

Parental Leave for Fathers?
Gendered Conceptions and Practices
in Families with Young Children in Finland

Johanna Lammi-Taskula

Academic Dissertation



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My interest in studying gender relations, and especially questions related to men and masculinities started when I was a student at the department of sociology in Helsinki. In the beginning of 1990's I was working as a research assistant for professor Elina Haavio-Mannila who is a pioneer in studying the reconciliation of work and family life in Finland. The possibilities and support given by Elina were most valuable for my very first steps in the world of sociological research.

My work at the university led to a job at the Council for Equality. I wish to thank Hannele Varsa for asking me to become her maternity and parental leave substitute as the secretary of the sub-committee on men. I also warmly remember the late general secretary Eeva-Liisa Tuominen who always encouraged my work and helped me widen my thinking, knowledge and social network related to the various aspects of gender equality.

The Council for Equality coordinated a group that was collecting information for the OECD on parental leave in Finland. My work in reporting for the OECD then brought me to Stakes where Minna Salmi asked a group of researchers to join her in planning a project on the reconciliation of work and family life. My deepest gratitude to Minna for taking me ombord! Her brilliant and vigorous work made a great impression on me, and she has certainly been an important role model during all the years we have worked together.

The gendered take-up of parental leave was one of the themes studied in a row of Stakes projects during the past twelve years: two four-year Work and Family projects funded by the European Social Fund, and two Parental Leave Studies funded by Stakes, the Social Insurance Institute, the Finnish Work Environmental Fund, and the Ministry of Employment. Work in these projects has provided me with knowledge and perspectives that have been most valuable for the thesis in hand. I want to thank my co-workers in these projects – Minna, Hannele, Päivi, Riikka, Aija, Jarna, Pentti, Johanna and many others – for the innovative work on methods as well as the manifold considerations on empirical results. Many thanks also to all the people who have participated in our projects, given their time and shared their experiences.

In addition to the friends and colleagues in Finland, also the nordic research community focusing on men and masculinities has been a main source of inspiration for my work. Thank you Øystein, Helene, Bente, Steen, Marie, Claes, Ingolfur, Knut, Jörgen and many others for all the profound discussions, and for all the fun.

The World Congress of Sociology in 2002 was a turning point in my academic career. One night in some nice restaurant in Brisbane, professor Päivi Korvajärvi invited me to be a doctoral student at Tampere University. It was time to piece together previous work and, as it soon turned out, to do a lot of more work in order

to create an academic thesis. I am grateful to Päivi Korvajärvi and Ilkka Arminen who were my supervisors at the Women's studies department and the Department of sociology and social psychology. Päivi patiently guided me towards a structure of the thesis that substantially helped my writing process. Ilkka made some important questions related to the methodology of my study. Matti Alestalo's careful reading helped me to finalise the manuscript. David Morgan's and Elin Kvande's profound preliminary examiners' comments were most encouraging.

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Helsinki 17th of September, 2007

Johanna Lammi-Taskula

Johanna Lammi-Taskula. Parental leave for fathers? Gendered conceptions and practices in families with young children in Finland [Vanhempainvapaata isille? Sukupuolistuneet käsitykset ja käytännöt pikkulapsiperheissä Suomessa.] Stakes, Research Report 166. Helsinki 2007. ISBN 978-951-33-2011-9

Tämän tutkimuksen aiheena on Suomessa lakisääteiseen vanhempainvapaaseen liittyvien oikeuksien toteutuminen sukupuolen mukaan. Suomessa naisten osuus työmarkkinoilla on suuri, ja valtaosa heistä on kokopäivätyössä sekä korkeasti koulutettuja. Palkkatyön ja perhe-elämän yhteensovittamista on tuettu 1960-luvulta asti hyvinvointiyhteiskunnan järjestelmiä kehittämällä. Ensimmäisen kerran isille annettiin oikeuksia perhevapaaseen 1970-luvulla, ja viime vuosikymmenellä isät ovat olleet vanhempainvapaajärjestelmän kehittämisen keskiössä. Vanhempainvapaata ovat kuitenkin käyttäneet pääasiassa naiset. Lastenhoito ja kotityöt jatkautuvat edelleen epätasa-arvoisesti perheissä eikä naisten asema työmarkkinoilla ole tasa-arvoinen miehiin verrattuna.

Tutkimuksen avainkäsitteenä on sukupuoli tarkasteltaessa palkalliseen ja palkattomaan työhön liittyviä vanhempien käytäntöjä. Sukupuolen mukaan määrittävää mahdollisuutta hyödyntää vanhempainvapaata tutkitaan R.W. Connellin kehittämän, sukupuolten välisiä suhteita koskevan rakenteellisen mallin (1987; 2000) mukaisesti neljällä tasolla, joita ovat kulttuuriset ja ideologiset käsitykset sukupuolesta, työn jakautuminen käytännössä, yksilölliset halut ja tunnepohjaiset vaikuttimet sekä valtasuhteet. Empiirinen analyysi perustuu Stakesin vuosina 2001–2002 toteuttaman perhevapaatutkimuksen yhteydessä kerättyyn kyselyaineistoon, jossa vastaajina oli 3 232 pienten lasten äitiä ja 1 413 isää.

Vanhempainvapaata koskeva lainsäädäntö ilmentää periaatteessa sukupuolineutraalia vanhemmuuskäsitystä, jossa sekä äidin että isän nähdään pystyvän lapsen hoitoon. Vaikka yleisesti isän osallistumista lastenhoitoon pidetäänkin tärkeänä, käytännössä äidin asemaa lasten ensisijaisena hoitajana ei kyseenalaisteta. Äidin antaman hoivan ensisijaisuuden pitäminen luonnollisena heijastaa sukupuolten välillä vallitsevaa, eroihin ja hierarkiaan perustuvaa järjestystä (Hirdman 1990): isät oletetaan erilaisiksi kuin äidit, ja isien osallistumista palkkatyöhön arvostetaan enemmän kuin heidän osallistumistaan lastenhoitoon. Pienten lasten vanhemmat korostavat omissa valinnoissaan sukupuolen mukaan määrittävää vanhemman vastuuta, mutta he eivät odota sitä kumppaniltaan. Näin ollen äidit näkevät perheen elättämisen jaettuna vastuuna, isät taas pitävät lastenhoitoa jaettuna vastuuna.

Vanhempainvapaan jakaminen isän ja äidin kesken liittyy jossain määrin kummankin vanhemman sosioekonomisiin asemiin. Jos sekä äiti että isä ovat korkeasti koulutettuja, on todennäköisempää, että molemmat käyttävät vanhempain-

vapaata. Julkisen sektorin naisvaltaisissa organisaatioissa työskentelevät isät pitävät vanhempainvapaata jonkin verran enemmän kuin muut miehet. Sukupuoleen perustuva ajattelu, toisin sanoen isien vapaalle jäämiseen kohdistuvat asenteet sekä käsitys vanhempien erillisistä vastuista, vaikuttaa varsin merkittävästi siihen, miten vanhempainvapaata koskevat oikeudet toteutuvat perheissä.

Äidin ja isän kesken jaettavaa vanhempainvapaata koskevat ajatusmallit ja käytännöt liittyvät myös palkattomien kotitöiden jakautumiseen. Jos perheessä äiti käyttää koko vanhempainvapaan, vanhemmille muodostuu erilliset kokemusmaailmat ja kotityöt eriytyvät enemmän kuin sellaisissa perheissä, joissa isä pitää ainakin osan vapaasta.

Työelämän vaatimusten ja stressaavuuden vuoksi monet pienten lasten isät haluavat pitää taukoa töistään. Kyseessä on vanhempainvapaan pitämiseen merkittävästi vaikuttava asia, josta vanhemmat eivät usein kuitenkaan puhu keskenään. Monet isät kertovat perheen taloustilanteen estävän heitä ottamasta vapaata, mutta valinnat perustuvat pikemminkin olettamuksiin kuin laskelmiin.

Yksittäisten äitien ja isien valinnat tapahtuvat politiikan suomien mahdollisuuksien puitteissa, mutta niihin vaikuttavat myös aineelliset olosuhteet sekä ideologiset käsitykset. Nämä seikat voivat muuttua, mutta kehitys kohti molempien sukupuolten symmetrisempää vanhemmuutta edellyttää aktiivisia toimenpiteitä monella tasolla. Perhepolitiikassa tarvitaan isien yksilöllisiä oikeuksia vapaaseen. Jotta isän vastuu lastenhoidosta toteutuisi, tarvitaan työnantajien ja työtovereiden tukea. Myös perheiden arjessa on välttämätöntä pohtia sukupuolten välisiä suhteita ja kyseenalaistaa niitä.

