men, respectively, were analyzed. These different steps of analysis were undertaken for the present division of paid and unpaid work as well as for the plans regarding the division of paid work, household labor and childcare. In this, each field of work was analyzed separately. This procedure was repeated for the second interviews. For the second interview, the present division of paid work, household labor, and childcare, as well as changes since the birth of the child, were analyzed. The last step contains comparisons for each level of analysis, thus individual, within the couples, between the couples and within the group of women and men respectively, of the two interviews. The arrangement before the child was born was compared with the present situation after the child's birth; additionally, the plans and actual divisions of paid work, household labor and childcare were compared.

Often, qualitative research is seen as a means to develop or sharpen hypotheses or theoretical ideas on the basis of the data (Hopf, 2016). But, qualitative research can also be used to confront the data with hypotheses (Hopf, 1993; Hopf, 2016). This approach is very different from the common ideas that researchers should do their research without having theories, hypotheses or concepts about the research topic in mind (see for example Glaser and Strauss, 1980). However, when existing theories and concepts are taken into consideration, they can function as sensitizing concepts in the analysis and gain better findings than it would be possible without them, especially when the fitting of the concepts and the data is critically discussed. Another argument against the confrontation of hypotheses with qualitative data is that only quantitative research on the basis of population representative samples can test hypotheses. Hopf (2016: 157–58) criticizes that this argument does not account for different types of hypotheses; she argues that it depends on the scope of hypotheses if they can be assessed with qualitative methods. Hypotheses that aim at singular situations need qualitative research methods while hypotheses regarding collectives can only be answered on the basis of population representative quantitative data. Another argument for using and assessing hypotheses in qualitative research is that it is not possible to understand the meaning of how individuals interpret the social reality but that it is necessary to construct and assess hypotheses for this on the individual cases (Hopf, 2016: 161). Thus, it is useful to build hypotheses and contrast them with the single cases as they help to understand the single cases. If they do not explain the individual interpretations, this helps to develop the hypotheses further.

6. The sample

The sample that is used for the analyses was drawn and interviewed within the DFG-funded project “The Household Division of Domestic Labor as a Process. How does the Division of Housework Change over the Course of Relationships?” The interviews were conducted by different researchers²; in general, the aim was that female informants were interviewed by female interviewers and male informants by male interviewers. This could be achieved in most of the interviews. In the following, the realization of sampling the intended couples is discussed. It follows a description of the socio-demographics of the sample and the interviewed couples.

6.1 Realization of the sampling strategy

Chapter 5.3 named five criteria as principles for the selection of interviewees. Not all of them were met for all of the couples. The first criterion was that the selected couples had to live in one household. All couples that were interviewed fulfilled this criterion; it was central since only couples who share one household also divide paid and unpaid work, therefore, no deviations from the sampling strategy were allowed. According to the fourth selection criterion, both partners in all couples had to be active in the labor market; all couples interviewed fulfilled this condition. All couples lived in the south of Germany and in federal states that belong to West Germany. Regarding the other criteria, there were to some extent deviations.

The second sample criterion was that the couple had to expect their first child since this event leads to changes within the division of paid and unpaid work of couples. All interviewed couples expected their first child. Yet, in two couples – namely couple B and C³ –, one partner already had children from a former relationship. Woman B had an almost adult child from a former relationship who lived with couple B. This child was in a phase of becoming more and more independent at the time of the interview. The man of couple C had three children from a former marriage who lived with his ex-wife. The children visited the interviewed couple sometimes and stayed for a weekend. It was not intended to interview couples in which one partner already had children as it is reasonable to assume that these couples divide paid and unpaid work in different ways than couples without complex family situations (Heintz-Martin, Entleitner-Phleps, and Langmeyer, 2015). Nevertheless, in the cases of couple B and C, the existence of children of former relationships seemed to have no significant influence on the division of labor during the first interview, and therefore they were kept in the sample.

² Most of interviews were conducted by four researchers who worked at the State Institute for Family Research; three couples were interviewed by trained students of the Otto-Friedrich-University Bamberg in the course of a seminar.

³ The couples and interviewees are not named in the following. As a means of anonymizing their identities, the couples were assigned with letters. For a discussion about the implications of using certain pseudonyms see for example Lahman *et al.* (2015).

Not all couples of the realized sample met the third sample criterion that the interviews should take place during the fourth and seventh month of the pregnancy. Instead, the women were between the fourth month and only a few weeks before the delivery. One woman expected the birth of the child just some days after the interview while others were in the early second trimester. This might have influenced how far the planning for the future was advanced and how well the informants could recall the related discussion and decision making processes.

The last sampling criterion of having a similar educational level in each couple and interviewing mostly higher educated couples was met. The partners in ten of the fourteen couples had similar educational backgrounds while four differed in their educational levels. The different educational levels in the sample allowed for comparisons between interviewees and couples with different educational levels that were not initially foreseen.

6.2 Socio-demographic characteristics

The interviewed couples were not representative for the West German population; they differed in some of their socio-demographic characteristics. The women in the sample were on average 33 years old when giving birth while the population average was 29 years (Schulz et al. 2008). Their age at first birth ranged from 26 to 40. The male interviewees' age was on average 35 years and ranged from 27 to 44 – the age of first parenthood for fathers cannot be compared to population averages as there is no such information available. The respondents were also more highly educated than the German average (Authoring Group Educational Reporting 2013). Twenty-three of the twenty-eight interviewed persons had a secondary school diploma and achieved after schooling a university degree or finished a vocational training. The other interviewees had lower school diplomas, but all of them finished a vocational training. Both partners in ten couples were highly educated. In three couples, the men had a higher educational attainment than the women, and in one couple it was vice-versa.

The couples reported very different relationship durations; some had spent the last fourteen years together while others started their relationship about two to three years before the first interview. The average duration of the informants' relationships was approximately eight years. At the time of the first interview, the couples had very different cohabitation durations. One couple just moved in together six months before the interview while another couple shared one place for thirteen years. The sample can be divided into two, almost equally sized groups according to their cohabitation duration: One with a shorter duration of about two to three years and one with a cohabitation period of at least six years. The different relationship and cohabitation durations influenced the couples' division of unpaid work since some just started to find a way to divide the tasks while others probably found their arrangement long ago. The cohabitation duration probably affects interviewees' capabilities to recall how their division of a specific household task evolved. Twelve of the fourteen couples were married at the time of the first interview. Eight couples lived in rural areas, the other six couples in cities.

Since one sample criterion was that both partners in all couples were employed, all of them were active in the labor market. The actual working hours of the interviewees were very different. Most of the interviewees worked full-time. The actual weekly hours including overtime ranged from 12 to 65 hours per week. But already in the pre-birth situation, some men and women had different working hours with the men having more often full-time arrangements. One of the fourteen male interviewees worked part-time with up to 30 hours per week, while five of the fourteen female interviewees had a part-time work arrangement. The couples' income situations were often characterized by a higher net income of the male partner (Table 1). Both partners in four couples had similar income situations. In one couple, the woman had a higher income than her partner; she worked full-time while he worked part-time.

Table 1: Net income at the couple level at the time of the first interview

Woman's net income	Men's net income				
	1,000-1,500	1,500-2,000	2,000-3,000	3,000-4,000	> 4,000
500-1,000		D	J		
1,000-1,500	A	M, N	L		
1,500-2,000		F, K	I		
2,000-2,500	E				
3,000-4,000				C	G
unknown				B, H	

Note: Cases of similar incomes of both partners are marked. $N = 14$ couples.

6.3 Short description of the couples

After the general description of the characteristics of all couples, each couple is presented individually. This information shows the potential of the qualitative approach and allows a deeper understanding of the couples' divisions of labor and their decisions concerning their arrangement before and after the birth of the first child. Personal information is anonymized; therefore, the couples are given letters to identify them; instead of the actual occupations, fields of work are provided; the age and income are provided in categories.

Couple A

At the time of the first interview, both partners were in their mid-twenties with the man being one year older than the woman. Couple A has been in a relationship for four or five years. About one year after the beginning of their relationship, the man stayed the better half of the week at the woman's place without moving in. This situation lasted for about one year. Then, the couple relocated to an apartment in the house of the man's parents and married in the year before the interview. At the time of the first interview, the woman was four months into her pregnancy.

Both partners have finished three years of vocational training in the trade and service sector. The man started his training after his alternative service that followed after his graduation from school with a so-called *Mittlere Reife* (intermediate certificate). After finishing the training, the man started to work in the public service. At the time of the first interview, he had a permanent full-time contract. The woman made a voluntary social year after receiving her *Abitur* (university entrance qualification) and started to study afterward. She disliked studying and switched from the university to an apprenticeship in the trade and service sector. She held a permanent full-time contract at a private enterprise at the time of the interview. Both partners had very similar net incomes of 1,000 to 1,500 €, yet the man earned slightly more than the woman.

The couple had an equal arrangement of housework in terms of time spent doing chores at the time of the first interview. Some of the tasks were assigned to the one or the other spouse while others were done jointly or by both partners at different times.

Couple B

Both partners were circa 40 years old at the time of the first interview. They met about two and a half years earlier and began their relationship. Both partners described moving in together as an extended process: The man started to spend much time at the woman's apartment some time ago. She lived there with her adolescent son from a former relationship. About two months after the beginning of the pregnancy, they decided to give up the man's apartment and to share the woman's. Until the relocation was finished, two further months elapsed so that the couple had been sharing one apartment for six months when they were interviewed. Approximately nine months before the interview, the couple married. At this point, the woman was expecting the birth of the baby in about one week. The man was expecting the birth in one to three weeks.

The man left school with a *Hauptschulabschluss* (secondary school certificate) and went to vocational training in technics. Afterward, he was in the alternative service and decided to continue his education. After receiving his *Fachabitur* (university of applied sciences entrance degree), he started to study and dropped out. He continued an education related to his vocational training and received a degree. Following this further education, the man found a company together with a colleague which he eventually sold. At the time of the first interview, he was employed as a manager and had a fixed-term full-time contract for five years that started one year before. The woman finished school with *Abitur* (university entrance qualification) and wanted to enroll in a school for arts; her parents hindered her in doing this. As an alternative, she studied abroad and received a degree. After her studies, she worked in economics without interrupting her employment for her first child. When she was about 30 years old, she got unemployed and reconsidered her professional orientation. She decided to change towards performing arts as she intended after graduating from school. At the time of the first interview, the woman was self-employed in the field of arts and was also a consultant. On average, she

worked 25 hours per week, but the actual working hours varied. The man earned 3,000 to 4,000 € net per months. The woman did not report her income; but she stated that her income, even if it varied, was quite similar to her husband's.

The partners had different working hours; the man usually worked more hours. The division of household labor was influenced by the fact that the couple just moved in six months before the interview and was still finding their housework arrangement. Most housework tasks were done by the woman and a cleaning lady. Some of the tasks were done by both partners. Both partners reported that the woman's son did some household tasks.

Couple C

In couple C, the woman was ten years younger than the man. She was in her mid-thirties, while he was in his mid-forties. They met each other five or six years ago at their workplace. At this time, both were married to other partners. Both described their former marriages as not really happy; therefore, they decided to split up with the former spouses. The woman described that for her and her partner the decisions to end the previous relationships were, at that time, not due to them wanting to form a new, common relationship. Nevertheless, the latter developed after the end of their previous marriages. The man had three children with his former wife. About three and a half to four years before the first interview, the couple moved in together. At the time of the first interview, the woman was between sixth to seventh months into her pregnancy.

Both partners finished school with *Abitur* (university entrance qualification) and studied afterward. The man did not finish university but changed to a university for applied sciences and graduated with a *Diplom* (master degree). He was working full-time and with a permanent contract for a big company in the trade and service sector. The woman studied at a university and finished her studies with a *Diplom* (master degree). Ten years ago, after her studies, she started to work at the same company as her partner. Both partners worked mostly at clients' places or from home. She also had a permanent full-time contract. Both partners had similar incomes in the range of 3,000 to 4,000 €.

Both partners worked full-time, the woman worked more often long hours. The division of housework was characterized by outsourcing. Some of the remaining chores were mainly done by the one or the other partner; some were done jointly. Both partners said that they shared the domestic sphere equally.

Couple D

Both partners were born in the same year and were in their mid to late thirties at the time of the first interview. Eleven or twelve years before, the man and the woman met for the first time; shortly afterward their relationship began. During the first two to three years, they had a long-

distance relationship. Then, the woman decided to move into the man's apartment. After the man went abroad for a six months internship where the woman joined him for five months, they moved into a bigger apartment. Three years ago, the couple bought a then not-finished house and had almost finished restructuring it at the time of the first interview. The couple has been married for six years. The woman was expecting their first child in about five weeks. Becoming pregnant was not easy.

The man finished school with *Abitur* (university entrance certificate) and decided for vocational training in technics. After his training, he went to a university for applied sciences and finished his studies with a *Diplom* (master degree). At the time of the interview, he worked full-time at a big company in the IT and engineering sector and sometimes had longer business trips. He had a permanent contract. The woman finished school after the tenth grade with an intermediate certificate. She continued education with a three-year vocational training in health and social affairs. Afterward, she worked – partly in supervision positions – in different workplaces. Then, she founded her own business and was self-employed. Seven years ago, she restructured her business and decided to offer different services on a self-employed basis. Since the couple bought the house, she reduced her working hours to be able to do most of the restructuring work on her own. Her working hours differed from month to month; at the time of the first interview, she worked about 60 hours a month. Most of her clients were far from her domicile; for that reason, she tried to have more appointments in a row and had no clear working schedule. The man had more working hours and a higher income than the woman. He earned between 1,500 and 2,000 € per month while the woman earned about 500 €.

Most of the housework tasks were done by the woman. Some of the tasks were only done by her while others were done by both partners. Other chores were only in his responsibility.

Couple E

Both partners of couple E were in their late thirties; the man was one year older than the woman. At the time of the first interview, they have been in a relationship for four years and have been sharing one household for about three years. Shortly before the interview, the couple had a job-related long-distance relationship for six months. The interviewees have been married for two years. The woman was eight months pregnant.

Both partners received an *Abitur* (university entrance certificate). After finishing school, the man first finished a three-year vocational training before he studied. He graduated with a *Diplom* (master degree) nine years before the interview. He was then employed at several different educational institutes for three years before he was employed full-time at one for another three years. After that, the man worked for one and a half year in a part-time position. About seven or eight months before the first interview, the man moved for six months to another city to work there. At the time of the interview, the man was focusing on a further education while working as self-employed approximately 20 hours per week. The woman also did vocational training

after graduating from school. She continued with additional training in the health and social affairs sector. Afterward, she worked in this sector. Ten years after she started to be active in the labor market, she decided to go to the university. During her studies, the woman was self-employed. She graduated from university four years before the first interview with a *Diplom* (master degree) and started to work in the field of research and education with a part-time job of 30 hours per week. This allowed her to participate in further job-related training and to continue her self-employment. About two to one and a half years before the first interview, she quit the job to start at another workplace that combined her training and studies. She worked in the new job for 20 hours per week. At the same time, she was a freelancer for her former employers. In total, she had 35 to 40 working hours per week. The woman had a higher net income than her husband; she earned between 2,000 and 2,500 € per months, while his income was between 1,000 and 1,500 €.

The woman did more of the household chores than the man did. Some of the tasks were usually done by both partners; they did some jointly; others were mostly done by the one or the other. The couple also had help by a cleaner.

Couple F

Both partners were in their mid-thirties; they were born in the same year. The relationship started about six years before the first interview. Two years into their relationship, both partners increasingly spent time together in one apartment. Another two years later, they decided to move in together. The couple was not married, and at least the man did not plan to change this. At the time of the first interview, the woman was seven months pregnant.

Both partners received *Fachabitur* (university of applied sciences entrance certificate) and graduated from a university of applied sciences. The man finished school with *Mittlere Reife* (intermediate certificate) and continued schooling to receive his *Fachabitur*. Upon graduation, he went to the alternative service. He then did a vocational training in the health and social affairs sector. Two years of full-time employment in this area followed. Then, he decided to continue his education and went to a university of applied sciences to study a related subject seven years before the first interview. During the time of his study, he continued to work in his profession. Two years before the interview, the man finished his studies with a *Diplom* (master degree). For one and a half years he has been self-employed with flexible, full-time working hours in his field of studies. His partner was already working in this area and helped him to get his position. The woman finished a vocational training in research and education. She did not mention when or how long she was employed in this field. She started to study a subject related to health and social affairs eight years before the first interview and finished with a *Diplom* (master degree) after four years. Immediately after her studies, she started to work self-employed in the field of her subject. She continued her education with some job-related training. Usually, she worked full-time and had flexible hours. Due to her pregnancy, she reduced her working hours by circa

10 hours per week. The income of both partners was similar; each of them had about 1,500 to 2,000 € net income per month. The woman said that she earned a bit more than her partner.

Both partners did housework chores. Most of the tasks were assigned to the one or the other partner, while they discussed other chores almost every time they had to do them. The couple used opportunities to outsource housework. All in all, it seemed as if the partners shared housework equally.

Couple G

Both spouses were in their mid-thirties and were born in the same year. The partners got to know each other fifteen years before the first interview and have been in a relationship for ten or eleven years. Nine years before the interview, they moved in together and one year before, they married. The woman was in the ninth month of the pregnancy at the time of the first interview.

The man finished school with *Abitur* (university entrance qualification) and studied at a university of applied sciences in the field of IT and engineering and received a *Diplom* (master degree). After his studies, six and a half years before the first interview, the man started to work in his father's company. He planned to take over this company in the future. The man was full-time employed with daily overtime. Typically, he worked 60-65 hours per week. The woman received *Fachabitur* (university of applied sciences entrance degree) and continued her education at a university of applied sciences. Like her husband, she studied in the field of IT and engineering and received a *Diplom* (master degree). Eight years ago, after her studies, the woman started her first job, gradually taking on more managerial responsibility. She participated in a trainee program for future executives. At the time of the interview, the woman was in maternity leave; she was full-time employed and had regular overtime. In an average week, she worked 50-60 hours. Even if both partners had high incomes, the man's remuneration exceeded his partner's. Her net income was between 3,000 and 4,000 €, while he earned more than 4,000 €.

The division of housework of couple G was characterized by outsourcing. The partners employed a cleaner who did most of the tasks none of them liked to do. The other chores were assigned to the one or the other partner.

Couple H

Both partners were in their mid to late thirties; with the man being three years younger. They met in the early 1990s and started their relationship during their time at the university. Shortly after they started dating, they had a long-distance relationship, as the woman began working in another city after graduating while the man was still studying. After he finished studying, the distance grew for job reasons until eight years before the interview; then, they got married and moved in together. At the time of the first interview, the woman was seven months pregnant.

Both partners finished school with *Abitur* (university entrance qualification). After finishing school, the man did military service before he started studying a subject in the field of IT and engineering at a university and finished with a *Diplom* (master degree). Afterward, he began to work in a big company and changed positions some time ago. At the time of the first interview, he was working in his fields of study and held a full-time contract with 39 hours per week; the man's usual weekly working hours were very close these hours. The woman went to university after finishing school. She received a *Diplom* (master degree). After graduation, she moved to another city to work in her field of study. After another job and a period of unemployment, the woman was working in her field of study in the public sector at the time of the interview. She started in this job shortly after the marriage and with a full-time contract. Two years before the pregnancy, she reduced her working time to 20 hours per week due to health reasons. However, as most of her work was project-related, there were phases in which she worked twice the contracted hours. Regarding income, the man's monthly net income was between 3,000 and 4,000 €. Even if the woman did not report her remuneration, it could be assumed that she earned less than half of her partner's income as she worked part-time and in a worse paid sector.

The woman did more housework than the man did. Usually, each partner did specific routine tasks while they shared some others.

Couple I

Both partners were in their early thirties; the man was two years older than the woman. They started their relationship in school, fourteen years before the first interview. Four to five years later, they moved in together while the man built a house. After finishing house building, the man moved in his home alone. After some time, she joined him. Later, the couple had a long-distance relationship for three or four years as the man had a job in another city. The couple got married two years before the first interview. The woman was eight months into her pregnancy.

After finishing school with a secondary school certificate, the man went to a specialized secondary school and received his *Fachabitur* (university of applied sciences entrance degree). He then enrolled in a university of applied sciences and studied a subject in the field of IT and engineering. Following his studies, the man worked for some years for a big firm related to his field of studies. After some time, he decided to return to education and worked in academia while he did his Ph.D. Then, he decided to leave academia and worked in his field of studies in a very big enterprise. He worked full-time and rarely more than the contracted 35 hours per week. The woman also graduated from school with a secondary school certificate. She then started vocational training in health and social affairs. During this time, she took the opportunity to receive a *Fachabitur* (university of applied sciences entrance degree). Following the vocational training, the woman started to work in a related job. About six years before the first interview, she changed workplace and started as a manager in the health and social affairs sector. Although she had a full-time contract with 38.5 hours per week, the woman frequently worked more than

40 hours and up to 50 hours per week. The man's net income was higher than his wife's as he earned 2.000 to 3.000 € per month while her income was between 1,500 and 2,000 €.

The woman did most of the indoor tasks while the man engaged in outdoor chores and repairs. Since the couple argued in the past about the division of housework, they decided to hire a cleaner who did some chores.

Couple J

The woman was in her mid-twenties, the man in his mid-thirties; he was nine years older. The partners met during their studies and started their relationship shortly after meeting for the first time, six years before the first interview. The man stayed almost all time at the woman's apartment shortly after starting a relationship. This changed some months later at his labor market entry in another city resulting in a long-distance relationship. When the woman finished her studies three years before the first interview, the couple married and moved in together. At the time of the interview, the woman was five months pregnant.

Both partners finished school with *Abitur* (university entrance qualification). The man continued with vocational training. After completing his training, he started to study and finished his studies six years before the first interview. Half a year after receiving his *Diplom* (master degree), he began to work in the field of studies in a necessary legal training for civil servants. After this phase, the man became a civil servant. At the time of the first interview, he had a 42 hours contract and usually worked 45 hours per week. The woman also studied and finished with a *Diplom* (master degree) in three years and continued with the necessary legal training to become a civil servant afterward. After her training, there were no positions available in her field of studies. After a short time of unemployment, the woman decided to take a lower status job in which she has been working ever since at the time of the first interview. This was a part-time job with 21 hours per week. As she also wanted to stay active in the field she studied, she worked as a self-employed consultant and spent approximately eight hours per week doing this. The man earned more money than the woman. His monthly net income was between 2,000 and 3,000 € while hers was between 500 and 1,000 €.

She did about two-thirds of the housework. Each of them usually did different chores.

Couple K

The woman was in her early thirties and the man in his late thirties at the time of the first interview. The couple met three years before and started their relationship shortly after meeting each other at the workplace. The couple moved in together after approximately two months of being together. The man described this as not planned but that he helped his partner with renovating her new apartment and then he somehow also moved in. After approximately two

and a half years of relationship, the couple married. At the time of the first interview, the woman was six months into her pregnancy.

The man left school first with a medium educational level and did a vocational training in a technical field. Then, he went to military service and continued with some further training. In the years that followed, he worked in his area of training and then decided to receive his *Fachabitur* (university of applied sciences entrance degree) and went to school for one year to do this. After successfully finishing school, he went to a university of applied sciences to study a subject in the field of health and social affairs. Since four years before the first interview, he worked full-time and had a permanent contract. The woman finished school with *Abitur* (university entrance degree). Afterward, she studied a subject in the field of health and social affairs and started to work in a related job. She enrolled in further training two years before the first interview that she did in her free time. She had a permanent full-time contract with 38.5 hours per week. The man had similar working hours. Both partners earned 1,500 to 2,000 € per months.

Both shared housework equally, with a strong specialization on different tasks. There were only some chores both partners did together.

Couple L

The man was in his mid-thirties and the woman in her late-twenties. The couple met about eight years before the first interview and started their relationship. They moved in together about six years before the interview. The couple married seven years into their relationship. At the time of the first interview, the woman was nine months pregnant.

The man finished school with *Mittlerer Reife* (medium level) and started vocational training in technics afterward. Ever since, he has worked in the same company with full-time hours (40 hours per week) and regular long hours in shift work. The woman finished her school education with *Fachabitur* (university of applied sciences entrance degree) and did a vocational training in the health and social affairs sector. She was unemployed for some time during the last years and had a fixed-term full-time contract with 40 hours per week at the time of the first interview. She had a supervising position and worked shift work with regular long hours. The man had a higher income with 2,000 to 3,000 € per months, while the woman earned 1,000 to 1,500 €.

The couple had a housework arrangement in which the woman did more chores than the man. Both partners had specific tasks they performed; the man sometimes also did tasks that were usually done by the woman.

Couple M

At the time of the first interview, both partners were in their mid-thirties, the woman was two years younger. They met about fourteen years before the interview and started dating one year

later. Shortly after that, the woman moved in with the man at his parents' house. They built a house and had been living there for nine years at the time of the first interview; they have been married for ten years. At the time of the first interview, the woman was eight months pregnant.

Both partners had a *Hauptschulabschluss* (secondary school certificate). The man absolved a vocational training in the sector of IT and technical engineering and had been working for different employers. At the time of the first interview, he has been with the same employer, holding a supervising position, for about eight years. He has been working full-time in shifts with 40 hours per week. The woman did a vocational training in a technical field after finishing school and worked for one year in a training-related job. Afterward, she went to a school for training in the field of health and social affairs and worked in that sector for two years. Then, she started to work in the trade and service sector in a company that was related to her training and changed to some training-unrelated job in the sales and service sector about ten years before the interview. Since then she has been working part-time with 20 hours per week there while being self-employed in her field of training simultaneously for 10 to 12 hours per week. The man had a higher net income; he earned 1,500 to 2,000 € per month, the woman had a monthly income between 1,000 and 1,500 €.

The woman did more of the housework. The couple divided the chores in a way that implied that the woman usually did some, the man usually did others.

Couple N

Both partners were in their late-twenties and of equal age at the time of the first interview. They met six to seven years before and started their relationship right after meeting for the first time. After one year of dating, the man moved into the woman's apartment. The couple married about one year before the first interview. The woman was seven months pregnant.

Both partners had a *Hauptschulabschluss* (secondary school certificate). The man finished a vocational training in the field of IT and technical engineering and absolved a two-year extra training. Since about two and a half years, he worked for the same company in full-time hours. The woman did not report her training. When she met her partner, she was unemployed but found a job shortly afterward. At the time of the first interview, she worked full-time with 40 hours per week in the trade and service sector. The man earned 1500 to 2000 € per months and thus more than the woman whose income was between 1000 and 1500 €.

The partners spent approximately similar amounts of time with household labor. However, they had a quite clear division of work; both did specific routine tasks.

7. Paid work

The following chapters present the findings concerning the division of paid work within the interviewed couples. Paid work here means employed and self-employed activities in the labor market. Illicit employment is not regarded – but none of the interviewees spoke about her- or himself being involved in illegal employment or reported that the partner was illegally employed. Volunteering compensated with expense allowances was also not considered as paid work.

7.1 Before the birth

7.1.1 Pre-birth paid work arrangements

At the time of the first interview, which was during the pregnancy, both partners in all couples were active in the labor market as this was a selection criterion for the sample. Nevertheless, the amount of contractual as well as actual working hours varied within the sample. The range among the interviewed women was more significant than among the interviewed men. Table 2 shows the contracted as well as actual working hours for each interviewee at the time of the first interview; furthermore, it notes if an interviewee worked self-employed or partly in employment and self-employment.

Twelve of the fourteen interviewed men were employed with full-time hours; their contracted weekly working hours ranged from 35 to 42. Two men were self-employed; one of them worked approximately 40 hours per week while the other one worked part-time with circa 20 hours per week; he participated additionally in further training. Some of the men rarely worked overtime while others usually did. The highest number of working hours had man G who worked in a family member's enterprise; he often had up to 25 overtime hours per week and thus spent 65 hours per week with his paid work.

The working hours of the women in the sample varied more. Eight of the fourteen interviewed women worked full-time, the other six women worked part-time. Eight of the female interviewees were employed, three were self-employed, and three combined employment and self-employment. The contracted weekly working hours of the full-time employed women ranged between 38 and 40 hours. Two women who had full-time working hours combined a part-time contract of about 20 hours per week and self-employment so that they worked approximately 40 hours per week. One woman had a part-time contract with 20 hours per week. The other women working part-time were either self-employed or combined self-employment with part-time employment. Their weekly working hours ranged between 12 and 30. Some women rarely worked overtime while others did regular or occasional overtime of up to 20 hours per week.

Eight out of the fourteen interviewed couples had a dual-earner model in which both partners worked full-time hours and had often approximately the same working hours.

Variations in the working hours occurred partly when one partner regularly did overtime while the other did not or when the partners worked in different sectors as the full-time working hours in some sectors are lower than in others. Both partners in three of these couples had extensive regular overtime of ten or more hours per week (C, G, L). In one couple (I), the woman worked up to 12 hours of overtime per week on a regular basis while her husband rarely worked overtime and was contracted to even fewer hours than her (35 compared to 38.5 hours). In another case, the woman had less working hours than her partner but still worked full-time since full-time hours usually start with 30 hours per week (M). In two couples, both partners did shift work (L, M). One couple (F) used to have a dual-earner model with both partners working full-time until some weeks before the first interview. Then, the woman, who is like her partner self-employed, reduced her working hours due to the pregnancy. Including this couple, five couples had a male full-time and female part-time arrangement in which the men worked more hours than their part-time working partners. One couple lived a female full-time and male part-time arrangement as the woman had more working hours than her partner.

Table 2: Paid work arrangements (contracted weekly hours and overtime hours) of the interviewed couples at the time of the first interview

Couple	Paid work arrangement (man/woman)
A	full-time: 40 hrs / full-time: 40 hrs
B	full-time: 40 hrs / part-time: 25 hrs (self-employed)
C	full-time: 38,5 hrs + 10-20 hrs overtime / full-time: 38,5 hrs + 10+ hrs overtime
D	full-time: 40 hrs / part-time: 12-20 hrs (self-employed)
E	part-time: 20 hrs (self-employed) / part-time: 20 hrs + 15-20 hrs self-employed
F	full-time: 40 hrs (self-employed) / part-time: 20-30 hrs (self-employed)*
G	full-time: 40 hrs + 25 hrs overtime / full-time: 40 hrs + 10-20 hrs overtime
H	full-time: 39 hrs / part-time: 19,75 hrs + irregular overtime up to 20 hrs
I	full-time: 35 hrs / full-time: 38,5 hrs +2-10 hrs overtime
J	full-time: 42 hrs + 3 hrs overtime / part-time: 21 hrs + ca. 8hrs self-employed
K	full-time: 38,5 hrs / full-time: 38,5 hrs + some overtime
L	full-time: 38 hrs + 10-12 hrs overtime in shift work / full-time: 40 hrs + 10 hrs overtime in shift work
M	full-time: 40 hrs in shift work / part-time: 20 hrs in shift work + 10-12 hrs self-employed
N	full-time: 40 hrs / full-time: 40 hrs

Note. * The woman just reduced her working hours to part-time some weeks before the interview in anticipation of the birth of the child.

The partners of one couple often worked in very different sectors and different hierarchical positions (see also the descriptions of the couples in chapter 6.3). Different horizontal and vertical placements of women and men in the labor market are typical for Germany and concur with specific career and income potentials (Trappe, 2006). Table 3 relates the couple's working arrangements to their income relations. The income pattern that men earn more than women

(Finke, 2011) was also found within the interviewed couples (see Table 3). In only four couples (A, C, F, K), both partners earned similar net incomes; the interviewees reported their remuneration in standardized categories and both partners stated to be in the same income category. Both partners in these couples had similar working hours at the time of the interview or used to have these until some weeks before the interview (F). Nevertheless, having similar working hours did not lead to similar incomes in the other couples. In seven of the remaining ten couples (D, G, I, J, L, M, and N), the male partner earned more than the female partner, even if some of them had similar working hours. The monthly income difference ranged between ca. 500 € and ca. 2,500 €. In one couple (E), the woman's income was higher than the man's which reflected that she had full-time working hours while he worked part-time in self-employment. In two couples (B, H), one partner did not report their net income. Nevertheless, these couples are included in the table: In couple B, the woman stated, that she and her partner had similar incomes with her having a lower income. For couple H it can be assumed, that his income exceeded hers: He was full-time employed while the woman was part-time employed; both partners worked in different sectors with the man's sector being generally better paid than the woman's.

Table 3: Paid work arrangements (based on the actual working hours) and income relation of the interviewed couples at the time of the first interview

Work arrangement	Income relation		
	Man > Woman	Man = Woman	Man < Woman
Both full-time, no overtime	N	A, K	
Both full-time and overtime	G, L	C	
Man > Woman	(B,) D, (H,) J, M**	F*	
Man < Woman	I**		E

Note: Couples in which one partner did not report his or her personal income are marked with (). * The woman just reduced her working hours to part-time some weeks before the interview in anticipation of the birth of the child.

** Both partners worked full-time, though one of them had more working hours.

Against the background of the German fiscal system, it has to be considered that the net incomes can be influenced by the income splitting regulation⁴ that favors the higher salary. This could be the case for four couples who used split incomes (B, D, E, J). If a married couple with a high income difference decides to do so, the partner with the smaller gross income has to pay higher taxes than he or she would have to pay if the income would have been taxed individually

⁴ "This principle means that the income tax of a married couple is calculated by applying the tax function to half of the added incomes of the spouses, and this amount is then doubled to determine the tax amount of the couple. Under the German system of progressive taxation this implies that the amount of the income tax of a married couple may be lower than the tax the same couple would have to pay if both spouses were taxed individually according to the principle of separate taxation. The difference in the tax under these two principles depends both on the level of household income and the distribution of incomes between the two spouses. In popular German discussion, this difference is termed the 'splitting advantage' of the joint taxation of married couples." (Steiner and Wrohlich, 2004: 541).

while this is the opposite for the partner with the higher gross income. Thus, the gross income differences between married spouses can be smaller than the net income differences after tax splitting. However, since the interviewees only reported their net incomes, the gross income difference cannot be considered.

7.1.2 Explanations for the pre-birth paid work arrangements

The interviewees spoke not only about their division of paid work but also about why they had their work arrangement. Table 4 signifies for each interviewee whether he or she named or rejected the aspects discussed in the following if he or she was ambivalent regarding them or did not speak about them.

Paid work is perceived as natural

All interviewees⁵ spoke about their own and their partner's employment or self-employment as something that was entirely natural for them. The accounts pointed to a strong adult worker norm (Lewis, 2002). This norm was reflected by the fact that almost none of the interviewees named reasons for his or her labor market activity. They seemed to see no need to it.

Additionally, none of the interviewees questioned their employment or self-employment or that of their partners at the time of the first interview directly or indirectly. Even when speaking about work-related problems or conflicts, none of the interviewees described the own or the partner's paid work as disputable. This can be seen on the example of woman K who could hypothetically imagine withdrawing from her job – while never thinking about not being active in the labor market in general. When she was asked about her job and her related satisfaction, she reported that after a period of pregnancy-related sick leave she could imagine not to work in her job for several years:

Well, regarding the job, I have the feeling that I could stop for several years [...] and I noticed as I was sick for quite a long time at the beginning of the pregnancy that I do not really miss the job. (couple K, woman, first interview: 451)⁶

Also, so von dem Job her ist das so ein Gefühl, ich könnte jahrelang aufhören, [...] ich habe auch gemerkt, dadurch, dass ich am Anfang der Schwangerschaft recht lang krankgeschrieben war, dass mir der Job eigentlich nicht wirklich fehlt. (couple K, woman, first interview: 451)

⁵ This finding might result from by the sample criterion that both partners in each couple had to be employed.

⁶ The interviewees were conducted in German, were transcribed and translated to English. The transcriptions were literally, including passages in which the interviewees or interviewers looked for words, but dialect was 'translated' to standard German. Shorter pauses are indicated by '...', longer pauses by '...', passages that could not be understood are marked with '(.)'. All transcripts are anonymized. In the presented quotes, mostly only the interviewees' passages are shown; when interviewers said only shortly "Yes" or "mhm" to signal that they were following the narration, these parts are cut out with '[...]'.

However, this might be related to her actual job as she was involved in some further education and planned to change her job in the future or to become self-employed. Her general idea of herself was that being active in the labor market is normal and that considering other employment and self-employment options was preferable over non-employment.

In compliance with the strong adult worker norm, no couple and none of the interviewees explained why the couple had its paid work arrangement; actually, they did not describe paid work as something they talked about how to share it. This finding was consistent for the interviewed women and men and happened irrespective of the working hours, the work arrangement, or the income.

Financial aspects

When speaking about their employment situation, interviewees who had an insecure job or were in an undesired job situation, talked about financial stability and security. One example was man E who had frequent job changes with short-term, part-time contracts in his work history. At the time of the first interview, he was self-employed with 20 hours per week and participated in further education. His work situation was very insecure, and he expected to become unemployed within the following months. He earned less money than his wife and said that he had no problem with her being the primary earner but with having a rather small and unstable income himself:

I don't think that I'm influenced by those traditional clichés like 'the man has to.' My parents would say that, they'd say 'but it is you who has to earn money'. [...] You see, I don't have a problem with my wife earning money, but I do have issues with having very a small and unstable income myself because having own money which I can spend as I like is way better than saying: I have a financial problem and would you. As at the moment, my wife is earning all our income. (man E, first interview: 208)

Ich glaube nicht, weil ich jetzt in irgendwelchen klassischen Klischees verhaftet bin, so 'Der Mann muss'. Das würden meine Eltern an mich herantragen, die würden sagen, 'aber du musst doch das Geld verdienen'. [...] Also ich habe kein Problem, dass meine Frau das Geld verdient, ich habe Probleme damit, dass ich selber gerade relativ wenig und unstetiges Einkommen habe, weil eigenes Geld zu haben, worüber ich jetzt verfügen kann, das ist schon besser als zu sagen, ich habe gerade da ein finanzielles Problem und kannst du mal. Weil im Moment bestreitet ja gerade meine Frau unseren Lebensunterhalt. (man E, first interview: 208)

Man E was the only interviewee who spoke about financial dependency – even if some of the others were also financially dependent on their partners. Man E was the only male interviewee working in part-time. Even if women who worked part-time earned less money than man E and were even more financially dependent on their partners, they did not speak about financial dependency. Differences in the perceived and actual insecurity of the self-employment might to some part explain this difference: The women who worked self-employed had been doing so for some years while self-employment was relatively new for man E. Another explanation for the difference in the perceived financial dependency may originate in gender roles in two regards. First, being partly dependent on the partner is in line with the expectations

raised on women (Brines, 1994). Therefore the part-time working women who earned less than their partners might have perceived similar financial situations differently from man E. Second, since providership is among the expectations raised at men (Brines, 1994), men might be more concerned about financial security: Man F, who was self-employed, was also very concerned about financial security and started to earn additional money with an artistic second job. Man B, who used to be self-employed some years ago, stressed this point, too: He said he preferred employment as the financial security was more important for him than the advantages of self-employment.

Other interviewees who spoke about financial aspects were the women J and M who worked in different jobs than they initially planned to. Both women had a part-time job in a field of work that was different from their professional qualification. Additionally, they both were self-employed in the area of their profession. Combining employment and self-employment was important for both of them. Woman J said that the employment was necessary for a steady and secure income while the self-employment enabled her to work in her field of studies as well. Woman M did not speak about the financial security the employment provided but said that her self-employment was not for economic reasons but to be able to work in her profession.

Most interviewees did not mention financial aspects when they spoke about their own or their partner's employment or self-employment. The interviewees who did were either male and self-employed or female and worked partly outside their occupational profession. The men talked about financial security or insecurity that arises from self-employment; the women instead said that income was not as important as the option to work self-employed in the area of their education. There was no couple in which both partners spoke about financial aspects.

Paid work as an important area of life

When speaking about their paid work, interviewees described their job as an important activity in their lives. Woman B said that her self-employment was very important for her self-concept as she created her job profile. Woman C who worked full-time with regular overtime was very proud of her job and her career. She described herself as very successful in her job. She said her work was crucial for her and that she could not imagine stopping work as it was a part of her self-concept. She was investing in her future career, was getting further training and aimed for a promotion. To achieve this goal, she usually worked more than her contracted working hours and was available for her office during her free time. Woman C combined two aspects in which paid work was described as important by interviewees: It was part of her self-concept and having a further career development was an important goal for her.

Man E also spoke about his work as an important part of his self-concept. However, he did it in a very different way than the other interviewees. His self-employment was very insecure,

and his prospects in the near future included unemployment. He explained the importance of work for himself with the fact that he defines himself by his occupation:

But it's not that I feel responsible for the family income, but about that, I want to work. You define yourself by your profession, by what you do, and something just has to happen. Thus, just sitting at home, that is nothing. (man E, first interview: 407)

Aber es geht mir nicht darum, dass ich mich für das Familieneinkommen verantwortlich fühle, sondern dass ich einfach selber arbeiten möchte. Du definierst dich einfach über den Beruf, über das, was du schaffst und da muss einfach irgendetwas passieren. Also nur zuhause zu sitzen, das ist nichts. (man E, first interview: 407)

Other interviewees mentioned that their paid work was not relevant for their self-concept; one example was man C who worked in the same company and had the same working conditions as his very work-oriented partner. When asked about his plans for the professional future, he expressed his hope that his company's early retirement program would still be available when he will be old enough to apply for it in more than ten years. Woman J also described that her work was not important for her self-concept. After her professional training, she was not able to get a position in her field of study since there was a cut back of places in that area when she was looking for a job. She and her partner mentioned that this was very difficult for her. Nevertheless, she reorganized her life and was happy with other aspects than her paid work. She combined part-time employment in a different field with being self-employed in the area of her studies. She spoke about her self-employment, not as something that was very important for her but as helping her in balancing different areas of life. Thus, the fact that she could not work in her chosen field seemed to reduce the importance of paid work for her self-concept.

The career advancement aspect of the importance of paid work was found in more interviews than the link to the self-concept. Woman G, for example, participated in specialized training for higher management positions in her company; man A was in further training outside of his workplace. The men I and G prepared additional career steps at the time of the interview. Man I said that he did not enjoy working – nevertheless, he planned to change companies in order to advance in his career, even if this change was connected to more working hours. Man G prepared to assume the responsibility for the company of a family member he was currently working in. Others like the man M looked for more interesting and higher ranked jobs. None of the men who prepared or wished to advance in their career spoke about paid work as something important for their self-concept. On the other hand, there were also interviewees who reported not to be interested in career advancement. Most of them were men. Man H, for example, said that he preferred to stay in his position in the hierarchy as he liked his current job and enjoyed that he rarely had to work long hours. He reported that he sometimes was asked about his interest in managerial positions, but he always declined these offers. In the past, he changed employers and chose a less stressful employment situation with rare long hours.

Thus, paid work was not an important aspect of the self-concept for every interviewee nor did all strive for career advancement. More men spoke about this aspect of the working life.

Comparing the partners in each couple revealed that both partners in two couples, couple E and couple G, expressed that this aspect was important for them. In three couples, one partner said that this was an important aspect while the other one said it was not. Only one partner in six couples mentioned self-concept or career aspects and both partners of two couples did not express that these aspects were important for their paid work. The pattern within the couples was not linked to their work arrangement.

Pleasure at work

Another aspect of the work situation the interviewees spoke about is work-related pleasure. Pleasure at work helps to understand why the interviewees perceived their own and their partner's (self-)employment as natural. The pleasure at work also affected how much the interviewees identified themselves with their work and their wish to stay in their jobs. Woman L described that pleasure at work was vital for her: After her education, she used to work in another workplace and liked that job. After changing the workplaces, she was even more satisfied with her paid work even if it included shift work and regular long hours. She described her work as her dream job that filled her with pleasure; therefore the shift or long hours did not matter for her. Woman D also expressed that she liked her work and that the related pleasure was more important to her than earning a higher income:

And I won't get rich from it, [...] but I have fun at work, I really like to do that. I'm not burned out or think, crap, you wanted to do this and this and that, but now you've been [working] for thirteen hours, and you're just tired. Instead I [...] like to go there in the morning, and I come home relaxed, in the afternoons or on the next morning depending on the schedule [...]. The quality is more important for me than the financial aspects, as long as it is enough, I will continue doing it. (couple D, woman, first interview: 48-49)

Und ich werde davon nicht reich, [...] aber ich habe Spaß an der Arbeit, ich mache das wirklich gerne. Ich bin nicht total ausgelaugt oder denke, Mist, du wolltest doch noch das und das und das gemacht haben, aber jetzt warst du schon dreizehn Stunden [arbeiten], du kannst einfach nicht mehr, sondern ich [...] geh wirklich in Früh gerne hin und komme nachmittags entspannt nach Hause oder halt am nächsten Tag in der Früh, je nach dem, wie es ist, wie es eingeplant ist [...] So die Qualität ist mir wichtiger als die finanzielle Seite, so lange wie es halt reicht, wird das so gemacht. (couple D, woman, first interview: 48-49)

Others who spoke about work-related pleasure mentioned that not only the work contents but also the surroundings like nice colleagues, a nice boss, and a good work atmosphere contributed to feeling pleasure. Woman H who worked part-time and had a fixed-term contract described that these aspects were vital for her and that they were the reason why she wanted to continue working there after the end of her current contract. Man H said that a good work environment was crucial for him to feel joy at work.

Woman M was part-time employed and worked additionally self-employed in the field of her occupational qualification. After her training, she worked in her area for some time. However, she would have had to enroll in further, costly training to be able to earn a sufficient income with her occupational qualification. This training was too expensive for her. Thus,

woman M started to work in another position that was still related to her occupation. She changed her employer after some time and finally worked for a company that had nothing to do with her primary profession. She said that this work was for monetary reasons and the self-employment in her original job primarily for her pleasure.

Most interviewees who spoke about work-related pleasure were women and worked in the social sector. Others who mentioned pleasure at work said that the work surroundings, the colleagues and the boss, contributed to their well-being at work. Only two male interviewees spoke about work-related pleasure. There seems to be no pattern in mentioning pleasure or not that is connected to the couples' paid work arrangements.

The importance of another area of life

When speaking about their paid work, the interviewees did not only talk about its importance for their lives but also compared it to the significance of another area of life: Either their private life in general or particular aspects of their private life. Interviewees in part-time work often used the importance of their private life to explain why they did not work full-time and did not want to increase their hours. Woman D, for example, decided to prioritize her private life: She reduced her working hours considerably in order to have more time to make renovations at the couple's house. Woman H reduced her working hours about two years before the first interview when she used to have health issues. After these problems had vanished, she kept the part-time hours since she enjoyed having more free time. Additionally, she added that she and her partner were not very interested in their career development and that they preferred having more free time over having more money:

Both of us are not really career oriented and well, [...] having a bit more time is more important to us than having more money. (woman H, first interview: 601)

Wir sind auch beide nicht jetzt so wahnsinnig karriereorientiert und ja [...] uns [ist] dann eigentlich auch ein bisschen mehr Zeit wichtiger als mehr Geld. (woman H, first interview: 601)

Man E argued similarly: He used to work full-time with regular overtime; at the time of the first interview he was involuntarily self-employed. He reported preferring part-time work as he wanted time to enjoy his life and spend time with other things than his job.

Woman M prioritized her private life over her career some time ago and still rated it higher than her paid work: In order to earn substantial money with her profession, she would have had to get some quite expensive further training. Since she did not have the money after her training, she started to earn and to save money. However, then she met her partner, and they decided to have children. Since she described that having children would conflict with potential further training, she decided against it and favored her relationship and the plan to become parents.

Woman B is the only interviewee who spoke about the importance of her private life without weighting it against the significance of her paid work. She said that both her private life as well as her job were important for her self-concept. She aimed at balancing her self-employment and her private life without sacrificing one or the other. She said she had made that mistake in the past when she worked too much which resulted in health problems.

Mainly women spoke about the importance of other areas of their life besides their paid work. There was no couple in which both partners said that other things in their life were equally or more important than their paid work. Some of the interviewees who explained their paid work with the importance of other areas of life used to have a time of full-time employment; some of them used to have long hours and missed having time for other things in their life during this time. All interviewees who mentioned the importance of other spheres of life worked fewer hours than their partners even if both partners worked full-time. Accordingly, there seems to be a relation between the couples' work arrangements and the mentioning of the importance of other areas of life — however, not all interviewees in couples in which the partners had different working hours referred to this argument.

Table 4: Couples' paid work-related argumentations

Couple	Own paid work natural		Partner's paid work natural		Self-concept and career		Pleasure		Importance of other areas of life		Financial aspects		Paid work arrangement
	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	
A	+	+	+	+		+							both FT
B	+	+	+	+	+		+		+			+	♀ < ♂
C	+	+	+	+	+	-	+						both FT
D	+	+	+	+			+		+				♀ < ♂
E	+	+	+	+	+	+				(+)		+	♀ > ♂
F	+	+	+	+			+					+	♀ < ♂
G	+	+	+	+	+	+							both FT
H	+	+	+	+	+/-	-	+	+	+				♀ < ♂
I	+	+	+	+		+	+	-					both FT
J	+	+	+	+		+/-					+		♀ < ♂
K	+/-	+	+	+			+/-						both FT
L	+	+	+	+	+	-	+						both FT
M	+	+	+	+		+	+		+		-		both FT
N	+	+	+	+		-							both FT

Note: The male and female partner in each couple are marked with ♂ and ♀, respectively; naming the significance of rationales is marked with +; rejected arguments are marked with -; ambivalence is marked with +/-; no explicit statement is marked with an empty cell. FT in the column work arrangement stands for full-time.

Interrelation between the different explanations

The interviewees often explained their or their partners' paid work with more than one argument. And some of the arguments were connected in the informants' explanations. There was an interrelation between the importance of paid work and career advancement for the interviewees' self-concept and one other explanation for the women. Women who argued with the importance of their paid work also referred to pleasure at work. Women who spoke about the importance of other areas of life also always talked about pleasure at work. This was primarily the case for women who worked fewer hours than their partners. However, this interrelationship does not seem to be also in the opposite direction: not all women and none of the men who spoke about pleasure at work related it to the importance of paid work or other areas of life. Interviewees who referred to financial aspects did not talk about the other explanations in a definite pattern.

7.2 Anticipations

7.2.1 Plans for the paid work

The interviewed couples had considered how they wanted to live as a family at the time of the first interview. These considerations included anticipations for the division of paid work between the partners. Table 5 provides an overview of the couples' paid work plans for the first year after the child's birth.

