



## 24-7 NEGOTIATION

Couples negotiation processes about their division of paid and unpaid work in their transition to parenthood

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## Programme

- **Background & The Dutch case**
- **Sensitizing concepts: theoretical & empirical points of departure**
- **Research design & methodology:**  
couple-interaction interviews before and after birth of 1st child
- **Results:**
  - a. STUDY 1: Explicit & implicit negotiation / decision-making processes (wave 1)
  - b. STUDY 2: 4 processes across trans. to parenthood: realizing intended division (wave 1 & 2)
- **Conclusion/Discussion**
  - Scientific implications
  - Practical implications: couple workshops



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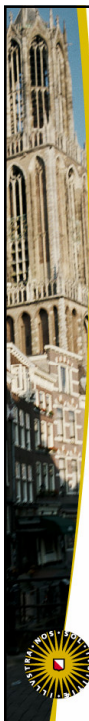
## Background & The Dutch case

- Transition to parenthood is crucial stage for path dependent patterns in couples division of work
- Traditionalization of division of work during transition to parenthood
- Broadening of gender roles → more room for negotiation about who does what
  - Growing labour force participation (including young mothers)

### THE DUTCH CASE

- Favourite arrangement: 1,5 earner model ( )
- Part-time work widely available, including social benefits
- Leaves are relatively short compared to other European Welfare States:
  - Mothers: 16 weeks of maternity leave, Fathers: 2 days of paternity leave, + Both parents: 13 (26) weeks of (un)paid parental leave (part-time or full-time)
- Motherhood culture: parent's care is highly valued- versus nursery's

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## Dutch Labour participation after first childbirth.

Period: 1997-2005 in percentages

	1997	2001	2003	2005	2007
<b>Women</b>					
Did not work & won't work	NA	15	15	15	16
Stopped working	<b>25</b>	16	11	12	<b>10</b>
Work less	44	35	37	34	33
Work same/more hours	<b>32</b>	34	37	37	<b>40</b>
<b>Mannen</b>					
Did not work & won't work	NA	2	4	2	4
Stop working or work less	<b>10</b>	6	6	6	<b>6</b>
Work more or equal hours	<b>90</b>	92	90	91	<b>90</b>

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CBS (Enquête beroepsbevolking'00-'07)



## Research Aim & Questions

### RESEARCH AIMS:

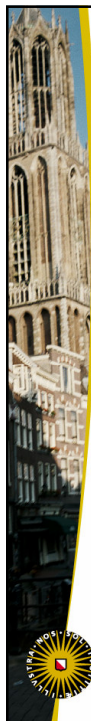
- *increase understanding of couples' daily negotiation processes about their division of work (paid work, housework and childcare) during the transition to parenthood.*
- *provide insight in how these processes contribute to couples' division of work.*

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- In terms of explicit and implicit strategies, what characterizes the decision making processes of young couples with regard to the division of paid and domestic work?
- How can we understand couples' intended and unintended changes in their division of work from before to after the birth of their first child by their negotiation processes?



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## Definition of negotiation process

Couples' negotiation processes are defined as ongoing and dynamic interaction processes, in which spouses arrive at a certain division of work, either implicitly or explicitly.



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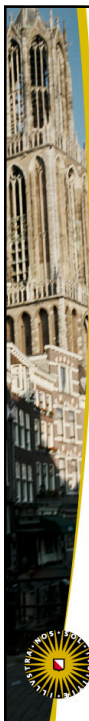


## Sensitizing concepts- points of departure

- Couples discuss paid work, seldomly housework (Van Lenning & Willemsen, 2000)
- Couples speak about daily and concrete topics of housework, but not about their division in more broad sense (Hooghiemstra & Pool ,2003)
- Hidden power (Komter , 1989; Bittman, 1997)
  - negative responses of husbands to changes proposed by wives,
  - wives anticipating husband's perceived needs and preferences
  - wives avoiding conflicts → status quo of traditional division confirmed



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## Sensitizing concepts- points of departure

- explicit decision-making strategies play an important role in realizing an equal division of work (Knudson-Martin & Rankin Mahoney, 1998, 2005; Scanzoni & Fox, 1980; Wiesmann et al., 2008).
- Implicit & explicit decision-making (Sillars & Kalbflesh, 1989)



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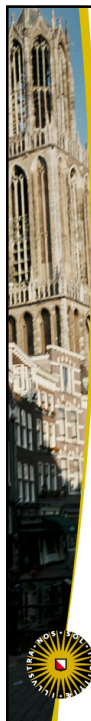


## Sensitizing concepts

- Resource-Bargaining Theory: Negotiation Household
  - Growing negotiations between partners
- Gender theories: No negotiations
  - Doing gender: Implicitly but actively reinforcing one's gender identity



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## Research Design & Methodology

### **Quantitative panel: 2 waves of NKPS (2002-2004/2006-2007)**

- 1927 couples (18 to 45 years, heterosexual, cohabiting)

### **Qualitative panel study (NKPS minipanel)**

- **Couple-Interaction-interviews**
  - Individual interviews with both spouses
  - Individual questionnaire
  - Joint couple interview.