Asiasanat: Vanhempainvapaa, isät, äidit, työnjako, sukupuoli, Suomi

Johanna Lammi-Taskula. Parental leave for fathers? Gendered conceptions and practices in families with young children in Finland [Föräldraledighet för pappor? Genusrelaterade uppfattningar och praxis i familjer med små barn i Finland.] STAKES, Research Report 166. Helsingfors, Finland 2007. ISBN 978-951-33-2011-9

Denna studie utforskar det genusrelaterade utnyttjandet av lagstadgad rätt till föräldraledighet i Finland. Kvinnorna deltar i hög grad på arbetsmarknaden, de arbetar för det mesta heltid och har en hög utbildningsnivå. Sedan 1960-talet har statliga välfärdsinstitutioner utvecklats för att stödja samordningen av förvärvsarbete och familjeliv. Rätten till ledighet för pappor infördes först på 1970-talet, och under det senaste decenniet har pappans deltagande i vården stått i fokus när det gäller utvecklingen av ledighetspolicyn. Föräldraledigheten har emellertid mest utnyttjats av mammorna, fördelningen av barnavård och hushållsarbete i familjerna har förblivit ojämn och kvinnornas ställning på arbetsmarknaden är inte jämställd med männens.

I studien är genus ett nyckelbegrepp för att förstå föräldraxis i betalt och obetalt arbete. Det genusrelaterade utnyttjandet av möjligheterna till föräldraledighet utforskas på fyra nivåer enligt R.W.Connells strukturella modell för genusrelationer (1987; 2000): kulturella uppfattningar och genusideologi; praktisk fördelning av arbete; individuella önskemål och emotionella motivationer; och maktförhållanden. Den empiriska analysen baseras på undersökningsdata med 3 232 mammor och 1 413 pappor till små barn, insamlade under 2001–2002 som en del av Stakes undersökning om föräldraledighet.

I princip reflekterar lagstiftningen om föräldraledighet en genusneutral uppfattning om föräldraskapet, varvid både mamman och pappan ses som dugliga vårdare av barnet. Även om man allmänt förstår att pappans engagemang i vården av barnet är viktigt, har mammans överlägsenhet i vården inte i praktiken ifrågasatts. Internaliserade antaganden om mamman som vårdare reflekterar den förhärskande genusordningens principer ifråga om skillnader och hierarki (Hirdman 1990): papporna antas vara annorlunda än mammorna, och deras aktivitet i arbetslivet värderas högre än deras aktivitet i vården av barn. Bland föräldrar till små barn betonas genusrelaterade skyldigheter som förälder i förhållande till personens egna val, men förväntas inte av partnern. Sålunda tänker mammor att försörjning av familjen är ett delat ansvar och pappor tänker att vården av barnen är ett delat ansvar.

Fördelningen av föräldraledigheten mellan mammor och pappor har i viss grad samband med föräldrarnas individuella socio-ekonomiska ställning. När både mamman och pappan har en hög utbildning, är det mer sannolikt att de

delar på föräldraledigheten. Pappor som är anställda inom den kvinnodominerade offentliga sektorn tar något oftare föräldraledigt än andra män. Men genusideologin, d.v.s. attityden till att pappor tar ledigt och uppfattningen om olika skyldigheter som förälder, är av signifikant betydelse för utnyttjandet av rätten till ledighet i familjen.

Ideologierna och praxis när det gäller fördelningen av föräldraledighet mellan mammor och pappor har också samband med arbetsfördelningen ifråga om obetalt hushållsarbete. I familjer där mammorna utnyttjar hela föräldraledigheten, utvecklar föräldrarna skilda sfärer av erfarenhet och hushållsarbetet är mera differentierat än i sådana familjer där åtminstone en del av föräldraledigheten utnyttjas av pappan.

I ett krävande och stressigt arbetsliv önskar många småbarnspappor ett avbrott från arbetet. Detta är en viktig motivationskälla till föräldraledighet, men förs ofta inte fram i kommunikationen mellan föräldrar. Även om många pappor anger familjens ekonomi som ett hinder för att de ska utnyttja ledigheten, grundar sig deras val mer på antaganden än på beräkningar.

Mammornas och pappornas individuella val återspeglas i såväl policyalternativ som materiella förhållanden och ideologiska uppfattningar. Alla dessa är öppna för förändringar, men utvecklingen mot mera symmetriska relationer i föräldraskapet kräver aktivitet på många nivåer. Individuell rätt till pappaledighet behövs i familjepolitiken, förverkligandet av pappornas ansvar för vården av barnen kräver stöd från deras arbetsgivare och kolleger, reflektion över och ifrågasättande av genusrelationer är nödvändigt också i familjernas vardagsliv.

Nyckelord: Föräldraledighet, pappor, mammor, arbetsfördelning, genus, Finland

ABSTRACT

Johanna Lammi-Taskula. Parental Leave for Fathers? Gendered conceptions and practices in families with young children in Finland. STAKES, Research Report 166. Helsinki, Finland 2007. ISBN 978-951-33-2011-9

This study explores the gendered actualisation of statutory parental leave rights in Finland. Women's participation in the labour market is high, they work mainly full time and have a high education level. Since the 1960's, welfare state institutions have been developed to support the reconciliation of paid work and family life. Leave rights for fathers were first introduced in the 1970's, and during the past decade, fathercare has been in the focus of leave policy development. However, parental leave has been taken mainly by mothers, the division of childcare and housework in families has remained unequal, and women's position in the labour market is not equal to that of men.

In the study, gender is a key concept for understanding parental practices in paid and unpaid work. The gendered actualisation of parental leave possibilities is explored on four levels following R.W.Connell's structural model of gender relations (1987; 2000): cultural conceptions and gender ideology; practical division of labour; individual desires and emotional motivations; and power relations. The empirical analysis is based on survey data with 3 232 mothers and 1 413 fathers of young children, collected in 2001–2002 as part of the Parental leave study by STAKES.

In principle, the parental leave legislation reflects a gender neutral conception of parenthood where both the mother and the father are seen as capable carer for the child. Although fathers' involvement in childcare is widely understood as important, in practice the mother's primacy in childcare is not challenged. Naturalised assumptions of mothercare reflect the principles of difference and hierarchy of the prevailing gender order (Hirdman 1990): fathers are supposed to be different from mothers, and their activity in paid employment is valued more than their activity in childcare. Among parents of young children, gendered parental responsibilities are emphasized in relation to one's own choices, but not expected from the partner. Thus, mothers think breadwinning is a shared responsibility, and fathers think childcare is a shared responsibility.

The sharing of parental leave between mothers and fathers is to some extent related to the socio-economic position of each parent. When both the mother and the father have a high education level, they are more likely to share parental leave. Fathers employed in female-dominated public sector organisations take somewhat more often parental leave than other men. However, the gender ideology i.e. attitudes towards fathers' take-up of leave, and conceptions of separate parental responsibilities is quite significant for the actualisation of leave rights in families.

The ideologies and practices of sharing parental leave between mothers and fathers are related also to the division of labour in unpaid housework. In families where the mother takes the whole leave period, parents develop separate spheres of experience and housework tasks are more differentiated than in families where at least part of parental leave is taken by the father.

In a demanding and stressful working life, many fathers of young children desire a break from work. This is an important source of motivation for parental leave, but it is often not communicated between parents. Although many fathers report family economy as an obstacle for their take-up of leave, their choices are based more on assumptions than calculations.

The choices of individual mothers and fathers are embedded in policy options as well as material conditions and ideological conceptions. These are all open to change, but development towards more symmetric gender relations in parenthood requires activity on many levels. Individual leave rights for fathers are needed in family policy; the actualisation of father's childcare responsibility requires support by their employers and colleagues in work organisations; the reflection and questioning of gender relations is necessary also in the everyday life of families.

Keywords: Parental leave, fathers, mothers, division of labour, gender, Finland

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1 Introduction

“I recommend staying at home with children on parental or care leave for all men. This would promote equality in many ways. When you are at home with children, you will understand mothers in a different way. The situation of single mothers begins to seem quite desolate. There are some problems, however when a man stays at home. Male colleagues, especially men of older generations easily wonder and make dismissive remarks. It is not easy to find peer support. In the parks and sandpits a man is often lonely as it can sometimes be problematic to take part in women’s circles. Pregnancy and breastfeeding are topics in women’s war tales, they are not meant for men’s ears. As a man one must also prove one’s ability as a parent to some extent. For example, if my child sometimes swears, I feel others may think it is because of the father. To some extent it troubles me when other men or women are insecure in their attitudes towards me, as if I were seriously ill and needed support and comforting, or they want to avoid me. Anyway, it is very educative and magnificent that I can be with my children when they are young. I believe many mothers share this experience with me. I find it great that you are studying this. Your study acknowledges the existence of us stay-at-home fathers, proves that we are not mere statistical deviations.”