All interviewed couples planned to have a specialized paid work arrangement for at least some time after childbirth in which the man focuses on the labor market while the woman stays at home. The minimum duration of this specialized arrangement was eight weeks – which corresponds to the length of the obligatory maternity leave for employed women – and the maximum period was three years – which corresponds to the maximum length of parental leave. Even the couples in which the women were self-employed – for whom the law concerning maternity leave does not apply – planned for her to stay at home for the length of maternity leave. Most couples planned to continue a completely specialized or partly-specialized division of paid work according to which one partner is full-time employed while the other one is inactive or working reduced hours.

The couples A, D, G, L, and N planned a completely specialized paid work division and that the woman takes parental leave – or stays at home in case of self-employment – for at least the first year after childbirth. Women A and L said that they could imagine starting to work for some hours per week within the first year after birth, but they did not have any plans for their return. The men in these five couples were expected to continue to work full-time. Couple E also planned a complete specialization, but, in contrast to the others, this couple anticipated the

man to stay at home while the woman works full-time. The man wanted to look for a part-time job to start sometime during the first year of the child's life.

Three couples and one man wanted to have a complete specialization for some months, followed by a partly specialized arrangement or an equal arrangement. Couples C, K, and M as well as man J – woman J had a different plan for the timing of her re-entry – planned for the woman to stay at home from her paid work for some time and return to the labor market afterward while the man continues to work full-time. Couples C and K, as well as man J, planned a parental leave period of six months for the female partner. Couple M had not yet decided upon how long the woman would stay out of the labor market; the woman was part-time employed and at the same time part-time self-employed. She wanted to take parental leave in her employment for at least one year while returning to her self-employment earlier with some hours per week and wished to increase them to the pre-birth level gradually. Couple K and man M also planned for the woman to reduce her working hours upon her re-entry in the labor market. Couple K planned that she would reduce her hours by half; man J expected his wife to return to her part-time employment and did not speak about her self-employment. Couple C said that the woman would return to her full-time job after six months of parental leave, then both partners would again work full-time.

Three couples and one woman (couples B, F, I and woman J) planned a reduction of the female working hours without using parental leave or staying at home from the self-employment for a longer time. The women planned to return directly after the maternity leave or in case of the self-employed woman F after three months. The planned working hours varied. Woman B planned to return with ten days per month and increase her self-employed working hours until she received a certain income. Couple F agreed that the woman would return to her self-employment for 20 hours per month after approximately three months at home and increase her hours if possible. Couple I planned the smallest reduction of the women's working hours in the sample: She envisioned returning to her full-time job with a reduction of three and a half hours. She wanted to stay at home during the maternity leave; afterward, she planned on taking some vacation and reducing her overtime before returning to her job four months after childbirth. Thus, these couples planned a complete specialization only during the maternity leave or during a short stay at home time before three of them were transforming their arrangement to a partly specialized division of paid work. Couple I planned that both would work full-time, with the woman having approximately five working hours per week less than her husband.

Couple H planned to have an almost equal division of the paid work after the woman's maternity leave: Woman H wanted to return to her 20 hours per week part-time job. During the eight weeks of maternity leave, they planned for the man to stay in his full-time employment; upon the woman's return to her job, the man wanted to take parental leave while working part-time with 16 hours per week.

Table 5: Couples' plans for each partner's paid work in the first year after childbirth

Couple	Months after the child's birth												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
A ♀	maternity leave		parental leave				parental leave + maybe marginal employment						
A ♂	full-time: 40 hours/week												
B ♀	at home	first 10 days/month (self-employed), then more, until 1000 €/month income											
B ♂	full-time: 40 hours/week												
C ♀	parental leave						full-time: 38,5 hours/week						
C ♂	full-time: 38,5 hours/week												
D ♀	at home – timing of return to self-employment not yet planned, probably not in the first year												
D ♂	full-time: 40 hours/week												
E ♀	maternity leave		part-time: 20 hours/week		part-time: 20 hours/week + first some, then 15-20 hours/week self-employed								
E ♂	at home – plan: find a part-time employment												
F ♀	at home			first 20 hours/months (self-employed), then more									
F ♂	full-time: 40+ hours/week (self-employed)												
G ♀	maternity leave		parental leave										
G ♂	full-time: 40 hours + 25 hours overtime/week												
H ♀	maternity leave		part-time: 19,75 hours/week										
H ♂	full-time: 39 hours/week		parental leave + part-time: 16 hours/week										
I ♀	maternity leave		vacation		reduced full-time: 35 hours/week								
I ♂	full-time: 40+ hours/week												
J ♀*	maternity leave		vacation	reduced part-time: 16-17 hours/week									
			parental leave						part-time 21: hours/week				
J ♂	full-time: 42+ hours/week												
K ♀	maternity leave		parental leave				parental leave + part-time: 2 days/week						
K ♂	full-time: 38,5 hours/week												
L ♀	maternity leave		parental leave + maybe some self-employment										
L ♂	full-time: 38 hours + 10-12 hours overtime/week in shift work												
M ♀	maternity leave		parental leave + self-employment, timing and hours not yet decided										
M ♂	full-time: 40 hours/week in shift work												
N ♀	maternity leave		parental leave										
N ♂	full-time: 40 hours/week												

Note: * Normally, the partners' plans regarding their future paid work arrangement were identical. Couple J differed in their plans; the first row indicates the woman's plan, the second row indicates the man's plan. Self-employees were not covered by the maternity or parental leave legislation, thus even if the informants spoke about maternity or parental leave the table indicates "at home" for self-employees.

Table 6 allows for the comparison between the plans for the future paid work arrangement and the arrangement at the time of the first interview. The maternity leave is not considered in

the post-birth arrangement since this leave was obligatory for all employed women. In the rows, the pre-birth paid work arrangement is categorized. The table shows the plans for the paid work arrangement after the childbirth in the columns. As four of the couples planned on changing their arrangement during the first year, these couples can be found in two columns; the suffix “-1” indicates what they anticipated for the time following the maternity leave and “-2” indicated what they intend to change after some while.

Table 6: Comparison of the plans for the paid work in the first year after childbirth and paid work arrangements at the first interview

Pre-birth paid work arrangement	Plan for paid work arrangement			
	Both full-time	Man continuous & woman at home	Man continuous & woman reduction	Man reduction/ at home & woman continuous
Both full-time	C-2*	A, C-1*, G, K-1*, L, I, K-2*, M-2*, M-1*, N		
Man > Woman		D; J-1♂*	B, F, J♀, J-2♂*	H
Man < Woman				E

Note: Usually, the plans of both partners within a couple are the same. If the partners differ, this is indicated with ♂ and ♀.

* The plan was to change the arrangement after some time. Couples C and K and the man of couple J planned the first period to last for six months; couple M did not say how long the first period would be. The first period is marked by “-1” and the second period with “-2”.

All seven couples with two full-time working partners at the time of the first interview planned a specialization of their paid work arrangement after the birth of the child: The women would interrupt or reduce their paid work while the men would continue their full-time work. Couple C planned to have this specialized arrangement for half a year and to return to their dual full-time arrangement afterward. Woman I planned to reduce her hours only marginally, but since she did not want to return with her full-time hours, the couple is in the column indicating that the female partner was envisioned to reduce her working hours.

Most of the couples, who had a partly specialized division of paid work at the time of the first interview, planned for a further specialization of this division after childbirth. They either planned the partner with less working hours to stay at home or to reduce employment or self-employment further. Couple H differed from the others as they did not intend to extend the existing specialization but to change towards an equal arrangement in which both partners work part-time: The man planned to take parental leave and work during this time with part-time hours while the woman planned to return to work with unchanged part-time working hours after maternity leave.

7.2.2 Explanations for the paid work plans

The informants referred to several arguments for their planned division of paid work in the first year after the child’s birth. Table 7 provides an overview of the arguments and of if an informant used an argument to explain the future paid work, if he or she rejected it, was

ambivalent regarding it, did not refer to it, or talked about it without arguing in favor of it or rejecting it.

Paid work and perceived naturalness

The male informants perceived their future paid work as natural. Hence, most couples planned for the man to stay continuously active in the labor market. The men expressed the naturalness of their paid work when they were asked if they had thought about taking parental leave. Some men said that they never thought about the question if they could take parental leave which implies that they perceived their paid work as natural. Other men like man D said that they considered taking parental leave – and thus did not see their paid work as given – but that the couple's current financial situation was a hindrance. Men A and F could hypothetically imagine taking parental leave for some shorter time. This hypothetical idea included for both men that they would return quickly to their paid work as their future employment and self-employment, respectively, was natural for them. Men E and H planned to stay at home or reduce their paid work; despite this plan, they perceived their future paid work as natural. Man E who planned to stay at home from his self-employment after his partner's maternity leave explained this with his rather insecure self-employment. Man H who planned to take parental leave and reduce his working hours by more than 50 % also described his paid work as natural.

The naturalness that men perceived regarding their paid work was mirrored in the interviews with the women. All women took their partners' future labor market activity for granted. This became visible when they were asked if the men would take parental leave; some women said that they never even thought about this option. Others could hypothetically imagine their partners to take some parental leave and return to their full-time jobs afterward. Woman E who planned with her partner that he would stay at home after childbirth said that she would have preferred him to remain active in the labor market. The couple planned to deviate from their ideal of equal part-time working hours since her work situation was more secure than his. The ideal of both partners working part-time hours implies that couple E perceives labor market activity as natural. This naturalness was also prevalent in the interview with woman H: Couple H planned for the man to take parental leave and reduce his paid work during his leave. Woman H said that her partner had considered staying at home for some time, but eventually the couple decided against this to ensure his future employment chances. In the following quote, woman H refers to staying at home for three years – which is the maximum period of parental leave:

My husband also considered stopping working ... Well, then we decided together that this would not be very wise since especially in [his field of work] if you are out of work for three years, it is just not so convenient for the reentry. (woman H, first interview: 331)

Mein Mann hat dann auch schon überlegt, ob er ganz aufhört zu arbeiten ... Da sind wir schon auch gemeinsam zu dem Entschluss gekommen, dass das nicht so sinnvoll wäre, weil gerade in

[seiner Branche], wenn man dann halt drei Jahre ganz raus ist, ist es einfach nicht so günstig für den Wiedereinstieg. (woman H, first interview: 331)

In contrast to the perceived naturalness of the men's labor market activity, not all women perceived their own future paid work as natural in the first year after childbirth. Most of them perceived it as natural to work for pay after a period of staying at home after the child's birth. Half of the women in the sample planned to return to their jobs in the first year of the child's life. The naturalness of their paid work did not necessarily imply that these women expected to return to their jobs after the eight weeks of obligatory maternity leave or that they anticipated keeping their pre-birth working hours. Two women (couples E, H) who perceived their future paid work as natural planned to return to their jobs with unchanged working hours after maternity leave. Five women who described their paid work as natural planned to stay at home for some time before returning to their paid work with reduced (couples B, I, J, M) or pre-birth (couple C) working hours. Woman L planned to stay at home for one year and perceived her future paid work as natural. The other women expressed either ambivalence regarding the naturalness of their future paid work (couples F, K) or said that not being active in the labor market for at least the first year after their first child's birth was natural for them (couples A, D, G, N). The two women with ambivalent statements argued that they generally saw their paid work as natural, but that they also wanted to stay at home after childbirth which was also natural for them. The paid work plans of women who were ambivalent or perceived it to be natural that they would stay at home corresponded to these ideas: These women planned to stay at home for at least one year (couples A, D, G, N), reduce their paid work considerably (couple F), or stay at home and return with reduced hours (couple K).

The men also had differing notions of what is natural regarding their partner's future paid work. Most men continued to find it natural that their partners would be employed or self-employed in the future, while others thought that it was natural that their partner would stay at home for some time. In most couples, the men's perception of naturalness was similar to their partners'; they also perceived their partners' future paid work (couples B, C, E, H, I, J, M) or staying at home (couples A, D, N) as natural. Other men thought it was natural that their partners would return to their jobs while the women did not (couple G) or were ambivalent (couples F, K). Man L found it natural that his wife would stay at home after childbirth while she did not and had ideas about being self-employed while being on leave in the first year.

Financial aspects

Another argument for the couples' planned paid work after the birth of their first child was of financial nature. Nineteen of twenty-eight interviewees spoke about economic aspects to explain two decisions: The first was that one partner did not plan to take parental leave; the second was the timing of the job return of the partner who planned to stay at home after childbirth. Besides, some interviewees described the future financial situation as unproblematic or spoke about financial dependency.

When explaining the plan that one partner would take some time off the job while the other would stay active in the labor market with continuous working hours, most couples said that one partner's income exceeded the other's. Therefore they argued that it was financially impossible for the partner with the higher income to take parental leave. The following quote from the interview with woman D, who was self-employed, exemplifies this:

Well, parental leave does not work for us financially since I have very little money compared to [husband's name] and we would not manage it financially with only my money. Well, it would be meager. (woman D, first interview: 359-360)

Also, Elternzeit geht rein finanziell bei uns nicht, weil ich im Vergleich zu [Name des Mannes] verhältnismäßig wenig Geld habe und wir würden das finanziell nicht schaffen nur mit meinem Geld. Also, das wäre dann einfach viel zu knapp. (woman D, first interview: 359-360)

Most of the interviewees who explained their planned paid work arrangement with income differences were in relationships in which one partner earned more than the other; the partner with the lower earnings often worked fewer hours than the other (couples B, D, E, I, J, L, M). Most couples with similar incomes did not refer to income differences when explaining their planned division of paid work (couples A, C, F). Couple K is an exception; woman K argued that it would be financially impossible for her partner to take parental leave. Both partners had very similar incomes with her earning even a bit more than her partner. She argued that since she would definitively take parental leave, it was financially impossible for her partner to take some leave or to reduce his working hours. Since it is natural for her to stay at home with the child and return with reduced hours after six months, there would be no financial leeway for her partner to do the same.

The reentry timing of the (female) partner who would stay at home after childbirth was the second aspect some couples (couples F, J, K) explained with financial arguments. These couples said that they would receive maternity or parental leave compensation for zero to six months. They described that they calculated how long they could afford for the woman to stay at home and decided upon her reentry based on this calculation. This decision seemed to be alright for both partners of couple J. Couple K would have preferred a more extended phase of parental leave but said that they needed two incomes to make a living. Woman F said that she thought that it would be financially possible for her to stay at home for longer than the anticipated two to three months. According to her, her partner was not willing to support her in this since he wanted to keep the couple's standard of living which was dependent on two incomes. When he was asked about the planned future work arrangement, he added that he was afraid of the economic uncertainty the couple faced due to the self-employment of both partners.

I have a relatively high standard. We don't live on a high horse or something like that, but I see it also as a matter of risk spreading. You never know what will happen. When both work, the risk is just distributed to both. And I can sleep better if it is like that, especially when both are self-employed. It just isn't that easy. It could [change] from one day to the other – for whatever reasons. (man F, first interview: 362)

Ich habe jetzt einen relativ hohen Standard. Wir leben nicht auf hohem Ross oder so was, aber ich sehe das auch als Risikostreuung. Man weiß ja nie, was mal ist. Wenn beide arbeiten, dann ist das Risiko einfach auf zwei verteilt. Und ich kann da einfach besser schlafen, das ist so. Grade, wenn beide in einem freiberuflichen Status sind. Das ist halt nicht so einfach. Das kann von heute auf morgen [ändern] – aus welchen Gründen auch immer. (man F, first interview: 362)

The couples who explained the woman's reentry plan with their income situation were in the middle of the sample's income distribution. Like most of the other couples, they were not or only for a short period entitled to the parental leave allowance. Two of the four couples in the sample with similar incomes of both partners explained the woman's reentry with their income, which implies that the women contributed substantially to the couples' financial situation.

The interviewees also spoke about financial consequences that would arise from the decision that one partner stays at home for some time. The partner who was envisioned to alter the labor market activity would lose at least parts of the own income, especially since only a few of the couples were eligible for the parental leave allowance. And even if they were eligible, the leave allowance was much lower than the remuneration of the person taking parental leave. Their future financial dependency was an issue to speak about for some interviewees who planned to interrupt their job; especially women who had equally high incomes as their partners said that they would probably feel financially dependent. Woman G, who had a high income like her partner, knew that her partner's income would suffice for them. Nevertheless, she worried that the dependency would be problematic for her. Couple E, who planned for the man to stay at home after childbirth, reported that it was somehow problematic for him to become economically dependent on his partner. In contrast to the women who planned to be dependent on their partners' income, dependency seemed to have another meaning for man E. He mentioned that his partner was willing to support him and that this was somehow difficult for him; he reported that he did not feel like failing the male role of breadwinning – but considering the way he spoke about that, it can be assumed that this norm was a point of reference for him. The dependency of one partner implies for the other partner to become the provider. None of the interviewees who planned to be the providers reported worrying about it. Man L, for example, said that it would be unproblematic since he would continue to earn his income which is sufficient for him, his partner and their child. Since mostly male partners were planned to become providers, the fact that they did not report to worry might be related to gendered expectations of providing. Couple H planned to change their arrangement, in which the man earned way more than the woman, towards a more equal income distribution since the woman would return to her job after maternity leave and the man would take parental leave and reduce his working hours. Man H was directly asked by the interviewer about the financial consequences of his reduction; according to him, they would have approximately the average income of one person who graduated from a university which he considered as sufficient to make a living as a family. This shows that for couple H, the income difference between the partners was not important for their planned paid work arrangements – but that other factors had more influence.

Paid work and career as important parts of the self-concept

The interviewees explained their paid work plans also with the importance of paid work for the own self-concept: Since paid work was important for their images of themselves, some interviewees could not imagine staying at home or reducing their paid work in the future (women B, C, I and L; men B). Mostly women argued with the importance of their paid work for their self-concept. One example is woman I who worked in a managerial position. She planned to stay at home for four months after childbirth and to reenter with slightly reduced working hours. She said that she could not imagine staying at home for an extended period. A reason for this was that she initiated some changes in her workplace and wanted to see how these changes affect the work situation. Furthermore, she could not imagine staying at home and returning without losing her managerial position, something she feared would happen if she would return later or with fewer working hours. Her partner said that his wife's paid work was very central to her; he also mentioned that his income would suffice so that his wife would have no economic reasons to return to her paid work; thus he implicitly refers to a provider role. Both partners described that the importance of the paid work for the woman was something they had to defend against others like the woman's employer or relatives. They expressed that the employer anticipated the woman to take three years of parental leave and seemed not very supportive when the woman discussed her idea of taking a short leave and returning with slightly reduced working hours. She expressed that she was startled and irritated by her employer's behavior but that this could not affect the couple's plan.

The importance of paid work for the self-concept did not always lead to a plan reflecting it. Couple E said that being active in the labor market was crucial for both partners' self-concepts. Especially the man spoke about this issue — the couple planned for him to stay at home with the child while the woman combined employment with self-employment. The reason for deciding against the importance of paid work for the man's self-concept was the insecurity of his self-employment. The couple argued that they had to decide under the financial reality which was more important than the man's self-concept or the woman's ideas about her partner. They both hoped that the man would find a part-time job and that the planned specialization was temporary.

Other interviewees spoke about the importance of career advancement for their self-concept (woman C, G; men G, I). Since they perceived child-related leaves or reductions of their working hours to be potentially harmful to their career advancement, these interviewees concluded that they could take no leave at all or only a short leave. Woman C argued that she wanted to advance in her career and that her paid work was crucial for her self-concept. She planned to take six months of leave and to reenter her full-time job. She and her partner explained that the employer did not allow part-time work for employees with the woman's job profile; thus, it was clear for woman C that she would return in full-time. The employer also influenced the timing of the reentry: He guaranteed a return to the exact same workplace if she took no longer than six months leave. Man C was less job-oriented than his partner and did not

describe his paid work as an important part of his self-concept nor did he want to advance his career. Nevertheless, it was no option for the couple that he took parental leave since he had financial obligations to his former wife and children from this marriage.

The importance of the career advancement did not necessarily lead to the plan of a short parental leave: Woman G described her career as very important for her; she took part in a career enhancement program in her company. Nevertheless, she said that her paid work was not less important for her than staying at home and taking care for the child in the first year of the child's life. She planned to stay at home for at least one year. Her partner who planned to advance in his company did not understand her decision and believed that her job was crucial for her and expected her to change her mind.

Other interviewees explained their planned paid work with the unimportance of further career advancement. Couple H argued in this way: Man H said that he enjoyed his current work while he knew that career advancement would include many tasks he disliked. Besides, he argued that having more free-time and especially time to spend with his child was more important than climbing the career ladder. The man planned to take parental leave and to reduce his working hours by 60 % when the woman would return to her part-time job after maternity leave.

Usually, when interviewees explained that the paid work or career advancement was important for their self-concept, their partners also spoke about this aspect similarly. One exception from this is couple L; the partners had different ideas about what her paid work should mean for the woman's self-concept and therefore had different plans for her future paid work. Woman L described her work as very important to her; she said that she had found the job of her dreams and could not imagine not working in it after the birth of her child. Man L knew that his partner's job was very important for her, but he believed that after the birth of the first child, the job should no longer be important for his partner's self-concept because then being a mother should be her first priority. These different ideas were reflected in both partners' wishes for the future paid work and in the planned future paid work. Woman L reported that she first planned to return to her job after her maternity leave since she knew that she could not return to her managerial position in case of a longer leave or reduced working hours as she had a fixed-term contract that ended some months after childbirth. Man L argued that it would be best if his partner would stay at home for three years since her paid work was not important to him after the birth of the child – thus, he linked the argument with gendered ideas. After discussing and considering different options of the woman's future paid work, the woman concluded that her self-concept is not only influenced by her paid work. This was reflected in the plan that the woman would take one-year parental leave and return in part-time. The couple did not plan for the man to take any time off his paid work even if his job did not seem to be as relevant to him as his wife's job was to her; he did also not want to advance in his career.

Gendered arguments

Almost all informants referred to gendered aspects when explaining the couple's future paid work arrangement – only two men did not mention gendered aspects or expectations. Especially interviewees, who planned for the woman to stay at home for at least six months while the man would work in full-time continuously, often had gendered rationales and referred to complementary roles for mothers and fathers. The maternal role included the idea that the mother should take care of the child which was often described as incompatible with her paid work. These interviewees concluded that the woman would stay at home due to this incompatibility. The paternal role meant for the interviewees that the man was responsible for earning the family income; he was expected to secure his future paid work; taking parental leave was often considered as a risk to this. Hence, the man had to stay in his full-time job. The idea of complementary roles is exemplified in the following quote of woman A who was asked about the plans for the future paid work arrangement and if her partner would take parental leave:

Well, or rather from my point of view, this [the option that man A takes parental leave] was not an issue since I like to stay at home, but he would also have liked to stay at home, but I think he would have, he said that he would have no problem with being the househusband and staying at home, but then just, well, what concerns the breastfeeding, there is no other possibility, and I have to admit that I would not have accepted to have this taken from me. (woman A, first interview: 531)

Also, beziehungsweise von mir aus war das [die Möglichkeit, dass der Mann Elternzeit nimmt] eigentlich kein Thema, weil ich gerne daheim bleibe, aber er wäre auch gerne daheim geblieben, aber ich denke er hatte, er sagt auch, er hätte überhaupt kein Problem damit Hausmann zu sein und daheim zu bleiben, aber schon allein, ja, was das Stillen angeht, geht es ja gar nicht anders und ich hätte mir das auch nicht nehmen lassen, muss ich ganz ehrlich sagen. (woman A, first interview: 531)

Woman A referred to two reasons: First, she planned to breastfeed the baby which in her view excluded her partner from taking parental leave. Second, she would not allow him to take the breastfeeding away from her; breastfeeding and parental leave were connected in her argument; this suggests that she believed that taking parental leave was her right and that she would lose something if her partner took leave. When the woman was asked what her partner said about her idea that only she would take leave, she reported that he would also have liked to take leave, but that he left the decision to her. Man A also said that he would have liked to stay at home with the child but that he would not do that since his partner did not want him to. He explained that his wife believed that the parental leave belonged to her. He did not argue with her and accepted that his wife's decision implied for him to become the provider.

Interviewees who planned a complementary paid work arrangement after the childbirth said explicitly or implicitly that women and men should prioritize different aspects of their lives when becoming parents. Men who planned for a specialized paid work arrangement expected their employers to hinder them from taking parental leave even if they have never asked for it and even if both mothers and fathers are legally entitled to go on parental leave. Some interviewees placed this argument in line with fears for their future career, their employment

security, or their future income. This argument was gendered since the employer's unwillingness to agree to parental leave was not mentioned concerning the woman's planned parental leave. Furthermore, potential or expected negative consequences for the woman's career were only discussed by some of the interviewees who planned a specialized paid work arrangement. However, they kept their plan if they believed that parental leave could imply negative consequences for the woman's career. This was also the case if they knew for sure that the woman's career would be affected negatively. Woman D, for example, reported that she struggled with whether to stay at home for some time after childbirth or not since she would lose her clients. She said that she first wanted to return to her self-employment shortly after birth but then decided for a longer phase of staying at home. She argued that she could not work as a mother of a very young child as caring for the child was more important than her paid work and that she could not do both at the same time.

Woman G would probably also face negative career consequences for her plan to stay at home for at least one year. At the first interview, she had career ambitions and was involved in specialized training for further career advancement. Nevertheless, she said that she could never imagine returning to her workplace shortly after childbirth. Her partner did not share the idea that a mother should stay at home for a child; he said that he had less conservative views than his partner and that he did not find it very consequential to invest in education if one wants to live according to gender roles from the 1950ies or 1960ies. This position seemed to contradict not only his partner's idea but also her planned full-time parental leave. On the other hand, man G also referred to societal gendered ideas about maternal and paternal employment:

The woman is still disadvantaged in this regard; it is clear that in our society, it just is like that. When she [the woman] returns after three years or after two years, you don't even have to think about that she will have a job that is in [her present field of work], since she won't be able to work full-time there. Well, only if she has someone who will look after the child around the clock or at least for the most time of the day. [...] As I said, I don't tell her what to do, but I think it is relative, or I am less conventional than my wife who said, well, I want to stay at home in the beginning. (man G, first interview: 863)

Es ist klar, dass in unserer heutigen Gesellschaft immer noch die Frau an der Stelle benachteiligt ist, das ist einfach so. Wenn sie [die Frau] nach drei Jahren oder nach zwei Jahren wieder kommt, da kann man sich abschminken, dass sie einen Job bekommen wird, der eben im [bisheriger Arbeitsplatz] ist, weil sie eben nicht einen Vollzeitjob dort ausüben können wird. Außer, sie hat dann jemand, der sich hier rund um die Uhr oder zumindest mal einen großen Teil des Tages um das Kind kümmern würde. [...] Wie gesagt, ich mach da keine Vorschriften, aber ich seh's eigentlich relativ oder ich seh's ein Stück weit unkonventioneller als meine Frau, die da von sich aus schon gesagt hat, ja, also, zunächst mal möchte ich dann schon zu Hause bleiben. (man G, first interview: 863)

Many of the interviewed men and women who argued that women and men have complementary roles after the birth of a child also believed that mothers of young children cannot work full-time. These interviewees therefore planned that the woman's labor market reentry after the parental leave was accompanied with a reduction of working hours while the man did not change his employment situation.

About half of the interviewees did not argue with gendered rationales or rejected gendered ideals for themselves. Accordingly, most of them planned for both partners to share paid work. Couples C, H, and I planned for both partners to have similar working hours in the first year of the child's life. The female interviewees did not want to become homemakers and did not want their partners to become breadwinners. Couple H spoke explicitly about gender equity and explained the planned change towards an equal division of paid work in the first year after their child's birth with gender equality. At the time of the first interview, the woman worked part-time; the man worked full-time. She would return after obligatory maternity leave, and then man H would take parental leave and work with slightly fewer hours than his partner. Woman H said that the couple spoke about their ideas about family life for a long time. Both partners reported that the man always expressed his wish to reduce paid work and interact with his child more often than after work or during weekends and that the woman did not want to stay at home for an extended period after childbirth. Both partners believed that women and men should be equal in all areas of life. This conviction included that none of the partners should concentrate on one area of life – neither family work nor paid work.

Couple E argued that gender equality was vital for them and that they always expected to have an equal arrangement after childbirth. However, they planned for the man to stay at home while and for the woman to return to the labor market after maternity leave due to their economic situation. When she was asked if they always knew that they would want to have an equal arrangement of paid work, the woman answered that this was always clear for her and her partner and that they aimed to achieve an equal arrangement in the future. The couples who believed that an equal sharing of paid work after the transition to parenthood is ideal or planned to have such an arrangement felt that they differed from other couples in similar situations. They were aware of and confronted by their social circles with the ideal of complementary roles for mothers and fathers of young children. Especially female informants spoke a lot about this social pressure in the interviews as they had to justify their decision in discussions with family, friends or colleagues. Woman E talked about the prevalent gender norm that mothers of young children were seen as selfish and career-oriented if they did not take parental leave. She also referred to the image of a “Rabenmutter”⁷:

The social environment is not to be underestimated. Not in Germany, where you are regarded as a Rabenmutter. Well, our social environment knows to some extent [...] of course how we will handle it. And so like the broader circle of friends, and I am astonished about it. Really! [...] how unprogressive folks react and accordingly how critical the people are. (E, woman, first interview, 628-629)

Das Umfeld ist ja nicht zu unterschätzen. Nicht in Deutschland, wo man als Rabenmutter gilt. Also unser Umfeld weiß zum Teil [...] natürlich wie wir es machen. Und so der weitere Freundeskreis, und ich bin erstaunt darüber. Wirklich! [...] wie reaktionär die Leute reagieren bzw. wie kritisch die Leute sind. (E, woman, first interview, 628-629)

⁷ “Rabenmutter”, literally translated raven mother, is a German expression for a mother who is judged as a bad mother since she is not devoting herself to her child.

Breastfeeding

At least one partner in nine couples referred to breastfeeding as an important argument for the planned paid work arrangement. Interviewees, who referred to breastfeeding when describing the plan that the woman would take parental leave, named three reasons why breastfeeding determines the parental leave: First, breastfeeding was the best nutrition for a baby, second, only women can breastfeed, and third, breastfeeding and female paid work were perceived as incompatible. Mostly the women explained that they read about the best nutrition for babies and that they learned that breastfeeding was essential for their child's health. This often led to the conclusion that the mothers-to-be have to breastfeed; woman A, for example, described that children need to be breastfed to ensure their wellbeing; therefore, for her, a mother had no choice than to breastfeed:

Well, for me it was in general clear, well due to reading and gathering information, clear, that it [the breastfeeding] has to take place. Well, that it [the breastfeeding] is really, really important for the child's health and that I as a person can't object it since I have to offer the child the best (woman A, first interview: 431)

Ja, für mich war eigentlich schon klar, also durch das Lesen und Informieren, schon klar, dass es [das Stillen] sein muss. Also dass es [das Stillen] für die Gesundheit des Kindes unheimlich wichtig ist und dass ich mich da als Person nicht dagegen stellen kann, weil ich dem Kind eigentlich das Beste geben muss. (woman A, first interview: 431)

Ideas about breastfeeding included for most interviewees that a breastfeeding mother could not be active in the labor market; breastfeeding and employment excluded each other. As breastfeeding was important for the child's health, these interviewees concluded that the woman would take parental leave to breastfeed and that the length of parental leave should at least be the planned breastfeeding period. An example is man I who said that the decision to breastfeed the child influenced how long the woman intended to stay at home – thus implying that a working mother cannot breastfeed; however, woman I did not agree and said that the breastfeeding period did not influence her reentry timing.

Breastfeeding was often referred to in connection to other gendered arguments. The decision to breastfeed the child and to stay at home for breastfeeding excluded men from taking parental leave. The following quote from man C who was asked if he could imagine taking parental leave demonstrates this:

I can imagine parental leave, but then the brain shows up. And then it starts. Why does the woman take parental leave? The woman takes parental leave because she has to take care of the child because she has to breastfeed it. If I took parental leave, this would mean at the same time, that she goes to work. Then, the question arises what I would do. I cannot breastfeed it [the child]. (man C, first interview: 242)

Elternzeit ist vorstellbar, kommt aber auch wieder das Hirn. Und dann geht's los. Warum nimmt die Frau Elternzeit? Die Frau nimmt Elternzeit, weil sie muss sich ums Kind kümmern, weil sie muss es stillen. Wenn ich Elternzeit nehmen würde, würde das parallel bedeuten, dass sie arbeiten geht. Dann ist die Frage was mache ich dann. Stillen kann ich es [das Kind] nicht. (man C, first interview: 242)

Man C seemed to think that if he was to take parental leave, he could not care for the child since he could not breastfeed. Correspondingly, the couple planned that the woman would take six months of parental leave. Other interviewees also confounded breastfeeding with universal childcare and said that a child needs breastfeeding and that therefore the woman should stay at home. However, most couples planned a parental leave that exceeded the length of the planned breastfeeding period.

None of the interviewees denied that breastfeeding was good for the child; however, some said that mothers can breastfeed and be active in the labor market at the same time or that a short breastfeeding period would be sufficient so that the woman could stop breastfeeding after some weeks and return to her job afterward. Couples B and E perceived that breastfeeding and female paid work do not exclude each other; they planned for the women to return to their jobs during the breastfeeding period. Both women were at least partly self-employed and knew already how they wanted to breastfeed during their breaks; they imagined that their partners or other relatives, for example, would bring the child to them. Woman E's plan provoked negative reactions: Friends or work-related contacts confronted her and said that breastfeeding is the best nutrition for a child and that a working mother cannot breastfeed. Her social circles asked her what she planned concerning breastfeeding upon her return to her jobs and assumed that she would not breastfeed then. Women B, men B and E did not speak about negative reactions.

Woman H believed like most other interviewees that breastfeeding was important for the child and that breastfeeding and maternal employment were incompatible – however unlike the others, she planned to stop breastfeeding after six to eight weeks because she wanted to return to her job after maternity leave; at this time, her partner would take parental leave and work part-time. She explained that she considered other breastfeeding options but could not imagine pumping the milk and storing it in the office. Woman H did not mention the possibility that she could breastfeed the child in her breaks if somebody brought it to her. She said that breastfeeding was a very normative issue and that six to eight weeks of breastfeeding were sufficient.

Pleasure at work

Some of the interviewees referred to pleasure at work when they spoke about their future division of paid work with their partners. These were mostly women; only two men talked about this aspect. The women who did could not imagine being out of their job for an extended period as they enjoyed their work; the men could not imagine that their partner stayed out of the labor market for a longer time for the same reason. For some, pleasure at work was a reason for the women's labor market activity; it was not an argument for the labor market activity of any of the interviewed men. This reflects the finding that the man's post-birth paid work is perceived to be natural. Interviewees who referred to pleasure at work planned that the woman would return two to six months after giving birth. Women who referred to pleasure were very

work-oriented at the time of the first interview, did overtime regularly, were involved in further training, were self-employed, or had managerial positions in their jobs. They could financially afford to decide for or against their paid work since their partners earned enough income to support them and were willing to do this at least for some time. Man I, for example, whose partner had a supervising position and enjoyed her work very much, explained his partner's planned labor market return partly with the pleasure she feels in her job:

Yes, we actually have the best conditions that you can imagine. [...] That is why she then said that she'd like to continue doing it [her job]. And she really enjoys doing her work. In fact, she enjoys working more than I do. I actually don't really like it [...] like she thinks, that this is right and that she has fun and everything fits really good and .. she, in fact, would be really silly if she would forego it. .. Thus, sure, she should do it, she should continue doing it. (man I, first interview: 476-485)

Genau, als, wir haben eigentlich die besten Rahmenbedingungen, die man sich vorstellen kann. [...] Weshalb sie dann auch gesagt hat, ja, sie will das [die Erwerbsarbeit] einfach gern weiter machen. Und sie arbeitet einfach extrem gern. Sie arbeitet eigentlich lieber als ich. Ich arbeite gar nicht so gern. [...] wie sie das eben glaubt, dass es so richtig ist und es ihr eben Spaß macht und da passen die Sachen einfach sehr gut und .. sie wäre eigentlich dumm, wenn sie das aufgeben würde. .. Also, drum klar, soll sie das machen, soll sie weiter machen. (man I, first interview: 476-485)

Pleasure at work was for man I – like for the other interviewees who referred to this argument – not the most relevant aspect for the couple's plan. The man also said that he did not really like to go to work; nevertheless, the couple never considered that he would take parental leave or reduce his working hours; this is also documented in the quote above since the man only spoke about labor market considerations regarding his partner's and not regarding his labor market activity. When describing the future paid work arrangement, the lack of pleasure at the workplace was for none of the interviewees an argument against their own or the partner's paid work after the birth of the child. This reflects that pleasure was not as relevant for or against paid work as financial or gendered aspects were.

Man G spoke about pleasure at work in a different way than all other interviewees. Woman G planned to take parental leave for two to three years. The man did not think that his partner enjoyed her paid work too much to stay out of the labor market for a longer period. He said that he supported her and that she could decide upon the length of her parental leave as she wanted. However, he expected that she would change her mind in the future when she realized that she missed her paid work and the related pleasure.

The importance of another area of life

When speaking about their future paid work arrangement, all but four interviewees mentioned that they weighted the importance of other areas of life and the importance of the paid work against each other. The most important area of life that was discussed by the interviewees was their family and more specifically their unborn child. In this weighting, the interviewees reported different results: Some of them expected that other areas of life would gain more importance

after childbirth than the labor market participation and correspondingly, they planned changes for the labor market activity. Others anticipated that other areas of life and their employment or self-employment would be equally important in the future; therefore, they did not expect significant changes concerning their paid work compared to the pre-birth situation.

Some informants who expected that their or their partners' paid work would be less important due to the child's birth concluded that they or their partner should focus on the child and take parental leave. The following quote from woman G exemplifies that for her, ever since she decided to become a mother, this automatically implied that she would take parental leave:

Well, for me, it has always been clear that I don't want to return directly. [...] I either bring a child into the world or I go to work. But both – after three months – shortly after the child is born, that I return to work, directly after maternity leave, I never thought about that; thus, this was immediately dismissed. The issue of 'how long do I stay at home' is still present at the moment. I have not yet decided what I really want. [...] I think that I certainly won't stay at home for the whole three years, at this time, I tend to take two years, but if it is really like that, I don't know, it will show when the child is here. (woman G, first interview: 599-607)

Also, für mich war es eigentlich immer klar, dass ich nicht direkt wieder einsteigen möchte. [...] Weil entweder ich setze ein Kind in die Welt oder ich arbeite. Aber so beides – nach drei Monaten – kaum ist das Kind da, gehe ich wieder arbeiten, direkt nach dem Mutterschutz, das war für mich von vorne herein kein Thema, also, das war gleich abgehakt. Das Thema 'Wie lange bleibe ich zu Hause' ist aktuell immer noch ein Thema. Ich habe mich nämlich immer noch nicht endgültig entschieden, was ich jetzt wirklich möchte. [...] Ich denke, ich werde sicherlich nicht die ganzen drei Jahre machen, aktuell tendiere ich zu den zweien, aber ob das wirklich so kommen wird, weiß ich nicht, das wird sich zeigen, wenn das Kind da ist. (woman G, first interview: 599-607)

Other women argued that the child would be their priority and that they would not return to their jobs for some time after childbirth. These women assumed that the childbirth would not change their partners' priorities similarly. Most male informants did also not expect the transition to parenthood to change their priorities of paid work and family. However, most of them believed that this would be different for their partners. The anticipated change in their priorities was difficult for some women. Woman D or L said that they struggled with this anticipated change since their paid work was crucial for their self-concept. Nevertheless, they concluded that the child would be their priority and explained their plan to stay at home for at least one year with this argument. The anticipated change in priorities for the women that led to the plan that they take parental leave or stay at home from self-employment included that the male partner would continue to work full-time.

Other couples expected that the birth of their first child would have similar impacts for both partners. Both partners in couples E and H anticipated that spending time with the child would be very crucial to them – but that paid work would not lose its significance. Couple H planned an arrangement that reflects the anticipated importance of childcare: Both partners would work part-time after the maternity leave. This plan was similar to couple E's initial ideas; however, due to man E's insecure labor market situation, the couple decided for a specialized arrangement in which the man stays at home. Couples E and H said that there were two reasons for their expectation that both partners would be similarly affected by the transition to

parenthood. First, they believed in gender equality, and second, men E and H had a strong desire to take active care of the child and to be as involved as their partners.

Other interviewees said that they did not weight paid work and other areas of life against each other as they believed that they could easily reconcile both areas. Mostly men reported this. Women B and C were the only women who did not expect that the transition to parenthood automatically led to a shift in the importance of areas; nevertheless, they assumed – like most of the interviewed men – that the child would be an important aspect of their life, but that it would not alter the meaning of their paid work. Male interviewees who did not expect substantial changes in the importance of their paid work planned to continue working full-time. The two women planned to stay at home for two and six months, respectively; they did not explain the planned leave with a change of their priorities but instead explained the reentry to their jobs with the continuing importance of their paid work.

In almost all interviewed couples, both partners had similar expectations regarding changes in the priorities of different areas of life for both partners. If, for example, the women argued that her paid work would lose importance with the birth of the child, her partner also reported this regarding her priorities. Couple F was different from the other ones in this regard: The woman believed that becoming a mother would change her priorities and that she would want to stay at home for a longer time. Man F also expected that the child would change their lives in general. However, he argued that being active in the labor market was his priority and that he wanted his partner to prioritize her paid work which implied not taking a longer leave. The couple reported that they spoke about their different expectations and, as a compromise, they planned that the man would continue to work full-time and that the woman would stay at home for some weeks after childbirth before returning to her self-employment in part-time with continually increasing working hours. Even though they compromised, both partners expressed the hope that the other partner would change his or her mind after childbirth.

Institutions and policies

Policies and institutions like maternity leave, parental leave, the leave allowance, or the availability of childcare places influenced the couples' decisions upon their future paid work situation. Almost all interviewees referred to legal and institutional conditions in their explanations.

Since maternity leave is obligatory, all interviewees planned that the female partner would stay at home after childbirth; this was also true for the self-employed women and their partners. Thus, all couples planned that the woman would stay at home for at least eight weeks after childbirth, most planned that she would do this for approximately three-and-a-half months.

Most informants spoke about the parental leave legislation. For some, this policy allowed them to plan according to their ideals; like woman N who always wanted to stay at home for three years after childbirth. However, others had a more critical view of the policy. Some

women reported to have the impression that the legal framework limited their options; parents had to inform their employer about their parental leave for the next two years within six weeks after childbirth. The informants expected not to feel competent to make that decision at that time. Their conclusion was to probably opt for a longer leave than they would if they could more easily change the leave agreement after one year, for example. There were also perceived limitations for the male partner; some interviewees reported that the man's employer would not want him to take parental leave. The German parental leave legislation is gender-neutral, both parents have equal rights to take parental leave; however, some interviewees argued that employers did not expect men to take parental leave. Most male informants did not speak with their employers about parental leave, but they believed nevertheless, that it would have been impossible for them. The following quote from man D exemplifies this. When he was asked if he feared negative consequences from taking parental leave, he first considered potential disadvantages for his career and then expressed the belief that his employer would try to hinder him from taking parental leave:

Disadvantages ... well, it is a private company, and there are only the owner and a manager and [...] I don't know ... disadvantage ... probably in the long run, yes. I don't know if he would even adapt to it. He would try to block it from the start, I am sure of that. (man D, first interview: 381-382)

Nachteile...Also das ist eine Privatfirma und es gibt nur einen Besitzer und Geschäftsführer und [...] Ich weiß es nicht ... Nachteil ... Wahrscheinlich irgendwie auf lange Sicht schon. Ich weiß nicht, ob er sich überhaupt darauf einstellen würde. Er würde versuchen von vorne weg abzublocken, da bin ich mir sicher. (man D, first interview: 381-382)

Man H was the only male interviewee who spoke with his employer about parental leave since he planned to take it. When asked about the employer's reaction, man H explained that his direct superior considered taking parental leave himself when his child was born some years ago; thus, he reacted very positively. Man H said that he would not have expected any other reaction since he worked in a big company that had flexible models for mothers. He, therefore, expected that taking parental leave and working part-time had to be possible for a man as well:

Well, it is also ... well, such an employer, like a big [company], in which it, in which this part-time work is possible for women, well, I have, in my working group there are two women who were gone for half a year or three-quarters of a year and who returned in part-time, well, ... then this has to be possible for a man as well. (man H, first interview: 592-616)

Ist halt auch ... na, so ein Arbeitgeber, wie so eine große [Firma], wo das, wo diese Teilzeitarbeit für, für Frauen ging, also, ich habe, bei uns in der Gruppe sind zwei Frauen die halt, waren halt erst ein halbes oder dreiviertel Jahr ganz weg und sind dann halt wieder gekommen in Teilzeit ja ... dann muss es für einen Mann ja auch gehen. (man H, first interview: 592-616)

Most interviewees did not report conflicts or problems with the employer regarding the woman's parental leave plan. Exceptions were woman C and I. Woman C said that she could not take an extended parental leave than the planned six months as her employer would only allow a return to her position – something she wanted – if she returned within six months after childbirth. Woman C did not say if she would have preferred to take a longer leave. Couple I

also reported difficulties. Woman I planned to take no parental leave, her employer instead expected her to take three years. Both partners of couple I explained that the employer tried to convince the woman not to return to her work as planned.

The parental leave allowance was another policy couples spoke about. Most of the couples were not eligible for the benefit as their income was too high. Since they needed two incomes to make a living, this influenced some couple's plans. Couple K explained that they planned the length of the woman's parental leave according to what they could afford. Since they were not eligible for the allowance, this period would be shorter than they would have wished for; woman K decided to take one year of parental leave and work part-time after six months. Man J explained that they would receive six months of leave allowance and, therefore, his partner would stay at home for these six months and return afterward. Woman J said that they would not receive the allowance and that she, therefore, would return after her maternity leave.

Institutional contexts – and especially the availability of public childcare places – influenced the interviewees' plans for their future paid work arrangement. Since, at the time of the first interview, children were entitled to public childcare services when they were three years old, there were few services for children younger than three years. Some interviewees said that since there was no public or private childcare available, the woman could not be active in the labor market – at least not full-time. Woman D, who is self-employed, felt that she could not decide freely about her future paid work as she was dependent on daycare that was not available in her region:

Well, socially, financially, as a woman you are, so to speak, in a state of dependency then. So, there are no spots in crèches. I cannot continue to work, even if I wished to, as they don't take children below the age of one year, and above one year of age, then I have to bring it to [another place], as here in this area, we do not have this sort of facility which takes very young (children) and if, then you have to register even before the date of fertilization. (woman D, first interview, 424-429)

Also sozial, finanziell ist man als Frau dann sozusagen in einem Abhängigkeitsverhältnis. Also es gibt keine Krippenplätze. Ich kann gar nicht weiterarbeiten, selbst wenn ich wollte, weil Kinder unter einem Jahr werden sowieso nicht genommen und über ein Jahr, da muss ich's irgendwo nach [anderer Ort] schaffen, weil hier in der Gegend gibt es ja auch nicht solche Einrichtungen, die ganz kleine nehmen und wenn, dann muss man sich schon weit vor dem Zeugungstermin angemeldet haben. (woman D, first interview, 424-429)

Woman I also spoke about too few places; the couple filled in an application for childcare facility a long time before the first interview, however, since the institution they chose had a waiting list with 200 families they did not know if they would get a place. Other interviewees had not tried to apply for a crèche but also spoke about the little number of available places. The lack of places implied that parents-to-be had to find other solutions if both partners wanted to work in the labor market. For some, this meant that the woman planned only marginal hours or planned her working hours around the man's hours so that he could take care of the child, others wanted to involve family members or private childminders. Couple H was the only one who planned for both to work part-time and care for the child in equal terms.

The policies and institutions set a reference point: the age of three. Parents can take three years of parental leave and the right to have a childcare place starts at age three. Even interviewees who did not plan to stay at home with the child before the age of three referred to this period; this suggests that the welfare state created a time span which couples who become parents have in mind.

Discussions

At least one partner in six couples reported they had discussions about their future paid work arrangement. The couples said that they discussed who would stay at home with the child and about the timing of the reentry into paid work of the partner who takes leave; some had also discussed before they decided to have a child about their general idea of parenthood and division of labor.

Couple F, for example, had conflicting ideas about their future paid work arrangement; woman F wanted to stay at home to take care of the child. Her partner wanted her to return to her self-employment some weeks after the childbirth to reduce economic insecurity that arose from both partners' self-employment. Woman F reported that they discussed their paid work ideas before they decided on becoming parents; the timing of her return to the labor market was a condition for her partner's willingness to have a child. Another part of the compromise was that the man accepted she did not return in full-time shortly after the child's birth. Woman F described their bargaining in a way that suggests that she wanted the child more than her partner and that she, therefore, was willing to accept his condition of a short stay-at-home period.

Women E and H also had conditions for their willingness to have a child: They had the idea of sharing paid and unpaid work equally; this implied for the men to be active fathers and for both partners to work part-time. Woman E who combined part-time employment and part-time self-employment at the time of the first interview described that she never wanted to stay at home for three years when she had a child and that she spoke about that with her partner:

Well, when we talked about kids, it was obvious to me that I won't back out of my job. And that I won't live the model that means to stay at home for three years and to return afterward. That was always clear. [...] Well, for me. Or ... or for both of us, too ... Or I made that clear to [partner's name]. And for [partner's name], it was also always clear that he wants to have his share of fatherhood. And that he does not have any ambitions to get sick from working at a 40 hours job plus you don't know how much unpaid overtime. And not knowing anything about it [the child]. But then, he also knew that I would not do that. But it was also ... it was clear. But it was just as clear, that none of us also ... Well, that none of us is happy with something like staying at home full-time. (woman E, first interview: 580-584)

Also als wir über Kinder gesprochen haben, war für mich völlig klar, dass ich nicht aus meinem Job aussteigen werde. Und das ich nicht ein Modell fahren werde, was da heißt, drei Jahre zu Hause und dann wieder einsteigen. Das war schon immer klar. [...] Für mich schon. Oder... oder für uns auch ... oder so habe ich das auch [Name des Partners] klar gemacht. Und für [Name des Partners] war auch schon immer klar, dass er Anteil nehmen will an Vaterschaft. Und dass er jetzt auch nicht die Ambitionen hat, sich auf so einer 40 Stunden Stelle, plus unbezahlt noch irgendwie sonst wie viel drauf, kaputt zu arbeiten. Und nichts davon [vom Kind] mit zu kriegen. Aber da wusste er natürlich

auch, dass ich das nicht mitmache. Aber es war auch ... es war klar. Aber es war genauso gut klar, dass keiner von uns auch ... Also das keiner von glücklich ist mit einer Geschichte ganz zu Hause zu bleiben. (woman E, first interview: 580-584)

When speaking about these conversations, woman E said that her partner always wanted to be an active father, but also that she made her position clear to him and that he always knew that she would not be willing to be a stay-at-home-mother. Man E also reported that he was aware about his partner's ideals. Therefore, when deciding for the transition to parenthood, both wanted to work part-time in the future. This ideal was not planned due to the man's rather insecure work situation.