### **Wave I: 32 couples**

- 18 couples expected first child
- 14 couples already had first child (6 weeks- 11 months)

### **Wave II: 30 couples**

- Children: (3,5 – 18 months, M=10 months)
- Drop-out: 2 couples (burnout, divorce); 2 men (not interested in 2nd interview)



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## Analyses

- **Analyses of 62 interviews (wave 1 & 2)**

- Understanding the couple's story
- Constant comparative method
- Programme: MAXqda. Coding & Retrieving texts
  - Hierarchical coding & classification
- > Reducing & structuring data:
  - Selecting themes
  - Describing differences & similarities
  - Distinguishing types



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## Interview-methodology: Couple-interaction interviews

	Aim of method	Wave 1	Wave 2
<b>Individual interview</b>	Individual perspective without couple-bias	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Ideal division of work with child</li> <li>. Satisfaction &amp; conflicts</li> </ul>	positive and negative sides of new division arguments for division; disagreements; desire for change; doubts and satisfaction
<b>Couple-interaction interview</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Observe decision-making dynamics and interaction</li> <li>- facilitate recall of earlier decision-making through reconstruction of anecdotes and incidents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Development of division</li> <li>- Processes &amp; mechanisms</li> <li>- Nature of communication: agreements, issues, conflicts</li> <li>- Plans for future division with child</li> </ul>	Decision-making: which issues did couples talk about, make agreements, did not talk about, in what way?
<b>Questionnaire</b>	background information and sensible information e.g. about conflicts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Actual division of paid work and housework (hours spend self and partner)</li> <li>. Conflicts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.Actual division of paid work and housework (hours spend self and partner)</li> <li>. changes after the birth and conflicts</li> </ul>
<b>Length of complete interviews</b>		1.5 hours- 4 hours; M = 2.5hours; Total: 973 pages	1.7 hours- 3.10 hours, M= 2 hours Total: 960 pages



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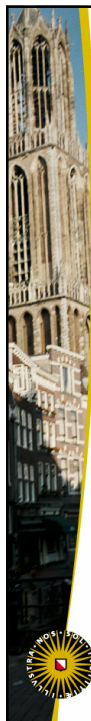
## Results, STUDY 1, wave 1: before the birth "Not worth mentioning"

### Implicit decision-making: 'Muddling through'

- Silent agreements & disagreements
  - Taken for granted, automatically: silent agreements
  - Meddling and & rather doing it oneself
  - Silent frustration & disagreeemnets
- Implicit until frustration & conflict arises
- Little pro-active planning, reflection & discussion on division of work



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### Silent agreements

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



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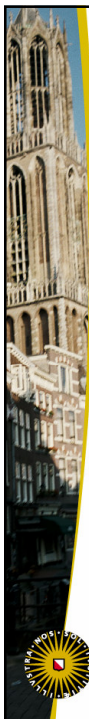


### **Preferring to do it yourself.**

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



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### **Women meddling with men's housework: men's reactions**

#### **Easy way out:**

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

*[Marc, full-time dual-earner couple]*

#### **Resisting:**

*Dennis: I'm a good cook, but she does it a bit differently, in a different order and then she says: 'No, you should do it like this.' Then I kick her out of the kitchen and shut the door. Then she goes and sulks in front of the TV. And then later she says: 'Oh it's delicious, oh.'*

*Debby: I can't look, as soon as I start interfering I think I can point out details to him.*

*[Dennis & Debby, female-as-breadwinner couple]*



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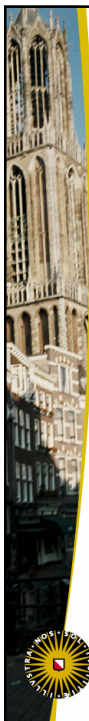
## Dealing with conflict:

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

*[Valentin & Valerie, full-time dual-earner couple]*



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## Explicit decision-making processes