The text above was written by a man – let us call him Matti – at the end of the questionnaire of this study where there was room for comments by the respondents. Matti, aged 35 and father of two children, was selected as a respondent because he has taken two weeks of paternity leave, three and a half months of parental leave and seven months of care leave from his teacher’s job. He belongs to the very small group of fathers in Finland who have taken not only the “normal” 1–3 weeks paternity leave but also shared parental leave with the mother of their children. In the general picture of parental practices, this group remains quite invisible, or as Matti puts it a “mere statistical deviation”. In the discourse of equality policy, however, it is exactly this group of men who have for several decades been regarded as significant for future social development towards more symmetric gender relations.

Since the 1960s, public discussions on fatherhood and state policies relating to parental responsibilities have been connected to promoting women’s entry and

position in the labour market. Institutional support has included not only reconciliation schemes for mothers and care services for children, but also policies encouraging men's activity at home, especially in childcare. The four decades of welfare state policies have not, however, resulted in equal sharing of family responsibilities between mothers and fathers. Despite women's high employment rate and the prevalence of full-time work, the division of labour between men and women has remained unequal.

Women are paid less and not given permanent work contracts because they are expected to bring along additional costs to the employer. These costs are related to (potential) motherhood: women can become mothers, and children need someone to care for them. As mothers usually bear the main responsibility of childcare and take most of the parental leave, motherhood is seen as an obstacle for women's work careers. The unequal possibilities at work reproduce an unequal division of care work in family life: it seems like a rational choice to have the parent with lower income and less career possibilities – usually the mother – to stay at home with the child, while the parent with better pay and position takes care of breadwinning. The separate rather than shared tasks of mothers and fathers may produce economic advantage for the family as a unit – but not necessarily for each family member, and especially not in the long run (Ahrne & Roman 1997, 6–12). The primacy of mothers in childcare is thus both a cause and an effect of their weaker position in working life.

Rather than mentioning his wife's career as a motivation for his parental leave, Matti wants to take up his own identity as a capable, caring parent as well as the deeply meaningful and satisfactory experience of spending time with his children when they are young. This reflects the tone of general discussion of fatherhood in Finland: since the 1990s, emphasis has been put on the emotional relationship between father and child rather than on gender equality (Rantalaiho 2003, 203). Supporting the father–child relationship has become important especially in relation to parental separation and divorce rather than in promoting the father's care responsibilities as relevant to achieving gender equality in the labour market (Vuori 2004, 59).

In his comment on stay-at-home fathers, Matti argues that the active participation of fathers in childcare makes them understand and value childcare work more. The amount of work related to childcare remains to a large extent invisible for those who have little experience of doing it themselves. Thus, childcare is not recognised as “proper” or “productive” work. Matti's argument is close to the logic of woman-centered feminism that aims at gender equality through changing identities and values, emphasising the value of care work (Vuori 2004, 59). From Matti's perspective, children are not (only) obstacles; time together with children could give also fathers possibilities to construct a positive identity based on a notion of fathercare as something as valuable as mothercare. The notion of father-

care as valuable can position women's paid employment not as a demand for men to participate in childcare, but as an opening for more space in family life for men (Rantalaaho 2003, 216).

Focus of the study

The topic of this study – parental leave – touches upon questions related to family sociology, welfare state research as well as the sociology of work. Knowledge about the reconciliation of paid work and unpaid care work is relevant for theorizing family relations, and it is also useful for analysing developments in the labour market. In this study, the main focus is however in *gender relations*. Both family life and the labour market are highly gendered spheres of life; in both settings, gendered experiences are reproduced. The heterosexual nuclear family is the one institution in which most of us display our gender on a daily basis in relation to the rules and behaviours expected of us as women and men (Risman 1998, 4–6). In working life, women and especially men choose occupations that are typical to their sex (Kolehmainen 1999). Most leading positions in business and administration are held by men; the gender segregation of occupations and branches contributes to a gender gap in pay level (Pulkkinen 2005).

Parental leave is situated in the intersection of family life and working life, so the patterns of gender differences and hierarchies specific for each sphere are present simultaneously. Because of this intersection, I understand parental leave as an especially gender-intensive phenomenon. My general research focus is in analysing *how the actualisation of parental leave possibilities by mothers and fathers in Finland are connected to a more general gender system*. A gendered division of labour between mothers and fathers in families reflects gendered parental desires and emotions as well as prevailing cultural ideas of gender, and gendered power relations. These four levels of gender relations – an adaptation of R.W. Connell's structural model of gender relations (1987; 2000) – provide a frame for analysing the gendered take-up of parental leave (Figure 1).

The *division of labour* between women and men in paid and unpaid work is put in the centre of the configuration; it is the main focus in this study. The division of labour is doing motherhood and doing fatherhood in practice, and closely connected to symbolic or cultural *conceptions* of motherhood and fatherhood. In family life and in paid employment, there are mutually supportive and conflicting expectations, rules, obligations, rights and practices regarding men and women as parents (Rantalaaho 1993; Alvesson & Due Billing 1999, 9). Ideas or ideals of gender relations in parenting are reflected in the actual practices in heterosexual families and in working life; they can be supported as well as rejected in the choices of individual women and men.

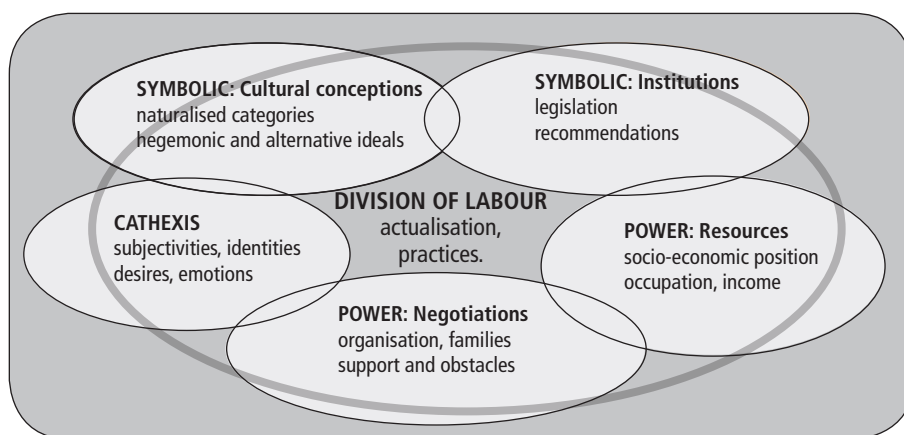


FIGURE 1. Dimensions of gender relations related to the take-up of parental leave

Different gendered divisions of labour are produced in *negotiation* processes. Participation in paid employment and periods of childcare leave, as well as the division of everyday childcare and housework tasks are negotiated in families between mothers and fathers. Relevant aspects in the negotiations are information, discussions, and disagreement or consensus between parents. Mothers and fathers may actualise their ideal division of parental responsibilities in a mutual consensus where ideals are shared and responsibilities accepted by both spouses. Or, one parent may be able to act according to his or her ideals, while the other parent must compromise or suppress needs. It is also possible that both parents are in practice doing something else than what they in principle support, for example because of their situation in the labour market. *Power relations* are thus relevant for the actualisation of different possibilities that men and women can choose from and negotiate about. Take-up of leave is related to *economic* power relations between mothers and fathers such as differences in pay level.

In addition to family negotiations, the take-up of leave from paid work needs to be negotiated also at the *workplace*. In working life, the occupational position and the branch or sector of employment may create different possibilities for mothers and fathers to take parental leave. The conditions for negotiations about leave may be different in female-dominated and male-dominated workplaces. In female-dominated organisations, childcare leave is frequently taken by employees, which is reflected in the attitudes and practices of superiors and co-workers. In a male-dominated workplace, an individual father suggesting a longer parental leave may be an odd case whose choice is met with confusion.

Negotiations and divisions of labour are not only rational but often also *emotional*. Emotions are the “glue” binding people together and generating commitments to large-scale social and cultural structures (Williams & Bendelow 1998, xvi; Turner & Stets 2005, 22–23). A wide variety of emotional experiences are related to

doing fatherhood and doing motherhood. Subjective desires such as those of intimacy, independence and recognition play a part in moulding the gendered actualisations of leave possibilities. More or less institutionalised gender relations such as segregation of sectors, occupations and positions into male and female spheres, or more or less normative cultural conceptions about “good motherhood” and “good fatherhood” are emotionally charged elements of social life. In addition to clear positive or negative emotional reactions towards common or atypical ways of doing motherhood and fatherhood, a lot of ambivalence and contradiction is typical for individual desires as well as social reactions related to gender and parenthood. Thus, parental choices between care and breadwinning responsibilities may often be accompanied with the emotion of confusion.