Unlike the other couples who spoke about their plans before they decided to become parents, the discussions in couple A seemed to have been quite recent. They discussed which partner would stay at home after the child's birth. It was "clear" for woman A that she would take parental leave and she did not assume that her partner also wanted to stay at home. However, he said that he would have liked to take parental leave and take care of the child. Since the woman argued with his inability to breastfeed and connected the parental leave to it and the maternal role, he accepted her wish and stepped back.

Table 7: Interviewees' paid work plans related arguments for the first year after childbirth

Couple	Own paid work natural		Partner's paid work natural		Financial aspects		Self-concept		Gendered arguments		Breast-feeding		Pleasure		Importance of other areas of life		Institutions		Discussions	
	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂
A	-	+	+	-					+	+/-	+	+			+	-	+	+	+	+
B	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-		-		+		-	-	-	-		+
C	+	+	+	+	+		+		-	-		+	+		-	-	+	-		
D	-	+	+	-	+	+			(+)	(+)	+	+			+	+	-	-		
E	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	-	-	-				(+)	(+)			+	+
F	+/-	+	+	+	+	+			(+)	(-)	+				+	-	-	+	+	+
G	-	+	+	+			+	+	+	(-)				+	+	-	+			
H	+	+	+	+		-	-	-	-	-	-				(+)	(+)	+	+	+	+
I	+	+	+	+/-	+	+	+	+	-	+/-	-	+	+	+	-	-	-	-		
J	+	+	+	+	+	+			-	-					+		-	+/-		
K	+/-	+	+	+	+	+			+/-		+		+/-		+		+/-	+/-		
L	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	(+)	+			+/-		+	-	-	-		
M	+	+	+	+		+			+	+					+		+	-		
N	-	+	+	-					+	+					+	-	+	+	+	+

Note: The male and female partner in each couple are marked with ♂ and ♀, respectively; naming the significance of the aspect is marked with +; rejection of the aspect is marked with -; ambivalence is marked with +/-; no or no explicit statement is marked with an empty cell. FT in the column work arrangement stands for full-time.

Interrelation between the different explanations

The interviewees explained their planned division of labor usually with more than one argument and connected these arguments. The interviewees' ideas concerning the naturalness of the woman's paid work interruption were often connected to arguments regarding separate sphere gender roles. Interviewees who perceived the woman's future labor market activity to be natural tended to argue with gender equality or did not refer to gendered explanations. Furthermore, some of the women who perceived their future paid work to be natural and planned to work after the child's birth also referred to pleasure at work – at the same time, none of the female informants who perceived staying at home as natural spoke about pleasure at work. However, all of the latter also explained their plan with the importance of other areas of life while only some of those who perceived their future paid work as natural did refer to this argument. There also seems to be a connection to breastfeeding: Women who said that breastfeeding and paid work excluded each other, argued with the naturalness of staying at home in the first year after childbirth; women who said that breastfeeding and paid work could also be combined argued with the naturalness of their paid work. Financial aspects were usually not connected to other arguments in the interviewees' explanations for their future paid work even if the argument was often used.

Interviewees who referred to the importance of their career and paid work for their self-concept when explaining their plan to return to their paid work, often also argued in gender-equal ways and with pleasure at work. It could have been assumed that women who stress the importance of their paid work for their self-concepts would not argue with the importance of other areas of life; however, some of them did. Furthermore, all women who did not speak about their paid work regarding self-concept stressed the importance of other areas of life – namely their child – for their future paid work interruption or reduction.

Gendered aspects were not only often pointed out in connection to the naturalness of the woman's paid work, but also to pleasure at work and the importance of other areas of life. Women who said that the child would be their priority argued often with separate sphere gendered ideas whereas women who did not expect a change in their priority argued in line with gender equality. Furthermore, there seems to be a tendency of explaining the planned arrangement with separate sphere gender roles and breastfeeding; similarly, women who argued with equal gender roles often said that breastfeeding did not influence their future paid work. Institutions and policies were also often linked to gendered explanations; for example, most interviewees could only imagine the woman to take parental leave or connected her future paid work with the lack of childcare institutions.

7.2.3 Comparison of explanations for the pre-birth situation and the paid work plan

The comparison between the accounts for the division of paid work at the first interview and the explanations for the planned division of paid work reveals some continuity in the arguments; more common, however, were changes in and the occurrence of new explanations. In contrast to the pre-birth situation, there were more arguments for the anticipations, and the interviewees spoke about their paid work plans as something they decided jointly upon.

There were two similarities in the explanations of for the pre-birth situation and the plans for the first year of the child's life. The first one is the naturalness of men's paid work: All interviewees perceived the man's labor market participation presently – at the time of the first interview – and for the future to be natural. The second similarity concerns the importance of the paid work and career advancement for the self-concept. Interviewees explained with this argument why they wanted to be employed or self-employed both at the time of the first interview and for the future. However, these arguments seemed less important for the future paid work for two women and three men as they only spoke about it regarding their pre-birth work situation.

In a few arguments, there was more change than stability. All interviewees perceived the female employment or self-employment as natural for the pre-birth situation. Regarding the future paid work, in contrast, at least in five couples a partner thought it was natural that the woman would stay at home. Another argument that was more important for the paid work during the first interview was pleasure at work. Regarding the future employment or self-employment, the work-related pleasure was still slightly more often an argument in the women's interviews. However, fewer interviewees spoke about it.

Other arguments gained importance. This was the case for the importance of other areas of life. For the pre-birth situation, this argument was not very common. When explaining their plan for the future division of paid work, almost all couples referred to the importance of other areas of life – mostly the child. For nearly all couples, the increased importance of other areas of life implied that one partner would reduce the working hours or stay at home for some time. Financial aspects also became more relevant for the explanations. Only a few couples referred to economic issues when speaking about the paid work at the time of the first interview – and none of them linked the division of paid work to the income difference between the partners. In their explanations for the future paid work arrangement, most interviewees spoke about financial aspects; the income relation between the partners was often very important for the decision upon which partner would stay at home.

The interviewees also explained their planned labor market activity with aspects that were not relevant for the situation before the child's birth. Gender roles only became important when couples envisioned their future paid work arrangement. However, some referred to complementary gender roles as orientation while others used them as a negative example and refused them. Breastfeeding was another new argument; it was apparently no argument before

the birth of the child. Most interviewees used breastfeeding to explain why the woman and not the man would stay at home as they perceived breastfeeding and paid work as incompatible; others did not think that breastfeeding excluded paid work or thought that a short breastfeeding period suffices. Institutions and policies also became only important regarding the future division of paid work. For some couples, these enabled their desired specialized division of paid work. Others, in contrast, said that they would probably have a stronger specialization than preferred because of the lack of public childcare, or that both partners would return to paid work earlier than wanted due to the lack of financial support. When explaining their future paid work, some interviewees reported that they discussed with their partners over their future division of paid work. None of the interviewees spoke about discussions regarding the pre-birth division of paid work. It seems that the couples did not decide together about each partner's labor force participation before and during the pregnancy. When planning, the couples began to see paid work as a field of the division of labor; they discussed each partner's working hours as they then become more dependent on each other.

7.3 After the birth

7.3.1 Post-birth paid work arrangements

As expected by the informants before the birth of their child, most of them had a different division of paid work with their partner about one year after their transition to parenthood. All women stayed at home for some time after the delivery; some of them stayed at home for the two months of maternity leave, others were still in parental leave at the second interview. Most of the men did not change their paid work; man E stayed at home for some months before he started a new full-time job; man H took parental leave when the child was two months, and his wife returned part-time to her paid work after maternity leave.

Table 8 shows the couples' paid work arrangements at the time of the second interview and distinguishes between contracted and actual working hours. Twelve couples had an arrangement in which the man worked more hours than the woman. In three couples, the man worked full-time while the woman was in parental leave and was not involved in the labor market (G, L, N). In three other couples, the man was full-time employed while the woman worked marginal hours of up to 6 hours per week in employment or self-employment (A, D, M). The men in five couples worked full-time while the woman was part-time, between 10 and 30 hours per week, in employment or self-employment (B, E, F, J, K, M). Couple E changed their arrangement after a few months: After the birth of the child, the man stayed at home, and the woman returned to her part-time employment after maternity leave; the woman also started with her self-employment at increasing hours. When the man received a job offer, the couple changed their arrangement as the woman then took parental leave in her employment and continued to work self-employed for up to 30 hours per week. In two couples, both partners worked more than 30

hours – in one of these couples, both worked full-time hours, in the other the woman worked a few hours less than her partner (C, I). In another couple, both partners worked part-time with the man having a few hours less than the woman (H).

Most couples had an arrangement that corresponded to their plan, or that was very close to it. Some women, like women A or C, returned earlier to their paid work than they had planned; others, like women B or J, worked more hours than they anticipated. Woman K returned to her job after eight months and not as intended after six months. Couple E was the only one who had an arrangement that was substantially different from their plan.

Table 8: Paid work arrangements (contracted weekly hours and overtime hours) of the interviewed couples at the time of the second interview

Couple	Paid work arrangement (man/woman)
A	full-time: 40 hrs / parental leave + marginal: 6 hrs
B	full-time: 40 hrs / part-time: 30 hrs (self-employed)
C	full-time: 38,5 hrs / full-time: 38,5
D	full-time: 40 hrs / at home + marginal: 5 hrs/month (self-employed)
E	full-time: 40 hrs / parental leave + 20-30 hrs self-employed
F	full-time: 40+ hrs (self-employed) / part-time: 12 hrs (self-employed)
G	full-time: 40 hrs + 25 hrs overtime / parental leave
H	parental leave + part-time: 16 hrs + 4 hrs overtime / part-time: 19,75 hrs
I	full-time: 40 hrs +10-15 hrs overtime / full-time: 32 hrs
J	full-time: 42 hrs / part-time: 21 hrs + ca. 8 hrs self-employed
K	full-time: 38,5 hrs / part-time: 19,5 hrs
L	full-time: 38,5 hrs in shift work / parental leave
M	full-time: 40 hrs in shift work / parental leave + ca. 6 hrs self-employed
N	full-time: 40 hrs / parental leave

7.3.2 Explanations for the post-birth paid work arrangements

In the explanations for the postnatal paid work arrangements (see Table 9), some arguments were important that were also discussed regarding the plans or practices before childbirth. Others lost significance, and some new arguments emerged.

Paid work and naturalness

Only a few informants argued explicitly with the naturalness of their or their partners' paid work when explaining their division of paid work. The same was true for the naturalness of staying at home with the child. All interviewees perceived the man's labor market activity to be natural, and most of them also thought that it was natural that he worked full-time. Two men thought that working part-time would be better. Man E did nevertheless work full-time. Man H was the only

man who worked part-time at the time of the second interview. He seemed to perceive both being active in the labor market as well as taking parental leave and reducing his working hours as natural. His partner also described his paid work reduction as something natural; she expected him to stay in part-time work after the parental leave.

For the women's labor market activity, there were different ideas about what was natural. For some informants, it was natural that the woman was active in the labor market with full-time hours. This was, for example, the case for woman C. She took parental leave after maternity leave and started to work 10 hours per week afterward. After six months, she returned to her full-time work; she and her partner described it as natural that she worked full-time. Most of the interviewees considered it natural that the woman worked part-time. For women H, for example, the naturalness of her part-time work and her partner's part-time work was connected. She returned to her part-time job after maternity leave; then, her partner took parental leave and reduced his working hours. The woman explained that it was good for her to stay in her job but also that she would want it to be more normal for fathers to reduce their paid work as well:

She .. yes, so far, I actually think that staying in the job – well, I think that ... well, I think that this is a good thing, well for me, the development should be more that fathers have the option to reduce their working time and to be more involved in childcare, too. Well, ... that would rather be the model that I would favor than that one partner gets out of the job for twelve months and then returns to the job. (woman H, second interview: 396)

Sie .. ja, insofern denke ich eigentlich, auch dieses drinnen bleiben im Beruf - also, ich find das ... also, ich find das eine gute Sache, also für mich müsste es eigentlich mehr dahin gehen, dass auch eigentlich Väter die Möglichkeit haben, ihre Arbeitszeit zu reduzieren und sich stärker an der Kinderbetreuung zu beteiligen. Also, ... das wär so mehr das Modell, das ich favorisiere als dass jetzt ein, einer für zwölf Monate aussteigt und dann wieder in den Beruf einsteigt. (woman H, second interview: 396)

Some interviewees spoke about part-time female paid work as being natural as long as the woman still had enough time to take care of the child. This was reflected in the marginal working hours of woman D, for example. Man D had ambivalent ideas about his partners paid work; he thought it was natural in general that she was active in the labor market, but he also believed that, at the time of the second interview, it was better if she worked only a few hours. The other two women who had marginal hours did not perceive themselves as being active in the labor market but as being on parental leave and earning a little bit extra money. This also reflects their idea that it is better if a mother stays at home with a young child. Woman G, who took two years of parental leave and who was in a managerial position before the birth of her first child, perceived staying at home to be natural. The following quote exemplifies this; when she was asked about plans for the future and specifically about her future paid work, she said that she would work again sometime in the future, but that this was currently not important:

The plan for the future is, at some point in time, a second child. [...] And at some time, I will also work again. But that, is next year, is it the year after next year, is it sometime in the future, well, that is not really important for me at the moment. (woman G, second interview: 881-893)

Und irgendwann dann halt mal ein zweites Kind, das ist so die Zukunftsplanung. [...] Und irgendwann werde ich halt auch wieder arbeiten. Aber, das, ist nächstes Jahr, ist es übernächstes Jahr, ist es irgendwann mal, also, das ist mir im Augenblick eigentlich unwichtig. (woman G, second interview: 881-893)

In most couples, both partners had similar ideas about the naturalness of the female partner's cutting back on paid work. However, in other couples, the partners had different ideas about what was natural regarding the woman's paid work. Woman L, for example, found it natural that she planned to return to her paid work in the month after the second interview while her partner argued that he would have preferred her to stay at home for three years. The partners in couple J also had different ideas about what is natural. Woman J thought that it was natural that she was employed and self-employed; man J thought that it would be natural that she stayed at home but referred to their finances to explain why they did not live accordingly.

Gendered arguments

The interviewees explained their current paid work arrangement often with reference to separate sphere gender roles or with refusing these gender roles and arguing with gender equity. Separate sphere gender roles were commonly used to explain a division of paid work in which the man worked full-time while the woman took parental leave and was either not active in the labor market or worked at maximum 20 hours per week. The informants argued that they could not imagine the woman to be active in the labor market or to work more hours since she as the mother needed to take care of the child. Thus, being a mother and doing paid work – at least in full-time – seemed to be contradicting for these informants. The following quote from woman A exemplifies how interviewees argued with gendered expectations; she was in parental leave at the time of the second interview and worked in marginal employment six hours per week. Before the birth of their child, she used to work full-time like her partner. Woman A was asked if she and her partner ever considered him taking parental leave. She answered that he would have liked to take leave but that she perceived this to be her right as a mother:

He would have liked to do it [take parental leave]. [...] But then, it was always from my side, that I said, no, that .. is my right now, I want to have it in the first place, yes [...] He, well, he always said that he would also like to do that, yes, and he could imagine doing it. But then, I, as the mother, put myself in the forefront and I said, no, I'm the mother, I stay at home [...] to keep the classical ideals. [...] I just wanted to do that. (woman A, second interview: 1170-1197)

Er hätte es [Elternzeit nehmen] gern gemacht. [...] Aber das war dann schon immer so von mir aus das, das zu sagen, nee, das .. ist jetzt mein Recht, das möchte ich in erster Linie jetzt erst mal haben, ja. [...] Er, also er hat schon immer gesagt, er würde das auch machen, ja und er könnte sich das auch gut vorstellen. Aber da hab ich mich dann immer als Mutter dann doch ein wenig in den Vordergrund gespielt und gesagt, nein, ich bin die Mutter, ich bleibe daheim. [...] Um das klassische Rollenbild aufrecht zu erhalten. [...] Das wollt ich einfach. (woman A, second interview: 1170-1197)

When the interviewer asked man A if he could have imagined taking parental leave while his partner earned the family income, he did not refer to his wishes but just said that his partner had always expressed that she wanted to stay at home after childbirth. He seemed to accept the

consequences of his partner's wish to live a separate sphere gender roles arrangement: he had to remain in full-time employment even if he had wished to reduce his working hours in order to be able to spend more time with his child. Both partners described the man as being responsible for earning the family income. Woman A argued that she would not want to have any responsibility for the family income as she felt that her identity as a mother was too important:

Respondent: I do not want to take the responsibility I would have if I would, well, work part-time; and then I would earn more money, and we would then adjust our financial plan to my part-time work. No, I wouldn't want to go so far.

Interviewer: Well, and responsibility concerning what?

Respondent: For earning money, that I have my part in it and that I would become indispensable then, and I do not want to be essential; I am too much mother for that. (woman A, second interview: 309-313)

Befragte: Verantwortung will ich dann auch nicht auf mich nehmen, wenn ich jetzt dann auch noch mal, also Teilzeit arbeiten würde und dann noch mehr Geld verdienen und wir dann praktisch darauf hin den Finanzplan abstimmen. Nee, das, soweit möchte ich dann auch nicht gehen.

Interviewerin: Mh. Und Verantwortung - bezogen worauf?

Befragte: Auf das Geldverdienen jetzt, dass ich dann auch schon jetzt meinen Teil dazu beitrage und dann praktisch unabhkmmlich dann auch dafür werde, das möchte ich nicht, da bin ich dann doch zu sehr Mutter dann. (woman A, second interview: 309-313)

This shows that being a mother and being active in the labor market to a substantial extent and having responsibility for the family's financial situation seemed to contradict each other for this but also for other women.

Other informants referred to ideas of gender equity when they spoke about their paid work arrangement. They either had a division of paid work in which both partners had very similar working hours or wished to have such an arrangement but could not put their ideal into practice. Couple H was the only couple in the sample in which both partners had part-time working hours. Gender equality was a very central argument for their arrangement; especially woman H explained that they both would not be happy in a specialized arrangement in which one of them would focus on paid work as both wanted to share paid work but also unpaid work and especially childcare in equal terms. Both partners of couple E said that their ideal would have been to share paid work equally; however, after childbirth, the man stayed at home, and the woman returned to paid work after the maternity leave. When the man received a full-time job offer, both partners worked full-time for some months and then the woman took parental leave and worked part-time in self-employment. The couple still aims at having an equal arrangement of paid work and argued with gender equality. Both partners in couple C worked full-time; however, they did not refer to gendered ideas or ideas of gender equality.

Importance of paid work for self-concept

Some informants explained that their paid work and further career advancement were important for their self-concept and that this influenced the decision for their division of paid work with their partner. Other interviewees said that their paid work was not relevant for their self-concept

or that they were not interested in career advancement when they explained why they were not active at the labor market or worked marginal or part-time hours.

Informants who referred to the importance of their paid work or career ambitions for their self-concept said that they could not imagine being inactive in the labor market as this was an important aspect of their identity; most of the interviewees who explained their paid work with this argument were women. For some, this was one main reason to stay at home after childbirth for a short time before returning to their jobs. Woman H, for example, reported that she always imagined herself working in her job when she had a child since it was crucial for her. Man H also spoke to the importance of paid work for his partner. At the same time, both partners of couple H said that his paid work was not so important for the man as spending time with the child. Therefore, the couple decided for the woman to return to her part-time paid work after maternity leave and for the man to take parental leave then and reduce his working hours. When he was asked about expectations concerning negative consequences from his decision, man H said that this was not important for him as he did not want to achieve a managerial position:

[L]et's say it like that, leading positions in part-time, are as far as I suppose really rare. But that is nevertheless nothing, that, that I would go for or something that, that is not my thing. (man H, second interview: 500)

[S]agen wir mal so, so Führungsposition in Teilzeit, glaube ich, gibt's halt noch relativ selten. Aber das ist sowie so nichts, was, was mich hier großartig jetzt, was ich anstrebe oder was, was mir nicht besonders liegt. (man H, second interview: 500)

Other interviewed women took a longer leave than woman H but also explained that they decided upon the length of their stay-at-home period with having the importance of the paid work for the self-concept in mind. Couple C, for example, argued in this way. The woman took six months of parental leave and started to work part-time with ten hours per week after maternity leave; after parental leave, she returned to her full-time job. The man stayed in his full-time job. Both said that being active in the labor market and doing her specific job was very important for the woman before the birth of the child; therefore, she wanted to return to exactly her position as she imagined that her paid work would continue to be important for her identity. As the employer allowed her to return to her exact position only if she took no more than six months of parental leave, the couple decided to plan accordingly. When she was on maternity leave, her employer offered her to work part-time in the months between her maternity leave and her return to her position during; as her job was so important for her identity, she took the opportunity and worked for four months part-time from home. However, at the time of the second interview, woman C was quite unhappy with her job situation as she faced some negative consequences from her parental leave; she received an unsatisfactory evaluation for her accomplishments in the last year; the company noticed that her performance went down during that year but did not take her parental leave into account. She was angry about the lack of understanding that she could not do the same amount of work during her leave then she did before and after this period. Thus, her view upon her paid work changed and she referred to her

income as compensation. A consequence for her was to cut back her overtime and work the contracted hours. She still said that her paid work was vital for her, but the importance of the specific job changed since the first interview.

Woman F said that she did not want to only stay at home with the child. However, in contrast to other interviewees referring to the importance of their paid work for their self-concept, she seemed to be ambivalent as she also stressed the importance of not working substantial hours. She described that she would not have returned in the way she did if the couple had had the financial possibilities to forgo her income for a more extended period.

Career ambitions or planned career advancements also influenced the couples' divisions of paid work. Both partners of couple G, for example, said that the main reason for the men's full-time employment was that he planned to take over an enterprise in the next years. He was continually taking over greater responsibility in this company, and both partners argued that he could not reduce his working hours substantially or stay at home for some time due to this plan. Woman G – who was in parental leave at the time of the second interview – reported that her career advancement would no longer take place as she planned before childbirth. She used to attend to a future higher managers training in her firm before her pregnancy and stressed then that this was very important for her. With the beginning of the pregnancy, she dropped out of this training and saw no chance to restart it or to be assigned to a higher managerial position:

Respondent: [...] what I used to have as a goal for myself, to have management responsibility [...] And yes, I think that this won't happen.

Interviewer: The program for supporting young professionals means?

Respondent: Well, they sent me to specialized training, and they gave me first management jobs in the hope that if there would be a vacancy somewhere, that they would give me a team lead or another managerial position. [...] and this will not happen anymore. (woman G, second interview: 424-437)

Befragte: [...] was ich eigentlich mal so als Ziel für mich hatte, Führungsverantwortung zu haben. [...] Und ja, das wird, denke ich, nicht stattfinden.

Interviewerin: Das Nachwuchsförderprogramm heißt?

Befragte: Also, man hat mich speziell in Schulungen geschickt und mir auch erste Führungsaufgaben übergeben gehabt und mit der Hoffnung halt, dass wenn irgendwo eine Stelle frei werden würde, man mir dann irgendwie eine Gruppenleiter- oder sonstige Führungsposition geben würde. [...] .. und das wird nicht mehr stattfinden. (woman G, second interview: 424-437)

Woman G seemed, on the one hand, unhappy with her forgone career advancement; on the other hand, she also said that she would not want to prioritize her career over her family life. For couple G, the man's achievable career plans and the woman's no longer accessible career plans were the most important explanations for the man's continuous full-time employment and one explanatory factor for the woman being in parental leave.

Financial aspects

Financial aspects were important for many of the informants to explain their current division of paid work. An income differential between the partners was often an explanation for a more

specialized paid work arrangement in comparison to the pre-birth arrangement. Other interviewees referred to financial needs to explain why both partners were active in the labor market. The interviewees also spoke about financial dependency or the responsibility for the family income.

Before childbirth, nine men had earned more than their partners, in four couples the man had earned substantially more. Therefore, income differences were an argument in these couples for the man to continue to stay full-time employed. The couples said that they needed his higher income while her employment was for some couples financially less important. Woman D, for example, explained that she would not be able to earn as much income as her partner did and that, therefore, he had to stay in his full-time job; since the couple also wanted that one of the partners took care for the child, the woman reduced her working hours. Woman D said that she would have wished that her partner could also reduce his working hours to share childcare more equally. However, this was financially not possible. Not all interviewees expressed that the income difference hindered them from living the paid work arrangement they wanted. In contrast, couples A, F, L, M and N, and woman G said that their income situation enabled them to have their desired arrangement. These informants perceived it as ideal that one partner stayed at home or worked with reduced hours and focused on childcare; they argued that they were in a situation that they could afford to have one full-time working partner and one who reduced her income.

Other informants referred to financial aspects when explaining why both partners were active in the labor market; they often said that they needed a certain amount of money to make ends meet, to keep their standard of living or to pay for liabilities and for that one income was insufficient. Woman K, for example, took one-year parental leave and started to work part-time with 20 hours six months after the child's birth. The couple claimed that it could not afford her to stay at home for a longer period if they wished to keep their standard of living and if she wanted to continue her further education:

Respondent: Well, it just wouldn't have worked. We would have had to forego the house, and I would have had to dismiss my further training since this also is some hundred Euros per month.

Interviewer: Mh. If you had stayed at home for a longer time?

Respondent: Exactly. [...] And there were really these issues that we said to ourselves, well, both of us studied, and it can't be like that that we have to turn every cent five times. (woman K, second interview: 1044-1053)

Befragte: Also, es wäre halt, es wäre einfach nicht gegangen. Also wir hätten dann auf's Haus verzichten müssen und ich hätte meine Ausbildung abbrechen müssen, weil halt da auch jeden Monat ein paar hundert Euro einfach weggehen.

Interviewerin: Mh. Wenn Sie länger zu Hause geblieben wären?

Befragte: Genau. [...] Und es waren halt wirklich so Dinge, wo wir uns gesagt, also wir haben beide studiert und das kann's ja dann eigentlich nicht gewesen sein, dass man dann wirklich jeden Cent fünfmal umdrehen muss. (woman K, second interview: 1044-1053)

Man C argued similarly that it would be unreasonable if his partner would not be active in the labor market since she spent so much time on her education. Others like man I said that there

was no financial need for his wife to do paid work since his income would be enough to support the family, but that she wanted to stay in her job.

Couples who changed their paid work arrangements during the transition to parenthood often spoke about what this change implied for financial dependency on the one hand and for the need to provide the family income – or large parts of it – on the other hand. With one exception, men E, only women were financially dependent on their partners' income. For some women, it was quite difficult to spend their partner's money on things for themselves. Woman C, for example, reported these problems. She was full-time employed before childbirth and had a similar income to her partner. After the birth, she took parental leave for six months and started to work 10 hours per week after maternity leave. After six months of leave, she returned to her full-time job. When asked about her current paid work she referred to the financial situation when she was in parental leave and how she felt then:

Respondent: Yes, it is a bit of freedom, naturally. You have your own income ... the six months, well, it was like: Hm, I'd really like to have these shoes .. can I buy them? It is, when you've always worked, it is a weird feeling. [...] That I, I have to ask someone else to spend money. [...]

Interviewer: Mh. And this was really as weird for you, I mean, I don't know how you deal with your, your bank accounts? But was it that you have or had asked your husband for money?

Respondent: No, he did, he did everything freely – but nevertheless, well, it somehow was like mh [...] At that moment, it is not your money that you spend, and it is just like, he really did great, well just .. without any complaints he said immediately, look, like that and that, and we share it and that is all. But it was just like .. the feeling, don't I spend your money right now? [...] Well, he really equaled it out for me, completely, since he said, well, listen, what you have as non-income now .. we share the damage, to say it like that [...] That was great, I found it impressive. [...] But [...].

Interviewer: It was still a problem for you?

Respondent: Yes, yes. (woman C, second interview: 744-789)

Befragte: Ja, es ist ein Stück Freiheit, logisch. Du hast dein eigenes Einkommen. .. Die sechs Monate ja, so nach dem Motto: Mh, ich hätt jetzt gerne das Paar Schuhe .. kann ich mir die kaufen? Das ist, wenn du immer gearbeitet hast, das ist so ein komisches Gefühl. [...] Dass ich, ich jemand anders fragen muss, für Geld ausgeben. [...]

Interviewerin: Mh. War das, war das denn so komisch, ich meine, ich weiß ja nicht, wie Sie ihre, ihre Konten oder so einteilen? Aber, war das so, dass Sie dann Ihren Mann um Geld gebeten haben oder hatten?

Befragte: Nein, er hat, er hat es freiwillig alles - aber trotzdem, also irgendwie so mh. [...] Das ist ja in dem Moment nicht dein Geld, was du aus gibst, sondern es ist einfach nur, Er hat's großartig gemacht, also nur .. anstandslos hat er sofort gesagt, pass mal auf, so und so und wir teilen das und das ist alles. Aber es war halt irgendwie so .. das Gefühl, geb ich da nicht gerade dein Geld aus? [...] Also, er hat mir das voll ausgeglichen, weil er gesagt hat, pass mal auf, das was du jetzt an Nichtgehalt hast, .. den, den Schaden teilen wir uns sozusagen. [...] Das war toll, fand's klasse. [...] Aber [...].

Interviewerin: Bei Ihnen im Kopf war's so das Problem?

Befragte: Ja, ja. (woman C, second interview: 744-789)

Feeling dependent or not knowing if it was good to spend the partner's money on private things was also a problem for women who had less income than their partners before the birth of the child. Woman M, for example, explained that she had no issues with spending her partner's money on groceries, but for buying things on herself. For some of the men, it was an issue to speak about being the providers for the family. Man M, for example, said that it was noticeable

that the woman's income was lacking and that the couple's financial situation was more difficult with just his salary – in which he neglected that she still worked some hours self-employed. Some interviewees also worried about their financial security since they relied on one or mostly one income. The income of the women who reduced their working hours in the first year after the child's birth had another weight for both partners. An example here is man D. He argued that the income of his partner who works a few hours per month in self-employment had more the character of pocket money than being a relevant part of the family income; it was his money that was the family income.

Importance of other areas of life

Many interviewees said that their private life gained more importance in the transition to parenthood and that their work life lost significance for them. Especially the child and spending time with the child was crucial for them. Mostly women argued with changed priorities when explaining why they were staying at home, reduced their working hours, or did not consider working more hours at the time of the second interview.

Women who explained staying at home with the importance of the child and their family life argued that a certain span of the child's life was very crucial for its development. Implicitly, this included that they were responsible for taking care that this time provided the child with the best conditions. Woman N, for example, argued with the importance of the first three years for the child's development; she also explained that she always wanted to stay at home with the child for three years and that she enjoyed being at home with the child and caring for it. Woman G also spoke about the child as her priority. Additionally, she said that she would wish to go back to her job eventually. This was no realistic option for her. However, she believed that her child would want to spend as much time with the mother as possible, thus she expected the child to suffer from her potential employment. Since the well-being of the child was more important than her wish to be active in the labor market, woman G decided to take parental leave:

And I would wish that I could do my old job again, but if I look at it realistically: If I would do that, [child's name] would suffer, and I don't want that. [...] And then I have to back off. [Interviewer asks what the interviewee means when she expects the child to suffer.] Because then I wouldn't be there .. Well, let's say it like that, I would feel like that in her place. [...] that it is something negative when the mom is not or only seldom around. Perhaps she wouldn't have these bad feelings, but [...] well, I just don't want it. (woman G, second interview: 277-294)

Und ich würde mir schon wünschen, dass ich meinen alten Job wieder machen könnte, aber rein realistisch betrachtet: wenn ich das machen würde, müsste [Name des Kindes] darunter leiden und das will ich nicht.[...] Und dann muss ich mich halt zurückstecken. [Interviewerin fragt, was die Befragte damit meint, dass das Kind leiden würde.] Weil ich nicht da wäre. .. Also, sagen wir mal so, ich würde es empfinden an ihrer Stelle. [...] Dass man, das als was Negatives, wenn die Mama nicht da ist oder nur selten da ist. Vielleicht würde sie es gar nicht so schlimm empfinden, aber. [...] Also, ich möchte es einfach nicht. (woman G, second interview: 277-294)

Informants also referred to the importance of other areas of life when they explained why they worked with reduced working hours. They argued that they wanted to have time available to

care for their child; at the same time, they wanted to be active in the labor market, were offered good opportunities by their employers or needed their income to make ends meet. Man H, the only man in the sample who was in parental leave and worked part-time at the time of the second interview, explained that he would not have wanted to miss the first time with the child. He described that child's developments in the early years after childbirth are most important, and he wanted to see the child go through these developmental phases. At the same time, he said that there are always new experiences at the workplace, so he decided to take leave to experience this unique time. When asked why he took parental leave, he said:

Yes and well, simply, I would not want to miss it. [...] Well, that .. well, in one colleagues' office, Mr. [colleague's name], there are such nice posters, like: 'Don't, don't miss the chance of your life.' And I also think, believe, that, that there are projects at work, there is something new every other year, but this doesn't happen so often. [...] And it just is a unique time, and I just wanted to use it. [...] This is accordingly important for me. (man H, second interview: 206-221)

Ja und halt einfach, also ich wollt das halt auch nicht missen. [...] Also, .. dass .. na bei einem Kollegen, Herrn [Name des Kollegen], hängen so schöne .. Plakate so: [...] ,Verpass nicht die Chance deines Lebens.' Und ich, ich finde auch, mein, dass, dass so Projekte an der Arbeit, da gibt's halt wirklich alle zwei Jahres was Neues, aber das gibt's eben nicht so oft. [...] Und das ist halt einfach eine einmalige Zeit und die wollt ich halt einfach nutzen.[...] .. Das ist mir halt auch, halt dementsprechend wichtig. (man H, second interview: 206-221)

At the same time, neither he nor his partner who worked part-time before and after the birth of the child could imagine that one of them stayed at home without being active in the labor market.

Other informants prioritized staying at home with the child over their paid work and had not planned to return to their paid work as early as they eventually did. For example, in couples A, D, and M the men were full-time employed while the women stayed at home and worked less than one full day per week. These women planned to stay at home with the child for at least the first year of its life. Women A and D considered before childbirth to do some paid work, but it was not clear if that would start within the first year of the child's life. Woman M wanted to do some self-employed work during her parental leave, but she had not planned when she would return to her self-employment before the childbirth. These three women were contacted by their boss or clients and asked if they could imagine returning earlier than they intended to their jobs for at least some hours per week – which they did. They could not imagine extending their working hours since caring for the child was more important than their paid work for them. Women A and D said when they were asked if they planned to increase the working hours that they wanted to prioritize the family and would reconsider this when the child was old enough – without referring to a certain age. Woman M planned to stay in parental leave for three years.

Discussions

Some informants said that they discussed their division of paid work with their partners. The couples discussed when the partners had different ideas concerning paid work; others reported that they never had to discuss.

Some women said that they always knew that they would not want to become homemakers when having children; they would want to stay active in the labor market and share paid and unpaid work with their partners. Since this was important for them, they spoke about their ideas with their partners before deciding to become parents. Woman H, who worked as her husband part-time hours since the third month after childbirth, referred to these discussions. She said that she was not sure if she would have wanted to become parents if her husband would not have been willing to take parental leave. This consideration was only hypothetical since both partners had similar ideas as she explained when asked about her and her husband's ideals:

No, we didn't have any differences. But I have to admit that if my husband would have said that he would not like that. [...] I don't know if I would have wanted to have a child. Since the idea of staying at home all week with the child and having nothing else ... I don't know, but I think that this wouldn't be for me. (woman H, second interview: 258-261)

Nee, gab's eigentlich keine Meinungsverschiedenheiten. ich muss allerdings sagen, wenn mein Mann gesagt hätte, er möchte das nicht. [...] Weiß ich nicht, ob ich ein Kind hätte haben wollen. Weil, also die Vorstellung, die ganze Woche mit dem Kind zu Hause und nichts anderes ... weiß ich nicht so, wär glaube ich nicht ganz so meins. (woman H, second interview: 258-261)

Couple E also said that they discussed their future division of labor and their ideas about an ideal division very frequently before they became parents. Both believed that it would be best if they shared paid work in almost equal terms; however, in the end, they had a different arrangement. After the birth of the child, man E stayed at home, and woman E returned to her part-time employment after maternity leave; after some weeks, she increased her self-employed hours so that she worked full-time hours. Man E applied for jobs and was looking for a part-time position, but was offered a full-time position. The couple discussed this offer and decided that he should take it; at the same time, they concluded that they could not manage both of them working full-time. As a result, the woman took parental leave and continued to be self-employed with part-time hours. They decided to forgo their equal sharing ideal as they already had when the man stayed at home after childbirth. However, it was important for both partners to speak about the ideal in the interviews as they wanted to put it into practice. To achieve it, the man quit his job that was not only full-time but also included long commuting; he changed employers to a company that was known for its work-life-balance policies. Nevertheless, at the time of the second interview, the man's employer did not allow him a reduction of working hours:

Respondent: I would like to reduce to part-time next year if it is possible in anyways. I already dropped that info with the employer. But he just nodded .. we have to bargain again next year.

Interviewer: Mh. But it is still, the, the, the plan, that both work part-time, it is, well, it is important, well, very important for, for you and for, for [wife's name], too?

Respondent: For us, for the three of us, this would be important. (man E, second interview: 833-839)

Befragter: [Ich möchte] dann nächstes Jahr [...] schon eigentlich gerne auf Teilzeit reduzieren [...], wenn's irgend geht. Ich hab das schon mal anklingen lassen beim Arbeitgeber. Der hat's aber erst mal abgenickt, .. müssen nächstes Jahr einfach nach verhandeln dann.

Interviewer: Mh. .. Also ist es schon dieser, der, der Plan, beide Teilzeit, ist schon, also, nimmt eine sehr große Rolle ein, also ist sehr wichtig für, für dich und für, für [Name der Frau] wohl auch?

Befragter: Für uns zusammen, für uns drei wäre das wichtig. (man E, second interview: 833-839)

Some men spoke about a very different way of discussing a complete change in their arrangement with their partners. The men usually had considerably more working hours than their partners. Man F, for example, said that he offered his partner to swap the paid work arrangement in a way that she could work full-time while he would work part-time. However, since he said that he suggested this change when they were arguing about his share in childcare and housework, this suggestion did not seem to be honest.

Other informants said that they never had to discuss with their partners since they knew that they had very similar ideas from the beginning. One such example was couple G who referred to the man's plan to take over the company – since this goal was so important for both partners, they argued that they did not need to discuss if the man could reduce his paid work or take some leave. Woman G said that she had to explain their division to her social circle as she only knew mothers who returned earlier than she did. She was the only stay-at-home interviewee who reported discussions with her social circle. Women who returned earlier than expected by their friends or family and man H described these discussions more often. Couples E and H, in which the male partner reduced their paid work at least temporarily, spoke about the social circle as unsupportive. Woman E, for example, said that she had to discuss their initial plan with her social circles and she had to explain herself. When they changed their arrangement she had the impression that part of her social circles felt vindicated that it could not work out that the mother works full-time and the father stays at home:

Well, I really found it difficult, then, after I returned to work, to ask for parental, parental, parental leave. And also like, .. you have to listen to some crap, like, well .. you, as a mother, want to return to work again and stuff like that, and you prepare for that and then you return and then. [...] Well, it is a little bit like, there you go, now you see that it doesn't work. [...] Well like that. That was a little bit of the resonance that I felt, like, ah yeah, Mrs. (name of the woman) thought that she could shoulder it all, or yes, we thought they swap roles or whatever, but it doesn't work like that. (Woman E, second interview, 1074-1083)

Also, ich fand's schon schwierig da, nachdem ich wieder arbeiten war, um wieder Eltern und wieder Elternzeit, Elternzeitantrag zu stellen. Und auch so .. da hört man sich dann irgendwelchen Mist an, von wegen na ja, .. Sie gehen als Mutter wieder arbeiten und so, wappnen sich und geht man und dann. [...] Also, es hat so ein bisschen was von, siehste, jetzt siehste doch, dass es so nicht geht. [...] Also so. Das war auch so ein bisschen eine Resonanz, die ich gespürt hab, ah ja, die Frau (Nachname der Frau) hat gedacht, sie könnte das alles schultern oder ja, wir haben gedacht, die tauschen die Rollen oder was auch immer und so geht's aber nicht. (Woman E, second interview, 1074-1083)

Man H said that he received some unsupportive comments, mostly from his colleagues, while his employer supported him.

Institutions and policies

Many informants spoke about supporting or hindering conditions – like the employer's ideas, the availability of childcare facilities, or other persons who can help with childcare, and the social circle – for realizing their desired paid work arrangement.

Employers' ideas were mostly discussed regarding the woman's paid work. Couple A, for example, said that the employer was supporting her paid work; she returned to work in the way she did as her employer offered her to return with a few hours after childbirth. Others described the employers' ideas as defining a point when to return at the latest: Couple C explained that the woman wanted to return to the exact job she held before the child's birth – and not, as provided by the parental leave legislation, an equitable job; the employer only allowed her to do so if she returned in full-time after a maximum of six months of parental leave. Additionally, she was able to return after maternity leave on a part-time basis as her employer offered her to work from home for ten hours per week. Despite this offer, she reported that she was disappointed since her boss expected her to do the same amount of work in the last year as in the year before even though she was on parental leave for six months. Woman J described outstanding support from her employer; he allowed her to bring the child with her to work and sometimes he took the baby and comforted it.

Other informants perceived the employer as a hindrance to a different division of paid work. They said, for example, that they could not imagine that the man's employer would allow him taking parental leave, working from home or reducing the working hours – and this although both parents have the right to take leave or reduce working hours. Man D, for example, said that he would wish to have a couple of home office days per months to be able to spend more time with the child on these days. However, the employer did not support this idea. Since he just changed employers, he did not want to press this issue. Especially men argued that they could not reduce their working hours due to their employers.

The other major topic, interviewees referred to when speaking about supporting or hindering conditions was public or private childcare. For some, this was a supporting factor; they explained that both partners were able to be active in the labor market since someone else took care of the child during their working hours. This was more often an argument linked to the woman's paid work since the man's paid work was perceived to be natural. Thus, having a childcare facility, a childminder or relatives at hand to take care of the child was an explanation for the woman's labor market activity. Couple H realized their ideal without childcare help and said that they would not need this support as they organized their working days in a way that either the woman or the man took care for the child while the other one was at the workplace. For other interviewees, the absence of childcare facilities or relatives who could engage in childcare was described as a hindrance for the woman to pursue her job or to work more hours.

Some informants – like couples J and K and woman F – also referred to the parental leave legislation and especially the leave allowance and said that they would have decided for a more

extended leave if there would have been some income compensation. Other interviewees – like couple C – said that the man might have taken parental leave if there would have been a compensation for the forgone income.

Table 9: Interviewees' paid work-related arguments at the time of the second interview

Couple	Own paid work natural		Partner's paid work natural		Gendered arguments		Self-concept		Financial aspects		Importance of other areas of life		Discussions		Institutions and policies	
	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂
A	-	+	+	-	+	+/-		-	+/-	-	+		+	+	+	+
B	+	+	+	+		-	+		+	+	+				+	+
C	+	+	+	+			+/-	-	+	+			-	-	+	+
D	+	+	+	+/-	-		-	+/-	+	+/-	+				-	-
E	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+		-			+	+	-	-
F	+	+	+	+	+/-	+	+		+	+/-	+	+		+		+
G	-	+	+	+/-	+	+/-	-	+	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-
H	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+/-		-	+	+	+		+	+/-
I	+/-	+	+	+/-		+	+	+	+	-			+	-	+/-	-
J	+	+	+	-		+	+/-		+	+					+	+
K	+	+	+	+		-	+	+	+	+					+/-	+/-
L	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+/-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+/-
M	-	+	+	-	+	+	+		+	+	+	+	-	-	+	
N	-	+	+	-	+	+	-			+	+	-	-	-	+	

Note: The male and female partners in each couple are marked with ♂ and ♀, respectively; naming the significance of the aspect is marked with +; rejection of the aspect is marked with -; ambivalence is marked with +/-; no or no explicit statement is marked with an empty cell.

Interrelations between different explanations

The naturalness of the female labor market participation or non-participation was closely connected to the informants' ideas about gender inequality or gender equality. Informants who perceived the woman's paid work to be natural had more often gender-equal ideas. On the other hand, interviewees who thought that it was natural for the woman to stay at home held gendered ideas about maternal and paternal paid work. Often, interviewees also referred to financial aspects in the connection of these two arguments; for example, they explained that the woman should care for the child, while they did not perceive her paid work as natural, and they said at the same time that there was no financial necessity for her income.

Interviewees often linked the importance of paid work to the self-concept with discussions; it was vital for them to speak with their partners about how they could find an arrangement that fit the importance of their paid work. Similarly, interviewees who explained their paid work

arrangement with the importance of other areas of life described this argument, often in conjunction with discussions as they also needed to find a solution with their partner.

7.3.3 Comparison of pre-birth and post-birth explanations

The comparison of the paid work explanations at the time before and after the child's birth reveals some similarities and more differences.

The interviewees referred to some arguments in both interviews. One of these was the naturalness of the man's paid work. All interviewees perceived the man's labor market participation at the time of the first and second interview and in the plan of the time after the child's birth as natural, hinting at an adult (male) earner ideal. The importance of the paid work and career advancement for the self-concept was another set of arguments the interviewees used to explain their paid work during both interviews and the anticipations for the time after childbirth. Most interviewees who referred to it did it similarly regarding the paid work arrangement before and after childbirth while these aspects were less relevant for their plans.

The interviewees referred to some explanations similarly regarding the paid work plans and the post-birth paid work arrangement, which was different from how they spoke about them regarding the pre-birth situation. The naturalness of the woman's paid work was one example. While all informants perceived the paid work at the time of the first interview as natural, this was different for the plans and the explanations at the second interview. However, some informants who perceived it to be natural that the woman would not work after the child's birth were ambivalent at the time of the second interview. A similar development was observed for the importance of other areas of life: The interviewees rarely named it in their explanations of the pre-birth situation. It gained importance in the plans as almost all couples referred to it. At the time of the second interview, around half of the informants referred to this argument when explaining that one partner – mostly the woman – reduced the paid working hours or stayed at home in order to take care for the child. Financial aspects were rarely spoken about for the pre-birth paid work arrangement. Regarding the planned division of paid work after childbirth and in the explanations for the post-birth division, financial arguments were used by most interviewees either to explain why only one partner reduced the working hours or to explain the timing of reentry of the stay-at-home partner.

Other explanations were not mentioned in the pre-birth situation but arose in the plans for the paid work after childbirth and were also important for the post-birth arrangement. Almost all informants referred to complementary gender roles or refused them when they planned for their future as parents. Gendered aspects were also crucial for the explanations at the second interview; however, fewer informants referred to this explanation, and if they did, they were more often ambivalent or rejected complementary roles. Discussing the paid work hours was not mentioned for the pre-birth arrangement; in explaining their plans, some interviewees spoke about discussions; they started to decide on the paid work hours of both partners together.

Before becoming parents, the interviewees perceived both partners' paid work as natural and thus there was no need for them to discuss their arrangement. At the time of the second interview, discussions seemed to be still relevant for the couples' paid work arrangements. Institutions and policies also became important in the transition to parenthood.

Pleasure at work was an explanation for, mostly, the woman's paid work that lost its relevance over time: It was named guarding the paid work arrangement at the time of the first interview and less relevant in the arguments for the planned arrangements. For the post-birth situation, it seemed irrelevant.

Breastfeeding was only named when couples described their planned paid work in the first interview. Since most women did no longer breastfeed at the time of the second interview, this was not relevant for the explanation of their post-birth division of paid work.

7.4 Interviewees' paid work explanations and the theories

This section compares the interviewees' explanations with the theoretical mechanisms and the presumptions for the couples and integrates the explanations for the couples' pre-birth the anticipated and the post-birth paid work arrangements.

The *new home economics* explain couples' divisions of labor with different productivities. In general, a specialization is beneficial as it increases the productivity in the sector one partner specializes. With the transition to parenthood, specialization is expected to increase as couples then do not only divide paid work and housework but also caring for and rearing a child. This argument helps in understanding the finding that most couples planned for a specialized arrangement for at least the maternity leave. In line with new home economic arguments, the interviewees did not refer to income differences in determining the paid work arrangement before childbirth and started to consider the income differential when planning for their future as parents. Income differences were often one main argument for deciding which partner would stay at home for at least some time. In contrast to the theoretical assumptions, one man with a higher income potential worked fewer part-time hours than his partner while this couple explained that achieving a desired gender equal division was more important than income. Another finding that was not expected against the background of the new home economics was that interviewees spoke about becoming financially dependent. According to the theory, households maximize a household utility function and share the gains from specialization – thus also the market income. The idea of being dependent on a partner was for some interviewees problematic which resulted in only a few completely specialized couples in the sample.

Bargaining theory assumes individuals to maximize their own utility by bargaining with their partners over pleasant and unpleasant activities. In these negotiations, bargaining power that is related to income determines the chances to reduce unpleasant activities. Therefore according to bargaining theory, both partners should want to be active in the labor market to strengthen their bargaining powers. The transition to parenthood affects bargaining processes as couples then

have to deal with a new area of unpaid work. As a result, the partner with less bargaining power might stay at home to care for the child. The fact that all interviewees perceived being active in the labor market before the childbirth as natural fits to the theoretical expectations. However, this changed with the transition to parenthood – then, the labor market activity was no longer natural for all interviewees. Bargaining approach assumptions allow understanding that most couples with an income differential planned and realized a paid work arrangement in which the partner with less income stayed at home for some time. Couples with similar resources would theoretically be expected to plan and realize an equal division of paid work since both partners want to avoid unpaid work. However, this was only the case for couple C. Couples H and K planned and realized in contrast to the theoretical expectation an arrangement in which the partner with the higher income reduced his paid work to engage in childcare. Theoretically, paid work is more favorable than unpaid work, but childcare was more favorable for some interviewees. Considerations about becoming financially dependent on the partner can be interpreted against the background of bargaining theory as a dependency is related to less bargaining power.

According to *social exchange theory*, intimate partners exchange love and commitment but also, for example, paid work against unpaid work. Since all interviewees were active in the labor market before childbirth, none of them was dependent on the partner to provide for income, but some of the part-time working interviewees could not have kept their standard of living. Social exchanges within couples became more relevant with the transition to parenthood and especially when one partner reduced the labor market activity. In line with these considerations, paid work was not decided jointly upon before childbirth. Couples started to decide together upon their future paid work during pregnancy. The interviewees described that they talked about who would provide which share of the income and who would engage how much in childcare. Moreover, they put this into practice after childbirth.