- Pro-active planning: thinking ahead
- Reflecting on status quo
- Making agreements
- Expressing frustration & disagreements
- Active attitude towards change

Possible explanations:

- Wanting to realize equal division
- Discussion prevents larger frustration
- Investing in partnership is seen as worthwhile



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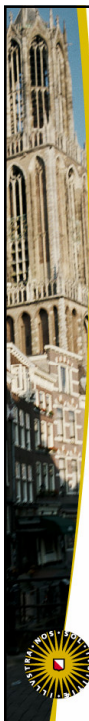
## Explicit decision-making

*Explicit after a conflict:*

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



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## Pro-active planning

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



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## Three types: decision-making & division of work

Table 3. Decision making by three ideal types of couples

	Traditional	Egalitarian	Transitional
Orientation towards division	Traditional gender roles	Gender equality and mastery	Equality and stoicism
Implicit or explicit decision making	<b>Implicit</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Silent agreements</li> <li>• Taken for granted and automatic</li> <li>• Non-reflective interaction</li> </ul>	<b>Explicit</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prospective awareness</li> <li>• Proactive planning</li> <li>• Making agreements</li> <li>• Engaging in disagreements: mastery</li> </ul>	<b>Implicit &amp; explicit</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vague expectations</li> <li>• Retrospective awareness</li> <li>• Silent (dis)agreements (stoicism)</li> </ul>
Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specialization of responsibilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explicitly communicating frustration</li> <li>• Outsourcing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involving men in housework</li> <li>• Meddling</li> <li>• Implicit frustration: stoicism</li> <li>• Scaling back</li> </ul>
Preferred division of paid and unpaid work?	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Yes</b></p> Traditional responsibilities	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Yes</b></p> Equal division	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>No</b></p> Transitional state, partly equal but tending towards traditional division



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## Discussion: findings

- Division of work before childbirth: prevalence of implicit processes, few exceptions
- Expecting a child:
  - explicit discussion on who works how many days, and cares how many days
  - broad discussion, no explicit discussion on who bears which responsibility for child & concrete tasks



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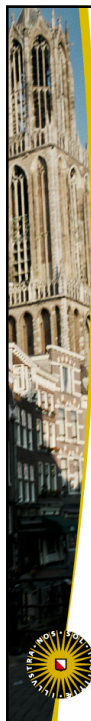
### Discussion:

#### Possible explanations for prevalence of implicit processes

- Saves energy on short term by avoiding conflicts
- Tyranny of small decisions (Kahn, 1966 as macro-level principle of consumer market decisions)
  - Small decisions individually do not appear important
  - accumulate to suboptimal, unequal allocation of time/tasks (see also Doorten, 2008; Lindenberg, 2007)
- 'Myth of the good relationship': Negotiating is not romantic
- Gender roles still indicate what men/women should do: not much need to discuss



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### STUDY 2: wave 1 & 2

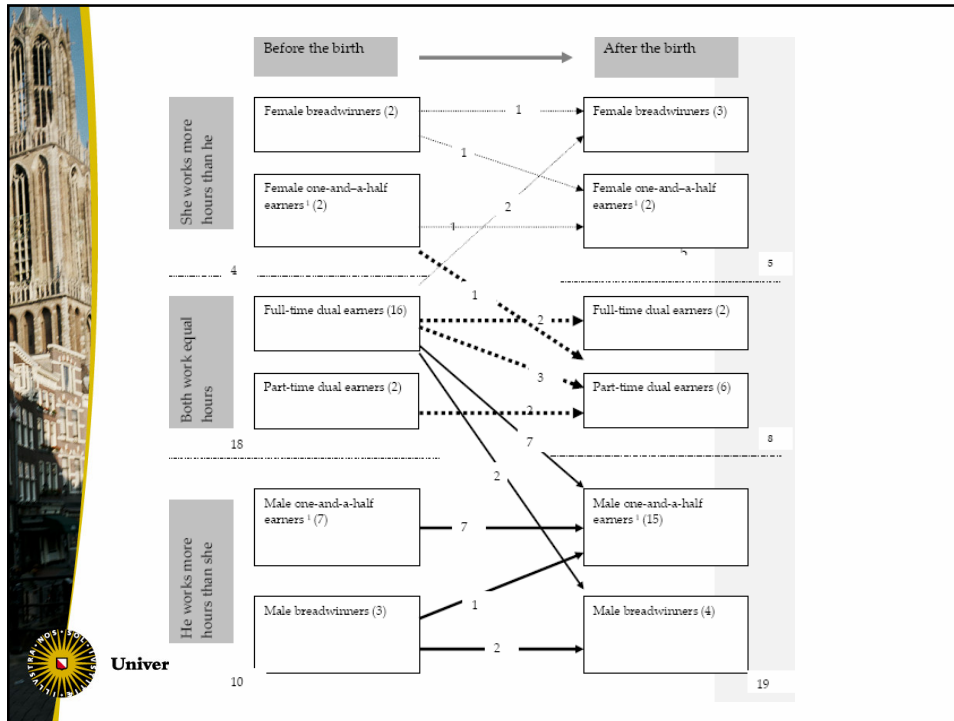
#### Results : Processes after first child birth