Positive emotional experiences related to the very basic joy of intimacy pull both mothers and fathers towards family life and time together with children. The challenges of work–family reconciliation often mean compromises in family life. For those with a precarious situation in the labour market, it may never seem like a proper time to become a parent. Also those with a better position and good career possibilities may experience a need to postpone having children, or to limit the number of children in order to be able to cope with the demands of working life (Salmi 2004a, 117). Thus, parenthood can be something both parents have yearned for, and a lot of emotional energy is invested into a long-awaited child also by many fathers.

Take-up of parental leave also arouses emotions related to paid employment. On the one hand, recognition for one’s skills and expertise at the workplace is a source of personal satisfaction, and taking leave from work may represent a loss of such recognition. On the other hand, experiences of paid employment as physically and mentally burdening are common (Lehto & Sutela 2004). For a stressed-out employee, parental leave can represent a break from paid work and an emotional relief.

If the father is culturally or in family interaction not recognised as a competent carer for his child, negative emotions such as frustration may push him away from childcare responsibilities. Also the positive and negative emotions related to working life are relevant for the actualisation of leave rights. Pleasures of work life – when talent is fulfilled or appraisal and rewards received at the workplace – pull parents away from the routines of unpaid care and housework (Hochchild 1997). Negative emotions related to problems at work such as excessive burdening and pressure or bullying and harassment may be escaped by seizing the opportunity to take a long childcare leave. In an emotion culture (Hochchild 1998, 5-7) with gender-specific expectations of femininity and masculinity, individual motivations related to paid and unpaid work which do not match the culturally hegemonic expectations may not be communicated even between spouses. Instead, more legitimate justifications for doing motherhood and fatherhood are presented.

Each of the four levels of gender relations that are related to the focus of this study – division of labour between women and men, cultural conceptions and ideologies of gender, emotional relations, and power relations – include complexities and contradictory aspects. Configurations and intersections of these four levels are thus more or less fluid and constantly changing, which means there is potential for change. Motherhood and fatherhood are never totally coherent or static areas of social life. This study provides a cross-cut picture of gender relations in the actualisation of parental leave possibilities in Finland at the beginning of the 21st century.

Context: Finland

Gendered practices take part in particular circumstances in particular times and places (Rantalaaho 1997, 16). In order to locate the empirical analysis in a specific social and cultural context, I will shortly describe the ideological, structural and institutional aspects that have been relevant conditions for the actualisation of parental leave possibilities by mothers and fathers in Finland. These include women's work and participation in the labour market, the development of the welfare state, changes in family structure, and the position of fathers in the changing gender contract.

Women's employment has for several decades been both practically and ideologically normal in Finland. A vast majority of both women and men agree to mothers' right to paid employment, as well as to sharing housework and childcare equally between spouses and parents (Melkas 2005). Women make half of the total labour force and pay around 40% of all income taxes. They have a high education level and work mainly full-time: in 2003, less than one in five women (18%) worked part-time. In 2002, 46% of women aged 25–34 had a higher education degree, compared to 30% of men. The labour force participation rate of mothers of children aged 0–6 was 72.1% (Pulkkinen 2005).

The roots of the high participation rate of women are in a strong work ethic based on the socio-economic history of the country. Finland went almost directly from an agricultural society into a modern service society. In a poor, agricultural society with very small farms, everyone had to work all the time for survival. Daily life was shared in a work-oriented partnership, men and women needed each other's work contribution. The late industrialisation, combined with growth of the service sector that that provided, meant that the typical industrial institution of a division of labour between a male breadwinner and a female housewife was never firmly established. The housewife institution may have been ideologically idealised but it was never a reality for a majority of people (Rantalaaho 1997, 21–22).

The grandmothers and grandfathers of today's young parents were the war generation. During the Second World War, women worked on farms and in factories while most men were at the war front for several years. The post-war years witnessed a baby-boom and the importance of motherhood was ideologically emphasised while the men returned to the labour force (Nätkin 1997). However, the paid labour of women was needed in the reconstruction of the economy, and two salaries were needed in families (Julkunen 1994, Anttonen 1994). Working mothers were thus not an exceptional phenomenon in Finland in the 1950s.

Like their Nordic sisters, women in Finland have been active in the construction of a welfare state that acknowledges employees' parental responsibilities and provides social rights and services to support the reconciliation of work and family life. In the 1960s a new form of gender contract – wage-worker motherhood – emerged (Julkunen 1994). Women were empowered to make choices about their work and family life: contraceptive pills were approved in 1961, maternity leave was legislated in 1964; the Abortion Act was passed in 1970. In the beginning of the 1970s, the total fertility rate went down to 1.5 only temporarily and has since been at a relatively high level in European comparison: around 1.7–1.8 (Kautto 2004, 31).

Although fatherhood was also problematized as part of the striving for gender equality (Jallinoja 1983, Husu et al. 1995), the new gender contract has concerned mainly women and the welfare state, without much reference to the duties of men in families (Rantalaiho 1997, 26–28). Even today, questions of children and childcare are understood as problems related to employed mothers rather than employed fathers (Salmi 2004, 5).

Social partners have been significant negotiation partners with the state in the developing of social policy in Finland (Väänänen-Tomppo 1981). Central labour market organisations – employers' and employees' unions – have been involved in the decision-making concerning not only wages and taxes but also social benefits, as well as the provision of services to support work–family reconciliation. Social reforms have been promised by the state in exchange of moderate income policy settlements that will promote general employment and competitiveness. In the 1970s, maternity leave was extended twice as a part of a general incomes policy settlement. The Daycare Act was passed in 1973, and fathers received their paternity leave right in 1978.

In the 1980s, the positive policy development of a “women-friendly welfare state” continued. The number of men taking paternity leave increased and the father's right to share parental leave with the mother took effect in 1982. The first Act on Equality between Women and Men was passed in 1987. In 1990, children under 3 were guaranteed a municipal child daycare place; as an alternative a flat-rate home care allowance was paid to parents who took care of their 0–2 year-old children at home. Labour force participation and employment rates of both

women and men were high: in 1990, the unemployment rate was only 3% (Pulkkinen 2005). The levels of income-related benefits paid during maternity, paternity and parental leave were generous: 80% of previous income (Bardy, Salmi & Heino 2001, 45).

In the mid-1990s, the favourable economic development of the 1980s had turned into a deep economic recession. A new gender contract started to emerge with themes of gender conflict entering the public discussion (Rantalaiho 1997, 30). The high employment rates of mothers with children under school age went down – from 76% in 1989 to 61% in 1997 (Haataja & Nyberg 2006). In 1993, the length of parental leave was shortened by 12 days and the income-related benefit level was cut so that it was on average 66% of previous income; in 1995–96 also the flat-rate home care benefit was cut by almost 25% (Bardy, Salmi & Heino 2001, 45). The quality of services for children was weakened with bigger groups in day-care and schools and higher turnover of personnel causing worries among parents (Bardy, Salmi & Heino 2001, 82).

The average age for having one's first child kept rising as young people felt they were unable to construct a stable enough life situation for family life. The birth of the first child is often postponed because of studies, work, or lack of a suitable partner (Paajanen 2002). Currently, the mean age of first-time mothers in Finland is about 28 years, and that of fathers about 30 years; less than 40% of men aged 30 and only 14% of men aged 25 have children (Paajanen 2006). The proportion of families with children of all families has been getting smaller, and more and more women have been becoming childless either intentionally or unwillingly (Pulkkinen 2005).

Moral discussions about motherhood have intensified and mothers' paid employment have been more openly questioned as harmful for children (Anttonen 2003, 178). Families with young children moved from a dual breadwinner model somewhat towards a male breadwinner model where the mother is – at least temporarily, and often because of unemployment – away from the labour market for some years when a child is born (Haataja & Nyberg 2006, 139). Divorces became more common, and while most children live with their mothers after their parents' separation (Kartovaara & Sauli 2000, 69–70), fathers started to state louder claims about their rights to be together with their children (Huttunen 2001, 105).

In working life, an apparent gender neutrality and the invisibility of gender at the workplace level (Korvajärvi 1996) is combined with a segregation into female-dominated and male-dominated occupations and tasks. On the one hand, the labour force has become more female-dominated and many occupations that were previously male-dominated have become more feminized. On the other hand, the large public sector with extensive social and health care services provides jobs that are mainly taken by women, while men are more often employed in the private sector. In addition, men and women often have different kinds of tasks and posi-

tions within occupations (Kolehmainen 1999, 246).

Women's possibilities in the labour market have improved as their education level has risen and new legislation against gender discrimination has been introduced. Despite this, most leading positions of economic life and administration are held by men, and women's wages remain systematically under the wage level of men (Pulkkinen 2005). Women end up more often than men in a precarious and temporary position in the labour market (Lehto & Sutela 1999, 142; Nätti & Väisänen 2000, 54).