The *time availability approach* aims at explaining the division of unpaid work by relating to paid work, the amount of unpaid work, and the capacity to do unpaid work. In this, paid work determines unpaid work. In their transition to parenthood, the couples started to relate paid work with available time. However, they did this in a different way than it would be expected theoretically. They described that they planned for changes in the labor market activities of at least one partner as childcare is a time-intense activity. Some wanted to involve childcare facilities to have time for paid work. After childbirth, the interviewees also referred to these explanations.

According to the *doing gender approach*, prevalent normative ideas link paid work more to masculinity than to femininity. Normative ideas are even more pronounced for parents of young children. Thus it can be expected that gendered arguments gain importance in the transition to parenthood. In the pre-birth situation, a strong dual-earner norm was prevalent in the couples – which might be a result of selecting dual-earner couples; the interviewees did not link paid work directly to gender. Some arguments seemed to be gendered, but not in the theoretically expected

way: The importance of the own paid work and career advancement for the self-concept would theoretically be more important for men. However, except for one man, only female interviewees explained that their paid work was crucial for their self-concept. The men who spoke about this issue worked part-time in self-employment and thus did not follow the full-time norm. In the plans for the future paid work arrangement, gendered ideas gained importance in the interviewees' accounts. Most related paid work to gendered ideas about motherhood and fatherhood. They explained for example that the woman would reduce her paid work as childcare was more important for her; this argument was not so prevalent regarding the man's paid work. Others explained their plans with gender equality and described that they would not want to share paid work according to gendered expectations. After childbirth, more than half of the informants referred to gender roles when explaining their paid work arrangement; however, most of them refused the idea that men and women should focus on complementary spheres, but thought that mothers with young children should not work full-time. As theoretically expected approximately half of the informants either thought that it was natural that the woman stayed at home or had ambivalent ideas regarding her paid work. The problematization of women's economic dependency is not in line with doing gender assumptions.

The *identity formation approach* explains couples' division of labor with work and family identities. It assumes that individuals build a work identity when they spend time in the labor market and a family identity when they spend time in the family. Gender roles affect this process differently for men and women: For men, spending time in the labor market also contributes to their family identity while both identities conflict for women. With the transition to parenthood, this conflict should theoretically become more pronounced. Since all interviewees were active in the labor market before childbirth, they should have strong work identities. The identity formation approach helps to understand why all interviewees perceived their and their partner's paid work as natural before childbirth; why it remained natural regarding men's paid work after childbirth and why this perception changed regarding the woman's paid work. The identity formation approach also helps to interpret the interviewees' reference to the importance of their paid work for the self-concept as it were mostly women who used to work full-time before childbirth drew on this explanation for their pre- and post-birth labor market activity. Identity theory would expect them to feel a conflict between their work and family identity – which was only discussed by some of the women when they planned for their paid work after childbirth and in the interview after childbirth. With the transition to parenthood, most of the interviewed women reduced their paid work and explained this with a change in their priorities. Identity theory helps to understand why priorities change especially for women while men tend to remain in full-time paid work when becoming parents. The discussions of financial security can also be interpreted against the identity formation approach: Financial security was important for men who experienced being self-employed; since men's family identity is affected by their labor market success, income insecurity was more of an issue for the interviewed men than women.

The *dependency and gender display approach* explains the division of household labor with gender-specific meanings of financial dependency. Men avoid economic dependency while women avoid being providers as both would not align with gendered expectations concerning financial responsibilities within couples. With the transition to parenthood, gendered aspects gain importance, and therefore, gendered meanings of providing income and being (partially) dependent on the partner's income can be expected to become more influential for couples' paid work decisions. In line with the theoretical expectations, the interviewees perceived men's paid work as natural before and after childbirth; concerning the women's paid work, the perception of naturalness changed for some interviewees with the transition to parenthood. The gendered meaning of providing income helps to understand why self-employed men spoke before childbirth about the need for financial security while women in similar situations did not. After the child's birth, some women explained that it was difficult for them to be financially dependent.

According to the *egalitarian values approach* higher educational levels are connected with ideas about gender equality. The educational levels of both partners affect via egalitarian or non-egalitarian ideas how couples divide housework. It can be assumed that ideas about gender equality also have an impact on the paid work arrangements of couples, especially when they become parents. Thus, highly educated couples should share paid work (more) equally than lower educated couples after childbirth. All women who returned to the labor market within the first year after childbirth were highly educated as were their partners; however, not all women in highly educated couples went back to work in the first year. In line with theoretical expectations, there was a relation between the couple's educational level and the perception of the naturalness of female employment or non-employment. Especially female interviewees with a medium or low educational level perceived it as natural to stay at home after childbirth or were ambivalent regarding their labor market activity. Only couples with two highly educated partners spoke about gender equality concerning the paid work, even if they did not share paid work equally. Since ideas about gender equality relate to all areas of life, it can be understood why some highly educated interviewees spoke about financial dependency that arose from a reduction of the woman's paid work. The egalitarian values approach also helps to understand that a man with a higher income than his partner reduced his paid work to achieve the couple's ideal of sharing paid and unpaid work equally after childbirth.

According to *equity theory*, the evaluation of the fairness of a couple's division of paid and unpaid work is essential as individuals try to have an equitable relationship. Equity leads to more satisfaction for the partners, more stable relationships, and less distress. With the transition to parenthood, evaluations of which division of paid and unpaid work is fair might change. Before childbirth, none of the couples spoke about the paid work arrangement concerning fairness; this might be understood as they did not decide jointly on each partner's paid work then. They started making these decisions together when they became parents and planned for their future paid work. However, most couples did not address fairness aspects directly when explaining

their planned or realized post-birth paid work arrangement. Aiming for a fair division of paid work and deciding together about each partner's labor market activity, however, was described by some couples.

8. Housework

When the informants were asked about their division of household labor, they were also asked how they define it. Most of them thought first of all of the routine tasks like cooking, cleaning, grocery shopping, or vacuum cleaning. Some also spontaneously spoke about gardening, repairing, and caring for pets as household labor. Others considered these non-routine tasks as housework only after the interviewers asked explicitly about them. In the following, all routine and non-routine household tasks – except caring for pets as only a few couples had pets – that were done count as housework.

8.1 Before the birth

8.1.1 Pre-birth housework arrangements

At the time of the first interview, six couples said that they had equal shares of household labor (A, C, F, G, K, N). Both partners agreed that both of them did approximately the same amount of household work – however, they did not share every single task equally. In the other eight couples, the woman did more housework than the man. Most couples had a division of household labor in which one partner typically did some tasks, and the other partner usually did other chores. Some chores were done by both partners jointly or at different times. Table 10 shows for the household tasks that the interviewees named, which partner did most of it. The table lists all the tasks the informants spoke about. Since they were asked to name chores spontaneously, there were tasks for which only one partner or only some couples provided information. Another reason for naming different chores was that not all couples had to fulfill all chores – as, for example, gardening was only relevant for couples who had a garden.

The women did some tasks more often, like ironing or tidying up the kitchen, as the table shows. Cooking, preparing the breakfast or grocery shopping was in most couples either done by the woman or by both partners. Tasks done by both partners were either done by both partners jointly, such as grocery shopping, or at different times, such as tidying up. And some tasks were more often done by the men like vacuum cleaning, buying beverages or repairing, and crafting.

Over half of the couples had help on a regular or irregular basis in doing the household labor. In most couples, this was a paid cleaner who did most of the routine cleaning tasks, like cleaning the bathroom or vacuum cleaning. Other couples frequently went to restaurants to eat out or regularly ate at their parents' or parents-in-law's place who then provided the food. If couples outsourced at least some of their daily household chores, they divided the remaining tasks more equally among them. Regarding non-routine tasks, only three interviewees said that they had help. This was especially interesting since a few couples were renovating their houses or apartments and still did these tasks themselves.

Table 10: Interviewees' perspectives on which person – the woman, the man, both or an external help – did which household tasks at the first interview

Household tasks	Who did the task mainly?			
	Woman	Man	Both	External help
Cooking	A; B; D; E; G♂; H; I; K♂; K♀; L♀; N♀	F♂	C; F♀; G♀; J; K♂; M	F♀, G♂; N♀
Tidying up the kitchen	B♀; E♀; F♀; K♂; L♀		J♀	
Preparing the breakfast	F♀; G♀; H♀; I♀; J	B; D	C♀; E♀; M♂	K♂
Washing up/ dishwasher	B♂; L♀; I♀	A; N; D♂; M	I♀; L♂; G; H	
Doing the laundry	B; F; G; H♀; I; J; K♀; M; N	A♀; B♂; E♀;	H♂; L	
Ironing	F♀; G; H; K♂; L; M♀; N♂	J♀	J♂	B; C; I♂
Cleaning and dusting	A♀; I♂; J♂; K	E♀; F♀; H♀	D♀; F♂	B♂; C; F; G♂; I♂
Cleaning the bathroom	D♀; J♀; K♀	E♀	F♀; H♀	C♀
Wiping the floor	J♀; N♀	D; F♀; H♂	L♀	C♀
Tidying up	E♂; J; K♂	A♀; D♂; G♂; M♂	D♀; I; J♀; L♀; N♂	F♀; G♂
Vacuum cleaning	J♂; L♀	A♂; B♂; D♂; E; F♀; G♂; H♂; K♀; M♂; N	J♀; M♀	B♀; C♀; G; I♀
Cleaning the windows		G♂; H; I♀		F♀
Grocery shopping	F; G♀; H; I♀; K♀; M♂; N	B	A; C; E; G♂; H♂; I; K♂; L; M♂	
Buying beverages		F; G♂; H; M♂		
Taking away the garbage		F♀; H♀	E♀; L♀	B♀
Gardening		J♀; M	A♀; D♂; H	A♂
Administrational tasks	D♀; H	J♂; N♀		
Finances & filing the return		D♀; I; J; H; N♀		
Caring for assurances		H♂; I; J♀		
Technics/Computer		B♀; F♀		
Caring for the car		A♀; E♀; H♀; I; M♂		
Renovating	D♂	I♀; J♂; K	D♀; I♀; J♀	

Household tasks	Who did the task mainly?			
	Woman	Man	Both	External help
Repairing/crafting	E	A; B; C; F♂; H♀; I; J♀; K; L♀; M♂; N♀	D♀	M♂

Note. The table contains the information about the division of different household tasks from the perspective of the informants and distinguishes if the woman, the man, both, or an external help did a task. When both partners described the division of a specific task similarly, only the couple letter appears in the table. When the partners differed or only one partner spoke about a specific task, it is indicated with ♀ for the female partner and ♂ for the male. Example: Both partners of couple A said that the woman would do the cooking; the partners in couple F had different evaluations: The man said that he would mainly do the cooking and the woman said that they both did it.

The table reveals that there were quite often different perceptions of the partners within one couple; one partner described that only one partner performed one task while the other said that they both did this task. This shows that it is essential to consider both partners' descriptions to be able to capture their division of household labor. For example, couple J had different perceptions regarding ironing; the woman reported that her partner did the ironing while he said that they both did it. The explanation for this difference was that usually, the man ironed – as woman J reported – while both of them ironed when it was indispensable – as he stated.

The couples' divisions of household labor reflect what is also reported by quantitative studies: Before couples become parents, both engage in housework, but women do slightly more than men. Furthermore, as reported by Koppetsch and Burkart (1999), some chores were more often done by the woman, and others were more often done by the man. The assignment of tasks to the female or the male partner followed in the present study pretty much the suggested lines of inside vs. outside, easy vs. heavy, fine vs. rough, wet vs. dry and daily vs. non-daily.

8.1.2 Explanations for the antenatal household labor arrangements

The couples were asked for their reasons regarding their division of chores generally and for single tasks. The interviewees named various explanations, thereby, some partners agreed, some disagreed, as will be presented in the following. Table 11 provides an overview of the arguments.

Preferences

Many interviewees referred to preferences when they explained why they or their partners did or did not do specific household tasks. Preferences were very often used in the explanation of which partner usually did the cooking, general cleaning, but also for cleaning particular areas such as the floor or the bathroom, and for repairing and crafting. Some informants referred to preferences regarding washing up or caring for the dishwasher, grocery shopping, vacuum cleaning, administration tasks, tidying up, doing the laundry, ironing, and gardening. Furthermore, informants explained their overall division of household with preferences. Couples who used external help such as a cleaner always referred to preferences. Thus, preferences were

relevant for deciding which partner did which housework, mostly for daily tasks, but also for some non-routine chores.

The division of chores according to preferences was not only a common strategy but also a means to reduce conflicts as both partners would engage in tasks they liked to do or disliked less than their partners. When both partners disliked a chore, usually the partner who disliked it less did it. Some couples decided upon their whole division of household chores based on preferences.

The division of specific housework tasks according to preferences seemed however not always to fit the preferences of both partners. When asked, how they decided that the woman would cook, woman A said that she preferred to cook as she did not like the food her partner made. Therefore, she decided to prepare the meals and linked her preferences to competences:

It also just developed because I didn't really think he was capable of cooking or I didn't like it when he cooked. Well, I am really different there, and therefore, I want to cook, but then I don't want to do anything after it. That is why it developed like it is. (woman A, first interview: 221)

Das hat sich eigentlich auch bloß daraus ergeben, dass ich ihm nicht zugetraut habe zu kochen oder mir hat es dann nicht geschmeckt. Also, ich bin da sehr eigen und deswegen möchte ich kochen, aber dann dafür danach nichts mehr machen eigentlich. Dadurch hat sich das dann eigentlich so ergeben. (woman A, first interview: 221)

Man A also said that she took over cooking as she thought that it would taste better if she prepared the meals; he did not agree with her evaluation and also enjoyed to cook. Nevertheless, he did not fight with her over who cooked and accepted that she did it. The quote about also shows that while woman A thought that it was her partner's task to clean the kitchen after the cooking.

The use of an external help like a cleaner or relatives was always explained with preferences or aversions; when none of the partners liked to do specific household tasks, like cleaning, some couples decided to outsource these tasks. Man E, for example, explained that the couple just decided to hire a cleaner; he argued that they would have the time to clean, mainly because he worked part-time, but that they did not like to do it and that they were annoyed by cleaning and thus, paying someone for doing it was a good solution for the couple:

Then we said, no, it [cleaning] is annoying, and now we have a cleaner, a relative, she's a niece of my wife who comes to our place two times per week and cleans the apartment. (man E, first interview: 42)

Da haben wir aber gesagt, nein das [Putzen] nervt und haben eine Putzfrau, eine Verwandte, das ist eine Nichte von meiner Frau, die halt jede Woche zweimal vorbeikommt und die Wohnung putzt. (man E, first interview: 42)

Other couples reported that hiring a cleaner was solving conflicts that arose from the fact that none of the partners wanted to clean. Woman I referred to the man's preference not to clean when describing the couple's decision for a cleaner; sometime after moving in together, the man used to have a job in another city which resulted in a long-distance relationship. When he

came back from this job, he said that he did no longer want to do any of the cleaning. First, woman I did all cleaning, but since she felt stressed about it, and did not want to fight over cleaning with her husband, the couple decided to hire a cleaner.

Competencies

When explaining their division of unpaid household labor, the informants often referred to competences; they said that one partner was more competent or faster in doing specific housework tasks which led to this partner usually doing them. Competencies were often used in connection with routine tasks – like cooking, ironing, cleaning the bathroom, vacuum cleaning, doing the laundry and cleaning up –, but also to explain non-routine chores – like car repairs, repairing, crafting or finances. Some said that competences influenced their overall division of household work.

When informants spoke about competences regarding the routine household chores, they often said that the woman was more competent and therefore she did more of these tasks. Some also explained that the man was less competent, an example here was couple H who described that ironing was complicated and that the man was not able to do it as well as the woman. Sometimes, the informants linked the competence to perform a specific chore to time efficiency. Some interviewees also referred to preferences when explaining why the man usually did specific chores; for example, both partners of couple E reported that the woman was not good at cleaning and that therefore the man always did it:

And if he likes to clean the bathroom until it is squeaky clean, then he can do it. Well, I don't really put an increased value on that. Or on .. on something like hovering, I hate that anyway, like hell. Thus, it fits quite well. (woman E, first interview: 222)

Und wenn er gerne das Bad blitzblank putzt, dann kann er das gerne machen. Also da lege ich überhaupt keinen gesteigerten Wert darauf. Auf so was ... oder Staubsaugen, das hasse ich sowieso, wie die Pest. Also insofern trifft sich das ganz gut. (woman E, first interview: 222)

The previous quote shows that competences and preferences are discussed simultaneously. This was very often the case in the interviews. It seems as if these two explanations are often intertwined.

The interviewees explained the division of crafting, repairing, or caring for the car also often with competences: One partner knew more about these tasks and was, therefore, better suited to perform them. These competencies were sometimes connected to the professions of one of the partners; man I, for example, explained that his field of study was technical and that he knew about car repairs while his partner did not. Others said that the parents of one partner had a profession that was related to crafting or repairing, for example, and that this partner learned about how to craft or repair from the parents in his or her childhood and was more competent. Some connected competence and talent; man E, for example, said that he was

clumsy regarding repairing and crafting and that his partner was competent in this area and that she therefore always did these tasks:

Well, we bought an apartment [...] I always say [...] that I have two left hands. So, we have completely reversed roles concerning handicraft activities. I do nothing since I can't do it and I don't really have the confidence. [Wife' name] does everything. Also like, she constructed the baby bed. Yes, she does everything. The bed, as I said, was just finished yesterday. She did the carpentry or re-did an old baby bed. I can't do that. I really adore that, she also has fun doing it. She doesn't do it because she has to, she really enjoys it. It is her hobby. She also wants to, in the next time when we move again, as it is planned, she will want to have a workshop with machines. (man E, first interview: 224)

Also wir haben uns eine Wohnung gekauft [...] ich sage immer, [...] ich habe zwei linke Hände. Also wir haben komplett verdrehte Rollen was handwerkliche Tätigkeiten anbelangt. Ich mache gar nichts, weil ich kann es nicht und ich traue es mir nicht zu. [Name der Frau] macht alles. Bis hin, dass sie gerade irgendwie Bettchen schreinert. Ja, das macht sie alles. Das Bettchen ist wie gesagt gestern fertig geworden. Das hat sie dann geschreinert bzw. ein altes Bettchen aufbereitet. Das kann ich nicht. Ich bewundere das, es macht ihr auch Spaß. Sie macht das nicht, weil sie es machen muss, das macht ihr richtig Freude. Das ist ihr Hobby. Sie möchte auch irgendwann demnächst mal, wenn wir wieder umziehen sollten, was geplant ist, wird sie sich auch eine Werkstatt einrichten wollen mit Maschinen. (man E, first interview: 224)

Sometimes, both partners did not agree on if they had different competencies or which partner was more competent. This was, for example, the case for cooking in couple A as also discussed regarding preferences. The woman thought that she was more skilled in cooking and that her food tasted better than her partner's. Man A reported that his partner believed that she was the more competent cook – which implies that he did not agree with this evaluation. Nevertheless, they did not argue about that issue and woman A cooked on most days.

Some interviewees also explained that they did not want to achieve competences in a particular area as they wanted their partner to do the task he or she was more competent in. An example here was woman D. She explained that her partner always took care of the oven and that she did not want to take care of this even if she was theoretically capable of it; she had two reasons for this. First, she wanted that her husband kept on doing it as it was fun for him and second, she wanted that he had specific responsibilities. She feared that if she told him that she also knew how to care for the oven, he would no longer do this, and her housework share would rise. Thus, not acquiring competences or not telling the partner about skills was a means to reduce the own housework share. Man H also talked about this strategy but said that he was not as competent as his wife in ironing and that he would have tried to learn it and would not pretend to be incompetent.

Standards

Different standards about how or when a task should be done were for some informants an explanation of their division of specific routine household chores. Interviewees referred to different standards most often in connection to washing up or caring for the dishwasher, cleaning, tidying up, or cleaning the bathroom. Some also explained their division of vacuum

cleaning, bringing away the garbage, ironing, cooking, and the overall division of household tasks with standards.

Many informants referred to standards when they explained which partner took over the cleaning for example; one partner thought that it was dirty while the other thought that it was not yet necessary to clean. The partner with the higher standard recognized the necessity and did the cleaning earlier than the other partner would have. Woman L referred to different standards when explaining why usually she washed up:

He always says: 'It doesn't have to be tidied up immediately, well, just laying it down for a while in the sink, it doesn't have to be done right away.' I always say, 'what is done is done.' There could be someone visiting, and then everything lays around. Well, there, maybe, since I ... he always says 'you, you always want everything, you always want to be perfect.' (woman L, first interview: 55)

Er sagt halt immer: 'Das muss doch nicht gleich aufgeräumt sein, ne, da lass halt jetzt das noch eine Weile in der Spüle stehen, das muss doch nicht gleich weg.' Ich sage halt wieder, 'was gemacht ist, ist gemacht.' Könnte ja wer kommen und dann steht das alles herum. Also da vielleicht, weil ich ... er sagt schon immer 'Du, Du willst immer alles, Du willst immer perfekt sein'. (woman L, first interview: 55)

The quote also shows that the partners spoke about their different standards and that the man was more relaxed regarding the timing of doing the dishes. The different standards did not only apply to the schedule of household chores, but also to how they should be done. Some interviewees thought that it would be cleaner if they did it instead of the partner. The following quote from woman A illustrates these different standards; she said that her partner would do odds and ends of routine housework but that she would not like him to do what was for her the real cleaning:

Well, cleaning or so, we do that at weekends and then it is mostly like that ... he might vacuum during the week, the vacuuming is done like every two to three days and then at the weekend, I most often wipe the floor. Yes. I actually don't let him do that, since the right, the thorough cleaning, I do that since I don't like to let this out of my hands. Yes, but like small things like washing up, hovering, tidying up, he does all that and then daily. (woman A, first interview: 308)

Also putzen oder so, das machen wir wenn dann am Wochenende und dann ist es meistens so, dass ... Also unter der Woche saugt er wohl zwischendurch mal, so alle zwei bis drei Tage wird gesaugt, und dann am Wochenende wisch ich dann meistens. Genau. Da lasse ich ihn dann auch eigentlich gar nicht ran, weil das richtige, gründliche Saubermachen, das mache dann doch ich, weil ich das dann auch nicht gerne aus der Hand gebe. Ja, aber so Kleinigkeiten, so spülen, Staub saugen, aufräumen, das macht eigentlich alles er und das dann halt täglich. (woman A, first interview: 308)

Having different standards was described as problematic by some couples as the partners argued, for example, about the question if a particular household task had to be performed or if it was not yet necessary. Sometimes the partner who had the higher standard was annoyed by the partner as he or she thought that the other one should know about the higher standards and try to clean more often for example. Man E reported that he had the higher standard regarding cleaning and was not happy with how his partner did; at the same time, his partner wanted their place to be tidier and was annoyed when he did not perceive the need to tidy up. For some couples, the different standards and the corresponding discussions and conflicts were a reason to

hire a cleaner. Thus, their solution for conflicts was to include another person in the cleaning process.

Gendered explanations

When explaining their division of housework, only a few couples explicitly referred to gender issues. Some of them spoke about gendered aspects when explaining why the man did the repairing and crafting or repairing the car. Others talked about gender concerning their overall division of household chores. Some of the interviewees referred to gender equality or said that both had to do housework, but they saw the man's housework as help and thus suggested that they perceived it as natural that the women did housework while this was different for men.

Woman A and J described that their partners carried out some non-routine chores more frequently; they explained that their partners were better suited to do these tasks since they were men. Thus, they connected specific characteristics, like strength, with being a man. When asked about who would take care of the car, woman A referred to differences in strength between men and women which made changing the car wheels more manageable for her partner even if she was able to do it:

Well, let's say, I'm not like that I don't think I can't do that. I also changed wheels and everything, and I can do that, but mostly, I let him do it since it is just faster done, as concerning strength, it is most of the time just easier for a man than for a woman. (Woman A, first interview: 73)

Also sagen wir mal so, ich bin nicht so, dass ich mich da nicht ran traue. Ich habe auch schon selbst Reifen gewechselt und alles und kann das auch, aber größtenteils wird es dann doch ihm überlassen, weil es da schneller einfach geht, weil von der Kraft her, es ist meistens dann halt einfacher für einen Mann als für eine Frau. (Woman A, first interview: 73)

Besides these particular non-routine tasks, the interviewees mostly spoke about gendered – or ungendered – aspects when they explained their overall division of household labor. Arguing with gender equality was more common than referring to gendered aspects. For example, both partners of couple A and L said that it was normal for them that both partners shared the household labor and they did not believe in gender roles that assigned housework to the woman. However, if taking the actual division of household chores of all couples into consideration, this did not necessarily imply that the interviewees expected both partners to have similar or nearly similar housework shares. For some, however, sharing housework suggested equal sharing. Woman A refused to do most or all household duties just because she was a woman and expected from her partner to be equally involved in doing the chores like she was. She also said that she thought of it as empowerment not to fulfill gender-asymmetric expectations regarding the division of household labor; however, she described that this might be different for her partner who usually did not tell other people about his household labor share. Not doing more than half of the household chores was a principle for woman A. When her partner used to be involved in further training in the evenings in the past, she insisted on him doing half of the

housework. This is different to for example couple E where the man reduced his housework share due to his further training.

Woman M was the only interviewee who argued that she should do more housework because of being a woman; she also explained this with her partner's socialization: His parents had a specialized division of labor where his mother did all chores, and man M never did housework before moving out of his parents' house. In contrast to this, man M described that he perceived it as natural that he also did household chores and did not expect his partner to do more or most housework. Despite this gender-neutral argument of man M, his partner did more of the routine housework chores. It seemed as if other arguments like preferences and available time were more important for man's engagement in housework – while for the woman these arguments and her gendered expectations are in line.

Some informants referred to gender equality on the argumentative level when they spoke about housework in general. But they described the housework in a way that suggested that men assist which implies that women are more responsible for doing housework. For example, man A described that when he moved in with his partner, he knew that he had to 'help' with the housework. Man B said referring to his colleagues that women nowadays were active in the labor market and that therefore the men have to help with the household:

The modern woman doesn't see her role classically in the household. I can just talk about my colleagues who are married or with a girlfriend, all the woman work. Thus, the men can't just make themselves comfortable on the sofa when they come home, all of them have to help. (man B, first interview: 186)

Die moderne Frau sieht ihre Rolle nicht so klassischerweise im Haushalt. Ich kann jetzt nur von den Mitarbeitern reden, die verheiratet sind oder mit Freundin, die sind alle berufstätig die Frauen. Also können sich die Männer nicht aufs Sofa werfen wenn sie heimkommen, sondern müssen alle mithelfen. (man B, first interview: 186)

Man B perceived his participation in routine household tasks as helping his partner; for some chores like cooking, it was clear that she did it more often and that she was responsible. Thus he assisted with cutting vegetables or similar things. Woman L, who expected that her partner also did housework, referred to him doing routine tasks like laundry, tidying up or cleaning as 'help' and said that she expected his help with housework. Labeling the man's routine housework contribution as help implied that the woman was responsible for it.

Available time

In their explanations for the division of housework, the interviewees often referred to time availability. Time was often an explanation for the overall division of household labor and the division of routine tasks like cooking, grocery shopping or cleaning. It was important in two regards; first, it determined the amount of spare time available for household labor; and second, regarding the timing, i.e., when during the day this time was available.

Couples with different paid working hours talked about the amount of spare time. In couples B, D and H, the man worked full-time hours while the woman worked part-time. The interviewees argued that the partner with more free time had a greater share of household labor as she had more time available. Linked to this argument was the idea that the partners preferred to spend their joint free time with other activities than doing housework. Woman H, who worked part-time while her partner worked full-time, said that she started to do more housework than her partner when she reduced her working hours as she did not want her partner to do household labor in the evenings after a working day:

Well, the division of housework was actually never a big issue between the two of us since we both have the attitude that you just divide it [housework] and I just happen to do a little bit more since I only work part-time and therefore I also believe that it is just right that, that I say that I do a little bit more and not, that since he works longer that he has to join doing something in the evenings. (Woman H, first interview: 158)

Also so die Verteilung der Hausarbeit war eigentlich nie so, so ein richtig großes Thema jetzt zwischen uns, weil wir eigentlich auch beide so von der Einstellung her schon denken, dass man das halt einfach aufteilt und ich mache halt dadurch etwas mehr, weil ich halt nur halb arbeite und deswegen denke ich, ist es einfach irgendwo auch nur in Ordnung, wenn, wenn ich halt sage, ich mache da ein bisschen mehr und nicht, wenn er dann halt länger gearbeitet hat, dass er abends dann noch mit sonst was anfangen muss. (Woman H, first interview: 158)

Woman H described furthermore that she tried to do most of the routine housework during her free time and while her partner was at his workplace; if that did not work, she and her partner did the household labor together. Woman D also did most of the household chores and explained this with having more free time; the couple decided that she would reduce her working hours to have more time for renovating the house the couple bought a while ago. Woman D explained that she left some tasks for her partner since she did not want to end up doing all unpaid household labor. Couple E in which the man had less working hours did not argue like the other couples; woman E did more housework despite having more working hours. Man E explained that his wife did more housework because he was involved in further education and needed time for that.

The timing of the free time on certain days or within weeks was also a determining factor for the division of household tasks in some couples. The informants explained with this argument why household labor was done at certain days like the weekend or at certain hours during weekdays. The weekend was usually the time when both partners had enough free time to do chores together. Especially informants with shift work – such as couple L or man M – or with fewer working hours than their partners – such as woman D, J, or H – said they had the time for housework in specific hours during working days. Couple L explained that they had no routine in timing the housework as both worked shift hours; the shift determined when the partners had time for chores. Woman J, who worked shorter hours than her partner, described that she often did housework in the morning before she went to her paid work that started later than her partner's. Also, couples in which both partners worked full-time without shift referred to the timing of both partners' free time when they spoke about their arrangement. Woman G,

for instance, said that she usually did the grocery shopping on their way home from her work as her working hours fit better to the opening hours of stores than her partner's who worked longer hours.

Time availability was also an argument for outsourcing tasks. Some informants – such as couple G and man I – argued that they had so little free time that they were not able to do a substantial amount of household labor since they had to recover from their paid work. Therefore, these couples decided to outsource household labor. For others, like couple F, the lack of time was a reason to outsource cooking on some days. When the partner who usually prepared the meal had no free time, the couple decided to eat out or to get take away food. The same argument was also used regarding non-routine tasks like repairing or caring for the car.

Physical aspects

The interviewees explained the division of some household chores and of the overall division with physical aspects; most often this was linked to the woman's pregnancy. Some of the men began to do more household labor or did chores they usually did not do during the pregnancy as the women were no longer able to do these chores due to the pregnancy or due to pregnancy-related recommendations by doctors or midwives. Furthermore, some informants explained that some heavy chores were more manageable for the man as he was stronger than the woman. In some cases, pregnancy and strength were related; the woman used to do non-routine work herself, but due to the pregnancy-related doctoral advice not to do any heavy lifting, the man now did that. Physical aspects were named for the division of non-routine tasks like repairing, caring for the car, or renovating in general, and since the pregnancy, also for routine chores like doing the laundry or grocery shopping.

The interviewees explained that the men stepped in when the women were no longer able to do chores due to pregnancy-related health issues. In most cases, this was a normal pregnancy side effect. In others, this resulted from some more massive pregnancy-induced health-related problems. This explanation was applied to routine chores such as grocery shopping or doing the laundry. Some men started to do the whole tasks while others only carried the laundry to the washing machine while the women still sorted the clothes or turned on the washing machine. Woman E explained that her partner started to buy beverages since she was no longer allowed to lift heavy things. She reported that the couple did not need to speak about this change:

We haven't talked about the [changes], but it just evolved differently. [Husband's name] now always does the beverage shopping. I used to do it. I can't do that anymore. Or he started to take care of things like the car and changing the wheels for winter. I used to do that on my own, but that is no option right now. (woman E, first interview: 869-870)

Die [Veränderungen] haben wir gar nicht verhandelt, aber das hat sich jetzt anders abgespielt. [Name des Ehemanns] geht jetzt immer Getränkekisten holen. Das habe ich früher gemacht. Das kann ich jetzt nicht mehr machen. Oder hat sich jetzt um so Dinge gekümmert, wie Auto und Winterreifen wechseln. Das habe ich eigentlich selber gemacht, aber das ist ja grad nicht. (woman E, first interview: 869-870)

Some of the couples were renovating during the interview as they were either moving or prepared their place for the baby. In this context, the women's pregnancy was also often an argument for the men to do more of the related chores. As the women were not allowed to do heavy lifting or felt less agile due to the pregnancy, they did less of these tasks but engaged more in other tasks. They often organized the renovation or decoration to compensate for not doing as much renovating as their partners. Woman J described that she supported her partner in the renovation with doing all of the less heavy duties:

But then I join covering the roof and I do then, I tidy up more behind them, again more not so heavy tasks, organizing everything, and maybe hovering and sweeping and eliminating the chaos, so that you can start a fresh one the next day. (Woman J, first interview: 239)

Aber ich habe dann mit Dach abgedeckt und ich mache dann, ich räume halt dann hinterher, wieder so die leichten Sachen, das ganze Zeug sortieren und irgendwie Staub saugen und kehren und das Chaos wieder beseitigen, damit man am nächsten Tag dann wieder ein neues anfangen kann. (Woman J, first interview: 239)

Usually, the men stepped in when the women could no longer perform a task. One exception was man H who did not engage in growing edible plants in the own garden – something woman H always did. Especially woman, who were very advanced in the pregnancy, and their partners spoke about the shift in their division of chores.

Discussions

When explaining their division of household labor, some informants reported that they and their partners spoke about or discussed their overall arrangement or their division of routine chores. Some of the interviewees said that they did this quite regularly. Others said that they agreed on a division in the past, and some reported that one partner more or less frequently told the other one when he or she should engage more in housework. The interviewees spoke about discussions in particular regarding grocery shopping, tidying up, or cleaning. Previous discussions were for some couples the reason why they decided to hire a cleaner. Others did not perceive a need to discuss or speak about the division of chores or the whole unpaid work with their partners.

Some informants reported that they and their partners discussed their division of household chores to find an optimal solution for both of them. For example, man E said that he and his partner used to speak about their division of household labor every time one of them was not satisfied with the situation and tried to find a good solution for both. He described that they stopped discussing housework as he was aiming at finishing his further qualification at the time of the interview and his wife wanted to support him in this process by doing more household chores. Woman E also referred to these discussions for which she used the word 'negotiate' (German: 'verhandeln'). When the interviewer asked what she meant with this term, woman E described that the couple spoke about her and her partner's ideas and tried to find an arrangement that is satisfactory for both partners:

Respondent: Negotiate implies to speak about it: 'What are your ideas, what are mine? And where can we meet?'

Interviewer: Mhm. Well, like talking about expectations?

Respondent: Exactly. And to discuss it, speak or communicate or negotia... negotiate in the sense that I think that not everything has to be equal. Like if you say: 'You have to cook for three days, I cook for three days.' Negotiate rather means: I do the cooking from my initiative all the time. I don't mind because I like to do it. And in exchange, you do the other thing. Something. Or I always do the grocery shopping, like when I go to work I can always do that on my way home. Or something like that. And therefore you do that... (Woman E, first interview: 861-874)

Befragte: Verhandeln heißt darüber zu sprechen: 'Was hast Du für Vorstellungen, was habe ich für Vorstellungen? Und wo können wir uns da irgendwo treffen?_

Interviewerin: Mmh. Also quasi über die Vorstellungen zu verständigen.

Befragte: Genau. Und ausdiskutieren, sagen oder besprechen oder verhand... Verhandeln in dem Sinne, sodass ich finde, es muss nicht alles paritätisch sein. Insofern, dass man sagt: 'Du musst drei Tage kochen, ich koche drei Tage.' Verhandeln heißt eher: Ich koche von mir aus immer. Das macht mir gar nichts aus, weil ich es gerne mache. Und dafür machst du das Andere. Irgendwas. Oder ich gehe immer Einkaufen, wie ich wenn ich zum Arbeiten fahre sowieso auf dem Heimweg dann einkaufen kann. Oder so was. Und dafür machst Du das... (Woman E, first interview: 861-874)

As the quote illustrates, the decisions in this negotiation process are made on the basis of preferences and the question if some chore was more practical for the one than for the other partner. Woman E also said that fairness is very important in their negotiations. Man F also reported discussions about the couple's housework; he said that discussions usually arose when one of them thought that he or she did more housework than the other one.

Other informants reported that they and their partners used to have different ideas about some tasks. One example here was the cooking in couple A. As described, both of them thought that they were good at it and wanted to do it; instead of deciding to cook together, the women decided to do the cooking as – in her evaluation – she was better at doing it. Man A seemed as if he did not want to argue with her about that. Since she did also not want to clean the kitchen after the cooking, she convinced her partner to wash up and clean the kitchen after she cooked.

In some couples, it seemed to be rather common that one partner did some chores after his or her partner instructed him or her to do so. This was most common for tasks for which the partners had different standards; the partner with higher standards would tell the other partner that it was necessary to clean up, for example. Others preferred to do chores instead of telling her partners; woman J described that she preferred to clean the sink from toothpaste spots than telling her partner to do it. The couples B, D, and H described another solution to their different standards: They decided that a schedule was better for them than the responsibility of one partner to remind the other one to do housework. The partners sat down on a regular basis and decided together for the following week who would do which chores.

Some couples also described their decision to outsource routine household labor with earlier discussion processes or with arguments they used to have. For example, couple I explained that the man did no longer want to clean and told his partner this. As the woman could neither convince him to change his mind nor wanted to do all the cleaning on her own,

they decided to hire a cleaner. Woman G reported that hiring a cleaner reduced their arguments as then both partners had to do less housework.

When the interviewers asked about how the couples developed their division of labor, some informants said that they never really discussed or talked about it with their partners. They explained, for instance, that it was just clear for them that both partners did household labor and that there was no need to speak about it. This was more often the case in couples in which the woman performed a greater share, like couple M.

Pragmatism/perceived naturalness

The couples described their housework arrangement partly with pragmatism and the feeling of the naturalness of a particular division. The interviewees mostly referred to pragmatism or naturalness when speaking about their division of routine chores like washing up, ironing, or grocery shopping, and regarding their overall division of household tasks.

Woman I described that their division – she did the dishes, her partner dried the dishes, he bought the beverages, and she did the grocery shopping – just evolved when they moved in together. There was no particular reason – or at least none she could recall during the interview – for this arrangement:

And some things have always been like that, like for example, he buys the beverages, then I more often do the washing up, or he dries up or .. I always do the grocery shopping that just happened to develop randomly. (Woman I, first interview: 766)

Und manche Dinge waren aber immer schon so, so in der Art, er holt die Getränke, dann spül ich halt eher ab oder er trocknet ab oder .. ich geh immer einkaufen, das hat sich so zufällig ergeben. (Woman I, first interview: 766)

Pragmatism in contrast to naturalness was often referred to for tasks none of the partners liked to do. For example, man J explained ironing with pragmatism. Neither he nor his partner wanted to iron; therefore, they avoided doing it as long as they could. He was asked by the interviewer what happened when the ironing had to be done; man J said that both just ironed their own clothes when they needed them:

Then either she does it – well that – every now and then I also do it, well then if I need a shirt, then I iron my shirt on my own and if she needs hers, she irons it herself since we both just don't like to do it. (Man J, first interview: 218)

Dann entweder sie - also, das - ab und zu mach ich das dann, also, dann, wenn ich ein Hemd brauche, bügele ich mein Hemd selber und wenn sie ihres braucht, bügelt sie es selber, weil wir's beide einfach nicht gern machen. (Man J, first interview: 218)

Pragmatism and naturalness were discussed concerning the overall division of household labor. Most of them argued that it was natural to share housework. For some, like man A, sharing the household tasks was not unconditionally natural but dependent on the employment situation. He said that he did not expect his partner to do the household labor when they moved

in together as they were both active in the labor market and therefore found it natural that they shared this unpaid work. Other notions of naturalness have been discussed in the section about time availability.

Routine

When the interviewees were asked about reasons for their housework arrangement, they often referred to routines. Each partner did specific tasks on a regular basis. This was often an explanation for daily housework like preparing the food, cooking or cleaning the kitchen.

The explanation with routine refers to the couple's histories as they developed this routine at some point in time. When they were asked about the development of their routines, the interviewees often could not remember why they started to divide a specific task in the way they did. If they could remember, it seemed as if preferences and competences were the starting points for the routine.

Another factor that led to the establishment of a routine was a coincidence. For example, man B described that he would always prepare breakfast and that this was one of his routine tasks. The couple never spoke about which partner would make it, but it just happened to be him based on the fact that he was the one to get up earlier:

The breakfast just happened since I'm the first one to wake up at the moment. I get up at 6.30 am, and this implies that I prepare the breakfast. That just evolved like that. (man B, first interview: 75)

Das Frühstück hat sich so ergeben, weil ich derzeit der erste bin der wach ist. Ich steh um 6.30 h auf. D.h. ich mache dann das Frühstück. Das hat sich so entwickelt. (man B, first interview: 75)

Routines allow couples to be sure that one partner performed tasks like preparing food without the need to speak about it withing the couple. Some informants also said that not only single tasks were divided on the basis of routines but that this was true for all housework activities. Couples who lived together for a long time referred more often to routines than couples who shared a place for a shorter time; routines develop over time.

Interrelations between different explanations

The different explanations for the division of paid work were linked in specific ways. The interviewees used competence and preference very often jointly and explained that the partner who was more competent in a particular chore often also had a preference for doing it. Competencies and preferences were furthermore often linked to routines as they were the starting point for the development of routines. The informants also explained their division often at the same time with standards and competence; competences raise standards of how ironing, for instance, should be done.

Gendered arguments were often interrelated with other explanations. In general, gendered aspects were not in the foreground for most of the informants, and if they referred to, it was

mostly in interviews with the women. They described themselves as more competent for specific routine tasks. Men were more often seen as competent for non-routine chores. Some informants also spoke about standards in gendered ways and said that women, in general, have higher standards regarding cleanness or tidiness than men. They also ascribed strength more often to men and said some heavy tasks were easier for the man than the woman.

Table 11: Interviewees' explanations for the chore-specific division of housework and the overall housework arrangement at the time of the first interview

	Preferences	Competences	Standards	Gendered aspects	Available time	Physical aspects	Discussions	Pragmatism/naturalness	Routine
Cooking	A♀+; D♀-; E♀+; E♂+; G♂+; H♀+; H♂+; J♀+; J♂+; K♀+	A♀+; B♂-; E♀+; E♂+; F♂+; G♂+; I♂+			D♀+; D♂+; F♀+; F♂+; G♀+; I♀+; J♂+; L♀+	I♀+	A♂+; F♀+	I♀+; N♀+	F♂+
Tidying up the kitchen	A♀+; L♀+		A♀+; J♀+; L♀+; L♂+		E♀+; L♀+		B♂+; J♀+		F♀+
Preparing breakfast	J♀+				B♂+	J♀+		B♂+; D♀+	
Washing up/caring for the dishwasher	A♀+; N♂+		A♀+; L♀+		B♂+; I♀+; L♀+		N♂+	G♂+; H♂+; I♀+	
Doing the laundry	G♀+; G♂+	F♂+; M♂+; N♂+	L♀+		J♂+; K♀+	G♀+; I♀+; L♂+	B♂+; H♂+; N♂+	H♂+	F♂+
Ironing	G♀+; G♂+; I♂+; J♀-; J♂-	C♂+; H♀+; H♂+; J♀-; M♂+	H♂+			G♀+	H♂+	J♂+; L♂+	
Cleaning and dusting	A♀+; D♀+; E♀-; E♂-; I♂-; J♂-		A♀+ E♂+; F♀+; F♂+; K♂+; L♀+		E♂-; J♂+; K♀+	D♀+	F♀+; F♂+; H♀-; K♂-; L♀+	J♂+; K♀+	D♀+
Cleaning bathroom	D♀+; E♀+; J♀+; K♀-	D♀+; E♀+; H♀-	E♀+; J♀+		I♀+		D♀+; I♀+; J♀-	K♀+	
Wiping the floor	A♀+; D♀+		A♀+		J♂+	H♂+	D♀+		
Tidying up	F♀+; G♂+; J♀+; J♂+		A♀+; D♀+; E♂+; G♂+; I♀+; I♂+; J♀+; L♀+		F♀+; J♂+	I♀+	D♀+; E♂+; G♂+; J♀+		I♀+

	Preferences	Competences	Standards	Gendered aspects	Available time	Physical aspects	Discussions	Pragmatism/naturalness	Routine
Vacuum cleaning	E♀+; E♂+	E♀+	E♀+; E♂+; H♂+		J♂+		B♂+		
Cleaning windows	G♂+; I♀+		H♂+					H♂+	
Grocery shopping	B♂+; C♂+; G♂-; H♀+; N♀+; N♂+		B♂-		E♀+; G♀+; G♂+; H♀+; L♀+; N♀+	I♀+; I♂+; M♂+	E♀+; L♀+; L♂+; N♀+; N♂+	C♀+; I♀+	I♀+
Buying beverages						E♀+; H♂+		I♀+	G♂+; I♀+
Taking away garbage			E♀+				L♀+		
Gardening	D♂+; H♀+				I♂+	H♀-			
Administrational tasks	H♂+; I♂+; J♀+; J♂+				H♀+				
Finances & filing the return	D♀+; I♂+; J♀+; J♂+	D♀+					D♀+		
Caring for assurances									
Technics/Computer									
Caring for the car		A♀-; I♂+; J♂+		A♀+	J♂+	A♀+; E♀+	E♀-		
Renovating		K♂+				J♀+; K♀+; K♂+; L♀+	I♀+		
Repairing/crafting	A♂+; D♀+; E♂+; L♀+	D♀-; D♂+; E♂+; F♂+; I♀+; I♂+; J♀+; J♂+; K♀+; L♀+		J♀+	D♀+; D♂+	B♀+; C♀+; J♀+; L♀+	I♀+	L♂+	
Overall division	B♀+; D♀+; F♂-; G♂+;	A♀+; B♀+; C♂+; D♀+;	A♀+; B♀+; E♂+; F♀+;	A♀-; A♂-; C♂-; E♀-;	B♀+; B♂+; C♀+; C♂+;	I♀+; I♂+; L♀+; L♂+	A♂+; B♀+; C♀+; C♂+;	A♀+; A♂+; B♀+; C♀+;	B♂+; F♂+;

	Preferences	Competences	Standards	Gendered aspects	Available time	Physical aspects	Discussions	Pragmatism/ naturalness	Routine
	H♀+; H♂+; J♂+; N♂+	K♀+	F♂+	F♂-; H♀-; J♂-; L♀-; L♂-; M♀+; M♂-	D♀+; D♂+; E♂-; F♀+; F♂+; H♀+; H♂+; J♀+; J♂+; K♀+; K♂+; L♂+; M♂+; N♀+; N♂+		D♀+; E♀+; E♂+; F♂+; G♂+; H♀-; K♀-; K♂+; L♀+; L♂-; M♀-; M♂-; N♀-	D♂+; E♂+; G♂+; H♀+; J♀+; J♂+; K♀+; K♂+; L♂+; L♂+; M♀+; M♂+; N♀+; N♂+	J♀+; J♂+
Outsourcing	E♀+; E♂+; F♀+; G♀+; G♂+; I♂+; J♂+		B♂+		G♀+; G♂+; I♀+; I♂+; J♂+	F♂+	G♀+; I♀+	C♀+; C♂+	

Note: The table contains the arguments named by all informants. They are denoted with their couple number and ♂ for the male partner and ♀ for the female partner. Naming the significance of rationales is marked with +; rejected arguments are marked with -; ambivalence is marked with +/-.

8.2 Anticipations

8.2.1 Plans for housework division

When imagining the first year after the child's birth, most interviewees expected changes in their division of household labor. Compared to the plans for the paid work arrangements, these anticipations were less concrete. Many interviewees only had vague ideas and said that they would see how the household labor would be divided in the future. Even if most interviewees did not have a concrete plan for the future housework arrangement, eighteen interviewees expected that the woman would do more housework than the man in the first year after the child's birth (see Table 12). Both partners in couples A, D, F, I, J, K, M, and N expected this. Woman G also thought that she would do more housework; in contrast, man G believed that both partners would continuously do half of the domestic labor. Woman L expected that she would increase her housework share even more, while man L expected that they would develop a more equal division as he planned to increase his share. While man J and K thought that their partners would do more housework, the woman expressed contradicting expectations: They expected to do more housework than their partners and, on the other hand, they spoke about sharing chores equally in the future. Couples A, F, G, K, and N shared housework equally in the first interview; at least one partner in these couples expected a change in their arrangement after the birth of the child. The other couples with this expectation – D, I, L, M, and J – already had a housework division in which the woman did more. Four interviewees, men C and G, and couple H, planned to share household labor equally in the future. The couples C and G reported an equal division of housework at the time of the first interview; both of them also had help by cleaners. Woman H did more housework at the time of the first interview, and the couple planned to change their housework arrangement towards an equal division. Couple E expected that the man would do more of the housework; at the time of the first interview, woman E did more chores than man E. Couple B and woman C did not speak about expectations regarding their future household labor arrangement.

The anticipations for the household labor arrangement corresponded to the couples' plans for paid work arrangements: If the interviewees planned the woman to take parental leave or stay at home from her self-employment, they also envisioned her to engage more in household labor. Couples who planned for the woman to return shortly after the maternity leave anticipated a less specialized arrangement than couples who envisioned her to stay at home for longer. Couple E, who planned for the man to stay at home after the child's birth and the woman to return to her paid work after maternity leave, expected that he would do more household labor. Correspondingly, couple H, who planned that both partners would work part-time, also envisioned that both would share housework equally.

Table 12: Interviewees' plans on which person – the woman, the man, both or an external help – would do which household tasks after the child's birth

Household tasks	Who will do the task mainly?			
	Woman	Man	Both	External help
Cooking	A♂; E♀; F♀		E♀; F♀; H♂; I♂	
Washing up/caring for the dishwasher		N♂		
Doing the laundry			H♀	
Ironing	G♀			
Cleaning and dusting	F♂		H♀	C♀; E♀; G; I
Cleaning the bathroom	F♀		H♀	G; I
Wiping the floor	F♀		D♀; H; L♂	
Vacuum cleaning		H♂		
Grocery shopping		L♂	H♂; I♂	
Gardening		B♂; M♀		B♂
Finances & filing the return			I♂	
Renovating	E♀			
Repairing/crafting	E♀			
Overall	A; D; F; G♀; I; J; K; L♀; M; N	E	C♂; G♂; H; J♀; K♀; L♂	

Note: The table contains the information about the division of different household tasks from the perspective of the informants and distinguishes if the woman, the man, both, or an external help did a task. When both partners of a couple described the division of a specific task similarly, only the couple letter appears in the table. When the partners differed or only one partner spoke about the division of a certain task, it is indicated with ♀ for the female partner and ♂ for the male.