##### 4 kinds of processes after the birth:

1. *Intended (temporary) specialization*
2. *Unintended specialization: gradual pragmatism*
3. *Intended equal sharing: Determined choice*
4. *Reversing the breadwinner role. Landmark of emancipation?*



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### Results: from before to after the birth: Mothers and Father's intentions

Father's-to-be ideal number of own caring days	Mother's-to-be ideal number of caring days for father's-to-be				Total
	0 days	1 day	> 1-3 days	≥ 3 days	
0 days	0	1	1	0	2
1 day	1	9	2	1	13
> 1-3 days	0	5	5	0	10
≥ 3 days	1	2	1	3	7
Total N	2	17	9	4	32

- 17 couples agree on ideal division
- 10 mothers want more traditional division of childcare than fathers
- 5 mothers want fathers to care more than fathers themselves



## Do fathers realize their ideal division?

Father's ideal number of caring days (wave 1)	Fathers' actual caring days after birth				Total
	0 days	1 day	>1 - 3 days	≥ 3 days	
0 days	2	0	0	0	2
1 day	2	10	1	0	13
>1 - 3 days	5	0	2	2	9
≥ 3 days	2	1	2	2	7
Total N	11	11	5	4	31 <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> calculated as five week-days minus the number of working hours divided by eight

<sup>2</sup> 1 missing value for the combination of fathers' ideal with actual number of caring days

- 16 fathers realize intended division
- 12 care less than intended
- 3 care more than intended



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## RESULTS: 4 kinds of processes after the birth:

### 1. Intended (temporary) specialization

- Dealing with increased unpaid work load by reducing women's work hours (temporarily)
- *Breadwinning is internalized duty for men*
- *Mother is special caretaker*
- Clear roles: little ambivalence & stress

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

[II ii, Gertrude 16 hrs, Anthony unemployed, child 11 months]



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## RESULTS: 4 kinds of processes after the birth:

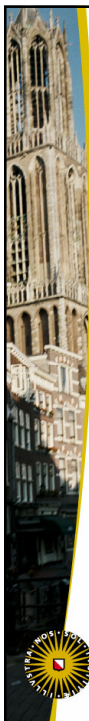
### 2. Unintended specialization: gradual pragmatism

- Preference for equal division
- No concrete plans: agreement about rough direction of the ideal
- One-and-a-half earner model, or 2x4 days
- Ambivalence about roles
- **"Gendered kick-off"**
  - Maternity Leave: headstart of mothers in skills & routines of baby care
  - Difficult to change after leave ends, childcare and housework

Debby: Hmm, the fact that Dennis cares for our baby works very well. But I find my work very ambivalent. I don't have it clear for myself how I prefer to divide the care. I like it that I work, but I don't like to abandon our baby. Preferably I would be able to and work and stay with our baby. At this moment I feel that although I only work 16 hours, I am gone too much, I would rather work less. [II, ii, Debby,



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## RESULTS: 4 kinds of processes after the birth:

### • 2. Unintended specialization: gradual pragmatism (CONT.)

- Xylona: Xander still finds it difficult to get into a routine and wonders for example how he can have a shower with the baby there. So he still has to find a way to deal with that. And I had to laugh, they're the things I struggled with in the first few months when I was on maternity leave. It's hard work and takes a lot of getting used to.' [II ii, Xylona 32 hrs, Xander 36 hrs, child 6 months]
- 'My career is already damaged through the pregnancy and the leave; I lost track, now he should make the best out of his career. It makes more sense that I stay home for some more time' [II ii, Anne 20 hrs, Adrian 30 hrs, child 11 months]
- Quiana: I hate the fact that when I am with my child, my thoughts stray to my work. I find that really irritating. It makes me feel guilty. Not only towards her, but also towards myself. Then I think to myself, now you're here and you're still thinking about work. [II ii, Quiana 32 hrs, Quentin 30hrs, child 6 months]