The weaker economic position of mothers reproduces the unequal division of parental leave: mothers of young children not only take most parental leave (until the child is about 10 months) but also some care leave so that periods of absence are typically 1.5 years per child (Lammi-Taskula 2004a). As a result, mothers also spend much more time in child care work and care-related housework than fathers. According to the time-use study in 2000, married or cohabiting mothers of young children (0–6 years) spent two and a half hours daily in childcare and another two and a half hours in housework, while fathers only spent one hour in childcare and 45 minutes in housework (Niemi and Pääkkönen 2001). The total hours of work per week – paid and unpaid altogether – are the same for men and women, but women do more unpaid work than men. Housework is not only unequally divided between women and men, but to a large extent segregated into female and male tasks. In families with children, mothers mostly take care of cooking, cleaning and almost entirely of washing clothes, while fathers mostly take care of cars and houses (Melkas 2005, 33). The everyday life of families with young children in Finland is thus characterised by segregation rather than sharing of parental responsibilities. The basic sustaining of family members is an important part of doing motherhood, while doing fatherhood includes taking care of the material settings of family life.

Due to employment breaks such as parental leave, women also thus accumulate fewer years of work experience and seniority. As a result, women are faced with a “motherhood penalty” (Budig & England 2001, 205) in their career development and income level. As childcare is still predominantly mothercare rather than fathercare, women's position in the labour market is still a topical challenge in Finland. The OECD has expressed concerns about mothers' difficulties in work–family reconciliation in Finland, especially in relation to their weaker career possibilities, which are understood as being related to the long periods of absence from paid employment (Babies and Bosses 2005). According to recent government reports (Metsämäki 2006; Kröger 2006), unequal sharing of parental leave between mothers and fathers is an important factor in producing discrimination of women in working life. The other side of the coin is that fathers of young children do more overtime work than mothers or than other men (Lehto & Sutela 1999). They can not spend time in childcare and housework because they are not at home.

The unequal division of labour is problematic for both women and men, and it is a common cause of conflicts between spouses (Reuna 1998; Melkas 2005, 36). In families with children, 62% of mothers reported they had experienced too much responsibility for housework at least occasionally, while one in five said they often had such experiences (Melkas 2005, 35). During the 1990s, the feeling of guilt related to neglecting home matters became more common especially among men (Lehto & Sutela 1999, 73). Fathers are often well aware of an expectation to be present in the child's life. Experts of child welfare who previously focused their attention on mothers have turned their attention to fathers, specifically aiming guidance and support at them; Mothers are expected to give room for fathers and to encourage and help them into a more active parenthood (Kuronen 1993). However, the emphasis is on the emotional father-child relationship rather than on the unpaid work related to childcare; enjoyment rather than full care responsibility is offered to men (Vuori 2004, 54–55).

Today, employees in Finland experience working life as less meaningful than in the 1990s. The deterioration of meaningfulness is related to negative expectations of the general situation in the labour market rather than to the situation at one's own workplace. The growing insecurity of the globalized economy has created mistrust or even fear of not getting the rewards of work one feels entitled to. These rewards include material benefits as well as emotional aspects such as trust, respect, and safety. Trust and recognition are especially important for men in upper white collar positions. When these rewards become less secure, they compensate by trying to obtain as high an income as possible as well as other, visible and short-term benefits (Alasoini 2006)

The insecurities of working life and the deterioration of trust and respect could on the one hand be expected to create space for career breaks such as parental leave. Parenting and childcare have provided meaningful alternatives for unemployment especially for mothers; when the rewards of paid work become less attractive, this could be true also for fathers. Many fathers of young children wish to take a break from the hectic working life (Lammi-Taskula 2003). However, insecurity may cause barriers to any breaks because the economic interests have a constant and intensive presence. It may never be a “proper time” for an employee to take a break because some benefits might be missed. For women this often means postponing having children, for men it may mean giving priority to paid work over fatherhood and childcare.

In international comparison, the possibilities of women and men in Finland to reconcile paid employment and childcare responsibilities seem quite good. Mothers' participation in the labour market has been high, women in general are highly educated and have entered several occupations and expert positions that were previously male-dominated. They are supported by rather long and generous parental leave schemes, and public day care services are available for children.

At the same time, not many men have entered the female-dominated area of care work, either in paid employment or in the unpaid family sphere. The gender gap in income level is an important aspect in the reproduction of women's double responsibility: mothers have the main responsibility for unpaid care work at the same time as they are also working full time and making an important contribution to the family economy. During the recent decade, the demands of working life have grown. Families with young children face more time pressure and economic insecurity. This has led to a growing polarisation between male and female parental responsibilities, as well as to a more unequal division of employment opportunities especially among mothers.

Research design and research questions

In order to analyse gender relations related to the actualisation of leave possibilities in Finland, I will turn to parents of young children who have themselves taken maternity, paternity, and parental leave. The conceptions and practices of these leave-taking parents will provide insight into the gendered processes related to the prevailing take-up patterns of leave. In order to get a comprehensive picture of the gendered take-up of leave, large enough groups of mothers and fathers need to be included in the study. The comparison of leave-taking mothers' and fathers' positions and motivations is relevant to understanding the processes of sharing or not sharing leave between parents; also variation among mothers and among fathers need to be taken into account.

Mothers of young children in Finland are quite a homogeneous group in that most of them take long periods of maternity and parental leave. Fathers, however are more heterogeneous: a majority take short periods of paternity leave while a minority take longer parental leave periods. A random sample of mothers will provide adequate data on the take-up of leave among mothers, but the same does not apply to fathers. In order to reach enough fathers who have taken not only paternity but also parental leave, a selected sample is needed. Fathers also need to be targeted individually, not as "parents". In previous studies where a questionnaire has been sent to a sample of families with young children, the majority of respondents representing the family have been mothers (an example of this, see Takala 2000). Thus, two separate samples are needed: one of leave-taking mothers and the other of leave-taking fathers.

The spouses of leave-taking mothers and fathers are not directly targeted in this study. However, some information about their position can be reached indirectly through the reports of the actual respondents. A limited picture transmitted by mothers can thus be provided also about a third group of parents: fathers who have not taken any leave. Although this group of fathers is quite important for the

future development of gender relations, the main focus of this study is in exploring the gendered experiences and practices of parents who have themselves taken leave. Thus, whenever terms “mothers” and “fathers” are used in the analyses, these refer to leave-taking mothers and fathers, not to all parents of young children.

The logic of the study follows Connell's structural model of gender relations. There are thus four dimensions related to the seven research questions: symbolic dimension, practical dimension, emotional dimension, and the dimension of power. The first two research questions are related to the symbolic level of gender relations regarding parenthood, one to the institutional formulations of parental responsibilities (research question 1), and the other to the everyday life conceptions held by leave-taking parents themselves (research question 2). The next two research questions are related to the practical gendered division of labour, one to the take-up patterns of parental leave (research question 3) and the other to the division of housework (research question 4). The fifth research question is related to emotional motivations and justifications for taking leave from paid employment. The last two research questions are related to power relations, especially to negotiations and social support – or the lack of it – fathers meet in the actualisation of parental leave possibilities. The first one (6) taps discussions, consensus and disharmony in the family, and second one (7) reactions towards fathers' leave at the workplace, and compromises made by leave-taking fathers.

Research questions:

1. What kinds of gendered conceptions of parenthood does the parental leave legislation reflect?
2. How do parents of young children understand gendered parental responsibilities?
3. How is the division of paid and unpaid work related to different socio-economic and ideological positions of parents?
4. How is unpaid housework divided between mothers and fathers, in relation to the take-up of parental leave?
5. What kinds of emotional aspects are relevant to sharing parental leave between mothers and fathers?
6. What kinds of negotiations about parental division of labour take place in families?
7. How is fathers' take-up of leave negotiated at the workplace?

Outline of the study

The theoretical and methodological starting points for the study include understanding gender relations as socially constituted rather than natural; relational rather than individual; and as something that is done. Gender systems are understood as dynamic processes of social practice where structures and institutions, as well as choices and actions of individuals are relevant. These starting points, as well as the possibilities and limitations related to quantitative analysis and the data used in this study are discussed in *Chapter 2*.

Symbolic gender relations are discussed on an institutional as well as individual and family level in *Chapter 3*. Ideas of mothers and fathers in leave legislation, as well as leave-taking parents' general attitudes and conceptions of gendered parental responsibilities are analysed in relation to the take-up of parental leave. Parental leave as a welfare state institution reflects the motives and goals of policy makers to affect the choices and actions of citizens (Ferrarini 2003, 1). Particular symbolic gender relations are represented in the statutory leave institutions providing parents possibilities for maternity, paternity and parental leave. In order to understand doing motherhood and fatherhood in Finland in the Nordic context, the leave schemes aiming at "making men into fathers" (Hobson 2002) are compared to those of Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland. Despite many similarities, there are also differences in how mothers and fathers are constructed in legislation. The comparison is made especially from the perspective of fathercare.