Most of the couples who already had help by cleaners or relatives planned to keep the outsourcing of household chores. In contrast, woman E was not sure if they would keep the cleaner. Man J said that he considered hiring a cleaner after the childbirth; however, this was more hypothetical.

Table 12 shows the interviewees' plans for the division of household chores. The comparison with Table 10 reveals that the plans were less concrete than the pre-birth housework division. The interviewees spoke about fewer household chores. Besides, only very few interviewees envisioned the division of specific chores. The interviewees talked more about the division of the routine tasks, such as cooking or cleaning than about non-routine tasks, such as renovating or filing the tax return. Almost all interviewees spoke about their shares in the overall division of housework (see the last line of Table 12).

8.2.2 Explanations for the plans for postnatal household labor arrangements

The interviewees referred to some arguments when explaining their ideas for their division of housework after the child's birth. The most common ones were naturalness, time availability, discussing housework. Table 13 provides an overview of which interviewee referred to which arguments for the specific chores, the overall arrangement and the outsourcing of housework.

Perceived naturalness

The informants, who anticipated that the woman would do most of the household chores after the birth of the child, often perceived that as natural and often did not explain it. Expecting that the woman would do most housework was connected to the plan that she would stay at home or reduce her working hours when returning to her job, which in turn was explained by the plan that the woman would be more involved in caring and rearing of the child than the man. Perceived naturalness was also present in the explanations of couples who did not envision that their division of housework would change.

Often, the descriptions of the anticipated change of the housework division included the perceived naturalness implicitly. For example, woman F said that she would clean the bathroom and wipe the floor after childbirth – chores the man did at the time of the first interview. She did not explain this expectation; it seemed natural to her. The following quote from woman A reflects this naturalness. It was crucial for her not to do a greater share of household labor than her partner at the time of the first interview; nevertheless, she was convinced that she would do more housework in the future when she would be at home:

Well then in the future [...] well, when I'll be at home and have the child, then it is clear that I will do the more substantial part of the chores since I'll just be at home (Woman A, first interview: 55)

[A]lso jetzt dann in Zukunft [...], okay, ich bin daheim und habe das Kind, dann ist es schon klar, dass ich dann den Großteil des Haushalts mache, weil ich einfach daheim bin (Woman A, first interview: 55)

It was natural for her to do more housework after childbirth. The naturalness of doing the greater share and doing most or almost all of the household labor was connected to staying at home with the child. The informants who argued explicitly or implicitly in this way thought that the woman could easily carry out the housework when she was at home. Man E, the only man who would stay at home after childbirth while his partner would work full-time in the labor market, also said that he expected to perform a greater share of the household labor. Thus, engaging more in housework seemed natural for the partner who planned to stay at home regardless of which partner planned to take time off the job. However, man E also described that his capability to do housework would depend on his time spent on childcare – and he described childcare as a 24/7 job. None of the interviewees who perceived it as natural that the woman would increase her housework share referred to time availability. The idea that staying at home is related with doing more household labor was also present in the interview of woman H

– even if the couple planned an equal arrangement in which both partners would have part-time paid work hours. Woman H expected that her partner would get some housework done on the days he would be at home with the child – if there was time beside the childcare. She anticipated that he would also start doing chores that she did at the time of the first interview, like doing the laundry or dusting.

Man L was the only interviewee who believed that the planned specialized paid work arrangement would not also imply a specialization of the housework. He expected that he would do more housework after childbirth – even if his wife would be on parental leave for one year. Man L said that he planned to do the grocery shopping more often or to wipe the floor more often since his partner would stay at home to take care of the child:

Well, I think, there won't be significant changes, but there will be some things ... I think like doing the grocery shopping will be more my responsibility in the future, since she will be at home for rearing the child ... and .. regarding, let's say something like cleanliness .. maybe .. that I also more often ... use the wiping cloth or something like that, to wipe the floor or whatever .. but besides that, I don't expect any bigger changes. (Man L, first interview: 318)

Also .. ich denke, großartig verändern wird es sich nicht, aber es werden halt so manche Sachen ... ich schätze einmal Einkäufe, die werden in Zukunft verstärkt an mir hängen bleiben, weil sie ja einfach mit der Kinderbetreuung da daheim ist ... und .. in Sachen, sage ich jetzt einmal, Sauberkeit .. vielleicht .. dass ich öfters einmal auch zum .. Wischlappen oder so etwas greife, zum Fußboden wischen oder was auch immer .. aber ansonsten denke ich, wird sich nicht großartig etwas ändern. (Man L, first interview: 318)

Available time

Closely connected to the naturalness of the expected change in the division of household labor was the argument of time availability. It was named as a reason why the couples planned for the partner who would spend more time at home also to increase the share of the household chores. Time was furthermore an argument for discharging the partner who would contribute more to the income from housework duties as this partner should be able to spend free time with the child and not with doing chores.

Many interviewees who planned to stay at home after the child's birth for some time argued, similar to woman D, that they would do more of the routine household chores since they would have the time to do so when they were no longer active in the labor market:

But I guess that I'll do more of all this household stuff in the next time. Just because I'll have more time. (Woman D, first interview: 351)

Aber ich vermute mal, dass so dieser ganze Hauswirtschaftskram in nächster Zeit, dass ich den mehr übernehme. Einfach, weil ich mehr Zeit habe. (Woman D, first interview: 351)

The interviewees expected to have free time when the child would sleep and spend this time on doing household labor. Some of the men also anticipated their partners to do a greater housework share as they thought that staying at home would mean having free time next to taking care of the child.

Another aspect, interviewees spoke about was that they wanted to make sure that the partner, who would spend more time in the labor market, also had time for the child. Therefore, the partner who was anticipated to stay at home or to have fewer working hours was thought to engage more housework so that the other partner would be able to spend the free time with the child and not with doing housework. Man N, for example, said that he and his wife did not talk about their future housework arrangement. Nevertheless, he expected her to do most chores so that he would be able to concentrate on the child after his working hours instead of doing housework. Man A also expected that he would want to take care of the child after his workdays and assumed that his partner who would be all day at home with the child had the time to carry out the housework which corresponded to her anticipation.

In contrast to the women who planned to stay at home for some time, man E who planned to stay at home while his partner would work full-time was the only one who raised some concerns. He argued that the reason to stay at home was to care of the child and that he would have to see how much time he would have left for doing housework. Thus, he said that being at home with the child did not necessarily imply that he would have free time. Man J had similar thoughts. Couple J planned that the man would not alter his full-time paid work. Man J thought that his wife would take six months of parental leave before returning then to her job, while woman J planned to stay at home for the eight weeks of maternity leave. Man J assumed that he would do more housework since his partner would need time to care for the child. He also said that his ability to do more housework was conditional on the fact that he also wanted to spend time with the child and to have some free time for himself.

Discussions

Only a small number of interviewees recalled having spoken about their future arrangement with their partners. Thus, it is not surprising that the partners of some couples revealed different expectations. In couple J, for instance, the woman expected no significant changes in the division of household labor – but at the same time, she also said that they would share housework equally which they did not do at the time of the first interview. In contrast, man J reported that he planned to do more household chores since his partner would have to get used to caring for the child and he planned to support her by doing more housework.

In contrast to most couples, couple A said they talked about their future division of household chores and also referred to previous discussions. When woman A was asked about plans for the future division of household labor, she referred to discussions, to available time, and naturalness concerning their division of chores. She said that when they argued about housework at the time of the first interview, she told her partner she would do more housework after childbirth – to end the argument. Woman A's willingness to do most of the household chores in the future – even if she would never accept doing more than her partner at the time of

the first interview – might be related to the fact that she wanted to stay at home with the child and that her partner could have imagined doing so as well (see chapter 7.2.2).

Others expected that they would discuss their division of household chores in concrete situations in the future. Couple E planned the man to have a greater share of housework after childbirth as he would stay at home with the child when the woman would return to her job after maternity leave. Woman E expected that she and her partner would discuss how they would share the domestic tasks upon her labor market reentry; she said that it was not possible to plan, for example, how they would arrange cooking at this time as they could not really anticipate how their lives would change with the child's birth.

Other explanations

When speaking about their plans for the future household labor arrangement, some other aspects were relevant for a few couples, sometimes only for one interviewee. These explanations were routine, pragmatism, and exchange.

Man C referred to the existing routine of doing housework and expected that this routine would remain because the external help would continue to do most of the cleaning. He doubted that his partner would increase her share of household labor because of their routines.

An example of pragmatism was man J's explanation that the couple might decide upon outsourcing ironing and cleaning. He explained that they would have to observe if they would be able to manage everything or if it would be better to hire someone for specific housework tasks. Woman D said that her partner would also have to wipe the floor in the future as this would be necessary for the cleanness of the place. This explanation can also be described with pragmatism.

Man F described that he expected his partner to do most of the household labor after the child's birth and explained this expectation partly with the exchange of his income against her share in unpaid work. Couple F planned that the woman would stay at home for some time after the child's birth while the man would remain in his self-employment. Man F said:

I just expect that, that [partner's name] will do more. [Interviewer asks 'why?'] Because she will be at home the whole day. Of course, she has to look after the child. But she will be paid for that; it is not like she does it for free. By me, in this case. We'll have to see how we will do it then. But how should I do it? In general, I imagined that when she's at home that she'll, of course, do more. And when I then do more, well regarding earning the cash, to put it like that, then I can't also take over the household labor. (...) I will continue to do the roast on Sunday and so on. There won't be any changes concerning that. But maybe concerning the cleaning and similar tasks, I think that will then be more done by her. (Man F, first interview: 412-418)

Ich geh mal davon aus, dass, dass mehr (Name der Partnerin) dann übernimmt. [Interviewer fragt, 'warum?'] Weil sie den ganzen Tag zuhause ist. Hat natürlich mit dem Kind zu tun. Aber sie wird ja auch entlohnt dafür, das ist ja nicht so, dass sie das umsonst macht. Von mir dann in dem Fall. Wie wir das jetzt dann machen, das müssen wir dann sehen. Aber wie soll ich das machen? Prinzipiell hab ich mir das so vorgestellt, wenn sie daheim ist, dass sie dann schon mehr macht. Und wenn ich dann noch mehr mache, also Kohle anschaffen, auf Deutsch gesagt, dann kann ich nicht auch noch den Haushalt machen. (...) Ich werde am Sonntag trotzdem den Braten machen usw. Da wird sich

nichts ändern. Aber was vielleicht das Putzen oder so angeht, ich denke das wird dann eher noch ein bisschen auf sie abfallen. (Man F, first interview: 412-418)

Woman F did not speak about this exchange, but that the couple would only have her partner's income for some months after childbirth and that she would have financial disadvantages as her partner was not willing to pay for her pension scheme during the time she would stay at home from her self-employment. She also expected that she would do most of the housework, however.

Table 13: Interviewees' explanations for the anticipated chore-specific division of housework and the overall housework plan

	Naturalness	Available time	Discussions	Other aspects
Cooking	A♂+; H♂+; I♂+	A♂+; F♀+	E♀+	
Washing up/caring for the dishwasher	N♂+			
Doing the laundry	H♀+			
Ironing	G♀+			♂+
Cleaning and dusting	F♀+; H♀+; I♀+; I♂+			
Cleaning the bathroom	F♀+; H♀+			
Wiping the floor	F♀+; H♀+; L♂+			D♀+
Vacuum cleaning	H♂+			
Grocery shopping	H♂+; L♂+			
Gardening	M♀+			
Finances & filing the return	I♂+			
Repairing/crafting	E♀+			
Overall division	A♀+; A♂+; C♂+; E♀+; E♂+; F♀+; F♂+; G♀+; G♂+; H♀+; H♂+; K♀+; K♂+; L♀+; L♂+; M♀+; M♀+; N♀+; N♂+	A♂+; C♂+; D♀+; D♂+; E♂+; F♂+; H♀+; J♂+; K♂+; L♀+; N♀+; N♂+	A♀+; A♂+; F♂-; F♂+; J♀-; M♂-	
Outsourcing	C♀+; E♀+; G♀+	E♀+; H♀-; I♀+; I♂+; J♂+		

Note: The table contains the arguments named by all informants. They are denoted with their couple number and ♂ for the male partner and ♀ for the female partner. Naming the significance of rationales is marked with +; rejected arguments are marked with -; ambivalence is marked with +/-.

Interrelations between the different explanations

When interviewees spoke about available time, they often linked this argument to the fact that it was perceived as natural that the partners who would have more available time due to the planned reduction of the labor market activity would do more housework. Furthermore, the interviewees argued that it was natural that the partner who would spend more time in employment would not want to do housework after the workday, but spend time with the child. This also points to preferring childcare over household labor. The interviewees did not refer explicitly to gender, but some of their arguments were gendered – especially regarding perceived naturalness and available time.

8.2.3 Comparison of explanations for the pre-birth arrangement and the housework plan

When the informants explained their plans for the future division of household labor, they referred mostly to other arguments than they did regarding their division of housework at the time of the first interview. For the plans, naturalness, available time and discussions were important explanations. For the pre-birth housework division, preferences, competencies, standards, gendered explanations, available time, physical aspects, discussions, pragmatism, naturalness, and routines were named. When planning for the time after the child's birth, the informants seldom had any detailed ideas about their division of housework as was reflected in their explanations.

At the time of the first interview, the interviewees felt it was natural that both of them participated in the housework; in their plans for the time after childbirth, also other arrangements became natural. The planned labor market situation led most couples to a specific housework arrangement in which the partner with fewer working hours did more chores than the other one. When both partners were planning to work similar hours, it also seemed natural to share housework equally.

Only couples with different working hours explained their pre-birth housework shares with available time. When describing their anticipated overall division of housework, also couples who planned to have similar working hours after childbirth spoke about this argument. Regarding the future arrangement, the timing of housework was – like in the pre-birth situation – explained with the expected availability of free time during the week or days. Furthermore, the interviewees included other activities such as childcare in determining how much time one partner would have to do housework – for the pre-birth situation; other activities were hardly spoken about.

Although the informants reported that they talked about household labor in the pre-birth situation and for the planned arrangement, they seemed to mean different things. In the pre-birth situation, informants referred to discussions with their partner foremost when they reported conflicts or when they described a joint decision about the division of a specific task. Regarding the future, only one couple said that they discussed their arrangement. Two

informants explained that discussions were not an issue and one interviewee expected that they would have to discuss their arrangement after the child's birth.

Other arguments that were important regarding the couple's division of housework at the time of the first interview, like routine, pragmatism, and standards, were either not at all relevant or only relevant for some informants.

8.3 After the birth

8.3.1 Post-birth housework arrangements

With the birth of the child, most couples had a more specialized division of housework than they used to at the time of the first interview; in most cases, the women increased her shares. Two couples (C and H) shared housework equally. One of them retained their equal division of housework; the other one changed their partly specialized housework division with a higher female share into an equal division after the child's birth. The other couples practiced a (partly) specialized division, with the women doing more housework – couples J and N estimated that the woman did more than 90 % of the housework and the man did less than 10 %. Couples A, F, K, G, and N used to have an equal division of chores while couples B, D, E, I, J, L, and M maintained or expanded their already partly specialized housework division. Most of the couples reported a short period after the child's birth during which the men did almost all housework as the women were recovering from the delivery.

Table 14 shows who was usually doing which household chores. It only contains the chores, the interviewees spoke about which varied between the interviewees as there was no list of housework tasks presented during the interviews. As can be seen, some tasks were mainly done by the women, the men or by both partners. Mostly the women carried out the routine housework like cooking, ironing, or cleaning. There were only a few informants who said that the men or both partners did these tasks – the exception was cooking: Five informants noted that they shared cooking or that the male partners did it. In most couples the men mostly did, for example, repairing, crafting, or buying beverages. Tasks that were more often done by both partners were, for example, grocery shopping, cooking, or doing the laundry.

Table 14: Interviewees' perspectives on which person – the woman, the man, both or an external help – did which household tasks at the second interview

Household task	Who did the tasks mostly?			
	Woman	Man	Both	External help
Cooking	A♂; B; D; E; F; G; H; I♀; L♀; M; N	J♂	B♂; C♂; J♀; K	E♀; C, F, I; J♂; N
Tidying up the kitchen	E♀; H♂; M♀	K♂	K♂	
Preparing the breakfast	F♀; M♀	B♂; C♀; D♀; J♂	B♀; E♀; J♀; M♂	
Washing up/caring for the dishwasher	A♀; D♀; L; N; E♀; H♀; I♀	B; D♂; H♂; J	G♀	
Doing the laundry	A♂; B♂; D; G; J; L♀; M♀; N	K♀	C♂; H♂; I; L♂	I♀
Ironing	B♂; G; H♂; L; M♀; N	J♀		B♀; C; H/I
Cleaning and dusting	A♂; B♀; D♂; E; F♂; K; L♀; N♂	B♂	H♀	B♀; C♂; G♂; I
Cleaning the bathroom	D; E♀; F♂; H♂; J♀; L♀; N♀		H♀; L♂	G♀
Wiping the floor	B♀; D♂; E♀; H♀; J♀; L; M♀; N♀			B♀; G♀
Tidying up	B♀; L♀; M♀	A♀; E♀; F♂; G♂; I♀	G♀	
Vacuum cleaning	A♀; B♀; H♂; J; K♂; L; M	E♀; N	H♀	B♀; C; G; I♀
Cleaning the windows	L; M♀; N	J♂		
Grocery shopping	A♂; B♀; D; E♀; F; G♀; H♂; I♀; J♀; K♂; M♂; N♀	B♂; E♂; L♂	C♂; G♂; H♀; J♂; K♂; L♀; M; N	
Buying beverages		A♂; F♂; G♂; M♂; N♂		
Taking away the garbage	J♀	A♀; G♂; H; K♀; M	L♂; N	

Household task	Who did the tasks mostly?			
	Woman	Man	Both	External help
Gardening	D♀	B♀; E♂; H♀; M♂	A♂; B♂; D♂; E♀; M♀	H; I♂; J♂
Administration tasks	C♂; D; H♀; I♀	A♂; F♂; J♂; L♂; N♀	F♂; H♂	
Finances& filing the return	B	A♂; F♂; G♂; H♂; I; J; N♀	B; C♂; F♂; G♂; I♀	C♂; D♀
Caring for assurances		F♂; L♂		
Technics/Computer		J♀; H♀		
Caring for the car		A♂; H; I♂; N♀	B♂; D♂;	
Renovating		J; K; N♀		J♂
Repairing/crafting	E	A♂; B♂; C♂; D♀; F♂; I♂; J♂; K; L; N♂		

Note: The table contains the information about the division of different household tasks from the perspective of the informants and distinguishes if the woman, the man, both, or an external help do a task. When both described the division of a specific task similarly, only the couple letter appears in the table. When the partners differed or only one partner spoke about the division of a specific task, it is indicated with ♀ for the female partner and ♂ for the male.

About half of the couples reported that they had regular or irregular help with their household labor and often for cooking and cleaning; usually, cleaners or relatives helped; preparing meals was often outsourced to restaurants or take away. Some couples also had help with gardening or gave filing the tax return to a professional.

Often, only one partner spoke about a specific task or the partners had different evaluations about who did a particular housework chore more often. It seems as if often the partner who spent more time doing a specific task reported that; for example, mostly women, who cleaned the floor, talked about it while fewer men did or only men talked about buying beverages.

The descriptions of the couples division of housework at the second interview reflect what is known from quantitative studies: With the transition to parenthood, the woman increases her housework share. The couples continued to divide tasks according to the from Koppetsch and Burkart (1999) suggested lines of inside vs. outside, easy vs. heavy, fine vs. rough, wet vs. dry and daily vs. non-daily.

8.3.2 Explanations for the postnatal household labor arrangements

When talking about their division of housework at the time of the second interview, the interviewees referred to different rationales. They mostly spoke about preferences, competencies, standards, gendered aspects, available time, discussions, and routines. Table 15 provides an overview of the explanations the interviewees named for the chores they mentioned.

Preferences

The interviewees based their division of routine and non-routine chores to some extent on preferences. These were named, for instance, regarding cleaning, garbage, ironing, grocery shopping, crafting, and doing the laundry. Besides describing the division of a specific household task or the overall housework division with preferences, the interviewees also referred to that explanation when explaining why the male partner spent time with other activities instead of housework.

In general, the interviewees decided that the partner who liked doing a task did it more often and that the partner who disliked doing it did it less. However, some interviewees said that available time was sometimes more important than preferences. Man D, for example, said that he really liked cooking, but as he had more working hours, woman D usually did the cooking.

Some informants, especially men, said – in line with their expectation in the first interview – that they preferred doing childcare over housework and would therefore not do specific tasks or did, in general, less housework than their partners. In most couples, the men spent more time with paid work while the women spent more time with childcare. These couples decided that it was more important for them that the man spent his free time with childcare than with housework. This implied that the women did more housework than the men. Woman H, who worked like her partner part-time, also talked about her partner's preference for spending time with the child over of doing housework. She explained that the couple spoke about who wanted to do housework and who wanted to care for the child; man H usually opted for childcare:

But it is also often like that, .. it is, like whatever, the washing machine or the dishwasher should be emptied, do you want to do it or do you want to look after the child? Then he usually always rather says that he wants to look after the child. [...] And then I do the things. (woman H, second interview: 787-792)

Aber es sich auch oft so, .. das sind, was weiß ich, die Waschmaschine müsste leergeräumt werden oder der Geschirrspüler, willst du's jetzt machen oder willst du auf's Kind aufpassen? Er sagt immer meistens eher, ich will auf's Kind aufpassen. Und dann mach ich die Sachen. (woman H, second interview: 787-792)

Preferences were less important for the overall division than other arguments. Man G was one interviewee who referred to this argument. Woman G was at home while he worked full-time with regular overtime. The couple hired a cleaner who did most of the routine housework. Man G was asked about chores he disliked and how they managed them. He explained that the

couple found a compromise concerning their overall division of housework by taking preferences into account:

Well, when you are in a relationship, sure, you have to find an agreement. That is also no, no issue that is related to having a child or not having a child, but when you live together, you try to share things so that the person who .. who does it less unwillingly, does the chore. But I don't have any, any issues with buying beverages for example if they have to be bought, so. [...] one does the laundry, and the other one does the cooking. (man G, second interview: 495)

Gut, wenn man in einer Beziehung lebt, sicherlich wird man irgendwie sich zu einem Kompromiss dort einigen. Das ist ja jetzt auch kein, kein Thema, das mit Kind oder ohne Kind irgendwie zu tun hat, sondern wenn man zusammen lebt, versucht man sich halt so aufzustellen, dass derjenige, der's, .. der's weniger ungern macht, sich der, der Tätigkeit widmet. Ich habe aber da kein, kein Thema damit, also wenn jetzt etwa Getränke zu holen sind, dann werden die geholt letztendlich, von daher. [...] der eine wäscht und der andere kocht. (man G, second interview: 495)

In line to what the interviewees described regarding their division of housework in the first interview, they also referred to preferences regarding outsourcing chores. Instead of doing disliked housework chores, the couples decided to pay someone else to do them.

Competencies

Competencies were another argument for the interviewees' division of housework. They referred to competences more often regarding non-routine tasks like finances, crafting or repairing than concerning routine tasks like cooking or cleaning. Competencies also affected the overall division of housework.

The interviewees referred mostly to competences regarding doing the laundry as well as crafting and repairing. They usually said that one partner was competent in doing certain crafting or repairing activities, for example, while the other was not or less competent; the couple then decided that the more competent partner usually did this chore. In most couples, the male partner was described as more competent regarding crafting and repairing. In couple E, it was the woman – which is in line with the first interview.

The overall division of labor was sometimes explained with competences. Man H, for example, described that the couple decided based upon competencies. Besides this, women H and K explained that they did, in general, more routine household chores because they did them faster than their partners – which can be interpreted as a sign of more competence. Woman D referred in a different way to this argument. She told her partner to do some chores because she was afraid that he might forget how to do these things if he would not do them regularly:

But, the, the second side is, that I really want that he also does household chores, not, that we end up someday like in other cases, that, that I organize the house and [husband's name] does not know anything about it and has no clue what to do. That he is no longer able to use the washing machine, does not know where the laundry is and, and, stuff like that, but he shall merely continue doing it and, and, and, and be part of it and should be competent. (woman D, second interview: 427)

Aber, aber die, die zweite Seite ist, dass ich schon will, dass er hier auch im Haushalt mitmacht, nicht, dass es irgendwie dann so wie bei vielen endet, dass, dass ich das Haus organisiere und [Name

des Mannes] überhaupt nicht weiß wo's lang geht und gar keinen Plan hat. Die Waschmaschine nicht mehr bedienen kann, nicht weiß, wo die Wäsche liegt und, und so ein Zeug, sondern er soll ganz einfach auch noch dranbleiben und, und, und, und mit dabei sein und drin, drin in der Materie stecken. (woman D, second interview: 427)

Thus, she decided that competences were no sufficient reason for her to do all chores, since she wanted to avoid that she was responsible for everything.

Standards

Different standards were another argument the interviewees referred to regarding their division of chores like doing the dishes, tidying up, or cleaning. This rationale was also important for the overall division of household labor.

With the transition to parenthood, the standards of cleanness changed for some informants. Woman F, for example, said that she wanted the floor to be cleaner than she used to since she wanted the child to play on a clean floor. Therefore, she cleaned it more often than she used to. Other couples said that they could endure it for a longer time after childbirth when their place was not all clean or more chaotic as they knew that the child would make it dirty again anyway.

In line with the argumentation in the first interview, different standards often implied that only one partner perceived the necessity to do a chore while the other did not. Woman A reported that the couple used to argue because of their different standards. She agreed to go along with her husband's higher expectations regarding cleanness when the couple decided that she would take parental leave. Standards were in other couples still a reason for conflicts. Man F explained that he wanted the office to be spotless and tidied up while his partner created, according to him, chaos. Thus, he tidied up more often, even if his partner produced the necessity to tidy up. Man I also reported different standards; he would not care if the house was not tidied up when they had friends over while his partner did. Therefore, she would tidy up more often and especially when they had guests.

The informants referred to standards as an explanation for the division of a specific task most often in connection with the different cleaning chores. In most couples, the women wanted the place cleaner than the men; therefore, they cleaned more often. Couple E reported that the man had higher cleanness standards, but that the woman did more of the cleaning. She did more because she spent more time at home than he did. In the first interview, the man used to do it more often due to his higher standard; he kept on doing more of the vacuum cleaning.

The interviewees explained not only specific chores with standards but also their overall division of housework. Man E, for instance, explained their overall division of household labor with standards. In other couples, different standards did not necessarily imply that the partner with higher standards did specific chores or in general more housework. Both partners of couple B, for instance, said that the woman had overall higher standards concerning the chores and that

she told her partner which tasks he should do so that she would not do everything alone. Thus, other arguments like fairness were for some more important than standards.

Gendered aspects

About every third interviewee spoke about gendered aspects or about refusing gendered arguments, mostly regarding the overall division of household labor. Some interviewees also referred to socialization processes and role models for their arrangement.

Woman B, D, I, and L explained that their partners or men, in general, would not feel equally responsible for housework as they or as women in general did. Woman B described that she knew the cleaner's working hours and what the cleaner should do, while her partner did not; according to her, it was typically female that she knew the hours and specific tasks of the cleaner. For woman I, it was a typical female dilemma that she perceived the necessity to do housework while her partner did not; at the same time, she expected him to pay more attention and notice what had to be done. Both women describe the management part of housework.

Most interviewees who spoke about gendered aspects referred to them regarding the overall housework division. Couple M linked the woman's mother identity to being the housewife who did the chores. Both partners described that it was entirely clear for them that the woman would do most housework when she became a mother as for them being a mother meant staying at home and caring for the child but also doing the domestic labor. Man M described it as follows:

She [wife] wanted to be a mother, you know. And it was actually certain before, that when [...] we have offspring that she would stay at home, you know and does the housework, well. And well, and her [paid work] is a nice variation, she meets people, hears something, the [work] is a variation, you know. (man M, second interview: 211-214)

Sie [Ehefrau] hat es sich ja gewünscht auch Mutter zu sein, ne. Und es war an und für sich schon fest gestanden vorher, dass wenn [...] Nachwuchs da wäre, dass sie schon daheim bleibt, ne, und dann Haushalt macht, also. Und naja, und die [bezahlte Arbeit], es ist halt schon einmal eine Abwechslung, sie hat dann mit anderen Leuten zu tun, erfährt halt mal ein wenig was, ist halt doch eine Abwechslung die [Arbeit], ne. (man M, second interview: 211-214)

The fact that the woman was self-employed with some hours per week did not change this perception for both partners. Despite the woman's general responsibility for the household, couple M also explained that they believed that both partners should share household labor. Thus, being a mother was an explanation for taking over a greater share of household work, but not a leeway for the man to do no housework at all.

Other informants linked being a woman or being a man and doing or not doing housework differently. Woman I, for example, described that she and her partner did housework in different ways and that it was natural for her partner that she did more than he did. She did not perceive this as natural but referred to gendered ideas. When she explained why she had a larger housework share, she said that men take the freedom to do housework differently; women would do the chores when the child slept while men would do them also when the child was

awake. The men's and women's different ways of doing household labor when they had a child resulted, according to woman I, in a higher burden for women:

Well, it is definitively connected to multiple burdens, and most of it is left with the woman. I really have to say it like it is. [...] And he, well, men take more easily freedoms, because he says, well, I just have to tidy up the office now [...] And I ... or it doesn't matter when that is, because sometimes I think that, that he could also do that in the time when he [the child] takes a nap or .. yes, well, or that he also takes some burden away from me. That he doesn't do that in the time when, like at the weekends, when I'm then again alone with [the child]. (woman I, second interview: 1161-1169)

Also, es ist auf alle Fälle eine Mehrfachbelastung und das meiste bleibt an der Frau hängen. Das muss man einfach so sagen. [...] Und er, also Männer nehmen sich auch leichter irgendwelche Freiräume, weil er sagt, ja, ich muss halt jetzt das Büro aufräumen. [...] Und ich oder ... oder egal wann das ist, weil ich denk mir dann auch manchmal, das könnte er ja auch in der Zeit machen, wo [das Kind] Mittagsschlaf macht oder .. ja, also dass er mich dann eigentlich auch entlastet. Dass er das nicht in den Zeiten macht, wo am Wochenende, wo ich dann auch wieder mit [dem Kind] alleine bin. (woman I, second interview: 1161-1169)

Woman I also referred to socialization processes and reported that her husband grew up with his parents having a very specialized division of household labor in which her father-in-law did not do any housework. Woman I grew up differently. Her mother was a single parent and always active in the labor market. Against this background, she asked herself if she was expecting too much from her husband as he did not have a male role model who did housework. Man I, in contrast, did not link doing less housework than his partner to gendered aspects but to time constraints due to his full-time paid work compared to his partner's fewer full-time working hours. He was well aware of his partner's unhappiness with his housework share but believed that she knew that he could not do more and that a cleaner was sufficient as help.

Other informants referred to gendered aspects in a more general way. Man E described a change in the couple's housework division towards a more gendered arrangement after childbirth. He also explained he and his partner did not want that arrangement but that they could not change it at the moment due to their different working hours. Some men compared their housework share with other men's to assess if they did enough. Man J reported that his partner did most routine chores while he did the crafting. He tried to perform a fair share and compared his housework time with other men to determine if his share was fair: He also expressed that he would not aim at an equal division as that this would not work out due to the different working hours. For man B, it was important not to live according to traditional gender roles and share the household labor accordingly; he described that his partner would not accept if he did no housework.

Available time

Time availability was an often used explanation for the overall division of housework but also for specific chores like cooking, doing the laundry, grocery shopping, or cleaning. This argument included different aspects. First, it could mean that one partner had, in general, more time than the other to do the housework – due to different working hours, for example – or second, that

there were specific times during the day or particular days during the week during which one partner had time for household chores, thus the timing of available time was an argument. Third, some interviewees explained outsourcing with time scarcity.

In line with explanations and expectations from the first interview, many couples with different working hours spoke about time availability concerning their overall housework arrangement. Another related argument was that the partners wanted to spend their free time together instead of spending it on doing housework. Woman D who worked a few hours per month in self-employment at the time of the second interview while her partner worked full-time described that she generally took over more chores as she had fewer working hours but also because she wanted the couple to spend their free time together:

First, since we also want to have time together ... and since [husband's name] works a lot. Well, I also work a lot, but [...] somehow different. And .. yes, I do it, I do it often while doing something else or during nights since I think ... that I, that we want to have time together as the family. [...] And I just want, ... we also do it together, like for example, on Friday afternoons, or, or, or sometime in the course of the weekend. Then both of us swarm for four hours around the house and then we are done. [...] But sometimes I think, well, no, these four hours, I want, I want to have some common free time, well, and then I try to do the housework during the week and ... and then we are lazy at the weekend. (woman D, second interview: 379-399)

Zum einen, weil wir halt Zeit auch gemeinsam haben wollen. .. Und weil .. [Name des Mannes] viel arbeitet. Na, ich arbeite ich auch viel, aber [...] Irgendwie anders. Und .. ja, ich mache es, ich mache es oft nebenbei und dann auch noch nachts, weil ich denke, .. dass ich, dass wir als Familie Zeit haben wollen. [...] Ich möchte halt, ... wir arbeiten auch zusammen, also sprich so Freitagnachmittag oder, oder, oder irgendwann im Laufe des Wochenendes. Dann wuseln wir hier beide, weiß ich, vier Stunden durchs Haus und sind dann fertig. [...] Aber manchmal denke ich, ah nee, die vier Stunden, will ich, will ich auch noch haben gemeinsam als Freizeit ja und dann versuch ich das schon im Laufe der Woche abzuarbeiten und .. und dann sind wir faul am Wochenende. (woman D, second interview: 379-399)

Similar arguments were used regarding specific household tasks, like cooking. The availability of time was also crucial regarding the timing of doing housework. In this regard, the informants spoke mostly about time restrictions: They could not perform chores while they cared for the child. Therefore, the interviewees did housework while the child slept or while the other partner cared for the child. Woman I said that she sometimes brought the child to its grandparents who lived nearby to have time for housework. Woman J said that she did chores during the times the child slept; for example, when the child slept in the mornings after the feeding, the woman did some chores before she went to her workplace:

[S]ometimes, she [the child] sleeps in the mornings half an hour and sometimes she doesn't. If she sleeps, I try to do something, well, in an exemplary manner, that I fill the dishwasher or wipe the bathroom or something like that. But, um, I, I also learned that you should not put yourself under stress if it doesn't work out. But, you just try it, to do something somehow, so that the apartment does not look completely like a bomb hit it. (woman J, second interview: 27)

[M]anchmal schläft sie [das Kind] vormittags noch eine halbe Stunde und manchmal auch nicht. Wenn sie schläft, dann versuch ich da irgendwas zu machen, also ganz vorbildlich halt irgendwie die Spülmaschine bestücken oder das Bad wischen oder so. Aber, mh, ich, ich hab auch schon gelernt, dass man sich nicht stressen darf, wenn's nicht geht. Aber, man versucht halt, dann doch irgendwie

was zu machen, damit's nicht komplett so nach Bombeneinschlag in der Wohnung aussieht.
(woman J, second interview: 27)

The availability of time – or the lack of time was for some informants a reason to outsource parts of the household labor. They argued that since both partners were active in the labor market, they wanted to spend time with the child and have free time – something that was not possible if they did all household tasks themselves. Therefore, they decided to get some help from a cleaner or a gardener. However, not only couples with two employed or self-employed partners used outsourcing; couple G employed a cleaner while the woman was on parental leave. Not all couples agreed upon if they had enough time to do the housework; the man K, for example, would have liked to outsource cleaning to have more time for other things; woman K thought that they had enough time and she did not want another person to clean their place.

Discussions

Discussions about the division of household labor were widespread. The interviewees spoke about the overall housework division and each partner's share within the couples – they usually did this when one partner was not satisfied with the arrangement. Discussion processes were less often relevant to the division of specific household tasks. Some informants also said that they and their partners did usually not discuss household labor.

Interviewees who referred to discussions often said that they and their partners would speak about their division of chores if one partner were no longer satisfied with it. Both partners of couple E, for instance, described that the woman told her partner when she was not happy with how they shared household labor; then the couple sat down together and tried to find a different solution. Man E believed that it was in general better to talk more often about different tasks and agree upon who would do them instead of expecting that there would be an unspoken arrangement. There were also couples who did not only speak about their division of housework or the shares of both partners in case of problems but on a regular basis. Woman D, for example, explained that the couple spoke approximately every four weeks about their housework division and their happiness with the current situation; if one partner were not happy, they would look for solutions. Couple K also spoke about their division of housework, and they agreed upon that the woman did more routine household work while the man did more of the construction works and repairs. Woman H who shared household labor, paid work, and childcare equally with her partner described that they often talked about the overall division of housework but also about specific tasks. They spoke about which partner would prefer to do the laundry and which partner would prefer to take care of the child – in general, they ended up with the man doing childcare, a solution both partners were happy with.

Others reported that they were not satisfied with the overall division of tasks or with the share of both partners but usually did not speak about it – or that it did not change anything if they did. Woman J described that she was frustrated about doing most of the housework and

about the fact that her partner did not increase his share when she returned to her paid work – thus when her overall workload increased. However, she did not speak about her frustration with her partner. In line with this non-communication, man J said that it was unproblematic for both of them that the woman did more household labor. Woman F also reported that they usually did not speak about her impression that her partner engaged too little in housework. Sometimes, she stroke up a conversation about this with him. This did not affect their division. Man F described that his partner would sometimes complain about him doing too little housework. His solution was to offer her a complete switch of their paid and unpaid work arrangement – something he knew that she would not want:

But, how I said, when there are, there are, of course, complaints like maybe regarding ... that I just because I, since I just do more now, it really is that I do less in the household. It is like that; it is de facto like that. [...] And, when there was a bad day when the child was maybe not in the best mood and just, sometimes the whole world turns against you. [...] And then she says things like, well, and you don't do anything and so on and so forth. Then I say, no problem then we turn everything around, and then maybe I get to see things like that – we can do this immediately. [...] And then, the discussion ends suddenly. [...] Because she knows that I really mean it. [...] Because I would really do it. [...] And if everything would go down then, well, then we could discuss it. But I think that I would do it at least just as well. (man F, second interview: 439-464)

Aber, wie gesagt, wenn halt dann, es kommen schon, Beschwerden kommen halt vielleicht in Bezug auf, .. dass ich halt, durch dem, dass ich halt jetzt auch echt mehr mach, ist es wirklich so, dass ich im Haushalt weniger mach. Das ist so, das ist faktisch so. [...] Und, wenn halt einmal ein schlechter Tag war, wenn halt das Kind vielleicht nicht so gut drauf war und halt, manchmal kommt halt alles zusammen.[...] Dann kommen halt so Sachen, ja und du machst ja nichts usw. und so fort. Sag ich, kein Problem, dann drehen wir das Ganze um, dann komm ich vielleicht mal in den Genuss das so zu sehen - können wir sofort machen. [...] Und dann ist die Diskussion eigentlich sofort beendet. [...] Weil, sie weiß auch, ich mein das wirklich ernst. [...] Also ich würd das wirklich machen. [...] Und wenn's dann zusammenbricht, gut, dann können wir uns noch mal drüber unterhalten. Aber ich denk, ich würd das schon genauso gut machen mindestens. (man F, second interview: 439-464)

Man A described that they usually did not speak about the housework because they agreed upon their arrangement before childbirth; they decided that the partner who stayed at home would do most routine chores. His partner wanted to stay at home with the child and knew that this would imply a greater share of housework. Some couples said that they did usually not discuss or speak about their arrangement of household labor. Woman G, for example, described that both of them just did housework without talking about it; her partner described that they usually spoke about who did the grocery shopping but that otherwise, they did not speak about their division. In this couple, this might be related to the fact that they had a cleaner who did most of the cleaning which reduced the overall housework that left to be done by the couple.

Other aspects

A few interviewees spoke about other aspects like naturalness, routines, delegation, or fairness. Couples who referred to routines said that both partners knew due to these habits which housework chores each of them did; they made discussions futile. Men F, J, and M described that they did not plan or speak with their partners about their overall housework division since

they had developed a routine after some time. When she was asked if they regularly spoke about the responsibilities for certain chores, woman H also said that she and her partner developed routines in the years they spent together, both of them knew which partner did which chores:

No, both of us know what they have to do. Well, or, who does what, it ... well, we are married for ten years next year. [...] And somehow, you simply know then, who, who does what. (woman H, second interview: 1090-1094)

Nee, da weiß eigentlich schon jeder was er zu tun hat. Also, oder wer was macht, das ... Also, wir sind jetzt nächstes Jahr zehn Jahre verheiratet. [...] Und irgendwie weiß man dann schon so, wer, wer was macht einfach. (woman H, second interview: 1090-1094)

In some couples, one partner's involvement in housework was dependent on the other partner – usually the woman – delegating tasks. The interviewees described that often the women were seen as more responsible for the chores or had higher standards and therefore the men did not feel accountable or did not notice when specific housework chores had to be done. Couple B reported that the man usually was oblivious about the necessity of housework and that his partner told him what he could do. The man said that if he did household chores, it was mostly because his partner told him to do them. This implies that the woman's housework share would rise if she would not delegate housework to her partner.

Men I and J, and woman M spoke about fairness and explained that they thought it was fair that the woman did more of the housework since she worked fewer hours than the male partner. Especially for woman M, it was important to engage more in housework chores to achieve a fair overall division of paid and unpaid work. Fairness and time availability are intertwined for these interviewees – however, others who referred to time availability did not discuss fairness. Women E explained that she was unsatisfied with their arrangement as she expected her partner to do more housework. Thus, her expectations of fairness were violated.

Interrelation between the different explanations

The explanations for the division of housework in the second interview were often not linked to the others. Preferences and competences were two arguments that were often connected; the interviewees said that the partner who was more competent often also preferred to do a specific task. Some interviewees combined gendered arguments and standards and reported that women had higher standards than men. The available time was also discussed in connection to preferences and standards. In some couples the partner with fewer working hours performed housework chores that he or she disliked more than the partner or for which the partner with more working hours had higher standards.

Table 15: Interviewees' explanations for the chore-specific division of housework and the overall housework division at the time of the second interview

	Preferences	Competencies	Standards	Gendered aspects	Available time	Discussions	Other aspects
Cooking	D♂-; F♀+; G♂+/-; I♀+; J♂+; L♀+	B♂+; I♂-		I♀+	B♀+; C♀+; C♂+; D♂+; E♀+; F♀+; G♂+; L♀+; M♂+		A♂+; C♀+; F♀+
Tidying up the kitchen		F♂+	E♀+		B♀+; E♀+		
Preparing the breakfast					E♀+; J♂+		
Washing up/caring for the dishwasher	A♀+; H♀+		A♀+; L♀+; N♀+		H♀+; J♀+; J♂+	H♀+; L♀+	
Doing the laundry	H♀+; K♀+	B♀-; F♀+; N♀-; N♂+	J♀+		A♂+	B♀+; H♀+; J♀-	
Ironing	B♀+; B♂+; C♂+; G♂+; H♂+; I♂+; M♀-; N♀-		B♀+; N♀-		B♂+; E♀+; I♂-; M♀+		
Cleaning and dusting	I♂+; K♂+	K♀+	E♀+; F♀+; G♂+; I♂+; K♂+; L♀+; L♂+	B♀+	E♀+; F♂+; H♂+	K♂+	C♂+
Cleaning the bathroom	D♀+; D♂+; I♂+		E♀+; F♂+		E♀+; J♀+		
Wiping the floor	A♂+; B♀+		A♀+; D♀+; E♀+; I♂+; L♂+; M♀+		A♂+; D♀+; E♀+		
Tidying up	F♂+; G♀+		A♀+; B♂-; E♀+; I♀+ E♂+; F♂+; G♂+; I♂+; N♀-		G♀+	G♀-	
Vacuum cleaning			E♀+		L♀+	L♀+	
Cleaning the windows		N♂+			M♀+		

	Preferences	Competencies	Standards	Gendered aspects	Available time	Discussions	Other aspects
Grocery shopping	B♂+; G♀+; J♂+; K♂+; M♀+; N♀+				A♂+; B♂+; D♀+; E♂+; G♀+; H♀+; H♂+; K♂+; M♀+; M♂+	C♂+; G♂+; J+	A♂+; I♀+
Taking away the garbage	A♀+; B♂+; K♀+		J♀+; N♀+; N♂+		G♀+	J♀+; N♀+; N♂+	
Gardening	D♂+; H♀+; H♂+	K♀+			D♀+; H♂+; M♂+		
Administration tasks	H♂-; J♂+				D♀+; I♀+		
Finances & filing the return	B♂+	B♂+; I♀+			D♀+		
Caring for the car		I♂+				H♂+	
Renovating	E♂+	E♀+; E♂+			E♀+; H♂+		
Repairing/crafting	B♂+; C♂+; D♀+; F♂-	C♂+; I♂+; K♀+; L♀+				D♀+	D♀+
Overall division	D♀+; G♀+; G♂+; H♀+; I♂+; M♀+; N♀+	D♀-; H♂+; K♀+; N♀+	A♀-; B♀+; E♀+; E♂+; F♂+; H♀-; I♂+; J♂+; L♀+	B♂-; D♀+; E♂-; I♀+; J♀+; J♂-; K♂-; L♀+; M♀+; M♂+; N♀+	A♀+; A♂+; B♂+; C♂+; D♀+; D♂+; E♀+; E♂+; F♀+; F♂+; H♀+; H♂+; I♀+; I♂+; J♀+; J♂+; L♀+; L♂+; M♀+; N♀+; N♂+	A♀+; B♀+; D♀+; E♀+; E♂+; F♀+; F♂+; G♀-; H♀+; H♂+; I♀+; J♀+; K♀+; K♂+; L♀+; L♂+; M♀-; M♂+; N♀-; N♂+	A♀+; B♀+; B♂+; E♀+; E♂+; F♂+; H♀+; J♂+; M♂+
Outsourcing	B♀+; G♀+; H♀+; H♂+; I♂+; K♀-			B♀+	B♀+; G♀+; I♂+; K♂+	C♀-	C♀+; C♂+; F♂+; J♀+; K♀+

Note: The table contains the arguments named by the informants. Interviewees are denoted with their couple number and ♂ for the male partner and ♀ for the female partner. Naming the significance of rationales is marked with +; rejected arguments are marked with -; ambivalence is marked with +/-.

8.3.3 Comparison of housework explanations before and after the child's birth

Two arguments were important for the pre-birth housework division, for the plans and for the division at the time of the second interview: time availability and discussions. The partner with fewer working did, before and after childbirth, more housework – and this argument was also reflected in the plans. The timing of the available time was in both interviews important for the division of the household labor. The interviewees continued to explain that the partner with less working hours did more housework to free the other one from doing chores in the free time in order to be able to spend the free time jointly with fun activities rather than with housework. Some interviewees reported at the second interview that not only paid work but also childcare affected their available time for housework as not all chores could be done while simultaneously looking after the child. Discussions had different meanings for the arrangements before the birth, in the plans, and after the birth. Before the birth, interviewees discussed the overall share and specific chores; in the plans, they spoke more about general ideas – and only a few couples actually negotiated; and at the second interview, discussions sometimes meant arguments since one partner was not satisfied with the arrangement.

Preferences, competencies, standards, gendered aspects, and routine were only named as explanations for the housework division before and after childbirth, not regarding the plans. The first three were used similarly before and after the child's birth. However, after the birth also the partner who had more time did chores he or she did not like, was less competent or had lower standards. Thus, the importance of these explanations decreased with the transition to parenthood. The interviewees mostly did not address gendered aspects directly; some interviewees said that standards and being female or male were linked. At the time of the first interview, non-routine tasks were explained with gendered aspects; this was not found in the second interview. Refusing gendered expectations in the second interview did not coincide with an equal arrangement. Routines lost significance at the second interview; only a few interviewees referred to this argument. Fairness was for some interviewees an argument regarding the current situation at both interviews; the interviewees related their share to their partners or to other men – no woman spoke about this – and determined if they did enough housework.

Some arguments lost importance for the division of housework in the transition to parenthood. These were physical aspects, pragmatism, and naturalness – which was also crucial for planning the household labor arrangement.

8.4 Interviewees' housework explanations and the theories

This section relates the interviewees' explanations for their division of household labor to the theories discussed.

From the point of view of *new home economics*, specialized arrangements of paid and unpaid work are more efficient and increase the output for all household members. The transition to parenthood is an event in couples' lives that increases returns from specialization. Before childbirth, none of the couples had a fully specialized division of housework. In most couples, the partners specialized on different chores. Women with less income and working hours did more housework than their partners – as is in line with theoretical expectations. Against these expectations, the man who worked part-time before childbirth did less household labor than his partner. When planning for their time as future parents, the couples envisioned a specialization of housework; the partner who was intended to reduce working hours was expected to do more of this unpaid work. The couples put these plans into practice, most had partially or almost entirely specialized housework arrangement, while others had equal shares in household labor. New home economics helps to understand that interviewees explained their division of housework before and after childbirth with competences and routines as these increase productivity, which is one main argument for specialization. However, some couples described that they argued over their division of housework in which the partner who did more chores wanted the other partner to increase the engagement in household labor. These discussions were not theoretically expected as an increasing share of the other partner does not lead to further increases in productivity.

According to the *bargaining approaches*, the partners negotiate their division of unfavorable household labor. Income differences affect the bargaining power. Thus, it can be theoretically expected that the interviewed couples change their division of housework when becoming parents as their planned paid work arrangements lead to income and thus bargaining power losses for one partner. In line with this expectation, the partner with less income often did more housework before and after childbirth – and the partner who planned to reduce labor market income was also planned to increase the housework share. In contrast to the assumptions, women E did more housework despite her higher income before childbirth. The informants did not refer to bargaining powers but tried to assign housework tasks in a way that both partners did the chores they were better at or liked more. Bargaining theory assumes that doing unpaid work is unfavorable, and some couples divided tasks according to preferences – or tried to avoid housework by outsourcing it. Especially after childbirth, interviewees described arguments about the division of the household labor that arose when the partner who did more chores was unsatisfied with this situation and spoke about this issue. The bargaining approach helps to understand why the partner with less income who did more household labor was often not successful in reducing their shares; they did not have enough bargaining power.