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## RESULTS: 4 kinds of processes after the birth:

### 3. *Intended equal sharing: Determined choice*

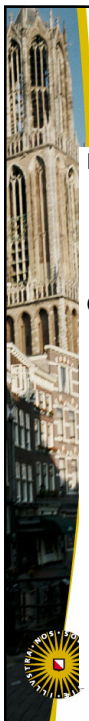
- *Childcare & paid work seen as meaningful task by men and women.*
- *Gender consciousness and avoiding gendered kick-off.*
- *Motivation & self-energizing effect through positive experiences.*

#### Paid work as intrinsic value

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



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## RESULTS: 4 kinds of processes after the birth:

### ***Intended equal sharing: Determined choice***

#### Equality as strong principle

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

#### Consciously not meddling

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

#### Positive experience reinforces

I: And how was it for you when you handed over care after four months?

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







## RESULTS: 4 kinds of processes after the birth:

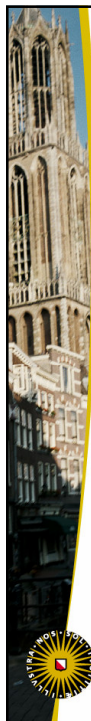
### 4. Reversing the breadwinner role. Landmark of emancipation?

- *Circumstances and temporary solution : unemployment, studying etc.*
- Confirming gender identity (compensation hypothesis).
- *No cumulative effects, such as gendered kick-off .*

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



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## Conclusions

- **Gender is a deeply ingrained pattern**
  - Gendered kick-off reinforces status quo in a gendered way
  - Re-allocation of routines is difficult
  - Gender roles have broadened, however, there is an inner deep core of the onion that has not changed yet:
    - Both spouses can/should generally do all tasks
    - But: final responsibility's are still gendered: → women's meddling, men's fear of reducing work hours etc.
- **Mothers and fathers: Ambivalent feelings: work versus childcare**
  - Cultural & Institutional background reinforce gendered decisions
- **Child is priority No 1, other interests are all secondary.** Gender wins space → 'Pink cloud' or Worry after first childbirth.
- **THE DUTCH/PART-TIME PROBLEM & accumulation of specialization in gendered direction.** One-and-a-half earner couples' frustration: growing to more specialization than desired
  - Little specialisation was difficult to maintain
- Traditional division is clear and needs few negotiation



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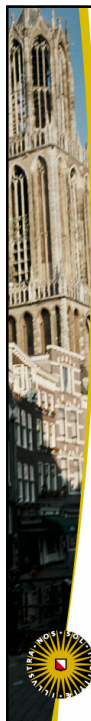


## Discussion: Consequences of implicit negotiation processes & gendered processes

- Preference of spouse (& of employer) not checked
  - therefore often unknown preferences and more traditional assumptions,
  - → assumptions about what spouse wants
  - → implicitly (internal) compromising between incorrect assumptions
- → undesired division for both partners through tyranny of small decisions
- Power of the status quo: difficult to change division once routine
  - Also ideal division of spouses was based on their current (skewed) division



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## Do we live in a transitional stage?

**Traditional assumptions about the separation of work life and personal life are no longer viable,  
but we have not yet created a coherent set of new values and beliefs to take their place.**

Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1976)



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## Practical implications: A couple workshop (3 evenings)

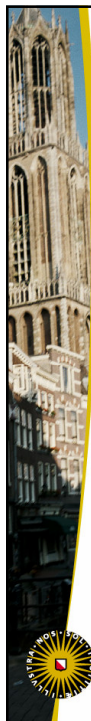
### Departure point:

- Consciousness is important for making intentions and wishes for division explicit

### Objectives:

- Clarifying priorities & long term vision:
  - What do I want? What does my partner want?
- Measuring and reflecting on the status quo.
- Exchange & share with other couples (same/other gender)
  - Recognition of problems, new ideas,
  - Neutral, relaxed atmosphere
  - Discussing possibilities and alternatives
  - Making implicit issues discussable: joint decision-making
- Making and committing to concrete action plans

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## Content of the workshop: Joint negotiation

### **Dream, investigate & discuss**

- What is your ideal division? Discuss/dream in groups
- Individual questionnaire: Estimate current division of paid work, housework, childcare
- Evaluate status quo with spouse
- Resource allocation: where & how to spend energy, time, money.
- Reflection: What works well? What can be better?

### **Concrete joint action plans**

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