By ensuring certain rights and benefits for parents of young children, the legislation shapes the ways people think about family life and parenthood as well as about gender; what motherhood and fatherhood "are" and what they should be like. However, welfare policies such as parental leave rights do not necessarily fully correspond to prevailing cultural conceptions of motherhood and fatherhood. Radical or rapid changes in the gendered division of paid and unpaid work in everyday life have not taken place despite new statutory leave rights that aim at encouraging fathers to take a more active role in childcare. In *Chapter 3*, leave-taking parents' conceptions of gendered care and breadwinning responsibilities are analysed.

State policies create a frame of possibilities, and the actualisation of these policies reflects at least to some extent cultural conceptions and ideologies of gender; however the ways men and women act as parents are also related to their social positions and economic resources (Plantin 2001, Brandth & Kvande 2003, Lammi-Taskula 2004a & b). A good position in the labour market or in an organisation, as well as ample material resources such as a good income give individuals more possibilities to choose between paid and unpaid work. In a heterosexual family with two parents, the sharing of parental leave is related to both the mother's and the father's position and situation in working life. Economic consequences are

often mentioned as obstacles for fathers' parental leave, but take-up patterns do not necessarily follow the division of income or other economic resources between parents (Rostgaard et al. 1999; Ojala 2002). *Chapter 4* focuses on the actual practices of care work and paid employment, i.e. the *division of labour* between leave-taking mothers and fathers in families with young children. The interrelations of ideological conceptions of parental responsibilities, and actual practices of paid and unpaid work in leave-taking families are discussed. Divisions of unpaid housework are analysed by comparing mothers' and fathers' reports in families where parental leave was shared, and in those where the mother took the whole parental leave period.

Subjective desires and emotions are important especially for the family negotiations of how parental responsibilities are shared or divided between mothers and fathers. Desires and emotions are intimately connected with the self, but they take place in an active engagement with the surrounding social world (Williams & Bendelow 1998, xvi; Puolimatka 2004, 103–108). What mothers and fathers experience as personal needs can not be separated from the prevailing cultural conceptions and social expectations of motherhood and fatherhood. These social aspects are not always recognised by individuals, and they rather understand the desires and emotions related to parenthood as personal and private matters. Thus, desires and emotions are not necessarily communicated to others, sometimes not even to the other parent. Still, they are strong motives for the division of labour between mothers and father in families with young children. In *Chapter 5, emotional gender relations* are discussed in relation to sharing parental leave. As respondents of our survey, leave-taking mothers and fathers of young children have reported different kinds of justifications for parental leave. Reports of emotional motivations are analysed in relation to the actualisation of leave possibilities.

To have power means that one is able to pursue one's intentions (Scott 2001), for example to take parental leave if one so wishes. The legislation gives both parents a right to parental leave, but the take-up of leave needs to be negotiated between mothers and fathers as only one parent at a time can take parental leave. Gendered *power relations* are discussed in *Chapter 6*. As interpersonal power relations in everyday situations are often based on taken for granted expectations, explicit wishes, commands and resistances may be rare. One parent may feel more entitled to express intentions, while the other parent's needs get silenced. Different kinds of compromises between paid and unpaid work are made by mothers and fathers in different situations and positions. Practices in organisations such as workplaces can support the possibilities of parents to choose alternative divisions of paid work and childcare, but these practices can also become obstacles. Power relations tend to reproduce themselves, and change in everyday life is resisted in order to maintain prevailing power relations.

Chapter 7 summarizes the empirical results. The implications of this study for *future research* on gender relations are discussed, as well as directions and challenges of *policy* in the field of working life, family policy, and gender equality. The speed and range of change varies on different levels of gender relations: often ideas and conceptions are more fluid than practices in everyday life. When ideas about motherhood and fatherhood are redefined, the material and practical divisions of labour between parents can also be modified. Sometimes unchanged practice reveals the superficiality of outspoken attitudes and the persistence of basic, gendered assumptions. However, sometimes practices have already changed while ideologies seem to lag behind. As a result of changes in the division of labour between women and men, also the allocation of material, cultural and mental resources can change. New forms of practices may bring along new resources, and the rejection of old practices can emancipate parents from some former limitations. Thus, also gendered power relations in families and in the public sphere change.

2 Theoretical and methodological starting points

A basic guideline for my research on gender relations is an understanding of social order as human product (Berger & Luckman 1966). This notion, combined with a feminist critique of “natural” differences of women and men¹ (e.g. Connell 1987; Risman 1998; Söndergaard 2001; Ramazanoglu & Holland 2002) implies that gender as we understand and experience it today is neither essential nor universal phenomenon. Instead, gender is constantly moulded politically and culturally, as well as through the activities of individuals in different times and places. Ideologies of women and men, and gendered patterns of action change along with religious, economic and political development (Connell 1995). Thus, also the conceptions and activities related to motherhood and fatherhood are understood as *socially constituted practices*.

The social construction of gender means individuals categorised as women and men shape their lives within historical social contexts. Their identities as well as the meanings and behaviours they associate with gender are created and modified through encounters with other people and within social institutions. Definitions of masculinity and femininity, what is understood as “natural”, typical and acceptable for women and men can vary between different cultures and societies and within any culture over historical time, and parallel or competing definitions exist within a culture at a given time. Subjective perceptions and conceptions of gender also vary over the life course of individuals. (Kimmel 2000, 86-88.)

I situate my study in the tradition of Finnish feminist research on gendered practices (Kinnunen & Korvajärvi 1996; Rantalaiho & Heiskanen 1997). This tradition has emphasized the multilevel organisation of gender in a given material context of everyday life (Rantalaiho et al 1997, 6; 14). Material and social realities have effects on people’s lives whether or not they are conscious of them or not (Ramazanoglu & Holland 2002, 9). Whereas “natural” gender differences tend to be seen as simple and self-evident, understanding gender as socially constructed means recognising the *complexity* of gender. In an interplay of structural conditions and individual choices in everyday life, institutional and cultural possibilities

¹ I draw my understanding of gender especially from structural and poststructural feminist theorising; essentialist conceptions of “womanhood” or “manhood” are not totally absent in some other strands of feminist thinking such as cultural feminism.

and obstacles become lived life, and individual ways of dealing with those conditions both reconstruct and change them (Salmi 2004b, 23-25). Individual mothers and fathers can choose, but within social constraints and only from options that exist for them (Risman 1998, 7).

As most individuals live in daily contact with other individuals, their identities, ideologies and actions are in relation to those of others. Thus, gender needs to be understood as *relational* rather than individual (Haavind 2001, 157). Gender relations are not just a matter of relations between people who are defined as women and men, or between phenomena categorised as female and male. Relevant diversities and hierarchies also exist among men and among women (Connell 2000).

The relational character of gender means that femininity and masculinity, motherhood and fatherhood are negotiated in social interaction. Through negotiation, gender becomes something that is *done* rather than something that “is” (West & Zimmerman 1987 and 2002). Even if it is individuals who do gender, this is carried out in the virtual or real presence of others.

Seeing gender as socially constructed means that conceptions of women and men, mothers and fathers, are not taken for granted as “natural” but are critically considered as part of the historical and local society which can and does change. At the same time, *embodiment* and materiality also needs to be taken into account. On the one hand bodies and emotions are socially produced and culturally variable; on the other hand bodily experiences exist in part outside their social constitution and there are physiological limits for the social definitions of the body (Cromby & Nightingale 1999, 10-12; Ramazanoglu & Holland 2002, 99). The one and only body each of us has is extremely important for our subjectivities and for the meanings we address to femininity and masculinity, as well as motherhood and fatherhood. This is especially important for the discussion of gendered parenthood, since it is women who are pregnant and who breastfeed, not men. However, not all of the social implications of these physiological conditions are self-evident or “natural”.

2.1 Gender system: differences and hierarchies

Various conceptual tools such as “patriarchy”, “sex/gender system”, “gender contract” and “gender order” have been used to address the general pattern of the complex, multilevel organisation of gender in society. In this study, I will use the concept *gender system* as referring to the interplay of socio-cultural, material and emotional aspects of the gendered everyday life of mothers and fathers of young children.

Rather than static, technical terms referring to the way components make up a system, gender system should be understood as a dynamic process of social prac-

tice. Both structures and institutions, and the choices and actions of individuals are important in this process. Gender system is not necessarily consistent but can have inner contradictions, ruptures and gaps; it is in a state of constant potential change and yet tends to reproduce itself (Rantalaaho et al 1997, 6).