Social exchange theory explains couples division of labor with an exchange of paid against unpaid work. Most couples planned for a change in their paid work arrangement; it can be expected that the partner who reduces the working hours would do more household labor in exchange for the partner's financial support. In line with this expectation, most interviewees who had a lower income than their partners did more household labor and couples with similar

incomes had equal divisions of housework. In their plans, the couples explained that the partner who takes parental leave would increase the housework share with a feeling of naturalness. This feeling corresponds to the logic of social exchange. Available time was before and after childbirth an argument for the division of housework that can also be understood on the basis of social exchange theory. The interviewees explained that the partner who spent more time at home did more chores to unburden the other partner.

The *time availability approach* explains the division of unpaid work with the time the partners spend in paid work, the amount of unpaid work that has to be done and the capability to do housework given the time restraints and the demand to engage in household labor. Housework demands increase when couples become parents. In line with the theoretical assumption, most couples referred to time availability when describing their division of housework before and after childbirth; the partner with fewer working hours usually did more chores. Some couples reported during the pregnancy that the men increased their household share due to physical aspects. This change can be understood with the theoretical expectations that men do more housework when there is a higher demand. Furthermore, couples in which one partner planned to reduce working hours argued that this would decrease the demand that the other partner did housework. Couples with equal paid work hours after childbirth share housework equally which is in line with the theoretical expectations. Some interviewees explained the outsourcing of housework with not having enough time to engage in this unpaid work.

According to the *doing gender approach*, gendered normative ideas influence couples' divisions of housework; prevalent gender-normative ideas link doing unpaid work more to femininity than to masculinity. Gendered roles can be expected to gain importance with the transition to parenthood. In line with this argument, most couples described that their division of housework became more gendered after their child was born. The informants partly referred to gendered aspects when explaining their division of chores; most of them said that they believed that men and women should share household labor – which did not necessarily mean equal shares. Many of them perceived the man's housework as help which suggested that they believed that the woman was responsible for it. Some interviewees referred directly to gendered explanations. Others linked other factors that influenced their housework division like competences or standards to gender. One example is that some interviewees said that it would be easier for the man to do specific chores due to his strength – an argument often used in connection with non-routine household tasks that are perceived as masculine. With the transition to parenthood, the interviewees started to refer to motherhood and fatherhood ideals when explaining their housework arrangement.

According to the *identity formation approach*, family and work identity result from time spent in the family and at work. Since gendered expectations influence the identity formation, and more gendered expectations accompany the birth of a first child – being a mother is linked to spending more time in the family than being a father –, it can be assumed that this event changes the division of household labor. Family and work identities are expected to conflict for women,

but not for men. Women with part-time hours did more housework than their partners and than women who worked full-time; this was theoretically expected. Most interviewees did not argue in line with the identity formation approach; only some explained that being a woman or being a mother was linked to doing more housework. None of the interviewees spoke about a conflict between their work and family identity regarding household labor.

The *dependency and gender display approach* expects that couples' division of unpaid work is related to financial dependency in a way that couples with equal incomes share household labor equally while women in couples with all other income relations have a greater share than their partners. They do this to compensate for dependency if they have less income than their partner or deviation of gender roles if they provide income for their partner. Most of the couples shared housework in line with the theoretical expectations before and after childbirth. Some couples shared housework equally even if the man had a higher income. The interviewees did not refer to economic dependency when explaining their housework arrangement. The argument that a woman who spent less time in the labor market than her partner did more housework than he could be interpreted as compensation for the partner's financial support. Some plans were not in line with the theoretical expectations; couple E who planned for the man to become more economically dependent envisioned him to do more housework – which he did for a short time before the couple changed the division of paid and unpaid work. Some couples who planned for a male earner model anticipated an equal sharing of housework – with the help of a cleaner. These explanations were not referred to after childbirth.

The *egalitarian values approach* connects the division of unpaid work with the educational levels of both partners. High education is linked with ideas about gender equality; therefore couples with two highly educated partners are expected to divide household labor equally. According to this perspective, highly educated couples keep their division of housework during their transition to parenthood. Couples with lower educational levels behave differently; they can be expected to have an even more gendered housework division after childbirth in line with different expectations for mothers and fathers. Before birth, five of the highly educated couples and three of the couples with different educational backgrounds shared the unpaid work as expected: The highly educated shared housework equally, while the women in the other couples did more household labor. In line with the theoretical assumptions, these couples referred to ideas about gender equality and inequality regarding the housework division. After the child's birth, most couples had at least partly-specialized housework arrangements with the woman doing more of this work. This division of housework was expected for couples with low or mixed educational attainments. However and in contrast to theoretical expectations, most of the highly educated couples also had unequal arrangements. Two of the highly educated couples had in line with the egalitarian values approach an equal division of housework. One of these couples, argued with ideas about gender equality, while the other did not.

Fairness regarding all spheres of work is the central mechanism for couples' division of paid and unpaid work according to *equity theory*. The division of paid work affects how fair or unfair

the division of unpaid work is perceived – and vice versa. It can be expected that couples view it as fair when the partner who has more free time does more household labor. Furthermore, since comparisons with others influence the perception of fairness, and in general women in Germany do more housework than men, an unequal division of chores might be considered fair – and some men reported that they compared their share with other men to assess if they did enough housework. In line with these expectations, couples linked housework with paid work; women who had fewer working hours did more household labor than their partners, and this was not perceived as unfair by the couples. Also, other arguments point to fairness; the assignment of chores according to preferences and competencies might lead to the assessment of a fair arrangement as the partners were able to do tasks they liked which might be rewarding per se. After childbirth, the interviewees started to argue partly explicit with fairness when one partner did more household chores while the other partner spent more time with paid work. The couples with equal paid work hours shared housework equally and perceived this as fair. Some interviewees reported discussions they had with their partners to restore fairness; the interviewees tried to alter their arrangement or spoke about which division of housework would be fair in their opinions.

9. Childcare

Childcare is a new field in the division of paid and unpaid work for couples who become parents. Childcare includes all activities related to the child; rearing the child, caring, feeding, changing diapers, playing with the child, bathing the child, and spending time with the child for example.

9.1 Anticipations

9.1.1 Plans for childcare

When planning for their future as parents, most informants had quite detailed plans about their overall division of childcare (see the last row in Table 16). Almost all couples planned that the woman would do a greater share of childcare in the first year of the child's life. Some informants expected that the women would only do a little bit more than the men while others expected the women to do almost all childcare. In general, the planned divisions of childcare within the couple were consistent to the informants' paid work plans: Doing more childcare was connected to changes in the labor market participation. In most couples, both partners had similar childcare ideas. Two exceptions are couples L and M. The men anticipated that their partners would do most of the childcare while the women said that they would share childcare equally. Regarding the labor market participation, both women wanted to take parental leave for at least the first year after childbirth while their partners would work full-time.

Couples C, E, and H planned a more equal division of childcare. Woman C said that both partners would share childcare equally while the man anticipated that his partner would do a little bit more childcare. Women E and H expected to have slightly lower shares of childcare while their partners said that they would share childcare equally. Woman C would take six months of parental leave and return to her full-time job; man C worked two days per week from home and said that he would care for the child on these days and in his free time. Couple E planned for the man to stay at home after the child's birth while the woman would return to her paid work after maternity leave. Man H would take parental leave upon the woman's return to her paid work after maternity leave; then he would work part-time like his partner.

Some interviewees had quite detailed ideas about their future division of different childcare activities (see Table 16). However, most interviewees did not have specific plans for the childcare activities. Woman C and man I imagined that both partners would change the diapers, while man E planned to prepare food for the baby and to stroll with it. The table also shows that the interviewees hardly named activities mostly the woman would do – except breastfeeding and caring for the child during nights. Four couples spoke about activities either both of them or mostly the man would carry out.

Table 16: Interviewees' plans on which person – the woman, the man, both or an external help – would do which childcare activity in the first year after the child's birth

Childcare activities	Who would do the activity mainly?		
	Woman	Man	Both
Breastfeeding	A; B♀; D♂; E♀; F; H♀; I♀; J♀; K♀		
Feeding			H♀
Preparing food for the child		E♂	
Changing diapers			C♀; I♂
Strolling with the child		E♂	I♂
Going to a playground		H	
Visiting a baby course		H♀	
Bringing the child to the crèche			C♀
Bringing the child to bed		I	
Nocturnal care	I♀; L♂		L♀
Overall arrangement	A; B; D; F; G; I; J; K; L♂; M♂; N	E♂	C; E♀; H; L♀; M♀

Note: The table contains the information about the division of different childcare activities from the perspective of the individual informants and distinguishes if the woman, the man, both of them, or an external help mainly take care of a particular activity. When both partners of a couple described the planned division of a specific activity similarly, only the couple letter appears in the table. When the partners differed or only one partner spoke about the division of a specific task, it is indicated with ♀ for the female partner and ♂ for the male.

Six couples (B, C, F, I, J, K) envisioned or considered having help with the daily childcare by relatives, childcare institutions or private childminders in the future (see Table 17). Most of them planned that they would receive help from family members and most of them planned to use private or professional help only for some hours per day or only on some days per week. Only couple C planned to bring the child to a childcare facility for five days per week when it is six months old. Couple K planned to increase the child's days in the crèche one year after its birth to five days – between sixth months after the birth and one year; they planned for the child to go to a crèche for two days per week. Other interviewees could not imagine bringing their child to a professional or family members on a regular basis or for substantial amounts of time. Couple E imagined that their family members might help with childcare as a back-up. Couple J had very vague ideas about involving professionals; they said that they would maybe use a crèche or a childminder, but they did not have any plans regarding the timing or the hours. Couple F had different ideas about outsourcing childcare. Woman F could imagine bringing the child to relatives and would not involve a crèche or childminder. In contrast, man F said that he would prefer to involve professionals – but he had no concrete idea about when the child should start to go to a crèche or childminder.

Table 17: Interviewees' plans for if and when to involve others – family, crèches, and childminders – into the regular childcare during the first 12 months after childbirth

Couple	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
A	maybe family members, no professionals											
B	professional help, maybe crèche, no au-pair											
C	crèche – five days per week											
D	no family members, no professionals											
E	family members as back-up											
F	maybe family members; woman: no professionals; man: crèche or childminder											
G	maybe – probably not within the first year											
H	no professionals in the first year											
I	family members, backup solution: crèche											
J	no family members or professionals planned – maybe crèche or childminder											
K	crèche – two days per week											five days
L	maybe friends and family members; woman: maybe a childminder; man: no professionals											
M	maybe family members, no professionals											
N	no family members nor professionals											

9.1.2 Explanations for the plans for postnatal childcare arrangements

When describing their plans for dividing the overall childcare and specific childcare arrangements, the interviewees spoke about naturalness, gendered aspects, available time, preferences, institutions and policies, financial aspects, physical factors, and some further aspects (see Table 18). However, most of the interviewees only named explanations for the overall division of childcare and not for how they planned to share specific childcare activities – which they also planned less frequently.

Perceived naturalness

Some informants spoke explicitly or implicitly about perceiving their plan as natural. Mostly, they spoke about this regarding the overall division of childcare activities, but also regarding specific activities like breastfeeding, changing diapers, or bringing the child to the crèche.

Some couples described that their planned arrangement felt natural and as the best was to care for the child. Primarily couples who planned that one partner would do more childcare than the other reported that feeling. Woman A and M, for instance, said that they always wanted to stay at home with the child; correspondingly, the couples planned the women to do most of the childcare.

Naturalness was also implicitly referred to when interviewees spoke about some activities they planned with the child. Most often this was the case regarding breastfeeding. Most

interviewees who spoke about breastfeeding did not explain why they planned for breastfeeding the child. Woman J, for example, said that she would breastfeed if it worked out without referring to any other explanations. Man I implicitly referred to the perception of naturalness when he described that it was entirely clear for him that he would change the diapers or that he would stroll with the child.

Gendered explanations

Interviewees also referred to gendered aspects when describing their plan for dividing childcare. This was mostly the case regarding the overall division. One couple also spoke this issue regarding specific childcare activities.

Couples who planned for the mother to stay at home and do most of the childcare often referred to their perception of naturalness and gendered aspects. Woman L argued that children need maternal care more than they need paternal care; she felt that it was her duty to care for the child even when she would return to her job in the future. The following quote shows woman L's considerations for the future after her labor market return – which is not planned for the first year after the child's birth – in case of an illness of the child:

Of course I worry about how it will be, when I'm at work and something happens at home like the child gets sick or ... of course you worry about things like that, can you do it, will your employer agree to you driving home quickly, or that, I mean, you have the right, where I as mother can take some days off when the child gets sick, but you never know how it will turn out in the end, and you just hope that it will be all right. [...] Well I can't answer it properly. I think I have to take things as they come ... and then I have to decide it spontaneously, or then it is like it is, when I have to drive home I'm leaving, [...] I think every mum is doing it no matter where she is working [...] Or every dad, too. It depends on who can leave quickly, but it usually should be the mother, yes, sure, in case of emergency it usually will be the mothers whom the children need then. (L, woman, first interview, 794-810)

Da macht man sich schon auch Gedanken, ne, was, was ist, wenn ich jetzt arbeite und jetzt ist gerade irgendwas daheim Kind ist krank, oder [...] da macht man sich schon Gedanken, kann man da macht da der Arbeitgeber mit, dann schnell, dass ich da schnell Heim fahren kann oder dass ich da dann, ich meine, es stehen ja dann gewisse Tage zu, wenn das Kind krank ist, wo ich als Mutter daheim bleiben kann ... aber wie das letztendlich dann wird man hofft halt, dass alles gut wird. [...] Also da kann ich echt nichts Konkretes dazu sagen, das, das sind so Sachen, das muss ich auf mich zukommen lassen und dann, das, das muss dann kurzfristig entschieden werden, oder dann das ist halt dann so, dass ich heim muss, [...] ich denke, das, das macht eine jede Mutter, egal wo sie arbeitet also denke ich einmal [...] Oder auch der Vater, je nachdem, wer halt einmal schnell weg kann, aber in der Regel sollte es die Mutter sein, ne, klar, gerade in solchen Fällen sind es meistens schon die Mütter, die die Kinder dann brauchen. (L, woman, first interview, 794-809)

Man L also believed that a child should be cared for by the mother and that a mother should stay at home to care for the child for at least three years after the child's birth. He never considered becoming the primary caregiver; the couple planned for the woman to stay at home for one year and to do most of the childcare during this time. Then, she would return to her job because she wanted to do so as it was important for her self-concept (see Chapter 7.2.2).

The partners in some couples expressed different gendered ideas. Woman A said she always believed that maternal care was better for a child and argued with specific maternal feelings; in contrast, man A thought that this was not necessarily the case and that he could be the primary caregiver. Couple A did not mention any conflicts related to these different ideas; however, they planned that the woman would stay at home for at least one year and that the man would care for the child in the evenings and at weekends. Man A accepted his partner's ideas, and none of them explained why he had aligned his ideas about parenting with his wife's ideas.

The couples E and H argued in contrast to the other couples with gender equality and said that both parents should equally care for their child and that a child needs the mother and the father. Therefore, the couple planned that both partners would take care of the child equally. This implied for woman H also to stop breastfeeding after a few weeks to make it possible for her husband to feed the baby. Besides striving for equality in their division of childcare and their relationship with the child, couple H also argued that being a competent caregiver was not connected to being male or female, but was an individual achievement. Woman H explained:

Based on our conception of roles it is like, [...] we both believe in equality and it is not like, that I think, mothers are better in raising children than fathers. Well, I think, it depends on how talented you are individually and it is not necessarily dependent on gender. And, yes, as I said, [...] he expressed the wish, [...] I think, if you have a child you are supposed to share this task somehow equally. Well, I think it is important for the well-being of the child that both parents care [...] that is somehow a shared responsibility in a relationship. (woman H, first interview, 425-426)

Von unserm Rollenverständnis her ist es so [...] dass wir eine gleichberechtigte Vorstellung schon haben und dass es jetzt auch nicht so ist, dass ich z. B. denke, Mütter können jetzt besser Kinder erziehen als Väter. Also, ich denke, das ist, ist auch, wie man individuell begabt ist und ist nicht unbedingt vom Geschlecht abhängig. Und ja, wie gesagt, er [...] hat, hat den Wunsch geäußert, [...] ich finde, wenn man ein Kind hat, sollte man das auch, auch miteinander einfach irgendwo diese Aufgabe teilen. Also, ich finde das für das Kind wichtig, wenn beide sich darum kümmern [...], das ist schon irgendwie eine gemeinsame Aufgabe in einer Partnerschaft (woman H, first interview, 425-426)

Couple E also shared the idea that both of them were equally responsible for the childcare. However, they planned due to the financial situation that the man would do most childcare and stay at home for the child as the woman would return to her job. As earlier indicated, woman E spoke about adverse reactions from her social circle to their division of childcare that the couple planned (see Chapter 7.2.2). Couple K spoke about negative reactions from relatives as they planned for the child to go for two days a week to a crèche after six months. Man K said that these reactions were addressed to his partner as the social circles expected the mother to care for the child. Woman H also referred to the expectations of others and said she wondered how it would be for her husband to be with the child at a playground or to be – probably – the only man in a baby course he planned to attend to.

Available time

The interviewees explained their planned overall childcare with time availability – and linked paid work and childcare. Some interviewees also referred to this argument regarding outsourcing childcare and for some specific childcare activities.

The interviewees often explained men's childcare involvement with available time; as discussed in Chapter 7.2.1, twelve of fourteen men planned to work full-time after childbirth. Therefore the informants argued that the men would only be at home in the mornings, the evenings and at the weekends which limited their time to care actively of the child. Man B described it as follows when the interviewer asked how he imagined childcare:

Given that a) I have to commute to [workplace, distance: 1 hour] every day and b) am involved [in my job], it will be a bit less. Since the day has 24 hours, I will maybe have a bit in the mornings and the evenings. If that was 10-12 hours, then we put away night sleep, then there is not much left. (man B, first interview: 177)

Aufgrund der Tatsache, dass ich a) jeden Tag nach [Arbeitsort, etwa 1 Stunde entfernt] fahren muss und b) [in meine Arbeit] eingebunden bin, wird es ein bisschen weniger werden. Da der Tag 24 Stunden hat, habe ich vielleicht morgens ein bisschen was und abends ein bisschen was. Wenn das der Sinn von 10-12 Stunden ist, dann tun wir noch die Nachtruhe weg, dann bleibt da nicht viel. (man B, first interview: 177)

Most interviewees argued similarly to man B; the man would be able to care for the child before and after his working hours – some men only before or after – and at the weekends due to paid work related time constraints. Some interviewees thought that this was no problem – like man F who said that the quality of the time spent together with the child was more important than the quantity. Others, like woman G, perceived it as a problem that her partner and the child would only have little time together. Man G worked regular overtime. As a potential solution to this problem, woman G considered driving with the child to her partner's office to enable them to spend the lunch breaks together as a family.

Couple H argued the other way around: they planned for the man to take parental leave so that both of them would be able to spend similar amounts of time on childcare – thus childcare determined the paid work. Woman J was the only interviewee who said that she could combine her paid work with childcare easily as she spoke with her boss and he allowed her to bring her child with her to the workplace.

Some interviewees spoke about available time concerning special childcare activities. Couple I said that the man who would not have much time to spend with the child planned on doing some special childcare activities like putting the child to sleep to spend time with the child then after his work. Regarding outsourcing childcare, five interviewees referred to available time; they said that they planned on or considered bringing the child to a crèche, a childminder or relatives so that both partners would have time for paid work.

Preferences

Preferences were often used as an explanation regarding the use of external childcare or support from relatives, in two interviews also regarding the overall division of childcare and in one couple also for the plan concerning bringing the child to the bed. In general, some interviewees – especially women – preferred spending time with the child to their paid work, as was discussed in Chapter 7.2.2.

Some informants who planned for their child to go to a childcare facility said that they preferred professional childcare to family or friends. Woman C explained that her partner's mother would theoretically be available for childcare; since she and her mother-in-law disagreed in many regards, woman C did not consider her help and preferred a public childcare facility. Correspondingly, the couple enrolled the child to a crèche on five days a week, starting when it would be six months old. This was similar in couple K. Most couples did not plan that the child would attend a public childcare facility, but some spoke about related ideas. Woman F reported that her partner wanted to use a crèche but that he also wanted her to take care of the child. She wanted to care for the child herself; she believed that children should not be too young when starting in childcare facilities; and, she would prefer a childminder over a crèche:

I don't want to hand it [the child] only over, whereas he [the partner] believes that a crèche would be okay for him. That is simply absolutely not okay for me, well to put such a little worm to a crèche, that is not an option for me. Well if, then his mum would come once per week, for example. And yes, a childminder, I could imagine that. (woman F, first interview: 387)

Ich möchte es [das Kind] halt nicht nur abgeben, wobei er [der Partner] da jetzt der Meinung ist, Kinderkrippe, das wäre für ihn okay. Das ist halt für mich absolut nicht okay, also so einen kleinen Wurm in der Kinderkrippe stecken, das gibt es für mich nicht. Also wenn, dann würde seine Mama einmal in der Woche kommen z.B. Und ja, Tagesmutter, das könnte ich mir noch vorstellen. (woman F, first interview: 387)

Other interviewees planned to receive help from their family and preferred this over public childcare. For most informants who spoke about this, the care by relatives was a backup solution in case the couple would need support. Others, like couple I, had very detailed plans for family help as the woman's return to the labor market would depend on it. Couple I agreed on their plan with both partners' parents; they also booked a place in a crèche as a back-up in case the familial childcare would not work out:

Yes, and I don't know how it will actually be, and I enrolled the child nevertheless in a crèche, just to be safe, since you ... yes, you don't know if it will really work out, if you can agree or if there will then ... be disagreements regarding the upbringing and therefore, I wanted to have all choices, if we would really get a place and this would not work out so that we would have another option as I need this constant for the work. (woman I, first interview: 362)

Ja und wie's konkret dann wird, weiß ich nicht und ich habe aber jetzt trotzdem vorsichtshalber das Kind schon mal in einer Krippe angemeldet, weil man...ja, man weiß es nicht, ob's dann wirklich klappt, ob man dann einer Meinung ist oder ob's dann doch, ... ja, Unstimmigkeiten gibt in der Erziehung und deswegen wollte ich mir das auch so offen halten, wenn jetzt wir wirklich einen Platz kriegen würden und das nicht funktioniert, dass wir noch eine andere Möglichkeit haben, weil für die Arbeit brauche ich halt einfach mehr Konstante. (woman I, first interview: 362)

Preferences were also discussed regarding the overall childcare division. Woman A hoped that her partner would be an active father and that we would spend more time with the child than her father did with her. The man's time with the child also seemed an issue for couple I; they planned for the man to bring the child to the bed to make sure that he has an active part.

Institutions and policies

Some interviewees explained that institutions and policies created conditions that enabled or hindered them to plan according to their childcare ideals. They discussed especially the availability of public childcare and the parental leave policies.

Woman D, for example, said that the lack of public childcare institutions was a hindrance for them to plan their division of paid and unpaid work in their desired way. She described that there were no good crèches nearby and that they could therefore not bring the child to a childcare facility in the year after childbirth. This lack of childcare places and the fact that she earned less income than her husband left woman D with the impression that she had no choice but had to assume the primary responsibility for childcare; she discussed this in connection to being a woman. Thus, she emphasized that institutional and policy settings have gendered effects.

Couple I described that they wanted the child to be looked after by their parents upon the woman's job return, but they also signed a contract for a place in a crèche as a backup option. They knew that his backup option was not something to count on. There were only very few crèches nearby, each of them had a long waiting list. Woman I described that the facility they chose had a waiting list with 200 children on it. It also had a system of assigning places according to age and sex of the children and only allowed one baby per year. Interviewees who did not plan to bring the child to a childcare facility spoke about the difficulty to find a childcare place. They referred to their general impression about available places.

The parental leave and parental benefit policy was also an explanation of why some couples planned for the woman to stay at home or reduce her work hours and not the man. As discussed in Chapter 7.2.2, the interviewees said that the financial compensation was too low so they could not afford to lose the man's higher income. Others said that the height of the compensation was so low that the women could not concentrate solely on childcare as long as they would have wanted to.

Financial arguments

Some informants referred to financial arguments when speaking about their childcare plans. Financial arguments were mostly used to explain why a couple considered using or not using public childcare and why one partner would have less time with the child than the other one.

Woman A described that bringing the child to a crèche would not pay off financially since all income she would earn if she returned to her job would pay for the public childcare; therefore, she argued that it was financially more useful for her to stay at home and do the childcare. This decision also fit her preferences and her assumptions of which division of childcare was natural. Others referred to financial aspects differently when speaking about public childcare. Man F explained that there was a tax return for using public childcare facilities until a certain threshold. The couple spoke about the possibility to outsource childcare for the number of hours that would secure them the maximum tax refund. Man F was promoting the idea while woman F did not want to plan for public childcare as long as their child was younger than two or three years of age and would prefer a childminder over a crèche. Couple C and K who planned to involve a childcare facility after six months did not speak about the related costs and the importance for their decision making in the interviews. Couple K said they needed to involve professionals as the woman had to return to her paid work after six months in part-time for economic reasons – which suggests that her part-time income exceeded the childcare costs.

Both partners of couple E referred to their financial situation when explaining why they would not put their ideal of sharing childcare equally into practice; at the time of the first interview, the woman had a secure and stable job while the man had not. Therefore, the couple decided for her to work full-time while the man would stay at home and do most of the childcare like man E explained:

Since she has the steady income, she did not take the parental leave, since the money has to come in and I will be responsible for the homely sphere. Well for the children, for the child then and for the household. (man E, first interview: 121)

Da sie das feste Einkommen hat, hat sie den Erziehungsurlaub nicht genommen, weil der Rubel rollen muss und ich werde dann für das heimliche Umfeld verantwortlich sein. Also für Kinder, für das Kind dann und auch für den Haushalt. (man E, first interview: 121)

Other aspects

Some interviewees spoke about other aspects when explaining their planned childcare arrangement: Physical aspects, the child's best, competences, and discussions.

The interviewees discussed breastfeeding as a physical aspect that led to gendered plans for childcare. They described breastfeeding as women's ability that excluded men. For some couples, this physical aspect implied that the woman should do more childcare than the man. Woman A connected in her explanations the physical aspect of breastfeeding with ideas about what is the best for the child; she described that she felt obliged to provide the best for her child, which included breastfeeding:

Well, from reading and gathering information it was clear to me that it [breastfeeding] has to be. Well that it is extremely vital for the child's health and that I as a person cannot be opposed to it, as I have to do my best for the child. (A, woman, first interview 431)

Ja, für mich war eigentlich schon klar, also durch das Lesen und Informieren, schon klar, dass es [das Stillen] sein muss. Also dass es für die Gesundheit des Kindes unheimlich wichtig ist und dass ich mich da als Person nicht dagegen stellen kann, weil ich dem Kind eigentlich das Beste geben muss. (A, woman, first interview, 431)

Woman H also spoke about the biological fact that only women can breastfeed and also spoke about it as a means to strengthen the mother-child bond. In line with her gender equality ideas, she planned on breastfeeding for a short period only so that her partner could also feed the baby; that would strengthen the bond between her partner and the child. For woman I, the physical aspect that she would breastfeed was the reason why she would have to do the childcare during nights – as she assumed that nocturnal care meant breastfeeding the child.

Man F expected that the couple would divide different childcare activities according to competences and said that he, therefore, had no ideas about their specific division of childcare. He compared childcare in this manner with housework which the couple divided according to him based on competences. However, he did not discuss that it might be that his partner would gather more competences directly after childbirth as the couple planned for her to stay at home in order to do more childcare.

Interrelation of the arguments

Naturalness and gendered aspects were sometimes connected; it seemed natural for the interviewees to argue with or against gendered ideas of motherhood and fatherhood when they explained their plan for the overall childcare arrangement. Furthermore, the physical aspect that only mothers can breastfeed and the conclusion that the woman would, therefore, be the primary caregiver seemed also to be natural for some interviewees.

Some interviewees also linked institutions and policies with gendered aspects and said that the lack of childcare places was more an issue that was important for the women than for the men or linked the parental leave policies with gendered expectations.

Table 18: Interviewees' explanations for the planned division of specific childcare activities, the overall division, and outsourcing

Childcare activities	Naturalness	Gendered aspects	Available time	Preferences	Institutions and policies	Financial aspects	Further aspects
Breastfeeding	B♀+; C♂+; E♀+; F♀+; F♂+; I♀+; J♀+; K♀+	H♀-	B♀-; E♀-; H♀+	I♀+		H♀+; I♀+	A♀+; F♀+; F♂+; H♀+
Feeding		H♀+					H♀+
Changing diapers	I♂+						
Strolling with the child	I♂+						
Going to a playground		H♀+; H♂+					
Visiting a baby course		H♀+					
Taking the child to the crèche	C♀+						
Bringing the child to bed			I♀+; I♂+	I♀+; I♂+			
Nocturnal care			L♂+				I♀+
Overall division	A♀+; E♀+; H♀+; H♂+; M♀+	A♀+; A♂+/-; E♀-; E♂-; H♀-; L♀+; M♀+; N♀+	B♂+; D♀+; F♂+; H♀+; H♂+; G♀+; G♂+; H♀+; H♂+; I♀+; I♂+; J♀+; J♂+; K♀+; M♂+; N♀+; N♂+	A♀+; F♀+	D♀+	D♀+; E♀+; E♂+; G♀+; H♂-; J♂+; K♀+	F♂+; G♀+; G♂+; H♀+
Outsourcing	F♀+	K♀+; K♂+	C♀+; C♂+; F♂+; I♀+; I♂+	C♀+; F♀+; I♀+; I♂+; H♀+; H♂+; J♀+; K♀+; M♀+; N♀+	D♀+; D♂+; E♀+; F♂+; I♀+/-; I♂+/-; J♂+	A+/-; F♂+	

Note: The table contains the arguments named by the informants. They are denoted with their couple number and ♂ for the male partner and ♀ for the female partner. Naming the significance of rationales is marked with +; rejected arguments are marked with -; ambivalence is marked with +/-.

9.2 After the birth

9.2.1 Post-birth childcare arrangements

Regarding the division of childcare, it is necessary to differentiate between childcare during weekdays and in the free-time, thus before and after a working day, and during weekends, as the arrangements for the different times and days, respectively, vary significantly as the comparison of Table 19 and Table 20 shows. Two couples (C, H) shared childcare equally on working days and in their free-time (see the last row in Table 19 and Table 20). Equally did not imply that both partners did precisely the same childcare activities but that they took care for approximately the same amount of time. The other twelve couples had a partial or complete specialization of the childcare in which the women did most or all childcare on workdays. In five couples at least one partner said that the woman also did most in both partners' free-time while in the majority of couples at least one partner said that they shared the childcare then. However, some interviewees expressed contradicting estimations during their interviews: they said in some part of the interview that they would share childcare equally when both partners were at home and at another part of the interview that the woman would still do more childcare then. Woman D and E said that their partners did most childcare when they were at home while the men reported an equal sharing before and after the working hours and during weekends. In some couples, unequally sharing childcare meant that one partner did 60 % of the childcare. In couples J and N at least one partner estimated that the woman did more than 90 % of the childcare. Most couples had a phase directly after childbirth when the women were recovering from giving birth, during which the men did more childcare. Man E did more childcare than his partner for some months when he was a homemaker after woman E returned to her paid work after maternity leave. When he started a full-time job, the woman reduced her working hours and started to do most childcare.

In couples with specialized childcare arrangements, the women were described as responsible for the childcare during the ordinary working hours; the men cared for the child in the evenings and at weekends. Only a few informants reported that some childcare activities were mostly or only done by the men. In contrast, in some couples, some activities were usually done by the women. Most interviewees said that there was one childcare activity that the men did more often than the women in the free-time; this was strolling with the child. Comforting the child or going to parent-child-classes, for instance, were activities mostly the woman did. Man E, who used to go to a parent-child-swimming-course with the baby, reported that he was the only man in this course. Man H also went to a baby course with his child. Besides these two men, no other men went to a baby course, but seven women did.

Most couples shared most of the childcare activities before and after the working hours on weekdays and at weekends or the men did them (Table 20). Bathing the child, for example, was

often done together by the partners of couples who spoke about it. Some activities were more often done by the women even if both partners were at home and could engage in childcare. Caring for the child during nights or organizing things for the child were examples. The table also shows inconsistencies in what interviewees reported. For example, woman N said at different times during the interview that mostly she, mostly her partner, and they both together put the child to the bed – therefore, all three columns signify that she said this.

Table 19: Interviewees’ perspectives on their division of childcare on weekdays during ordinary working hours

Childcare activities	Who did the activity mainly?		
	Woman	Man	Both
Feeding	A♀; B♀; C♀; E♀; F♀; I; J; L♀; M♀; N♀		H
Changing diapers	B♀; E♀; F♀; G♂; J♂; N♀		H
Dressing the child	B♀; L♀; M♀		H♂
Playing with the child	A♀; B♀; D♀; L♀; M♀; N♀		H
Cuddling with the child			F
Visiting a baby course	A♀; C♀; D♀; G♀; I♀; J; L♀	H	
Strolling with the child	M♀		
Looking after the child	B♀; N♀		C; H
Bringing the child to bed	E♀; I♀; J♀; M♀; N♀		
Nocturnal care	I♀		
Bathing the child/hygiene	M♀		H♂
Bringing the child to crèche etc.		K♂	C♀
Organizing for the child	E♀; F♀; G♀; I♀		
Overall arrangement	A♀; B D♀; E; F; G♀; I; J; K♀; L♀; L♂; M♀; N		C; H

Note: The table contains the information about the division of different childcare activities on workdays during working hours from the perspective of the individual informants and distinguishes if the woman, the man, or both did a specific activity mainly. When both partners of a couple described the planned division of a specific activity similarly, only the couple letter appears in the table. When the partners differed or only one partner spoke about the division of a specific task, it is indicated with ♀ for the female partner and ♂ for the male.

Table 20: Interviewees' perspectives on their division of childcare before and after the working hours and at weekends

Childcare activities	Who did the activity mainly?		
	Woman	Man	Both
Feeding	F♀; I; J; N	B♀; G♂	A♂; D♂; E♀; F♀; G♂; K♂
Changing diapers	G♂; I; J♂; N♀	K♀; N♀; N♂	D; E♀; F♀; I♂; K♂; L♀
Dressing the child	J♂		K♂
Playing with the child		D♀; G♂; M♀	A; B; D♀; G♂; H; K; L
Cuddling with the child			F
Visiting a baby course			
Strolling with the child		A♂; B; D♂; G♂; M♀	G♂; H
Looking after the child			H♀; H♂; N♂
Bringing the child to bed	B♀; G♂; I♀; J♀; N♀	A♀; K♀; N♀	D♂; F♀; G♂; H♀; H♂; N♀
Nocturnal care	A♂; D♂; E♀; F♀; G♀; I; J; L♀; M♂; N		B; C; D♂; E♂; H; K
Bathing the child/hygiene			B♀; D♀; E♀; F♀; N♀
Organizing for the child	E♀; F♀; I♀; K♀		
Overall arrangement	I; J; K♀; L; N♀	D♀; E♀;	A; B; C; D♂; E♂; F♀; G♀; H; K♂; L♀; M♂; N

Note: The table contains the information about the division of different childcare activities, before and after the working hours and at weekends, from the perspective of the individual informants and distinguishes if the woman, the man, or both did a specific activity mainly. When both partners of a couple described the planned division of a specific activity similarly, only the couple letter appears in the table. When the partners differed or only one partner spoke about the division of a specific task, it is indicated with ♀ for the female partner and ♂ for the male.

Three couples had help with childcare from a crèche or a childminder on three or four days a week and between three and nine hours per day, as Table 21 reveals. Seven couples had regular help with looking after the child by their family. They had this help between some hours per week and five days a week. Two couples said that relatives would sometimes take care of the child; one couple said that their relatives were available as a backup childcare option and four couples did not involve any relatives in childcare. Two of these four couples employed professional childminders or a crèche. Two couples did all the childcare by themselves.

Table 21: Couples' regular use of crèches, childminders, and family as caregivers

Couple	Crèche	Childminder/Nanny	Family
A	no	no	four hours/week
B	no	three hours on three days/ week + flexible	no
C	no	three days/week for nine hours/day	some hours on one day/week
D	no	no	no
E	no	no	one day/week + flexible
F	no	no	one day/week
G	no	no	one day/week
H	no	no	no
I	no	no	five full days/week
J	no	no	back-up
K	3 days/week for 5 hours, 1 day/week for the whole day	no	no
L	no	no	sometimes
M	no	no	two afternoons/week
N	no	no	sometimes

Most couples accomplished their planned childcare arrangement. Some reported small changes; couple F, for example, did not involve a public childcare institution in contrast to what the man initially wanted. Instead, the woman spent more time caring for the child. Couple E neither lived according to their plan nor their ideal childcare division as the women did more childcare than planned; the couple's ideal would have been sharing childcare equally.

9.2.2 Explanations for the postnatal childcare arrangements

As Table 22 shows, the couples spoke about a number of rationales when they explained their actual division of childcare at the time of the second interview. They referred to naturalness, gendered aspects, the availability of time, preferences, competencies, discussions, financial aspects, physical aspects, institutions, and policies, as well as some further aspects.

Perceived naturalness

Some aspects within the area of childcare seemed natural for the interviewees; this was the case for the overall childcare division and some specific childcare activities. The informants either said that it was natural that they had their arrangement or did not explain it.

For most interviewees, it was natural that both partners were actively involved in childcare, though that did not necessarily imply equal shares. Woman C, who shared childcare equally with her partner and used a childminder, described that taking care for the child was natural for the

man; when she looked after the child, he sometimes asked her why she was doing that because he wanted to do it. She said that she was proud of him taking care of the child:

Or also to see how, how he [husband] handles the, the baby. That warms my heart. I think that's amazing. [...] And then, I'm always proud of him, when he says: 'Um, why, why do you get the child? No, it's mine.' (woman C, second interview: 1000-1005)

Oder auch zu sehen, wie, wie er [Mann] mit dem, mit dem Baby umgeht. Mir geht dann das Herz auf. Find's total klasse. [...] Und bin da auch immer stolz auf ihn, wenn er so: 'Mh, wieso, wieso kriegst du das Kind? Nee, ist meins.' (woman C, second interview: 1000-1005)

Regarding childcare during nights, it was for some informants natural that both would share this care activity. Woman B, for example, said that they never spoke about who took care of the child during nights but that it was just natural that the partner who was less tired would get up if the child needed someone. For others, it was natural that always the woman took the nights – this might be connected to the different working hours.

Some informants, mostly men, said that it was natural for them to engage in all kinds of childcare activities. Man D, for example, said that it was important for him to do the diapers as it is part of being actively involved in childcare. He described that he thought that it was a pity if some men do not do the diapers. Others did not explain why both partners fed the child, did the diapers or cared for the child's hygiene but just said that both partners would engage in these childcare activities.

Gendered aspects

After the transition to parenthood, informants explained their overall division of childcare activities partly referring to gendered ideas of motherhood and fatherhood or with the refusal of these ideas. Gendered aspects were named regarding the overall division of childcare, different ways of interacting with children, the child's best interest, the meaning of parenthood for both partners and expectations of others.

Informants who referred to gendered ideas often said that they believed that the mother should be mainly responsible for childcare in the first years of the child's life while the father's primary responsibility was earning the family income. They also said that a father should spend time with his child in his free time. Man M, for example, said that he always believed that the mother should care for the child in the first three years of its life:

Well, my attitude was always that the mother should stay at home with the child, definitively at least for the first three years. Because then there is the first separation with the kindergarten, you know. But my idea was always that the mother stays at home, and I do believe that [wife's name] didn't have another opinion. Because somehow, there is the bonding there, the strongest bonding between mother and child. (man M, second interview: 284)

Also meine Einstellung war schon immer so, dass die Mutter beim Kind daheim bleiben soll, die ersten drei Jahre auf jeden Fall. Weil dann ist ja eh schon die ersten Abkapselung da mit dem Kindergarten, ne. Aber meins war immer, dass, dass die Mutter daheim bleibt und ich denke mal,

dass [Name der Frau] auch nicht anders da gedacht hat. Weil irgend, da ist halt doch die Bindung da, die größte Bindung Mutter und Kind. (man M, second interview: 284)

Man M, and others who argued with gendered aspects, referred to a natural bonding between the mother and the child that was supposedly stronger than between the child and other caregivers. Some informants also referred to maternal feelings when explaining why the woman did more childcare than the man or why they did not want to involve someone else in the daily childcare. Woman F said that she knew best what the child needed as she was the child's mother; because of this maternal intuition, she was the primary caregiver and also told her partner how to take care of the child. Man F also said that she thought that she could tell him what he should do; he also said that he nevertheless took care of the child in the way she considered best. He said, for instance, that he did not comfort the child immediately when it cried but waited for some minutes as nothing bad would happen to the child if it waited; his partner instead would always react immediately which he perceived as overprotective. Woman F referred to maternal instinct also as an argument against childcare institutions.

In contrast to informants who argued in line with gendered ideas that ascribed mothers and fathers different competencies and spheres, other interviewees either refused these or argued that both parents were equally important for the child and equally capable of caring for the child. Man B explained that he did not want to live according to gendered ideas; instead, he envisioned a new ideal that includes equal responsibilities and emancipation for men and women:

Well, I don't want to have the old image that says: Man goes to work, woman stays home with the child, the old, the old classic image of 1950. [...] Let's say, the man is at work, comes home, the food is prepared, the children are taken care of and so on. [...] The, the classic image is, I think, not good. The classic, the new classic image of 2050 could be: Both have, would have a part-time job [...] It is thus the, the, the freedom ... well, the emancipation should happen on both sides. (man B, second interview: 1552-1564)

Also, ich will jetzt nicht auf das alte Bild, was sagt: Mann geht arbeiten, Frau ist für Kind zu Hause, das alte, das alte klassische Bild 1950. [...] Sagen wir mal Mann ist bei der Arbeit, kommt nach Hause, Essen ist gemacht, Kinder sind versorgt usw. [...] Das, das klassische Bild ist, finde ich, nicht gut. Das klassische, das neue klassische Bild könnte sein 2050: Jeder hat, hätte jetzt einen Halbtagsjob [...] Es ist also, das, der, der Freiraum, ... also die Emanzipation sollte auf beiden Seiten sein. (man B, second interview: 1552-1564)

Despite the men's arguments against separate sphere gendered ideas, woman B did most of the childcare. She estimated to do approximately 90 percent of the childcare while he estimated her share to be approximately 70 percent. Couple H also referred to ideas about gender equality, in contrast to couple B, they put their ideas into practice. They reported that both partners had an equitable relationship with the child and were comparable attachment figures for it, which was good for the child. Couple C who also shared childcare equally but did not speak about gender equality.

Gendered arguments also affected the division of specific childcare activities. Some informants explained that women and men had different ways of dealing with children. Women were believed to care more tenderly than men and to like singing and cuddling with the child

more. In contrast, men were perceived as less anxious and more into action-oriented activities. Additionally, some informants said that men could spend increasingly more time with the child the older it gets since other ways of playing with the child became more important that fit the men more. Also, women C and H, who shared childcare equally with their partners, said that both partners had different ways of dealing with the child. Woman C, for example, said her partner sometimes forgot to look after the child and to feed it for some hours when he worked from home and got more easily annoyed when he was not able to do his paid work as planned because of the child; she said this was different for her. Man H reported that his partner had the impression that they were different, but he seemed not to believe that. Some informants who said that men and women have different ways of dealing with children thought that their child would benefit from interacting with both parents in different ways.

In line with gendered explanations, some informants argued that becoming a parent also had different meanings for women and men. Man C, who shared childcare equally with his partner, said that becoming a parent is definitively something different for a woman than for a man and that becoming a mother made his partner happier and affected her differently than it affected him⁸. Women I and N described that the child altered their lives more profoundly than their partners'. Woman I explained that it was easier for men to take their free time since they do not feel responsible in the same ways women do. Woman N put it similarly when she said that childcare was work for her while it was free-time for her partner and that her life changed while his life did not.

Some interviewees reported that they were confronted with gendered ideas by others. As discussed earlier, woman E received comments from the social circle. The couple also described one example where the man was confronted with other people's gendered expectations. The partners alternated going to a baby swim course with the child. When man E asked his former employer for support in managing to attend to that course, he had the impression that his employer expected man E's wife to go there with the child:

When I wanted to have half a day off for [son's name] or something, then there was always the question in the open: 'Don't you have a wife who could do that?' (man E, second interview: 228-232)

Wenn ich mir mal einen halben Tag hab frei nehmen wollen für [Name des Kindes] oder sonst was, dann stand immer die Frage im Raum: „Haben Sie denn keine Frau die das machen kann?“ (man E, second interview: 228-232)

He described furthermore, that it was a problem to go to the swim course every other week and that he had to take half days of vacation to go there. Furthermore, he was also the only man attending to this course, and he did not feel welcomed there since there was no dressing room

⁸ The described different meanings of the child's birth for both partners might be related to the fact that the man had three children from an earlier relationship.

for men, and he received some comments about him attending this course with his child. After he changed employers, attending was no longer a problem:

Someday, I then asked for half a vacation day every other week, I had to take vacation to go with [child's name] to the baby swimming course [...] I wanted to go there, we wanted, we did this baby swimming course during winter and we wanted to share this. I really wanted to go there. And this was really a huge thing. [...] Now, at [new employer], that is not a problem at all, I just don't go to work, or I just go three hours later to work: At [old employer], this was a huge thing, and everybody looked at me as if I was completely crazy. [...] And in the baby swimming course, I was also looked at as if I was the biggest idiot. Only women attended. [...] There was no dressing room for men, men are not counted in, and I had to listen to comments ranging from dumb to amused. Well, you then feel a little bit like an alien, as a father with a son going to a baby swimming course. (man E, second interview: 1101-1118)

Befragter: Ich hab mir dann ausbebeten irgendwann, dass ich alle zwei Wochen einen halben Tag, quasi mir Urlaub nehmen kann, ich musste mir richtig Urlaub nehmen, um zum Babyschwimmen zu gehen mit [Name des Kindes]. [...] Ich wollte da hin, wir wollten, wir haben Babyschwimmkurs gemacht im Winter und wir wollten uns das teilen. Ich wollte da gerne hingehen. Und das war echt ein großer Akt gewesen. [...] Das ist jetzt in [neuer Arbeitgeber] gar kein Problem, da komm ich einfach nicht, da komm ich einfach drei Stunden später zur Arbeit. In [alter Arbeitgeber] war das ein Riesenakt gewesen und alle andern haben geguckt, als wär ich total bescheuert. [...] Und zum Babyschwimmkurs selber bin ich auch angeguckt worden, als wär ich der letzte Schwachkopf. Da waren nämlich nur Frauen gewesen. [...] Es gab keine Männer-Umkleidekabine, Männer sind da nicht eingeplant und ich musste mir dumme bis belustigte Kommentare anhören. Also man fühlt sich dann so ein bisschen als Außerirdischer, als Papa mit Sohn beim Babyschwimmen. (man E, second interview: 1101-1118)

Man H who shared childcare equally with his partner also went to a baby course with the child. Woman H reported that there were some problems in the beginning as it was not common that men take part in such courses and that most focused on mothers and children. Woman B said, when she was asked about reactions from her social circle, that their neighbors did not know how much she worked since she worked partly from her home and that affected the neighbors' impression.

Available time

Available time was an argument almost all interviewees referred to when explaining their division of childcare. It affected the overall division of childcare but also of specific childcare activities.

In line with the explanations for the planned childcare described in Chapter 9.1.2, most interviewees spoke about both partners' available time regarding their post-birth childcare arrangement and connected paid work hours with childcare involvement. Men L and M worked shift hours and therefore had different times of the day to spend time with the child. The shifts determined when they could care for the child. Thus, the man would know how different it was to care for the child at different daytimes, as woman L put it. Some interviewees, like woman B who worked in self-employed for approximately 30 hours per week and partly from her home, reported that she could do childcare while working from home. Women B linked time and spatial availability:

Well, he [husband] just works. Thus he's away. [...] I work too, but I'm not away. [...] He's away, leaves at 8 am and comes back at 7 pm. [...] But, he has him [son] during weekends. (woman B, second interview: 1324-1336)

Na ja der [Mann] arbeitet halt, also der ist halt weg. [...] Ich bin, arbeitete zwar auch, aber bin nicht weg. [...] Er ist halt um, um 8.00 Uhr weg und kommt um 7.00 Uhr wieder. [...] Obwohl, am Wochenende hat er ihn. (woman B, second interview: 1324-1336)

Man I, whose partner worked more than 30 hours a week while he often worked more than 50 hours, was ambivalent regarding his available time. He said on the one hand that he would like to have more time with the child and on the other hand that he was happy with not having the option to do more childcare due to his job. He also said that the couple thought more about whether the woman worked too many hours. Instead, he considered his paid work as natural. He was asked in the interview if he thought that he and his wife were happy with how much time both spent on doing childcare:

Respondent: Oh, that's a difficult question, a really, really hot topic. .. I think that my wife sometimes feels rem ... remorse. [...] Does [the son] spend too much time at the grandparents? .. But on the other hand, she also says .. and I really think, that it is for [son's name], well, nice to have such an intensive contact to the grandparents. ... He is as, I say it like that: Well, from his character, as far as you can say that at his age, really open and laughs a lot. [...] Perhaps it is rather positive for his development. [...] Sometimes, I'm sorry for the fact that I .. do not have a little bit more time every now and then. But then, sometimes, I am annoyed, and then I am happy when it's none of my doing.

Interviewer: Especially, when you, like you said, come home from work late, at nine. Then he will usually be sleeping, won't he?

Respondent: At this time, he is sleeping, for sure. [...] Well, yesterday was a typical day. But I take the freedom now and again, in the mornings, that I don't start working at the office at eight, but that I start at half past eight or nine so that I have time in the mornings. [...] And this is really, really pleasant. [...] But usually, I don't see him in the evenings.

Interviewer: Yes, is this something, that you discuss, that, that, that, that is an ongoing issue [...]?

Respondent: ... Yes, but less from my side, because there, there we take it as something that is given by God, but more from her side, does she spend enough time with [son's name]. (man I, second interview: 498-535)

Befragter: Oh, ganz schwierige Frage, ganz, ganz heißes Thema. .. Ich glaub, meine Frau hat da schon ab und zu Gewisse ... Gewissensbisse.. [...] Ist [der Sohn] nicht zu viel bei den Großeltern? .. Aber auf der anderen Seite sagt sie dann auch .. und ja, bin ich eigentlich auch der Meinung, dass es für den [Name des Sohns] schon, ja schön ist, auch einen intensiven Kontakt zu den Großeltern zu haben. ... Er ist als, ich sag so: Ja, vom Typ her, soweit man das schon sagen kann in seinem Alter, ein sehr offener, lacht sehr viel. [...] Vielleicht ist es eher sogar positiv für die Entwicklung. [...] Mir tut's manchmal schon leid, dass ich .. nicht hin und wieder ein bisschen mehr Zeit habe. Wobei manchmal nervt's mich auch, da bin ich froh, wenn ich nichts damit zu tun hab.