Yvonne Hirdman (1990) has defined two main principles of the gender system as *difference* and *hierarchy*. The actualisations and outcomes of these principles may vary in time and place, but the general logic remains. The principle of difference means there is a tendency to think about people and life in a dichotomic manner, categorising each individual either as a man or as a woman; and understanding each aspect and sphere of life as either male or female. In perceptions on human life, the difference between these categories is emphasised while differences within each category are given less attention. Each newborn child is placed into a gender dichotomy i.e. labelled either as a boy or a girl and treated in a gender-specific way from the first moment on, despite of possible physiological and genetic variations (Badinter 1993, 65-66). Sometimes these forced dichotomic categorisations create identity problems for individuals who experience themselves as something else than the gender label given to them. Most children, however adapt to the dichotomic logic of gender difference and start constructing either male or female identities by doing things that are expected of them as boys or girls and avoiding activities that are presented to them as belonging mainly to the “other” gender category.

The principle of hierarchy (Hirdman 1990) means that individuals who are categorised as men rate higher in social ranking than individuals who are categorised as women; and things, characteristics or spheres of life that are understood as male or masculine have more prestige and value than those understood as female or feminine. The logics of difference and hierarchy are closely intertwined. In order to create or maintain a gendered hierarchy in a given social setting or situation, a clear difference between men and women, masculine and feminine is needed. Different value can only be attached to groups or phenomena that are distinct enough.

With a clear segregation of individuals into groups of women and men, and activities and spheres of life into male and female, crossing gender boundaries brings about social confusion. A token person (Kanter 1977) entering the sphere of the “opposite” gender receives extra attention as different or deviant, and often needs to justify one’s choices and activities. Staying in one’s “own” gender sphere is socially easier as many choices are taken for granted and no explanations are expected.

However, not all spheres of life are equally gendered, and not all gender boundaries are equally difficult to cross. Today, a lot of contacts and superficial similarity of men and women is tolerated. Many structural barriers of crossing gender boundaries have been removed by introducing legislation that provides

equal rights for women and men especially in working life, and prohibits gender discrimination. Women have a relatively high level of freedom to enter arenas labelled as male; men, however may not experience as much freedom to occupy themselves in activities culturally understood as female (Rantalaiho et al 1997, 7).

Rather than through formal norms, gender segregation is often reproduced by processes of identity construction. The “fear of falling” (Ekenstam et al 1998) keeps men – and sometimes also women – away from culturally feminine coded spheres of life that are less valued than those coded as male. Entering arenas or doing activities understood as female may represent a risk of losing social status as “a real man”. Male individuals who enter female-dominated occupations often quite explicitly “do masculinity” in order to reproduce the expected gender difference (Williams 1993, 3). This often results in their speedy promotion into higher positions of the organisation. For women, many activities and characteristics previously understood as male – high education level, activity in the labour market, earning an income that is enough to support a family – are not issues that threaten one’s gendered identity as “a real woman”. However, these may become more problematic for a gendered identity as “a mother”.

According to the principle of difference, motherhood is expected to be different from fatherhood. Women are presumed to be primary actors in caring for and raising up children; in expert texts, the “parent” turns out to be the mother (Vuori 2001). The aspects and characteristics of motherhood that are culturally and socially highly valued are those that are understood as female, not male. These include putting the child’s need for basic care before one’s professional activity. A highly educated woman in a good position, earning a high income may be recognised as a “real woman” but not necessarily a “good mother” if she does not take a long enough break from paid employment after giving birth to a child.

Similarly, those aspects of fatherhood that are most valued are those understood as different from motherhood. The emphasis on the importance of fathers for their children is based on notions of their difference from mothers rather than their parenting skills such as a capacity for care. Despite of the fact that parental activities of basic care such as feeding, bathing and comforting are crucial for the child’s well-being and health, fathers are able to skip these because they are understood as “feminine” forms of activity. As paradoxical as it may sound, keeping a distance from childcare is a gendered way of “doing fatherhood” and constructing an identity as a member of a recognised and respected male group. In working life, having a family and being a father is usually seen as a positive achievement for a man, but fatherhood is expected to be practiced only within such limits that paid work is not disturbed (Huttunen 1999).

Despite dichotomic ideologies, what parents actually do in their everyday life highlights the *variations and diversities* of doing gender. These diversities in mothers’ and fathers’ practices challenge dichotomic and segregated understand-

ings of motherhood and fatherhood. I share Jouko Huttunen's view about the deconstruction of stereotypic thinking of gender in relation to parenthood: "The closer a father gets to his child by nurturing, caring and giving his time, the more unnecessary and artificial the segregation of any 'roles' of mothers or fathers start to look like" (Huttunen 2001, 29).

2.2 Men and masculinity/ies in gender perspective

Research on fathers is about men – their positions, identities, and experiences in relation to those of mothers, other women and other men. Although feminist research (or women's studies) has mainly focused on analysing the position and the experiences of women – in order to rectify the exclusion or misrepresentation of women as subjects in previous research (Epstein 1988, 1) – it has been interested in men and masculinity, too. For decades – or rather, for centuries – men were the gender neutral subject of research on human life and societies. Making men visible and problematic as gender has been an important part of the feminist critique (Hearn 2000).

Since the 1980's, the research literature on men's lives, actions, experiences and identities has been rapidly growing. In studies on men and masculinities in the 1980's, the complexities and contradictions of masculinity were emphasised. Two kinds of male roles were seen to co-exist and compete in society and in the lives of individual men: the traditional man who was ambitious in his work and a dominating breadwinner in his family, and the modern pro-feminist man who was caring and expressed his feelings (Kimmel 1987, 9). The focus then shifted from the contradiction between "traditional" and "modern" masculinity to a more detailed analysis of different masculinities and differences between men according to age, ethnicity, class, sexuality (Kimmel 1993, vii; Segal 1997, xxxiv).

Although a range of different kinds of masculinities are recognised, the dimension of male domination and power does not lose its significance in the analysis of gender relations. Some masculinities are more dominant than others while some masculinities remain marginal. The concept hegemonic masculinity (Carrigan, Connell & Lee 1985) refers to the form of masculinity that at a given time is culturally most valued and give certain kinds of men a dominant and powerful position not only in relation to (all) women but also in relation to men who represent other kinds of masculinities – complicit, oppressed or marginal ones (Connell 1995, 76-81). The power of hegemonic masculinity is not tied to individuals but to socially produced gender relations that are characterised by opposites and negations: masculinity as non-feminine, non-gay, non-oppressed (Segal 1997, xxxiv).

Shifting the focus from masculinity to multiple masculinities has led to the questioning of the concept of masculinity in analysing gender. It would often be

more accurate to talk about what men do and what men's experiences are than referring to masculinity (Hearn 1996, 214). There is no need to totally give up the concept "masculinity/ies" but rather to be more clear and precise in how it is used. One possibility is to define masculinities as ideologies or fantasies about how men should be rather than traits of personality or parts of identity (MacInnes 1998, 2). However, we still need concepts that refer not only to ideologies but also to gendered and gendering practices (Connell 2000, 16-17). Theoretical approaches combining the dimensions of material and discursive are needed to understand how practices and discourses are "masculinised" rather than producing descriptions of what masculinity "is" (Hearn 1996, 214). Instead of looking for any essential core of masculinity that could account for men's life and actions, or merely describing how men are and what they do, masculinities can be understood as intersections of structures, practices, identities and bodily experiences (Connell 1995, 68-71). Masculinities have thus not only material and symbolic but also emotional dimensions.

Today, several competing hegemonic masculinities prevail simultaneously. In the Nordic context, different forms of masculinity have been quite homogenous as socio-economic differences have been smaller and conflicts of interests have not been as severe as in many other societies (Nordberg 2000, 37-47). Still, also in the Nordic welfare states, dominant ideologies and symbols of masculinity and femininity are present in the taken-for-granted everyday practices in different situations and different spheres of life. One idealised form of masculinity is "transnational business masculinity" which is marked by increasing egocentrism, libertarian sexuality and declining sense of responsibility for others (Connell 2000). As relations with women are often commodified in this ideal, family life or care for children are not included in doing this configuration of masculinity. A close relationship between father and child is, however supported by state institutions promoting shared parenthood such as paternity and parental leave. This kind of egalitarian configuration of masculinity is often understood as characteristic for the Nordic countries. In the everyday life of families with children, both ideals may be present together with a diversity of other ideas of masculinities as well as femininities.

Even though conceptions of gender and gendered practices are powerful, they are not determinative (Risman 1998, 152). In the feminist theories of gender, the use of concepts like contract and negotiation refer to the problematisation of naturalised gender relations and institutions (Hirdman 1990, 54; Rantalaiho 1993, 2-4). Rather than adjusting and integrating social life to some taken-for-granted naturalised order, there is a possibility of creating new practices and different kinds of choices for women and men. As society changes, prevailing ideals, expectations and ways of interaction may become outdated so that they need to be renegotiated (Rantalaiho 1997, 26). This is what parents sharing parental leave have done.