Interviewer: Insbesondere wenn du sagst, du kommst spät heim um neun - dann wird er wohl schon im Bett sein meistens oder?

Befragter: Da ist er im Bett, klar. [...] Also, das war jetzt gestern so ein typischer Tag. Ich nehm mir dann allerdings öfter mal die Freiheit, dass man in der Früh, ja ..., dass ich nicht gleich um acht im, im Büro bin, sondern dass ich manchmal erst um halb neun, neun komm, dass ich die Zeit in der Früh dann einfach noch hab. [...] Was dann auch sehr, sehr angenehm ist. [...] Aber abends ist es in der Regel so, dass ich ihn nicht seh.

Interviewer: Ja. Ist das was, was ihr, was ihr diskutiert, was, was, was so ein Dauerthema ist [...]?

Befragter: ... Ja, wobei weniger jetzt von meiner Situation aus, weil da, da nehmen wir's eher etwas Gott gegeben hin, als mehr von ihrer Situation aus, ist sie genug für'n (Name des Sohns) da. (man I, second interview: 498-535)

That quote from man I shows that occupational arguments were often also connected to gendered ideas and arguments of available time.

The partners in two couples had similar working hours. Couple C did not speak about their working hours as a determinant for their childcare arrangement. Couple H explained that they arranged their paid work in a way that ensured both partners to have approximately the same amount of time to do childcare and to have time alone with the child.

Woman J said that her working hours did not influence her time for childcare since she was able to bring the child with her to her workplace. She described that this worked out well and that her boss supported her in doing this; he had a room where she could change the diapers and sometimes when the child cried, her boss would comfort it. Some informants said that they outsourced childcare. Couple B, for example, explained that they had a nanny who came to their place three days per week since the woman did her paid work at that time; the couple linked the necessity of a nanny to the woman's self-employment, not to the man's employment. It was similar in couples I, K and M.

Some men tried to engage more in specific routine childcare activities after their workdays. Man G said that he fed the child in the evenings and put it to sleep at night when he managed to be home in due time for that. Couple I said that the man used to change the diapers in the morning before he went to work until he changed jobs; as he had to start earlier and had no longer the time to change diapers before going to work. Available time was not only important for routine childcare activities but also for non-routine ones. Man H explained that he went with the child to the baby course since it took place on a day he usually was doing the childcare. Man K also referred to the available time when he explained why his partner usually went with the child to see the doctor for check-ups; he worked full-time while his partner worked part-time. Therefore, she was able to arrange medical consultations before or after her workdays while he had to take a day of vacation for that. Other full-time working man said that they always went with their partners and the child to the doctor and did not mention if this was problematic concerning their working time.

As anticipated before childbirth, different time availabilities on workdays and weekends led in some couples to different childcare arrangements on weekdays and weekends. Woman D who did most of the weekday childcare said that she did almost no childcare during weekends since her partner did all childcare activities except for breastfeeding.

Preferences

The interviewees also spoke about preferences when they explained their division of childcare. Most couples explained their overall childcare arrangement with preferences. For example, couple G said that the woman preferred childcare over other activities and wanted to be the primary caregiver for the child; correspondingly, she did most of the childcare. Man H, who shared childcare equally with his partner, explained that being present in the child's life and

doing a substantial amount of childcare was more important to him than work-related projects. Not all couples put their preferred arrangement into practice. Theoretically, woman D would like to have an equal arrangement, but since her income was much lower than her partner's, the couple never considered that option.

Some men said that they would prefer to have more time with the child, while others thought that they did sufficient childcare. The preferences for spending free-time with the child or with something else conflicted in some couples as the women expected their partners to do childcare when they were present at home while the men preferred to have free-time on their own. Man I, for instance, described that he was aware of his partner's wish that he engaged more in childcare; but he said that he sometimes needed time for himself even in times the child did not sleep. Thus, his partner had to do the childcare – even if she already did more childcare than him. He did not consider that she might also want to have time for herself.

If and how other persons were involved in childcare were also explained with preferences. Informants who said that they did not want to involve other persons often spoke about institutional childcare or care by a childminder referring to the term “Fremdbetreuung” (literally translated to care by strangers). Interviewees who preferred to bring the child to their parents instead of to a childcare facility also used that term. Woman F who did most of the childcare, for example, said that the couple preferred their parents to look after the child to public childcare when she returned to her self-employment for a few hours per week. The couple preferred that arrangement even if it was complicated since her mother-in-law had to drive for some time to take care of the child:

As my mother will retire, or better start the inactive phase of her early retirement, then from July onwards and from July onwards, my mother will look after her [daughter] for 1 ½ days approximately or maybe also two days, depending on how it will be with my job or on what else I have to do. [...] As she lives in the same city and the mother-in-law lives 90 km away. [...] She commuted 90 km and this is how we bridged the time until July. [...] But we preferred this to handing the child over to an unfamiliar person. (woman F, second interview: 203-216)

Weil eben meine Mutter in Rente geht, besser gesagt, in der Ruhephase von der Altersteilzeit dann ist, ab Juli und ab Juli wird sie [Tochter] dann von meiner Mutter ja, 1 1/2 Tage ca. betreut oder vielleicht auch zwei Tage, je nach dem, wie's halt beruflich ist oder was ich sonst noch zu tun hab. [...] Weil die eben am gleichen Ort wohnt und die Schwiegermama halt 90 km einfach entfernt. [...] Die ist halt jetzt immer die 90 km gefahren, so haben wir halt die Zeit bis Juli überbrückt. [...] War uns aber dann doch lieber als das Kind einer fremden Person zu geben. (woman F, second interview: 203-216)

In contrast, others said that they would not want to burden their parents too much with childcare. Also, others preferred public childcare to dividing all childcare within the couple or to involving family members to a greater extent. Woman B explained that she preferred to employ a nanny to a crèche due to the inflexibility of crèches.

Some informants said that they divided specific childcare activities according to preferences. Woman C described that her partner liked to prepare bottles for the child but that he lacked the patience for feeding the child while the woman found feeding relaxing. In general, some

informants said that the men would prefer not to feed the child. One exception was man A who said that he wanted to feed the child since he enjoyed seeing how the child enjoyed eating. It seemed as if the men explained why they did or did not do specific childcare activities more often with preferences than the women did. It applied for doing preferred activities, like playing with the child, but also for avoiding unpleasant activities, like changing full diapers or dressing the child. It seemed as if men were at greater liberty to avoid tasks whereas women did not decide upon preferences but necessities.

Competence

The informants also referred to competences in their explanations of their childcare division, especially concerning the overall division of childcare. Furthermore, competence was important for outsourcing childcare and concerning specific childcare activities.

Mostly women referred to competences regarding the overall division of childcare. Women C, E, and H, whose partners did substantial amounts of childcare at the time of the second interview or used to do that, said that their partners were capable of caring for the child and doing all childcare activities. In couples in which the woman did more childcare than the man, the woman or both partners said that she or her partners doubted that the man was equally competent in doing childcare. Woman F, for example, reported that she often told her partner that he did something wrong in caring for the child and how to improve. In contrast, woman I explained that she thought that her partner should have the competence to care for the child but that he was sometimes insecure:

[I]n the first moment, he might feel a bit insecure, and then he says: 'huh,' but all in all he can do it. And [child's name] does in fact not make any problems. (woman I, second interview: 528-531)

[E]r hat zwar schon im ersten Moment immer so ein bisschen Unsicherheiten und sagt dann so: 'Hu', aber er kann's eigentlich schon. Und [Name des Kindes] macht dann da eigentlich keine Probleme. (woman I, second interview: 528-531)

Other women had no doubts that their partners were generally able and competent to care for the child but that they were more competent as they spent more time with childcare than their partners did. Some of the women worked or used to work with children. Therefore they or their partners said that they had in general more competences in dealing with children due to their jobs or training.

Competencies were also an issue for some women concerning childcare by others than the couple. They said that they and their partners knew best how to take care of the child and that others were not as competent as they were. Women A, F, and M, for instance, said that they that no person who was not close to the child – or in their words, strangers – would be able to care adequately for the child. However, they accepted that other family members did some childcare. Woman H also spoke about professionals' competences and said that staff in childcare centers

was often not qualified for looking after children below the age of three. Therefore, she did not want to bring her child to a childcare place.

Competencies were also crucial for the division of some specific childcare activities. Most often, this argument was named when the informants explained why the woman organized things for the child. The interviewees said that the woman knew best what the child needed while the man did not know at all or did only partly know what he would have to organize. In some couples, this led to the women organizing things for the child while in others the women still let their partners do that. Woman I said that she usually thought that her partner knew what the child needed but that he was insecure and asked her for help. When asked if her partner did not know what the child needed or if he tried to take the easy way out, the woman said that these situations sometimes led to conflicts:

No, I don't think so. He doesn't take the easy way out, because he really asks honestly and sometimes I don't really like to say anything as I'm so annoyed and as I think 'but you know that.' [...] And then he really continues asking until I say something. [...] I always say, 'but you know that,' and he says, 'yes, but I'm insecure and is this okay?' (woman I, second interview: 1229-1246)

Nee, das glaub ich nicht. Er macht sich's nicht leicht, weil er fragt wirklich ernst und manchmal mag ich gar nichts sagen, weil's mich so nervt und ich mir denk, 'Das weißt du doch.' [...] Und dann fragt er wirklich solange nach, bis ich was sag. [...] Sag ich immer, 'Das weißt du doch', und er sagt, 'Ja aber ich bin mir nicht sicher und passt es?' (woman I, second interview: 1229-1246)

Some informants also explained that the woman was competent with preparing food for the child and feeding it. Some women went to baby courses where they learned about nutrition. Women also reported reading more books about childcare and children's needs. Some of them initiated conversations about these issues and explained to their partners what they should do.

When explaining who usually put the child to sleep, informants referred to competences. Some said that both partners were equally competent to do that while others said that the woman was more competent than the man. Woman I, for example, reported that she put the child to its bed more often and that she feared that the child would not sleep if the man did it. Therefore, she spoke with her partner and asked him to bring the child to bed in order to ensure that it would work out. Woman J said that the child cried when the man tried to put it to sleep; man J also said that he was not able to comfort the child during nights when it woke up, so mostly the woman put the child to bed and got up during nights if the child needed attention.

Discussions

Some informants said that they discussed the overall division of childcare with their partners or about specific childcare activities. These discussions sometimes started before the decision to have a child and influenced the present-day division of childcare.

Interviewees most often referred to discussions about the overall division of childcare when the woman was not satisfied with the arrangement and wanted her partner to do more childcare. For example, woman I said that she had to speak with her partner about his childcare

involvement when she returned to her reduced full-time employment four months after childbirth as he did not change how much childcare he did. Since she worked more than 30 hours per week in her job and still did most of the childcare, she felt that she did too much. Other informants said that the women had to remind their partners of doing childcare. For example, man N said that his partner told him when she needed time for herself; in most of the times, he would then look after the child. However, he also said that the couple sometimes argued about his share. Woman N said she spoke with her partner about her being dissatisfied with being always available for the childcare and being often alone with the child. It was particularly an issue since the man spent three evenings a week on his hobbies while she had no evening for herself. However, even voicing her dissatisfaction did not change that the man had free evenings while she did not.

In contrast to these discussions, woman C reported that her partner often said that he wanted to do more childcare. She explained this when the interviewer asked who would go and take care of the child during nights:

This differs since her [daughter's name] bed is directly next to us, depending on who goes to bed first, this one lies down directly next to [daughter's name]. [...] Often there is even a 'Do you have to lie there again?' since daddy really likes to lie next to his [daughter's name]. [...] Then I say, okay, but then you also have to take care of the pacifier. [...] But he also does it then, he looks as long as it takes to find the pacifier again. ... and then he gives the pacifier to the child and in most cases, she falls asleep again immediately. (woman C, second interview: 1342-1357)

Da das Bettchen direkt neben uns ist, ist das unterschiedlich, je nachdem wer als erstes schlafen geht, der legt sich direkt neben [Name der Tochter]. [...] Meistens gibt es sogar ein: 'Musst du schon wieder da liegen!' Weil der Papi liegt gerne neben seiner [Name der Tochter]. [...] Dann sag ich aber auch, okay, dann musst du den Schnulli machen. [...] Aber das macht er dann auch, sucht er solange, bis der Schnulli wieder da ist. ... Und dann wird der Schnulli reingesteckt und dann schläft sie meistens auch sofort wieder. (woman C, second interview: 1342-1357)

Women I and J reported that they told their partners to engage more in specific activities like caring for the child during nights, organizing things for the child or putting the child to bed. Both of them explained that they had to tell their partners to do these activities since they thought that the women were responsible for doing them.

Some informants explained that they agreed on their childcare arrangement before the birth of the child and that they, therefore, did not have to discuss in their daily lives very much. For example, woman F said that her partner told her before the pregnancy that she would have to do most of the childcare; she wanted to have the child more than her partner did and was willing to accept that condition also since she wanted to spend most of her time taking care of the child.

Financial arguments

The informants referred to economic arguments when they explained their overall division of childcare but also outsourcing childcare and concerning outsourcing childcare.

Couples referred to the pre-birth economic situation as explanation for the childcare shares. However, not all interviewees said that the pre-birth income difference between the partners determined their childcare; couple H said that they decided despite the man's higher income that he took parental leave and worked part-time to take care of the child as his partner did. Putting their ideal of an equal childcare arrangement into practice was more important for them than having more income. That also implied that the couple had the financial leeway to decide for forgoing parts of the man's income.

Some interviewees referred to financial considerations regarding the outsourcing of childcare. Woman F explained that her preference of family care for the child over institutional care during her work hours was unrelated to financial aspects; the couple could afford to pay for a childcare institution, but she would not like to bring the child there. In contrast, couple K said that they outsourced childcare as both of them had to be active in the labor market. Thus, the financial necessity to have two incomes determined the use of a crèche.

Physical aspects

The interviewees also referred to physical aspects and spoke most about breastfeeding and exhaustion.

Some informants explained their overall division of childcare with breastfeeding or not-breastfeeding anymore or at all. Man B explained that he increased his childcare share since his partner stopped breastfeeding. Woman B used to take the child with her to occupational appointments during the breastfeeding period. After she stopped breastfeeding, the man could care for the child during her appointments at home. Similarly, woman H said that it was good for her partner's childcare share that the breastfeeding did not work as planned since he then was able to establish a relationship with the child that was equitable to hers:

Well, what did not really work, that was the breastfeeding. [...] So, until the child was three and a half months old, I always pumped up the milk. [...] And then we have, I stopped breastfeeding. And this with pumping up the milk was on the one hand really annoying, and you would have wished for the breastfeeding. But on the other hand, it made it possible that [the child] could be bottle fed from the beginning from mother and father. [...] And this was certainly good for our goal, that we both wanted to have an equitable relationship with our child. [...] In the beginning, we were sad about it, but in the end it was ok for us. (woman H, second interview: 50-75)

Also, was da nicht so geklappt hat, das war das Stillen. [...] Also ich hab dann bis das Kind 3 1/2 Monate war, halt auch immer Milch abgepumpt. [...] Und dann haben wir halt, habe ich abgestillt. Und das war aber ein, auf der einen Seite war das mit, mit dieser Abpumperei, das war sehr nervig und man hätte sich das Stillen auch gewünscht. Auf der anderen Seite war's so, dass [das Kind] von Anfang von Mutter und Vater die Flasche kriegen konnte. [...] Was eigentlich so diesem Ziel, dass wir gesagt haben, wir möchten eigentlich beide eine gleichwertige Beziehung zum Kind haben, sicher förderlich war. [...] Anfangs fanden wir es schade, aber letztendlich [...], war's dann ok, für uns. (woman H, second interview: 50-75)

Woman K also said that breastfeeding did not work for them and that this had an effect on her partner's overall childcare involvement and his connection with the child. The link between

breastfeeding and overall childcare was reflected in other interviews. Woman J reported that she had hoped her partner to do more childcare; she explained that since she still breastfed, the man did not feel like he could do more childcare.

Besides breastfeeding, exhaustion and other physical aspects played a role in the informants' explanations. Some of the interviewees, mostly the woman, who spent more time with childcare said that they were exhausted after caring the whole day for the child. Thus, the partner who spent the day with paid work often did childcare in order to facilitate for the partner who did more childcare to rest. Woman L, who did most of the childcare and was not active in the labor market while her partner worked full-time, reported that her partner did not believe her how exhausting taking care of the child was. He just realized it after he took care of the child on one day without her being around. Exhaustion was also an argument for the partner who spent more time in the labor market to not engage more childcare. Woman F and couple I said that the man was too exhausted from his paid work to spend more of his free-time with childcare than he did.

Physical aspects were also influential for the division of some specific childcare activities such as childcare during nights. When the women breastfed the child, the informants said that she had to take care of the child during nights since the child wanted to be breastfed and the man could not do that. Similarly, man E said that he could do more of the nocturnal childcare since his partner stopped breastfeeding. In couple B, the exhaustion of both partners determined who took care for the child during nights, which was described as a means to an equal division since both were equally tired.

Institutions and policies

The informants explained their use of childcare institutions with the availability or lack of childcare places or the proximity of childcare places near their residence.

The interviewees spoke about different experiences regarding the availability of childcare places. Some said that it was no problem to get a place for their child while others said that they were not able to get a place or that there were in general no places near their residence. Couple C described that they applied for a childcare place in the first months of the pregnancy. The child was planned to go there six months after childbirth. At first, the couple received a confirmation for a place, but then the agreed starting day was postponed again and again until it was supposed to be two months later than the woman's planned return to her full-time paid work. Therefore, the couple had to look for another solution and found a childminder. Others, like couple I and K, said that it was no problem to get a place in a crèche. Couple I then decided not to bring the child to the crèche since they had their parents to look after the child and the childcare institution was a backup plan for them. Couple K described that they could adjust the days the child attended quite flexible and on short notice. In contrast, woman D reported that she would like to bring the child for two days per week to a crèche but that this was not possible as the crèche nearby not allowed this or to share a place with other children. Thus, childcare

institutions were supporting some couples in achieving their planned childcare arrangement. Others described them as a hindrance. The main dividing factor between supportive and unsupportive institutions was flexibility.

Other aspects

Besides the discussed arguments, informants also spoke about aspects that influenced their childcare arrangement. These were responsibility for the childcare, the child's development, occupational reasons, feelings, and the spatial proximity of potential caregivers.

Some women spoke about responsibility for childcare when they explained why one partner did more childcare. Woman D, who did most of the childcare, said that she always felt responsible for the child even when her partner looked after the child; this was although she said that she fully trusted him and his abilities to do the childcare. She did not say if her feeling of responsibility affected his partner's childcare. Women F, I, J and L said that their partners thought that the women were more responsible for the childcare and did either not engage in childcare when both of them were at home or brought the child to the woman when it cried:

When there is something with the child, it is, is immediately that I am the place to go to when [the child] cries a little bit ... 'well, mum, take [the child], have a look at what is the matter with [the child]?' And I think in these moments, 'hey, it is also your child, you can do that too, you can comfort [the child] too. Just have a look if the diaper has to be changed, offer [the child] something to drink. Hey, you don't have to bring him every time to me.' (woman L, second interview: 461)

Wenn halt etwas ist mit dem Kind, das ist, ist sofort, bin ich die Anlaufstelle, der wenn ein wenig weint ... ,ach Mama, nimm' mal Du, schau' mal, was hat [das Kind] denn?' Wo ich mir denke, ,Hallo, es ist doch Dein Kind auch, Du kannst das doch auch, Du kannst [das Kind] doch auch trösten. Dann gucke halt einmal, ob in der Windel etwas darin ist, dann gebe [dem Kind] halt einmal etwas zu trinken. Hallo, Du musst [das Kind] mir nicht jedes Mal bringen.' (woman L, second interview: 461)

The interviewees had different ideas about what was good for the child's development and therefore came to different conclusions regarding how they organized childcare. For example, woman A expressed her fears that it would affect the child's development negatively if it were cared for by the wrong or too many persons. She added that she could not control the ways others interacted with the child and that she wanted that control to be sure that everything was optimal for the child's development. That was also the reason why she would not want the child's grandparents to look after the child for more than some hours per week. In contrast to this idea, woman I, for example, said that she believed that the child would profit from being cared for by its grandparents since they would do things differently. Another argument that some informants named regarding the child's development was that childcare institutions offered the child the chance of having contact with other children which was thought to be good for its development. Woman I wondered if the child would enjoy going to a crèche more than going to the grandparents since it loved to have contact with other children, but she thought that she could offer that interaction also in playgroups. Woman J who took the child with her to her part-

time work said that she sometimes asked herself if it was right for the child that she did that, but then argued that the child got to spend the whole day with her and that she could care for it whenever it needed her. Her partner said that in general, he thought that it was the best for children that the mother stayed at home in the first time even if they are happy with this arrangement.

A few interviewees named occupational reasons. Woman F always did the childcare during nights. She used to expect that her partner would also care for the child during nights after she stopped breastfeeding; but when the couple spoke about her expectation, he explained that he was not able to do it due to his occupational stress. There was also no change in the arrangement when the woman returned to her job with part-time hours. Woman K reported that she went to pick up the child when the crèche called in because the child got ill. After the child's birth, man K got promoted to a supervisory position. She described that he was more important at his workplace than she was, so she left work in cases of emergency.

The couples also decided upon their childcare arrangement based on their feelings. The informants referred to feelings, especially regarding childcare institutions. Couple F described that the man wanted to have the child cared for by a crèche or a childminder before the child's birth. However, then after the child's birth, his feelings changed, as he reported when he was asked about using a crèche or a childminder. Especially when the couple visited a childminder, the man had the impression that he could not bring the child there and preferred that the child's grandparents took over the childcare:

We actually considered that. And at the beginning, I favored that. [...] But ... when the child is there, and then you have a look at the persons that you do not really know, then, well, for me it was like, I had the feeling that I have to save my child. [...] It is really like that. [...] There is then, there is this emotional level, that you, if you're not yet a father or you can't, you can't really assess it. Well, for me, it was clear, we take a childminder, and then it [his partner's paid work] starts right away, yes. Well, you can think the earlier, the better. ... But then, I had a look at her and thought, no, I don't want that [...] Then I prefer the grandmother. (man F, second interview: 314-322)

Wir haben uns tatsächlich das angeschaut. Und ich (betont) war ja am Anfang auch dafür. [...] Aber .. wenn mal das Kind da ist und man sieht sich dann die Personen an, die man dann eigentlich doch nicht kennt, dann, also mir ging's so, ich hab das Gefühl gehabt, ich muss mein Kind retten. [...] Das ist wirklich so. [...] Da ist dann, es ist so diese emotionale Ebene, die man, wenn man noch kein Vater ist oder kann man die, kann man die noch gar nicht abschätzen. Also, für mich war das klar, Tagesmutter kommt her und dann geht's gleich wieder los [die Erwerbstätigkeit der Partnerin], ja. Also, kann ja überlegen usw. umso früher, umso besser. .. Aber, ich mir die dann angeschaut und hab mir gedacht, nee, das will ich nicht. [...] Dann lieber die Großmutter. (man F, second interview: 314-322)

Informants who involved crèches or childminders said that they had a good feeling with bringing the child there as they had the impression that the child enjoyed being there and that it had a good time there with other children. Other interviewees explained that they had the opportunity to have their family involved in childcare on a regular basis since they lived very close to them. Couple E moved in with the woman's parents to make sure that they have someone to care for the child. This close spatial proximity ensured that the family members are also available on

short notice. Other couples lived with the parents of one partner in one house and said that this was facilitating the childcare.

Interrelations between the different explanations

Gendered arguments or refusing gendered arguments was closely linked to ideas about what is the best for the child. Informants who argued with gendered ideas also said that it is the best for the child's development when the mother stayed at home and took care for the child since children needed their mothers during that time. On the other hand, interviewees who refused gendered ideas or argued with gender equality said that the child would benefit from having a close relationship with both parents. Gendered ideas were also connected to occupational arguments and to the availability of time for childcare.

It seemed as if the interviewees discussed the man's competence regarding childcare more often than the woman's. Female informants spoke more often about this argument than their male counterparts did. Women's competences were often connected to routines; they were more competent as they did childcare more often and as they were discussed to be more competent, they did more childcare.

Table 22: Interviewees' explanations for their division of specific childcare activities, the overall division, and outsourcing

Childcare activities	Natural-ness	Gendered aspects	Available time	Preferences	Competences	Discussions	Financial aspects	Physical aspects	Institutions & policies	Further aspects
Feeding	K♀+	C♀+	A♂+; F♀; G♂	A♂+; C♀+	A♂+; I♀+; I♂+; K♀+	I♀+		D♀+; I♀+; I♂+; K♀+		
Changing diapers	D♂+; L♀+		J♂+; N♀			J♂+; L♀+				
Dressing the child			J♂+	L♀+						
Playing with the child		I♀+	A♀+; A♂+	B♂+	I♀+	J♀+				
Visiting a baby course		H♀-; K♀-	A♂+; B♀-; H♂+; J♂	F♀+; G♀						A♀+; J♂
Strolling with child								B♀+		
Looking after the child	C♀+	C♀-; D♀+; F♂+; L♀	F♀; H♀; H♂		D♀+; L♀+					
Bringing the child to bed			A♂+; F♀; G♂; N♀	G♂; I♀+	A♀+; I♀+	G♂+; I♀+; J♀+				
Nocturnal childcare	B♀; K♀+; K♂+		C♀+; L♂	C♀+	I♀+; J♂+	I♀+; J♀+		B♀; D♂; E♂; F♀; I♀+; I♂+; L♂		F♀+
Bathing the child			B♀+	E♀	H♂					
Bringing the child to crèche etc.			C♀+							

Childcare activities	Natural-ness	Gendered aspects	Available time	Preferences	Competences	Discussions	Financial aspects	Physical aspects	Institutions & policies	Further aspects
Organizing for the child		I♀+			E♀+; F♀+; I♀+	I♀+				E♀; F♀
Overall division	C♀+; F♀+; H♀+; H♂+; I♂+; J♂+; M♀+; M♂+; N♀+	A♀+; B♂-; C♀+C♂+; D♀-; D♂-; E♂-; F♀; F♂-; H♂-; I♂+; K♀+/-; L♀+; M♀+; M♂+	A♀+; A♂; B♀+; B♂+; D♀+; D♂+; E♀+; E♂+; F♂+; F♂+; G♀+; G♂+; H♀+; I♀+; I♂+; J♂+; K♀+; K♂+; L♀; L♂+; N♀+	A♂+; B♂-; C♀+; E♀+; F♀+; F♂+; H♀+; H♂+; I♂+; K♂+; L♂+; M♀+	A♀+; A♂+; B♀+; C♀+; F♀; H♀; I♀+; I♂+; K♀+; N♂+	F♀+; H♀+; H♂+; I♀+; J♀+; L♀+; M♂-; N♂+	B♂+; D♀+; L♀	B♂+; F♀+; J♀+		C♂+; K♀+; L♀+
Outsourcing		F♀; F♂+; L♀-; M♀+	E♀+; E♂+; I♂; K♀+; K♂+; M♀+; M♂+;	A♀+; E♀+; F♀+; G♀; H♀+; I♀+; J♀+; M♀+; M♂+; N♂+	A♀+; G♀; H♀	G♂	A♀+; F♀-	J♀+	C♀+; C♂+; D♀-	A♂+; A♂+; B♀+; C♀+; C♂+ D♀-; G♂; H♀+; K♀+; K♂+; N♀+; N♂+

Note: The table contains the arguments named by the informants. They are denoted with their couple number and ♂ for the male partner and ♀ for the female partner. Naming the significance of rationales is marked with +; rejected arguments are marked with -; ambivalence is marked with +/-.

9.2.3 Comparison of the arrangement with the planned arrangement

The comparisons of the interviewees' explanations for their planned and realized childcare arrangement reveal the constant importance of some arguments, while others were only important before childbirth. In the plans, the interviewees mostly named explanations for their overall arrangement and plan to draw on external help for the daily childcare. At the time of the second interview, they still explained their overall division and outsourcing, but also – partly – their division of specific childcare activities.

The interviewees explained their plan and their current childcare arrangement with naturalness, gendered aspects, available time, and financial arguments. The most important arguments for the overall division and external childcare at both points in time were naturalness in connection with gendered aspects and available time. The interviewees referred to economic arguments, as well as institutions and policies, in the plans and the description of the division of childcare in the second interview. The interviewees drew on these arguments in similar ways before and after childbirth.

Physical aspects, preferences, and competencies gained importance for the interviewees' explanations with their transition to parenthood. The interviewees named other physical aspects than they did before. When they described their plans, they referred mostly to the woman's ability to breastfeed; at the second interview, the interviewees talked about breastfeeding when explaining their arrangement, but also about exhaustion that was related to doing childcare. The interviewees did not speak about exhaustion when they planned for the childcare arrangement. Before childbirth, only one man referred to competencies when describing his expectation that he and his partner would divide childcare according to their competencies. In the second interview, more than half of the interviewees explained their division of specific childcare activities, the overall arrangement, and the involvement of childcare professionals or the wider family in the daily childcare with competencies or the lack of competencies.

The interviewees named discussions, responsibility, the child's development, feelings, and spatial proximity of other caregivers than the couples only in the post-birth interview. They reported discussions in the interviews primarily when one partner wanted the other partner to do more childcare. Another occasion, interviewees talked about discussions was when they agreed upon their arrangement with their partner before they became parents.

9.3 Interviewees' childcare explanations and the theories

New home economics expects a specialization of partners according to their productivities. Both partners' productivities in paid work, housework and childcare should determine the specialization. None of the couples planned or had a completely specialized division of childcare. However, in line with the plans, the women did in most couples more childcare than the men. Two couples shared childcare equally and had also planned for an equal arrangement. Some couples explained their planned and realized arrangement with arguments related to

productivities. In line with theoretical expectations, income differences led to specialized paid work and specialized childcare arrangements; the capability to breastfeed can also be interpreted regarding higher productivities of the interviewed women. The perceived naturalness of specialized arrangements arguments for these also fit the new home economics' assumption that households decide jointly on how to maximize the shared outcome. After childbirth, competences for childcare – and thus different productivities – were for some interviewees a crucial factor in their childcare arrangement. They said for example that only one partner would be capable of putting the child to bed; if the other partner did this, the child would not fall asleep. Some couples reacted to this with a specialization. Others explained that both partners did some activities with the child to be sure that both were capable of doing childcare and especially if they had the impression that one partner was not as good as the other one in doing specific childcare activities – which contradicts the logic of specialization.

According to the *bargaining approach*, the partner with less income and thus less bargaining power is expected to do more childcare. In couples with equal incomes, both partners are expected to share unpaid work equally. The plans were in line with these expectations — couples with different incomes planned for the partner with less income to do more childcare. The exception was couple H who planned for an equal arrangement. Only one of four couples with similar incomes planned an equal division of childcare. The couples did not refer to bargaining powers when explaining their arrangements. Woman H who earned less than her partner but shared childcare equally talked about an unexpected form of bargaining; she said that she was not sure if she would have wanted to have a child if her partner would not have been willing to share childcare equally. Against the theoretical expectation that unpaid work was unfavorable, childcare was a preferred activity – which was reflected in the considerations how the partner with more working hours would have enough time to care for the child. Even if all informants wanted to do childcare, this did not imply that they wanted an equal division or to do more than the partner.

Social exchange theory assumes partners to exchange income against doing unpaid work. Thus, the partner with fewer working hours and less remuneration is expected to do more childcare in exchange for the other partner's financial support. Couples with similar paid work hours are theoretically expected to share childcare. The couples planned and realized childcare arrangements in line with the theoretical expectations. They explained that the partner who spent more time at home since the other one worked more hours did more childcare; however, the partners with more working hours engaged in childcare in their free-time. Almost all interviewees said that they wanted to do childcare and to spend time with the child – correspondingly, the partners supported each other in being able to do childcare.

The *time availability approach* aims at explaining men's housework share based on the time available besides paid work, the demand to do housework and the capability to react to the demand. It can be assumed that childcare as another unpaid work might be similar to housework and the division of childcare might also follow a similar logic. Men engage more in childcare activities when there is a demand, and they have the time resources to respond to the demand. As theoretically expected, most couples explained that paid work determines the available time for

childcare. Interviewees named time restrictions mostly for the men; almost all men worked full-time at the time of the second interview and did childcare in their free-time. The argument regarding women's childcare was partly different, as most women reduced their paid work to have time available for childcare. In line with theoretical expectations, men who had similar working hours as their partners did half of the childcare. Some female interviewees also reported that they demanded more involvement of their partners or that their partners increased their childcare share when the women reentered the labor market after a time of leave or when the women were stressed – thus, as expected by the time availability approach, the men did more when the demand was higher. Some couples involved relatives or childcare institutions in their arrangement, which reduced the need to do childcare. The interviewees always spoke about the outsourcing of childcare when they explained how much and when the woman had time for her paid work; the interviewees did not discuss outsourcing regarding the man's paid work.

According to the *doing gender approach*, caring or not caring for a child is linked to social constructions of femininity and masculinity. Most couples planned before childbirth and described afterward that the woman would do more childcare. The doing gender approach helps to understand why gendered arguments and perceptions of what is natural were often named by the interviewees when explaining their planned and realized division of childcare. Competencies, physical aspects, and preferences – other aspects interviewees spoke about regarding their childcare arrangement – were often gendered. Other informants explained that they did not believe in gendered ideals of motherhood and fatherhood and that both parents should be equally involved in childcare and were equally competent. Some reported that their division of childcare challenged societal expectations; they received critical remarks or were confronted with institutional assumptions about which parent usually cares for toddlers. These reactions can be interpreted against the background of the doing gender approach; a father who engages in childcare and a mother who does not most of the childcare deviate from gendered expectations. The social circle reacts to these non-normative arrangements.

The *identity formation approach* assumes that both partners have family and work identities; time spent in the family and paid work build these identities. They affect the division of paid and unpaid work. In the transition to parenthood, the effect of gendered expectations of identity formation increases. As a result, strong work and family identities conflict for women but not for men. Therefore, spending time within the family and with childcare is expected to become more important for women. Most couples divided childcare in line with these expectations. Most informants referred to naturalness and gendered explanations in a way that corresponded to the assumptions of the identity formation approach; they perceived it as natural that the woman would do more childcare or referred explicitly to gendered ideas about motherhood and fatherhood. Some informants said that for the women childcare was more important than paid work and that being a mother changed their priorities in life. One man whose partner almost worked full-time spoke about his partner's doubts if she spent enough time with the child – while it was no question for him if he cared enough for the child despite having regular overtime in his full-time job. Other informants said that the men wanted to spend more time with childcare –

thus, the expectation that there was no conflict for men if they focused on paid work was not valid for all informants. Furthermore, some full-time working women stressed the importance of their paid work and that they did not think that they spent too little time with the child.

The *dependency and gender display approach* aims at explaining couples' divisions of household labor with the economic situation of couples; women do more unpaid work when they are economically dependent to exchange housework for financial support or when they support their partners economically to compensate for the violating gendered expectations. It can be assumed that these mechanisms also affect the division of childcare as expectations regarding maternal and paternal childcare are even gendered. However, there are also substantial differences between household labor and childcare; childcare cannot be postponed as most household chores can. Couples who envisioned the woman to stay at home or reduce her working hours planned her to do most childcare. Couples who anticipated having similar working hours and incomes wanted to share childcare equally. One couple planned for the man to stay at home and to do more childcare due to financial reasons. They mostly put their plans into practice.

According to the *egalitarian values approach*, the educational attainments of both partners affect their division of household labor as higher educational levels are connected to ideas of gender equality and lower educations to notions of gender inequality. These ideas can be expected to have an influence on couples' childcare arrangements. The couples with different or low to medium educational backgrounds shared childcare in line with theoretical expectations. However, only two of the highly educated couples had an equal division of childcare. The egalitarian values approach helps to understand why highly educated interviewees spoke about ideas of gender equality – even if they did not share childcare according to these ideals. It was not in line with the theoretical expectations that some of the highly educated couples related to ideas of inequality of mothers and fathers when explaining why the woman did more childcare than the man.

Equity theory explains couples' overall division of paid work, household work, and childcare without having expectations aimed at just one of the areas of paid or unpaid work. It assumes that couples try to find a fair arrangement. Thus, arrangements in which paid and unpaid work are shared between the partners equally can be fair, but also arrangements in which the partners specialize on paid or unpaid work can be perceived as fair. Some of the interviewees' explanations can be understood against these theoretical expectations. They often connected arguments of the available time to ideas about fairness. Perceived naturalness and gendered ideas might influence which arrangement interviewees perceive as fair. Interviewees with gendered ideals often regarded it as fair when the woman did more childcare while interviewees with gender equality ideals thought it was fair when both partners spent similar amounts of time with taking care of the child. Some interviewees said that the partner who spent the day at the paid work would do childcare when he or she came home to unburden the partner who spent the day doing childcare. Equity theory helps to understand this as the interviewees believed that it was fair that the partner doing more childcare had a break from this activity. The interviewees also described discussions that arose when at least one partner did not perceive the division as fair and tried to change it.

10. Conclusion and discussion

The present study focused on the question of why couples change their division of paid and unpaid labor when they become parents. The knowledge of changes during the transition to parenthood is well-established in previous research and quite stable in various countries. Extending this knowledge, the aim was to examine how couples, on the point of becoming mothers and fathers, perceived and explained these changes in their division of employment and housework, in what way they anticipated them, and how they explained unexpected changes. This analysis was done for West German couples as the western part of Germany is an example for the combination of a conservative welfare state that supports the male breadwinner norm, and parenthood ideals that increasingly suggest fathers' active involvement in childcare and mothers' labor market activity. In order to gain insight into couples' decision-making processes, a qualitative research design was necessary. Therefore, the study drew on qualitative interviews with both partners in fourteen couples who were interviewed twice, once during the woman's pregnancy and once about one year later. During the first interview, partners were asked about their current division of paid work and housework, how they had developed it in the light of their individual educational and occupational as well as relationship histories, and how they reasoned their paid and unpaid work arrangements. Even more importantly, partners were asked about their plans concerning the division of paid work, housework, and childcare within the first year after the child's birth and their reasoning for these plans. Following-up on the first interview, the second interview focused on the actual present division of paid work, housework, and childcare, and on changes since the previous interview. Again, the informants were asked about their explanations for their arrangement. Both interviews included questions about satisfaction with their arrangement and conflicts which had evolved. The interview guideline was informed by theoretical mechanisms of economic as well as gender and identity theories. Economic theories assume that couples decide upon their arrangement on the basis of economic factors, like different productivities, incomes, or available times. Gender and identity refer to, for example, gendered meanings of doing paid work, housework, or childcare, on family and work identities, or ideas about gender equality, when explaining couples' divisions of paid and unpaid work.

In order to conclude these qualitative interviews, the method of qualitative content analysis was used as a structured way of condensing and summarizing information on the arrangements before and after the child's birth, the plans and especially the interviewees' explanations and reasons for their arrangements. For this purpose, each field of work – paid work, housework, and childcare – was analyzed separately. In this process, constant comparisons of the findings took place between the partners within a couple, between couples, and between men and women, each for both points in time. Furthermore, comparisons were made between the first and the second interview for each individual, within each couple, across couples, between the male interviewees, and between the female interviewees. Since multiple theories aim at explaining couples' division of labor, theoretical expectations were contrasted with the individual explanations and division of paid and unpaid work.

Key findings regarding the division of paid work

Before the birth of their first child, both partners in each of the couples were active in the labor market – which was a sampling criterion. Ten couples lived paid work arrangements in which both partners worked full-time; in three couples, the women worked part-time and the men full-time; and in one couple, the woman worked full-time while the man had part-time hours. The income situation of the couples only partly reflected the circumstance that most of the partners had similar working hours: The partners in four couples had similar incomes. In nine cases, the man had higher earnings, and in one couple the woman's income exceeded that of her partner.

The analyses revealed several main explanations: (1) Paid work seen as natural. Thus, they were implicitly referring to an adult worker norm. (2) The interviewees spoke about the meaning of their paid work for their self-concept and financial aspects. They said that their paid work was an important aspect of their life, or that they felt pleasure at work. (3) Not all arguments were equally highlighted in all couples or for all interviewees. Only couples in which one partner worked part-time, referred to the importance of other areas of life when explaining the part-time hours. Mostly women spoke about pleasure when explaining the paid work arrangement.

For the time after the child's birth, the couples planned substantial changes mostly for the women's paid work and not for the men's — only two of fourteen men planned for changes in their labor market participation. One of them planned to stay at home and look for a part-time job while the other planned to take parental leave and work part-time during the leave. The other twelve men planned not to make a change and to remain in their full-time employment or self-employment. The women's plans varied from staying at home for some weeks after childbirth and returning part-time, via staying at home for the maternity leave and returning with almost unreduced working hours, to taking parental leave for at least the first year of the child's life. Eight women planned when precisely they would return to their paid work within the first year after childbirth and the number of hours they would work. Three women envisioned to work for pay within the first year but had no concrete plans, and three female interviewees planned to take parental leave or stay at home during this time. (4) The most important finding is the difference in how the interviewees spoke about their anticipated paid work arrangements compared to their employment at the first interview: They switched from the individual level in the pre-birth situation to the couple level when planning for their future. They planned together for both partners' future paid work.

There were also changes regarding the importance of the explanatory factors: (5) The naturalness of the paid work of both partners shifted for some informants. While the paid work of the male partner was continuously perceived as natural, some interviewees said that it was now natural for them that the woman would not work after the child's birth for at least some time beyond the obligatory maternity leave. This explanation was closely connected to arising gendered arguments as well as the assessment of many informants that the woman could not work after childbirth as she had to breastfeed the baby. Thus, most of the interviewees planned the woman's paid work in accordance with the unquestioned plan that she would be responsible

for most of the childcare. In contrast, fewer informants said that breastfeeding and maternal paid work did not exclude one another and planned correspondingly that the woman would work shortly after the child's birth. (6) Financial aspects seemed to gain importance for the couples' plans compared to the pre-birth situation. They explained that the partner with the higher income would stay in full-time work, while the other partner was thought to take some leave. The argument with financial aspects was also interrelated to the interviewees' ideas about naturalness and gender equality or inequality. Interviewees sometimes decided against economic arguments if this decision was in line with their ideas of gender equality or inequality. (7) Another new argument, compared to the pre-birth situation, was the institutional and policy framework; it influenced the plan for the woman taking a certain amount of parental leave or for her return to her job within a specific time frame.

Pleasure at work and the importance of the paid work for the self-concept were also relevant for some women's future paid work, but as before, these arguments were not as relevant as gendered ideas about naturalness or financial aspects.

The second interview revealed (8) that these plans were mostly realized. All men who planned to be full-time employed followed their plans. The man who planned on taking parental leave and working part-time did so. Only the man who planned to stay at home and look for a part-time position did not realize his plan but worked full-time at the second interview. Most women also realized their ideas concerning their paid work. Four women returned earlier or with more hours than planned and one woman took parental leave and worked part-time, in contrast to her full-time working plan. Thus, women's paid work differed more often from the plan than the men's – probably since most men did not plan to change their labor market activity at all during the transition to parenthood.

The couples reasoning for their post-birth arrangements showed: (9) After the transition to parenthood, the men's paid work was still implicitly and explicitly described as natural; half of the interviewees perceived the woman's paid work as natural, the other half either thought that it was natural that she would stay at home for the child or had ambivalent ideas. As in the plans, perceptions of naturalness seemed to be influenced by gender norms. Ideas about gender equality were linked with the idea that the woman's paid work was natural. Gendered explanations were less often named for the post-birth paid work arrangement than they were for the plans. (10) Discussions preceded the couples' plans – less for their arrangements before and after their child's birth. This is presumably because the couples then started to think about paid work as a shared sphere of work. (11) Two former arguments lost significance. Breastfeeding was no longer relevant at that time of the second interview as most women did no longer breastfeed. Pleasure at work – which was already one of the less important factors before the birth and in the anticipations – was irrelevant at the second interview. Financial aspects, on the contrary, were still important for the explanations for the reduction of the partner with the lower pre-birth income and the timing of the women's reentry to paid work.

Key findings regarding the division of housework

At the time of the first interview, six couples shared household work equally while in the other eight couples the female partner did more of the housework. There was a clear distinction of housework task. Chores that were more often done by the women were daily routine chores like cleaning; those that were mostly done by the men included repairing or crafting. Chores like grocery shopping or cooking were often done by both partners together or at different times. Some couples outsourced some of the daily and the non-routine chores to professionals or had regular help by family members.

(1) Before the birth of the child, the most important reasons for the division of household chores were pragmatic arguments: preferences, competences, different standards, available time, and routines. Thus, the person who preferred doing a specific task or disliked it the least, who was more competent or faster in doing it, who saw that a chore had to be done or who usually did it was expected to do the chore. The partner who had shorter working hours, in general, did more housework than the other one – the couples explained that this partner had more free time to do so. When couples had some external help, they usually referred to preferences or available times when explaining why they outsourced housework. (2) Beyond this, some informants also referred to gendered explanations, naturalness, physical aspects, or negotiations. The interviewees either said that it was natural that both did housework regardless of being male or female, or that they thought that women should do more housework. Some also linked gender with other arguments, such as describing men as being more competent at specific non-routine tasks. Furthermore, some referred to routine housework done by the man as ‘help’, while the woman’s routine housework activity was not spoken about in this way. (3) Some couples regularly discussed their arrangement as they wanted both to be happy with it. These couples often had an equal housework division that was achieved by these recurrent discussions.

Regarding the anticipations for the housework division, a key finding is (4) that most couples did not have definite plans regarding how they would share housework in the first year after the child’s birth. This was visible as most interviewees only spoke about the general division of housework but not at all or only about a limited number of specific chores. The general expectation was that the partner who would spend more time at home would do more housework. Only four respondents in three couples expected that they would share household labor equally and one couple planned that the man would do most of the housework.

(5) The – mostly rather vague – plans for the division of household labor were often not explained in detail. The general assumption was that the person who planned to stay at home for some time or reduce the working hours would do more housework. It was, thus, a residual activity; the couples planned for the division of childcare and the division of paid work, but not for the housework. (6) When interviewees spoke about arguments in their descriptions, perceived naturalness, available time, and discussions were the most common ones. Available time seemed to be most important.

At the time of the second interview, two couples shared housework equally. In the other couples, the female partner had a higher housework load; two women did almost all of the housework while their partners were hardly involved at all. (7) The change in the shares was mostly due to a different arrangement of the daily chores. After the birth of the child, most women took over chores that were either shared or done by their partners before the transition to parenthood. The division of non-routine tasks, such as crafting or handling financial issues, was hardly affected by the child's birth. (8) Most of the couples had a short period after the child's birth during which the men took over almost all of the housework while the women were recovering from their child's birth.

(9) As in the first interview and in the plans, most interviewees referred to the available time when explaining their housework arrangement at the time of the second interview: The partner who had the least working hours did more housework. (10) Preferences, competences, and standards lost their importance in the transition to parenthood. Now also interviewees who disliked tasks, were less competent, or had lower standards did chores because they had less working hours. Gendered aspects were also less relevant, especially since they now were no longer linked as closely to different competences of men and women as before. (11) Some arguments changed or were no longer important. At the second interview, many women felt that they did too much housework and told their partners to increase their involvement. Pregnancy-related physical aspects influenced the couples' arrangements before the child's birth. They were no longer relevant at the second interview.

Key findings regarding the division of childcare

In contrast to the division of household labor, (1) most couples planned the division of childcare in more detail. Almost all couples anticipated that the women would do more of the childcare within the first year after childbirth. Two couples differed from these expectations; the women said that they would do slightly less childcare than their partners while the men expected to share childcare equally. (2) However, eight couples had no definite ideas for sharing specific childcare activities – except breastfeeding. Most interviewees spoke about the plan to breastfeed the baby. Mostly couples who planned to share childcare equally spoke about specific activities, like preparing food or changing diapers. The other couples envisioned the women to do more childcare and often spoke about childcare as if it was mostly breastfeeding. Six couples planned or considered to use help from relatives or professionals for some of the childcare.

When speaking about the plans for the division of childcare, the interviewees often referred to gendered aspects. (3) They claimed, for example, that maternal care was more important for the child than paternal care. However, the couples who planned an (almost) equal division of childcare said that both parents are equally important for the child's development. Thus, the interviewees argued that they anticipated a childcare arrangement that matches the child's needs best. The interviewees perceived gendered arguments as natural. (4) The couples also perceived it as natural that both parents would take care of the child – even if most couples planned that one partner would do more childcare. (5) From the decision that one partner would focus more on

childcare followed that the other partner would focus more on paid work. In this context, the available time of the partner who would work full-time was a rationale: This partner would have less time to care for the child. In combination with the naturalness of both looking after the child followed that the partner with more working hours would take care of the child more in the evenings and during weekends. (6) For some couples, financial aspects played a role as the partner with the lower income was often the one who was expected to do more childcare. (7) Institutions and policies were sometimes supporting but more often hindering factors for taking leave as wanted or involving childcare institutions at the preferred time and pace. Furthermore, preferences to spend time with the child influenced which partner would care for the child to which extent. Some couples also said that they preferred to take care of their child over outsourcing childcare.

At the time of the second interview, (8) most couples had, in general, their planned childcare arrangements. Two couples shared childcare equally, though one of the couples did not anticipate an equal division. Most couples described that they had different arrangements during the working days and in their free time. As expected, the couples shared childcare during the working days less equally than in the mornings and evenings of working days and at weekends. This also applied for most specific childcare activities, like playing with the child or feeding it. (8) However, also in times when both partners were at home, some tasks were not divided equally in all couples. The women often took care of the child during nights, and they often organized things for the child. Strolling with the child was, instead, an activity that men frequently did alone before and after work or on weekends.

(9) Referring to gendered arguments or refraining from them was still a typical pattern for the explanation of the childcare division at the time of the second interview. Interviewees who argued with gendered aspects, for example, said that maternal care was better for the child and that the transition to parenthood had different meanings to women and men. (10) Almost all informants spoke about available time. However, in contrast to the explanation of the planned arrangement, they usually did not argue that the woman reduced the working hours to have time for childcare but that she would have more time and therefore did more childcare than the man. (11) For the division of specific childcare activities, competences and preferences were relevant as the partner who was more competent or preferred specific activities did them more often. However, in connection with discussions, lacking competences were often also an argument for the more competent partner to try to convince the other partner to engage more in childcare to build more competences. (12) In weighting arguments for and against the outsourcing of childcare, preferences, competences, and occupational reasons were named. Some interviewees argued that taking care of the child within the couple was preferred over leaving the work to professionals or other persons as the mother was thought to be better at caring for the child than another person. In contrast, others said that since both partners worked with overlapping working hours, they needed family members' or professionals' help. The interviewees also named institutions and policies, like the availability of childcare places, to explain their arrangement.

Paid and unpaid work are interrelated; decisions in one area influence the other. However, the findings for the three spheres revealed that paid and unpaid work were connected in different ways before the child's birth, in the plans, and after the transition to parenthood.

Before the interviewees became parents, the partners did usually not decide jointly on the division of paid work. It was natural that both partners were active in the labor market. This was different from the informants' descriptions of housework. Housework was perceived as a field of work that had to be done by both partners. However, this did not mean that all couples thought that both should contribute equally to housework; actually, a lot of male and female informants referred to man's routine housework as help to the woman. When informants linked paid and unpaid work in their explanations, they said that their paid work hours affected their division of household work. Only one couple linked them the other way around and said that the woman reduced her working hours in order to have more time to renovate the couples' new house.

The interviewees connected the three spheres, paid work, housework, and childcare, with each other in their plans for the first year after childbirth. They planned for each sphere and their overall arrangement together; in doing this, they also considered paid work as a sphere of work they divided. Almost all couples started their plans for the future from the division of childcare. Since the child would need to be cared for, this was most important for the couples. In consideration of the division of childcare, different arguments, like gendered ideas, breastfeeding, the child's needs, but also financial aspects, and policies and institutions, played a role. The plan concerning the paid work followed the plan regarding the childcare arrangement. The partner who was thought to do most childcare was planned to stay at home for some time or reduce working hours; the other partner would stay in full-time employment. When couples planned to share childcare equally, they also assumed both partners to have a similar number of working hours. The handling of the household labor was mostly not anticipated in detail. The general assumption was that the partner who planned to do the childcare and, thus, to have more time at home would also engage more in the housework.

At the second interview, the three spheres were connected, and the interviewees spoke about how they shared paid work, housework, and childcare; however, the order changed. Similarly to the first interview, the paid work was the starting point for the division of the unpaid work, childcare as the determinant for the division of paid work and housework lost importance. The interviewees did not speak about their paid work as being dependent on their decision on how to share childcare around the child's birth. Instead, they mostly referred to the paid work arrangement as something given and explained their housework and childcare arrangements in relation to the working hours. Some also spoke about aspects that influenced the naturalness of the paid work arrangement, like ideas about gender equality or inequality or financial aspects. The interviewees often referred to the working hours and resulting available free time when explaining why one partner did more childcare or did not do specific childcare activities as he or she was at work. Available time also affected the division of housework. Housework and

childcare were ranked for most interviewees as they argued that childcare was more important than housework and had to be done before housework or that the partner with more working hours should do less housework to have more time to take care of the child.

Conclusions regarding the theories

The assumption of complete specialization proposed by the new home economics (Becker, 1998) did not coincide with couples' explanations for their pre- and post-birth arrangements and plans. As expected, most couples had a more specialized arrangement after their transition to parenthood; however, there were no completely specialized couples. Some couples had a specialization in the sphere of paid work. The unpaid work, however, was not completely specialized in any of the interviewed couples. Income differences became more important in the transition to parenthood for the decision which partner would focus more on the paid work. Concerning housework and childcare, some interviewees explained their arrangements with competences which were in line with the theoretically presumed higher productivities. In the transition to parenthood, some couples decided against economic rationalities and their already partly specialized division of paid work and housework and either chose an equal arrangement or had the partner with higher income reduce the working hours; in these decisions, gender equality norms and values were more important than income differences or productivities.

The interviewees described that they discussed housework before and after the birth, that they spoke about who would stay at home and who would earn the income, and that they still discussed their division of all three spheres at the time of the second interview. Bargaining approaches (Ott, 1992) expect couples to bargain and discuss their division of paid and unpaid work – and most of the described discussions were in line with the theoretical assumptions. However, there were unforeseen aspects: Childcare as an element of domestic labor was seen as favorable, and the own paid work – and thus the related income – was not always preferred over childcare activities. Some couples bargained about which partner should be allowed to stay at home, since both would have liked to take parental leave in order to care for the child, or since their income differences would have suggested another division of paid and unpaid work. In these negotiations, the women usually referred to gendered arguments of what is best for the child, and the couple decided for an arrangement in which the mother did more childcare than the father.

According to the social exchange theory (Blau, 2008), couples exchange paid versus unpaid work. As theoretically expected, the partner with fewer working hours did more unpaid work. The changes in the paid work during the transition to parenthood increased the housework of the partner in leave or reduced hours; this partner also did more childcare. Accordingly, partners with equal paid work shares divided the unpaid work more equally. The interviewees referred to this exchange in their explanations regarding available time and naturalness. However, doing childcare was important for all interviewees, and the women expected their partners to also engage in childcare even if there was no obvious exchange taking place.

The available time was an argument for most interviewees. It explained their anticipated and realized division of housework and childcare, as expected by Coverman (1985): 'The partner who had fewer working hours was responsible for more domestic tasks. The demand/response capability approach suggests an order to the decisions: The time spent at work determines how much unpaid work a partner can do. Nevertheless, this is not the causal order the interviewees with specialization plans and realizations suggest: They decided first who takes care of the child, and whether this person would also be active in the labor market or not. As a result, the person who spent more time at home to take care of the child was supposed to do most of the housework. The causal order for the couple who altered their division of labor towards a more equal arrangement was also different from the theoretical assumption. It was not the women's return to work that demanded a more equal arrangement, but the very idea of equality that demanded both the women's reentry and the men's working hour reduction. It can be assumed that when a new field of work – here: childcare – is added, couples decide first how they want to organize this and then decide on the other fields. At the time of the second interview, the theoretically assumed order of paid work affecting unpaid work appeared again.

The interviewees referred to gendered ideas when describing their division of paid and unpaid work before and after childbirth as well as their planned arrangement for the future as a family. The doing gender approach (West and Zimmerman, 1987) assumes that individuals display their gender in every action. According to the present ideas, being active in the labor market is regarded masculine, whilst doing housework and childcare are claimed to be feminine domains. Gendered ideas hardly affected the couples' arrangements before the birth of their child. At the transition to parenthood, however, they gained importance for some interviewees. They argued that becoming and being a mother was connected to actively caring for the child and at least reducing paid work; being more at home also meant doing more housework. In contrast, becoming and being a father meant taking care of the child in the free time, without reducing the paid work. Other interviewees rejected these ideas and argued with gender equality in their plans and after the birth of their child. Their social circles partly criticized them for their plans and for putting them into practice. The doing gender perspective explains the change in the couple who planned for the man to stay at home but ended up in an arrangement in which the woman took parental leave and worked part-time. Overall, the ascription of doing childcare to women is not too strong as the interviewees also expected men to do childcare.

As expected, the interviewees referred to different identities, and the women, in particular, anticipated that their family identity would gain importance for them after the birth of their first child (Bielby and Bielby, 1989). The interviews also show that the plans and realizations before and after the child's birth included complementary identities for men and women: Women care for the child and do most of the housework, while men earn the most of the family income. Contrary to the assumptions of the identity formation approach, in the first interview, the interviewees expected, the men to be active fathers who spend time with their child. Beyond that, the women who decided for an equal division of paid and unpaid work might feel conflicted as they have to balance their work and family identities; however, none of them expressed such

feelings. When the analysis includes the concept of identities, decisions and explanations that contradict the economic theories' logic of rationality become understandable.

Most interviewees who were economically dependent on their partners or earned less income did more unpaid work before and after the child's birth; they were also envisioned to do so in the plans for the time after the child's birth. Before the transition to parenthood, the male interviewee who earned less than his partner did less housework. These arrangements were expected by the dependency approach (Brines, 1994); it assumes that women do more domestic labor not only if they are economically dependent, but also when their partners are economically dependent on them to compensate for the violation of gender norms. However, the financially dependent man did more housework and childcare directly after the child's birth before the couples changed their arrangement and he took on full-time work. Most couples did not explain their arrangements in the theoretically expected way, even if gendered ideas were important, as they did not link them to dependency.

Since most of the interviewed couples were highly educated, it can be assumed that most of them have egalitarian values that influence their division of labor (Van Berkel and De Graaf, 1999). Indeed, the highly educated couples expressed egalitarian gender ideas before the birth of the child and some of the couples with mixed or lower educational attainments said that the woman carried greater responsibility for housework. In contrast, many highly educated couples referred to gendered notions in their plans for the post-birth division of paid work, housework, and childcare. These gendered ideas were still referred to at the time of the second interview. The couples with lower educational levels argued more in line with the theoretical assumptions with gendered ideas. Three highly educated couples continue to express a desire for egalitarian gender ideas, with two of them put into practice.

In the explanations, the interviewees often described their arrangements in ways that hinted at fairness as assumed by the equity approach (Walster, Walster and Berscheid, 1978). Before the transition to parenthood, the partners with more time at home did more housework, and if both worked full-time, couples had a more equal division of housework. In the plans, most interviewees explained that one partner would focus on childcare and the other on paid work – accordingly, the partner with more time at home was expected to do more housework. The other couples planned equal arrangements in paid work, housework, and childcare. The arrangements at the second interview also corresponded to these plans in most cases. However, some couples had an arrangement in which the women were active in the labor market and did more housework and unpaid work which they did not perceive to be fair. They reported negotiations with their partners to restore fairness. For some interviewees, fairness was an argument in their plans and realizations. They tried to find an arrangement in which no partner did way more overall work – as can also be seen in the argument of available time.

Conclusions regarding family policies

The findings from the qualitative interviews show that gendered ideas about mothers' and fathers' share in paid work, housework, and childcare are quite prevalent, especially regarding the main responsibility for the child. Correspondingly, most couples planned for the female partner to take parental leave or for self-employed women to stay at home for some time. Taking parental leave was something most couples could not imagine for the male partner; however, they mostly justified that by financial and occupational aspects. The interviewed couples became parents in 2006, thus before the new legislation concerning the parental leave benefit (*Elterngeld*) was valid. Therefore, the financial constraints were stronger for the interviewed couples than for couples who became parents after the policy change. Indeed, more fathers take parental leave after the reform (Bünning 2015). However, since most of them stay at home for the two partner months only and most mothers take twelve months of parental leave benefit, there are, besides economic factors, probably still gendered ideals influencing the decisions. The importance of gendered arguments in the transition to parenthood was shown in the present study. Hence, when family policy aims to enable parents to decide for gender-equal divisions of paid and unpaid work, it should try to tackle gendered ideas that ascribe childcare for toddlers mainly to mothers. They result in negative reactions by the social circles if mothers decide to return earlier than expected to the labor market or if the child attends a childcare place – namely the image of the *Rabenmutter*. To achieve more gender equal divisions of paid and unpaid work, a promotion of different role models might help to show that there are different versions of 'good' mothers and fathers; this is primarily because the recent family policies promote different and contradicting family models.

Some of the interviewees criticized another aspect connected to gender ideals about mothers and fathers: that courses for parents with babies or toddlers and family education in general mostly focus on mothers. The interviewees described that there were numerous courses for mothers and children available, but no courses that targeted fathers and their children. When fathers wanted to participate in baby courses, they often received bewildered eyes from other participants. In one case, the structure was not ready for the father to participate in a swimming course as the facility only provided changing rooms for women. Thus, family policies can either financially support that parent child courses address both parents or even support courses that target fathers and children. In doing so, the notion that mothers are more competent in caring for babies or toddlers can be counteracted. Furthermore, an obstacle for one father who wanted to join a parent child course was his former employer. From the perspective of the employer, it was the mother's responsibility to go there with the child. Policies can raise awareness also in employers that fathers are expected to participate in these activities.

Another aspect which has been addressed by family policies is public childcare for children below the age of three. Since August 2013, children who are at least one year old have the right to a place in a public childcare facility. At the time of the second interview with the couples, in 2007, some interviewees reported that there were too little places available and that they, therefore, could not use a childcare facility. This problem should nowadays be much less severe. However,

the interviewees partly also referred to the quality of public childcare for young children regarding qualification of the professionals and the number of children that were in one group. When the aim of policies is to increase the number of children in public childcare, they could influence the perception of the quality of public childcare through investments in the qualifications, remunerations of childcare professionals, and group sizes as the perceived quality affects parents' considerations about using public childcare services for young children.

Limitations and future research

The presented findings are based on the selection of couples who were not representative of the German population. The selection criteria might limit the studies scope — the condition that both partners had to be active in the labor market before the first birth might have influenced the finding of a strong adult worker norm at the time of the first interview. However, it can be expected that the potential bias due to this sampling condition is rather small since it is common that both partners are employed or self-employed before the transition to parenthood. Another sampling issue might cause more differences to the average population: Mostly highly qualified couples took part in the interviews. The educational background and the ideas about parenting and mother and father identities can be expected to be connected (Van Berkel and De Graaf, 1999). Since not all couples were highly educated, the study was able to contrast the ideas, plans, and realizations of interviewees with different educational backgrounds and couples with different educational relations. However, the overrepresentation of highly qualified couples might cause an overestimation of gender equality and of the possibility to realize the desired arrangement as higher education is usually also connected to higher incomes. Another sampling aspect was that only West German couples were interviewed. Living in West Germany is connected to fewer childcare places and more traditional parent ideals. Therefore, the plans from the interviewed couples might differ from their counterparts in East Germany, for example, regarding the use of external childcare, partly because there were fewer places but also because it was less common to bring the child to a childcare facility before it turned three years in West Germany.

Other limitations arise from the fact that the interviews were conducted in 2006 and 2007. Thus, the couples fell under the old parental leave and parenting benefit regulations – with low parental leave benefits that were not aimed at compensating for foregone income or at supporting both parents to take at least two months of parental leave. The interview dates imply furthermore that there was no right to a childcare place for children below the age of three and that childcare places were rather scarce. However, the present study analyzed couples' general arguments for changes in their division of paid and unpaid work in their course of becoming parents, and most of them were independent of family policies. For example, the study suggests that there are different explanations for different spheres and that couples in their transition to parenthood decide upon their future arrangement from the starting point of childcare.

Further research should investigate if the described arguments and the logic of the interrelation of paid work, housework and childcare could also be found in quantitative studies.

For this, specific questions about the interrelations should be integrated into questionnaires, and the relations between the different spheres of housework not only assumed theoretically. Another future research question could aim at the perceptions of fathers' versus mothers' childcare competences. Since fathers take parental leave more often, it could be analyzed if mothers are still described as being more competent at childcare or if the competence ascribed to fathers has changed. This study's findings suggested that most interviewees believed that mothers and fathers have different ways of dealing with the baby or toddler. Maybe when fathers take parental leave and are more involved in the everyday childcare, they are also more often perceived as competent regarding comforting the child. For this, a qualitative approach probably suits best.

11. Appendix

11.1 Interview guideline for the first interview

Note: The interview guidelines were developed from the research team of the project “The Household Division of Domestic Labor as a Process. How does the Division of Housework Change over the Course of Relationships?”

Introductory section before the interview

Acknowledgement

First of all, I would like to thank you that you agreed to this interview.

Introduce the interviewer

My name is [name]. On behalf of the state institute for family research, I am conducting this interview.

Research objective

Our project aims at the organization of the everyday life of parents-to-be who are both working before the birth of the child. This refers to both employment and housework.

The interviews with parents-to-be and other results will contribute to our current research. In the long term, our research results should contribute to a better understanding of the needs of young couples and incorporate this knowledge into family policies.

What we would like to find out

I would like to talk about

- How you and your partner have organized employment and everyday housework up to now,
- How it has changed in the course of your relationship as well as the events or circumstances that have contributed to these changes, ...

To consider subsequently,

- which changes emerge now through your [the] pregnancy [of your wife]
- your plans and wishes for the time after the birth
- in particular how you plan everyday life with your child.

Interview structure and time

In order to be able to discuss this important topic in detail, we should at least have one hour.

Recording and privacy protection

Is it ok for you if I record our conversation? This is of great importance with reference to the later analysis.

Of course, all issues discussed will be kept in confidence. The privacy policy strictly adheres. This means that it will not be possible to trace any information back to you or any other person mentioned in the later data analysis.

1. Interview: Actual situation

Introduction to the interview

As I said before, our analysis deals with young couples and how they organize their everyday life with reference to employment and domestic work.

Starting point: Actual situation

First of all, I would like to get an impression of your ordinary course of life. Please describe your current employment situation.

Check:

- Degree – Education and training completed?
- Professional qualification; occupational title?
- Current occupation (occupational title, overqualified, different from training, etc.)
- Which working time model? (Full-time, Part-time, telecommuting etc.)
- Hours per week? Mismatch between contractual working hours and amount of worked hours? By choice?
- Satisfaction: How does IP appraise her/his own job situation? Well-established?

Who of you two earns more at the moment? (How high is the difference in income?)

Could you please describe how a usual day [a typical week] in your life looks like? Start with getting up and explain who takes which tasks.

If you try to give an estimate: How many hours do you spend daily doing housework?

Who of you two is usually in charge of specific tasks which do not have to be carried out on a daily base, like doing the laundry or taking out the garbage?

Check:

- Home help? Or help by others?
- Frequent changes, loose/ unclear responsibilities?

Mechanism: Actual Situation

Conflicts

Did you ever had or have conflicts or disputes concerning the division of housework or concerning the division of employment and housework?

[With reference to employment and housework → depending on the issue that respondent raises]

Check:

- Were/are there different ideas and wishes?
- Have you argued/do you argue about it?
- Have you tried to find an alternative?
- Was/is this probably a permanent problem?

Specialization/Negotiation/Tradeoffs/Norm/Gender-Identity

Was it different at the beginning of your relationship?

[Open for giving other mechanisms or connections to the past]

Check:

- Did this happen over the years? “Crept in” over time?
- Does the IP question the division of work at all?
- Are there role models or examples within the circle of friends? Deterrent examples?
- Does the IP relate this to competences/abilities?
- Does the IP refer to gender stereotypes as an argument?
- Does the IP mention certain events as crucial factors?

[if necessary, go into detail concerning this event]

2. Pairing/getting to know each other

Introduction: Pairing [concerning matching, -- resources --]

I would like to talk to you how it was back then when you met your current partner. For how long do you know your partner?

In which year did you get to know each other?

And since when would you say you are a couple?

Was your **employment or educational situation at that time** the same as it is today?

Check:

- Finished education?
- Same job, same company, same city as today?
- Hours per week? Difference between contractual hours and the actual amount of hours worked? Voluntarily?
- Career prospective and plans of that time

Were both of you employed full-time?

Who of you two earned more/had more at his/her disposal during this time? [if applicable: was there a huge difference?]

Check:

- Did one of you/both of you receive financial support from their parents?

And when did you move in together? In which year?

Was there a certain reason or occasion why you moved in together?

Moving in together period

What kind of imaginations and expectations did you have at that time about your everyday life – and also about your everyday working life as a couple?

After moving in together, how have you and your partner divided your tasks: Who was in charge of which tasks within the household?

How did it come that you have divided the tasks like this?

How has your division of work developed since then?

Socialization/Origin/if applicable norms

How was it at your parents' place? Or were there other models?

[Only ask if these aspects are not covered within the normal course of the conversation]

Conflicts

Have you experienced situations in which you and your partner had conflicts?

[with reference to domestic work]

Check:

- Were there different ideas and wishes?
- Have you argued about it?
- Have you tried to find an alternative?
- Was this probably a permanent problem?

How would you describe the development (for example permanent conflict, without problems, one prevailed)?

Check:

- Did this happen over the years? “Crept in” over time?
- Does the IP question the division of work at all?
- Are there role models or examples within the circle of friends? Deterrent examples?
- Does the IP relate this to competences/abilities?
- Does the IP refer to gender stereotypes as an argument?
- Does the IP mention certain events as crucial factors?

[if necessary, go into detail concerning this event]

Negotiations?

3. Events

Introduction: Event 1 [As an inquiry following the development]

The division of work is sometimes affected by important events. Did such an important event happen to you within your relationship? For example your marriage or radical job-related changes?

- Marriage *[if applicable]*
- One partner's graduation *[if applicable]*
- Job-related changes of one of the partners *[if applicable]*
- Moves *[if applicable]*
- Relationship crisis/phases of separation *[if applicable]*
- Occupational mobility/periods of spatial separation *[if applicable]*
- Other for example family member who is in need of long-term care *[if applicable]*

[Focus immediately on the mentioned event within the course of the conversation]

How has your everyday life concerning work and your relationship changed with regard to **[this event]**? Please describe the development.

Comparing today and then: Had the domestic work the same workload as today, less or more? Reflecting on this time, would you say that you [or: **your partner**] spent overall more time with domestic work compared to your partner [or: **you**]?

Was your division of work different than today? If you think about your everyday domestic works, shopping, cooking, cleaning? And concerning works and reparations which only have to be done from time to time? How was it at that time, when **[this event happened]**?

Mechanism: Event 1

Did you go back to the normal division of work quickly after this event? Or did you have to try a lot/experimented/get used to the new situation?

Did you have difficulties to get used to the new situation?

[Only ask if it this issue is not brought up by the respondent in the course of the conversation]

Conflicts

Were there any disagreements with regard to the division of work?

[Could be either related to employment or domestic work → depending on the respondent's issue]

Check Conflicts:

- Did you and your partner have different ideas and wishes?
- Have you argued about it?
- Have you tried to find an alternative?
- Was this probably a permanent issue/problem?
- Did you negotiate?
- What about confidence in the partner and the relationship?

Specialization/Negotiation/Tradeoffs/Norms/Gender-Identity

- Did this happen over the years? "Crept in" over time?
- Does the IP question the division of work at all?
- Are there role models or examples within the circle of friends? Deterrent examples?
- Does the IP relate this to competences/abilities?
- Does the IP refer to gender stereotypes as an argument?
- Does the IP mention certain events as crucial factors?

[if necessary, go into detail concerning this event]

[FILTER:] If the applied organization of work division unusual

Norms and structural constraints

How did your friends/neighbours/colleagues/parents/parents-in-law react?
Were you surprised by their reaction?
Was there a person who encouraged you in this situation?
Was it difficult for you **[your partner]** to get used to the new situation?

[FILTER: End.]

And are there further job-related or private events of which you think that they have changed your division of work at home? Who in charge is for which tasks and who takes time for particular tasks? (Do you remember such an incidence or situation?)

[This is the connecting line back to the "event"-loop (Item 3), or the bridge to 'pregnancy and future' (Item 4)]

4. Plans and wishes for the postnatal period

4.1 Introduction: Period around birth and after the birth

And if we talk about you becoming parents soon. May I ask how far along you are **[your partner is]**?
How do you prepare for the baby?
Who takes which tasks? (Purchasing baby equipment, arranging the room, etc.)?
What does the father-to-be?
Does he take **[Do you take]** holidays during the period of the maternity leave? (Before or after the birth)

Plans and wishes for the first months after the birth

Have you ever thought about how it will be after the birth of the baby, how you will organize everyday life with a child or things that will change for example with reference to your work?

Check state of planning and priorities

- Do they take parental leave?
- How long and how will it be divided?
- Expected consequences for the division of work
- Who will take parental leave? Which type? (As well: knowledge about the legal situation and actual support/resistance of the employer)
- How important is the woman's [the man's] quick return to the job?
- Are there any plans with reference to persons or institutions that would enable an equal division of work?

And what about your partner? Have you ever discussed whether you would like to divide the parental leave?

Do you have already ideas or concrete plans how you will organize childcare? Will you receive support from your family or friends?

Could you imagine that the father stays at home and takes care of the baby and the household?
Why? How would that be? [Why not? What would have to change/be different in order to enable it?]

[FILTER:] If the mother and/or if IP wants to take parental leave

Have you already talked to your employer regarding your plans to take parental leave? And how did he react?

And your partner? Has he [she] already addressed this issue at work?

[Filter:] End

And that you would like to do it **[like this –specify-]**. What does that mean for your occupational career in the near future? *[Transition]*

4.2 Mechanism: Around the birth/ within the first months after the birth

Have you ever thought about how “being a mother” [“being a father”] will change your **everyday work life** (in the middle term)?

Do you plan to work after the birth of your child?

Have you and your partner ever talked about how you would like to arrange your everyday work life?

And what was the result?

[Essential question: Why is the division of work, in particular, parental leave, planned like it is?]

Specialization/Negotiation/Tradeoffs/Norm/Gender-Identity/Trust:

- Does the IP question the future division of work at all?
- Are there role models or examples within the circle of friends? Deterrent examples?
- Does the IP relate this to competences/abilities?
- Does the IP refer to gender stereotypes as an argument?
- ...are certain circumstances or conditions the reason?

[if necessary, directly refer to the event within the conversation]

- How important are financial aspects? Is the chosen type of work division the economically most reasonable one?
- What about trust in the partner? How is it justified?
- How is the trust in the long-term stability of the relationship? How is this trust justified?

Check Concretion

- How concrete are the mentioned plans and ideas?
- Have the expectations regarding the couple's everyday life changed? Why?
- Imaginations concerning the childcare

Check Conflicts: *[Attention: sensitive]*

- Are there different imaginations and wishes?
- Do/Did they argue about it?
- Do they try to find an alternative?
- Do they negotiate?
- What about trust in the partner and the relationship?

If you think about your career plans “at that time” [mention concrete point in time]. Have your career goals changed since that time? Have your priorities changed?

What could be the reason?

4.3 Plans and wishes for the year after the birth

How far-reaching are your current plans concerning the job-related and family-related future? Thinking about the entire first year after the birth of your baby?

- Who is taking parental leave? Which type?
- How important is the woman's [man's] quick return to the job?
- Are there any plans with reference to persons/institutions which support/enable an equal division of work?

Will you have **childcare support**? (On a regular basis?)

Have you ever talked about **childcare**?

What about **domestic work**? How do you imagine the future cooperation of you and your partner concerning domestic work after your child has been born? For example, who will be in charge of everyday things like doing the laundry or shopping? And to what extent? Have you ever discussed the issue of domestic work?

[Essential question: Why is the division of work, in particular, parental leave, planned like it is?]

Specialization/Negotiation/Tradeoffs/Norm/Gender-Identity/Trust:

- Does the IP question the future division of work at all?
- Are there role models or examples within the circle of friends? Deterrent examples?
- Does the IP relate this to competences/abilities?
- Does the IP refer to gender stereotypes as an argument?
- ...are certain circumstances or conditions the reason?

[if necessary, directly refer to this event within the conversation]

- How important are financial aspects? Is the chosen type of work division the economically most reasonable one?
- What about trust in the partner? Is it justified?
- How is the trust in the long-term stability of the relationship? How is it justified?

Check Concretion

- How concrete are the mentioned plans and ideas?

Check Conflicts: *[Attention: sensitive]*

- Are there different imaginations and wishes?
- Do/Did they argue about it?
- Do they try to find an alternative?
- Do they negotiate?
- What about trust in the partner and the relationship?

4.4 Long-term plans with anticipated/subsequent effects for the couple's division of labour

And if you look further ahead? For how long do[es] you **[your partner]** plan to be on parental leave? And what do you expect from the time after the parental leave? What kind of imaginations and plans do you have for your family and your job?

Do you think that your partner agrees with your ideas? Have you ever talked about that?

- Career development of mother and father
- Family planning (further children?)
- Other family-related plans for example house, moves, etc.

Specialization/Negotiation/Tradeoffs/Norm/Gender-Identity/Trust:

- Does the IP question the future division of work at all?
- Are there role models or examples within the circle of friends? Deterrent examples?
- Does the IP relate this to competences/abilities?
- Does the IP refer to gender stereotypes as an argument?
- ...are certain circumstances or conditions the reason?

[if necessary, directly refer to the event within the conversation]

- How important are financial aspects? Is the chosen type of work division the economically most reasonable one?
- What about trust in the partner? Is it justified?
- How is the trust in the long-term stability of the relationship? How is it justified?

Check Concretion

- How concrete are the mentioned plans and ideas?

Check Conflicts: *[Attention: sensitive]*

- Are there different imaginations and wishes?

- Do/Did they argue about it?
- Do they try to find an alternative?
- Do they negotiate?
- What about trust in the partner and the relationship?

Are there further aspects that concern you regarding this issue? Which we have not discussed yet?

5. Ending

Pie chart – summary

Finally, I would like to ask you to summarize the discussed issues in a figure – so to speak symbolically. For this purpose, I provide you with three “pies” which you should divide into pieces by drawing one or two lines.

The first pie refers to the total amount of time you and your partner will spend with the childcare. The size of the pieces should demonstrate how much time you – the mother **[the father]** – and how much time the father **[the mother]** will be in charge of the childcare.

The second pie should illustrate the total amount of time intended for domestic work (within the first year after your baby is born)

The third pie refers to the total amount of time intended for earning money, namely employment.

Now we are almost at the end of our conversation.

Age

Finally, may I kindly ask how old you and your partner are?

[Are there other remaining open questions regarding the standard demography? See checklist]

Snowball

Do you know other couples in your circle of acquaintances that are also expecting and who might agree to participate in our survey? Would you ask them whether we are allowed to contact them?

[if possible write down the phone number]

Check sample criteria:

- Does the couple expect its first child?
- Are both partners employed?
- Do they live together?

Second interview

Thank you. I would like to contact you a couple of months after the birth of your baby **[in about 1 year]**. I would like to ask how it has been for you and your family in the meantime. Do you agree with this? Would you also agree to a longer conversation?

Thanking for the interview

Thank you very much for this conversation and all the best on the birth of your child/ for the next months.

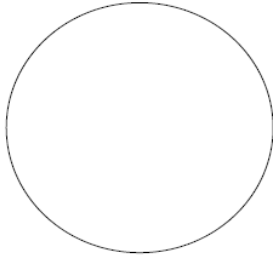
[Are there further organizational issues to address?]

Pie charts:

Meine Vorstellungen für die Zeit nach der Geburt unseres Kindes
- wie sollen unsere Aufgaben im Alltag geteilt werden?
(im ersten Jahr nach der Geburt)

1. Zeit mit dem Kind und für das Kind

Die „Torte“ stellt symbolisch die Gesamtheit der Zeit für die
Betreuung unseres Kindes dar.



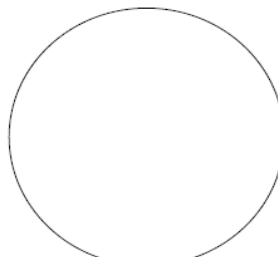
Beispiele:



Meine Vorstellungen für die Zeit nach der Geburt unseres Kindes
- wie sollen unsere Aufgaben im Alltag geteilt werden?
(im ersten Jahr nach der Geburt)

2. Zeit für die Arbeiten im Haushalt

Die „Torte“ stellt symbolisch die Gesamtheit der Zeit für die
Erledigung der Haushaltstätigkeiten dar.



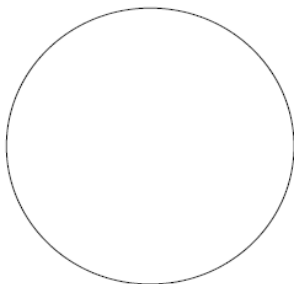
Beispiele:



Meine Vorstellungen für die Zeit nach der Geburt unseres Kindes
- wie sollen unsere Aufgaben im Alltag geteilt werden?
(im ersten Jahr nach der Geburt)

3. Zeit für die Berufstätigkeit und das Geldverdienen

Die „Torte“ stellt symbolisch die Gesamtheit der Zeit für die
Erwerbsarbeit und das Geldverdienen dar.



Beispiele:



Check Standarddemographie
[ggf. am Ende des Interviews noch erfragen]

1. Identifikationsnummer [vom Interviewer einzutragen]

Personen-ID: _____
Interviewer/In: _____
Datum der Interviews: _____

2. Vollständige Adresse und Telefonnummer [vorhandenes im Vorfeld vom Interviewer einzutragen]

Name _____
Straße/Hausnummer _____
PLZ/Ort _____

3. Bitte nennen Sie Ihr Geburtsjahr.

Befragte Person: Jahr: _____

4. Welchen höchsten Schulabschluss haben Sie erworben?

Befragte Person: ☐ kein Abschluss
☐ Hauptschule
☐ Mittlere Reife
☐ Abitur
☐ Sonstiges: _____

5. In welchem Umfang arbeiten Sie? Bitte beziehen Sie sich bei dieser Frage auf den vertraglich vereinbarten Umfang.

Befragte Person: ☐ Vollzeit
☐ Teilzeit
☐ Geringfügig/Stunden

6. Welchen Beruf haben Sie gelernt und welchen Beruf üben Sie zur Zeit aus?

Befragte Person:
Gelernter Beruf: _____
Ausgeübter Beruf: _____

7. Würden Sie uns noch verraten, wie hoch in etwa Ihr persönliches monatliches Netto-Einkommen ist?

Frage nach dem individuellen Einkommen
Unter 500 Euro
zwischen 500 und 1000 Euro
zwischen 1000 und 1500 Euro
zwischen 1500 und 2000 Euro
zwischen 2000 und 3000 Euro
zwischen 3000 und 4000 Euro
über 4000 Euro

8. Welche Steuerklasse haben Sie und Ihr Partner bzw. Ihre Partnerin?

Befragte Person: _____

9. Bitte geben Sie uns nun einige wichtige Informationen über Ihre Beziehungsform.

Familienstand. Wir sind:	Und zwar:
<input type="radio"/> Verheiratet	<input type="radio"/> mit Partner zusammenlebend
<input type="radio"/> Geschieden	<input type="radio"/> in Beziehung separat lebend
<input type="radio"/> Verwitwet	<input type="radio"/> alleine/getrennt lebend
<input type="radio"/> Ledig	<input type="radio"/> Sonstiges: _____

10. Gibt es sonst noch etwas, das Ihnen wichtig erscheint, das wir in Bezug auf Ihre Lebensform und Ihre Lebenssituation wissen sollten?

(Intervieweranweisung: Bitte besonders darauf achten, dass ein differenziertes Bild der Lebensform erhoben wird; die Haushaltsituation jedes Partners soll so detailliert wie möglich vorliegen!)

11. Sonstige Anmerkungen zum Interview?

11.2 Interview guideline for the second interview

Purpose of interviews:

The collecting of information about the division of labor within the couple (housework, paid work, childcare) with a special focus on changes after the transition to parenthood. To what degree did the amount of housework change altogether? Which mechanisms lead to greater/lesser participation of men? Which mechanisms lead to greater/lesser participation of women? On what reasoning are these changes based?

Two types of knowledge should be closely linked in the investigation: *narrative-episodic* knowledge and *semantic* knowledge. The first type refers to a *concrete situation*, the second to *generalized assumptions and correlations*. Both types of knowledge should be accounted for in the interviews since only the synopsis provides access to detailed individual histories. Therefore, interviews should be composed of narrative phases and concrete questions.

Structure of interviews:

1. Welcoming
2. Introduction to the study (making a connection to the last interview, e.g., by pointing out the child has been born in the meantime)
3. General information about the survey (e.g., data protection, usage of the results or other related issues)
4. Changes of *circumstances* since the last interview (current situation)
 - a. Paid work – in absolute terms and compared to your partner
 - b. Education – in absolute terms and compared to your partner
 - c. Income – in absolute terms and compared to your partner
 - d. Current institutional arrangement (parental leave, child-raising allowance, ...)
 - e. Housing
 - f. Family situation (marriage, ...)
 - g. Child's health
 - h. Parental perception of the child
5. Description of daily routines (current situation and compared to the past)
6. Thematic block on *reconciling work and family*
 - a. Current situation
 - b. Changes after birth
 - c. Desire and reality
 - d. Vision of the future
7. Thematic block on *housework*
 - a. Distribution of chores
 - b. Reasons for the distribution
 - c. Development of the division, decision-making structures
 - d. Changes after birth
 - e. Desire and reality
 - f. General point of view on the division of labor in the household
 - g. Vision of the future
8. General assessment of the situation, satisfaction
9. Future prospects

Three topics:

1. Changes in objective circumstances that serve as basic information for the two contentual blocks:
2. Reconciling work and family
3. Housework

Relevant events at the individual level ('resources'):

1. Level of Education
2. Paid work
3. Income

Relevant events at the level of the couple:

1. Childbirth (point of reference for pre-post comparison)
2. Changes in the proportion of resources
3. Changes in housing
4. Changes in family situation (other than childbirth)

Logic of inquiry: 'situation, causes, assessment'

1. Description of situation and changes
2. Description of causes/reasons of/for situation and changes
3. Assessment of the situation and changes

(Interplay of specific situation and overall value systems, assessments, etc. – keep different time horizons of the guiding questions in mind!)

Changes in circumstances:

First I would like to talk about some changes you may have experienced since the last interview one year ago.

Objective circumstances

- Paid work – current work, amount of working hours in absolute terms and compared to your partner
- Level of Education, continuing education – in absolute terms and compared to your partner
- Income – in absolute terms and compared to your partner
- Current institutional arrangement (parental leave, child-raising allowance)
- Housing
- Family situation (e.g., marriage)

Subjective circumstances

- Child's health
- Perception of the child (child sleeps a lot, high input in childcare?)

Topic: Daily routine:

Let's deal with your daily routine in more detail: Could you please tell me about yesterday's daily routine as detailed as possible? Please refer to the following topics: paid work, housework, and childcare. Please tell which tasks had to be carried out, how much time they took and by whom they were done.

Would you describe this day as a usual one? Did you follow your everyday routine yesterday?

If so, could you tell me a representative anecdote of your everyday life; a story which shows how things usually happen?

If not, could you please tell me, what would constitute a "regular" day of yours? Which aspects of yesterday's routine were particular (and why)?

What has changed about your daily routine since the birth?

Who takes care about the child and how is it done?

] Distribution of tasks! Fathers!

] How did you find the time for taking care of the child?

] Perception of the time spent with the child

Topic: Reconciling work and family:

Current situation

How does your everyday work life look like?

Have you [your wife] already returned to work?

-] Educational achievement – education and training completed?
-] Professional qualification – job title?
-] Current occupation (job title, overqualified, working out of the profession you trained for etc.)
-] Which working time model? (Full-time, part-time, working at home etc.)
-] Hours per week? The discrepancy between contracted and actual working hours? By choice?
-] Satisfaction: How does the interviewee evaluate her/his occupational situation? Well-established?

Do they – e.g., mother and father – both take parental leave?

For how long and how is it divided in the couple? Who is taking parental leave? Which model do they follow? (As well: knowledge about the legal situation and actual support vs. resistance of the employer)

Do you plan to divide parental leave at a later date?

Consequences for the division of work

How important is the woman's [man's] quick return to work?

Are there any plans with regard to getting in touch with other individuals and institutions that would help supporting an equal division of work?

Changes after birth

[FILTER:] If the woman has already returned to work

Could you please tell me how your/your wife's return to the job happened?

Are there any changes since your pregnancy/your wife's pregnancy (since our last interview)?

E.g., amount of working hours?

Other tasks at work?

Different employer?

Different superior?

Any other changes?

And how about your partner? Has he/she experienced any changes since our last interview?

Who of you two earns more money at the moment (how high is the difference in income)?

And who takes care of the child, if both of you are at work?

Friends, relatives, day nursery, daycare center, etc.?

Does the person who takes care of the child come to your house or do you have to bring him/her there?

Who brings the child there? Who picks the child up from there?

Who is in charge of organizing the childcare and who communicates with the care provider(s)?

How is the childcare financed?

(Is the child still breast-fed? How is this organized?)

[FILTER: END]

Have there been or are there still any disagreements between you and your wife with regard to the return to work or the model of parental leave?

Where applicable, these questions may also be asked with regard to housework and childcare → depending on what conflicts exist]

Where did [does] the conflict come from?

Desire and reality

Have you considered different ways of returning to work/choosing another model of parental leave?

And why did you decide against alternative solutions in the end?

Did the chosen model turn out the very way you expected it to be or did it turned out in a different way?

Why do you think that is it the best solution?

Are you satisfied with the solution or do you want to obtain more support or to have alternative solutions?

Support from whom?

How could this support look like?

Which conditions would you require to realize your ideal concept of combining work and parenthood?

If the child was born after January, 1st 2007, new legal conditions are in force with regard to the duration of parental leave and the financial support during parental leave. Have you and your partner discussed if this new arrangement would have led to a different division of childcare, housework and paid work? (Or may lead to such a different division with regard to further children?)

Is your partner of the same opinion?

And what about your family of origin and your friends?

Do you know other young parents that have the same division or is your model an exception from the rule?

Do you know other young parents who share your opinion or are you alone with your opinion?

] Feeling guilty? [Ask directly if possible]

Is there anything you dislike about your daily routine or anything you would rather do differently?

Do you have difficulties sometimes to entrust your partner or another person with the childcare?

Has there been a period of transition that was particularly difficult for you?

[FILTER:] If the applied division of work is out of the ordinary

How did your friends/neighbors/ colleagues/ parents/ parents-in-law (...) react?

Did their reaction surprise you?

Was there somebody who encouraged you?

Was it difficult for you [your partner] to get used to the new situation?

[FILTER: END]

And are there [further] job-related or private events of which you think that they have changed your division of work at home again? Who is in charge for which tasks and who spends time on particular tasks? (Do you remember such an incidence or situation?)

Vision of the future

Are there any changes planned for the next months? For how long do you plan to maintain your current arrangement?

Do you plan to return to work soon or to realign with regard to your profession?

] Is this due to financial reasons? Or is it due to personal reasons?

] Have you already made concrete plans?

] Have you talked to your partner about the issue of how to arrange working life then?

] If so, what was the outcome?

[Key question: What are the reasons for your plans about the division of work, paid work and childcare?]

] How concrete are the above-mentioned ideas and plans?

] Did your expectations with regard to everyday life for either you or your partner change? If so, why?

] Any conception with regard to future childcare?

For mothers only: Could you imagine that the father stays at home and takes care of the child and does housework while you are working? How would that be? **[Why not? What would have to change in order to make it happen?]**

Is there any support from your employer? How did he/she react?
And how about your partner? Did **he/she already** mention that issue at work?

[FILTER: If the interviewee has reduced or interrupted employment. If the partner has reduced employment, how did interviewee evaluate the partner's situation:]

Are you [Is your partner] planning to return to work next year?

When and how do you **[does your partner]** plan to return to work?

Full-time vs. part-time

Same occupation? Same employer? Same company?

What consequences does the chosen arrangement [name particular arrangement] have for your career in the near future?

Have you thought about how 'being a mother' ['being a father'] could change your everyday's work life (in the near future)?

Do you think that your [your partner's] parenthood will have negative consequences for your own/your partner's career?

Does this matter for you at the moment? Or do you think it will matter for you later on?

Do you make any efforts at the moment to keep in touch with your employer or your occupational environment? Or are you just glad to have a break from work?

Do you think returning to work will be easy for you?

Will your employment have changed very much when you return to work? Or will it be the same as it was before?

Do you occasionally worry about that or are you relaxed?

Which role does your partner play regarding your secure or insecure feelings about this issue?

[FILTER END]

[If the interviewee makes concessions with regard to employment]

Do you have the feeling to be more dependent on your partner in financial terms?

Do you think your arrangement reduces your financial and personal freedom?

[If the partner of the interviewee makes concessions with regard to employment]

Do you have the feeling to bear a greater responsibility than before the birth?

Do you consider this a burden sometimes?

And how, do you think, does your partner feel about it?

Do you think this arrangement reduces your partner's financial or personal freedom?

If you recall your plans regarding your career back then [name concrete point of reference]. Did your professional goals change since that time? Did you shift your priorities?

In your opinion, what are the reasons for this change?

Topic: *Housework*

Division of tasks

Super ordinate questions⁹:

- How are the tasks divided within the couple (with regard to housework, and in combination with childcare and employment)?
- Which reasons are mentioned for this division? (Reasons for the division of tasks)
- How did the couple come to this division, have there been any conflicts, etc. (interaction)?
- Has the division of tasks been defined? (Interaction)
- If so: how and why has the definition been made?
- Has the division of tasks changed since the baby arrived?

At the beginning of the interview, you told me, that... [make a connection between the daily routine and housework]. If you estimate roughly: How much time do you spend on housework daily?

Which tasks do you count among housework? (Which of these tasks do you do yourself and which ones not? Why? Are there conflicts within the couple?)

According to this, you count ... among housework. How much time do you spend roughly on these tasks? And for ... (request this information for each mentioned category).

And with regard to the division with your partner: What is your share (request this information for each mentioned category)?

→ this is the point where you let the interviewee work with the 'pie chart'.

Do you always divide the daily housework in the way you described it?

If you do not this in a regular manner: How do you divide the household chores in general? (Name different chores: e.g., cooking, cleaning, laundry, repairs, shopping). Who of you two is usually in charge for particular tasks which have not to be done daily? For example, doing the laundry or taking out the garbage?

Are there undefined responsibilities or do you alternate frequently? Are there particular rules on how the chores are organized?

Changes after the birth

Could you please describe what has changed significantly with regard to household chores since the baby arrived?

- absolute change (in respect of individual tasks and time)
- **relative change (in respect of individual tasks and time)**

Maybe we could do this by looking into specific examples and doing a 'before and after' evaluation?

→ This is where you let the interviewee work with the 'coordinate system'! (The coordinate system has not to be completely filled in at once. It can be used as an orientation and can be completed gradually.)

How did the adjustment in respect of doing housework take place after the birth?

With regard to the responsibility for the individual tasks in housework, did you go back to normal quickly? Or did you have to test new arrangements? Did you have to get accustomed to it? Have there been special arrangements which were not necessary before the baby arrived?

⁹ These questions come from an international research project in the context of the 'Equal' program of the European Union (correspondence with Sabine Buchebner-Ferstl of the Austrian Institute for Family Studies).

Was it difficult for you to get used to the new situation?

Have there been disagreements with regard to the division of tasks?

Have there been bargaining processes or quarrels? With regard to the division of work. Have there recently been any conflicts? (If so, ask the interviewee to tell this 'story'; ask for strategies to solve problems, ask the interviewees to evaluate these strategies)

Do you talk about housework problems with your partner? For example, if you have the feeling that you are doing too much and he is doing not enough? Do you delegate specific tasks? Domestic help? Or do others help you?

How do you evaluate the current situation in comparison to the time before? (How does your partner evaluate this situation in comparison to the time before?) Is there anything you would like to change? What does your partner think about it?

Did you have another attitude towards housework (e.g., change of priorities, changes in perception/appreciation or the like) back then? How were these attitudes, how did they change, why did they change and how do you evaluate this change? (What does your partner think about it?)

Desire and Reality

Are you satisfied with the division of housework and paid work, the way you and your partner are practicing it?

How do you rate your arrangement in comparison to other couples you know? (Compared to couples that either were or currently are in the same situation.)

General worldview

Does your current division fit your personal principles so that you could say it is like you have always imagined it? (Allow for a critical discussion; a tension between "desire and reality") → General values

Vision of the future, anticipation

What are your imaginations with respect to the division of housework in the future?

How do these imaginations affect the action?

Are there any agreements between the partners (e.g., with regard to the wife's return to work and the related re-organization of the daily housework)?

How sure are the interviewees about sticking to these agreements?

Is there anything you would like to change, or you would have liked to change (with regard to the organization of everyday life; evaluation of the partner's opinion)?

To what extent do your imaginations/wishes/ideals differ from reality? Why? What are the issues with regard to the division of labor you think about frequently? How do you rate this for your partner?

Checklists:

→ Checklist for reasons:

Did this happen over the years? 'Crept in' over time?

Does the interviewee question the division of work?

Are there role models or examples within the family/among friends?

Does the interviewee refer to gender stereotypes as an argument?

Does the interviewee mention certain episodes /conflicts as crucial factors?

Perception of housework, personal dispositions

Does the interviewee relate this to competences/abilities (strengths and weaknesses)?

Does the interviewee mention certain episodes as crucial factors (→with reference to the childbirth!)

→Checklist for conflicts:

Are there different imaginations and wishes?

Did perspectives shift?

Did the partners argue about it?

Did the partners try to find an alternative? How does such a better alternative look like?

Was this a perennial issue?

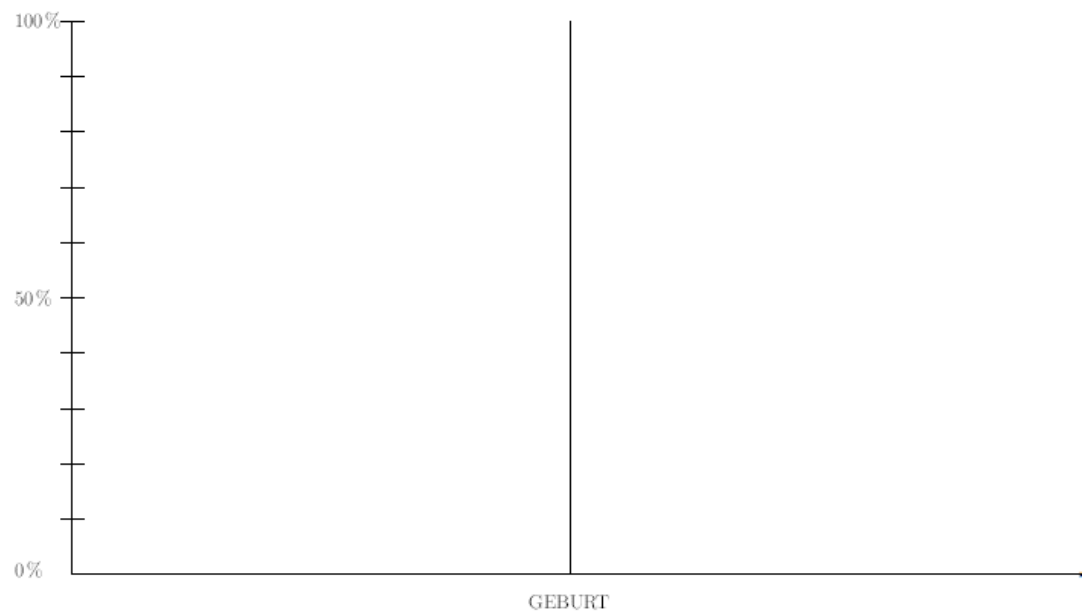
Pie charts and standard demography: see the first interview

Coordinate system

Einschätzung der Aufgabenteilung vor und nach der Geburt – HAUSARBEIT

Paar ID:

Frau / Mann (Unzutreffendes bitte streichen)



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