The fathers taking parental leave and the mothers returning to work before the end of the parental leave period have challenged the prevailing practices in both family life and in working life. Change is however gradual and nearly invisible. Hegemonic ideas about proper or natural gender relations prevail as long as only a small minority of people question their self-evidence by thinking and choosing differently in their everyday life. As some aspects change more slowly than others, gendered social patterns can be recognised in cross-sectional empirical research.

2.3 Research as policy relevant

Sociological studies are part of the social and cultural community that is being studied. Burawoy (2005) distinguishes between four types of sociology: professional sociology, critical sociology, policy sociology, and public sociology. As all the other types are based on professional sociology that provides methods, knowledge and concepts. Critical sociology aims to make professional sociology more aware of its biases and silences, and public sociology brings sociological research into conversation with publics. Although this study can be located under policy sociology as it is related to a policy agenda – namely the aim of statutory family policy to promote gender equality by encouraging more fathers to take parental leave – it has also critical and public elements. The critical element is related to questioning naturalised assumptions of gender, and making prevailing gender relations more visible. The public element means an aim to take part in conversations about mothercare and fathercare not only in the context of the academia, or in state family policy development, but also with a wider public. Research on the gendered ideas and practices in work and family life will contribute to the understandings of gender on a general level in society (Alvesson & Due Billing 1999, 20-21).

My research and development work in STAKES² should per definition be “policy relevant”, which means that it is expected to have an impact in the evaluation and development of welfare state policies (Heikkilä 2006; Tutkimus Stakesissa 2006). In this study, policy relevance is related to the aim of clarifying how statutory leave policies are actualised in the everyday life, and how these actualisations are gendered. Current discussions in sociology as well as in the field of gender studies focus a lot on global dimensions of social, political and cultural life, and focusing on Finland may seem like a too narrow or deficient perspective. Locally situated lives are influenced by global forces such as political struggles, markets and corporations, migration, and media (Connell 2000, 39). These are certainly relevant also for mothers and fathers living in Finland; they may be employed in multinational companies, some of them may have immigrated from other countries or other

2 STAKES is the National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health, situated under the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health in Finland.

parts of the world. They may take part in global discussions and political activities. They are likely to absorb ideas, conceptions and practices from supranational popular media and communication. These processes have all dimensions relevant for gender relations, but they are not covered in this study. Still, I find a detailed analysis of local (or national) patterns of paid and unpaid work as justified in relation to national policies and local, practical negotiations about possibilities and choices of mothers and fathers.

The feminist research tradition provides a starting point for my work in two ways. First, feminist research aims at producing useful knowledge that will make a difference to women's lives (Letherby 2003, 4). Regarding parental leave, what is relevant for women as mothers is – at least in heterosexual families – relevant also for men as fathers. Thus, this study should make a difference in men's lives as well. Secondly, Finnish feminist research on working life has been strongly connected to concrete research and emphasised the material context of actions in everyday life (Rantalaaho et al 1997, 14). This is also the focus of my study: I am concerned with understanding the concrete unequal division of labour between mothers and fathers, which has material consequences on the individual as well as on a more general level. I would not be doing research on this topic if I did not believe that it will actually facilitate the future development of family policy and parental leave institutions, as well as more equal care practices in families.

I believe that policy relevance is not possible without a personal intellectual interest and commitment to the research subject on the one hand, and a necessary level of scientific validity and reliability on the other. I expect the research methods provided by the sociological tradition of empirical research to provide me with tools that help me to produce knowledge that is valid and reasonable in the contemporary Finnish context. This knowledge will hopefully bring nuanced perspectives to the discussion of parenthood and parental leave, and broaden and diversify conceptions about men and fatherhood as well as about women and motherhood. It is my vision that fathercare will be an integral part of doing fatherhood, and the Mattis of the next generations – fathers who take leave from paid work to take care of their children- will no longer need to experience themselves as “statistical deviations”.

2.4 Doing quantitative analysis from a “middle position”

For a comprehensive understanding of gender, prevailing social structures as well as cultural meanings need to be taken into account; but also interaction, personal identities, bodies and desires must be analysed. Even if such a comprehensive inclusion of all these perspectives and levels is not practically possible, it is necessary to keep in mind what is left out of the analysis and where the limits of interpretations are.

The primacy of social processes – the social reproduction and transformation of structures of meaning, conventions, morals and practices – implies that language is central as a carrier and medium of gender categories and meanings related to gender. Varying ways of talking about women and men constitute social practices and the subjectivities of actual, living people. The variation of gendered meanings and practices is, however limited, i.e. there are also enduring consistencies and continuities. Even if knowledge about people’s lives is always to some extent partial because of local variation, it can not be completely relativist as there are also aspects of the world that precede local human beliefs and activity. Power relationships, material resources and embodiment shape the social processes through which local gender constructions emerge. (Cromby & Nightingale 1999, 4-6.)

Among different epistemological perspectives of gender studies, I will place my work in a “middle position” in relation to gender-conscious positivism on the one hand and strict poststructuralism on the other (Alvesson and Due Billing 1999, 52). The “middle position” means that I aim at analysing gender relations not only from the structural perspective, or from the individual actors’ (often psychological) perspective, but also “on the middle level” by putting gender relations in a context of the most crucial aspects of social life such as unpaid care work and paid employment (Holter & Aarseth 1994, 294–299).

Rather than presenting “scientific facts” about the take-up of parental leave between mothers and fathers, I aim at questioning some of the customary conceptions and established understandings related to the division of parental responsibilities and tasks, and their manifestation in the (non) use of parental leave by fathers. Gendered divisions of parental responsibilities and tasks are more than arbitrary and ambiguous patterns constructed in the level of language. It is possible to acknowledge the significance of culture and discourse, without denying that gender relations have conditions and effects outside the sphere of the discursive (Letherby 2003, 56). Constraints of choice limit many lives: black people cannot choose to be white, the poor cannot choose to be wealthy, and males cannot choose to have female reproductive capacities (Ramazanoglu & Holland 2002, 100).

To study gender relations is a challenging area of research, as many of the dimensions are not visible and directly observable, and often things appear gender neutral on the surface. An important goal in gender studies has been to question the apparent gender neutrality, and to show asymmetries and discrimination. In order to understand how gender is constructed, attention has been given to the cultural and local dimensions and processes. In an earlier phase, feminist research was associated with qualitative methods, especially in-depth interview. It may however not be appropriate to all issues or respondent groups, and there are many other methods feminist researchers have used. Today, the combination of different methods and various kinds of data – triangulation – is seen as a means

for more diverse and sensitive understandings of gender relations. There is no research technique that is distinctively feminist: a range of quantitative methods can be used as well as qualitative ones. Methods are tools for doing research, and any method can be used in pro-feminist or non-feminist way. (Korvajärvi 1996, 107; Lehto 1996, 84-86; Lehto 1996b, 144; Alvesson & Due Billing 1999, 21; Ramazanoglu & Holland 2002, 15-16; Letherby 2003, 85.)

Empirical research is a dialogue between theoretical ideas and experiences and observations that provide material to evaluate these ideas (Töttö 2000, 45; Haavind 2001, 11). In this study, I use survey method to provide data for the empirical accounting of my research questions. Originally, the survey method has been developed for an empirically based social research that would explain social transformations and provide a basis for concrete social policies (Oakley 1999). I think the method is useful for sociological research on the actualisation of policies even today. Although survey method may offer limited access to accounts of experiences, or nuances of meaning, it provides means of generalisation (Ramazanoglu & Holland 2002, 155). Survey research can demonstrate how a problem is distributed in a particular way throughout a population and help to understand which factors are contributing to the problem; also differences among groups and changes over time can be identified (Letherby 2003, 93).

I am aware of the possibility that the knowledge gained with this method may reflect upon the experiences of mothers and fathers of young children only to a limited degree. Especially the emotional experiences related to motherhood and fatherhood may be difficult to reflect and perceive in quantitative analysis as they are partly non-discursive. Bodily experiences of pregnancy and childbirth, and more or less breastfeeding are part of the gendered life of most mothers, while fathers can only share these experiences through perception and communication. Different meanings are given to bodily experiences in different situations and by different individuals, and these are related to what people do as mothers and fathers. Bodily experiences mainly fall outside the scope of this study – only one question about the relevance of breastfeeding for the take-up of parental leave is included in the questionnaire.

The questions we ask and the way we choose to ask them determine the answers we get (Letherby 2003, 3). In this study, this can be related to three aspects. First, the questions and variables that are available for the analysis are limited to the prior conception of gender and the division of labour in parenthood, and the meanings and categories have mainly been selected before data collection (Rantalaiho 1988, 41–44; Lehto 1998, 207–214). In this study, a large group of mothers and fathers with different kinds of social backgrounds got to answer and react to questions that the designers of the questionnaire have seen as relevant and meaningful from our own academic as well as private perspective, and given alternative answers that we thought to be possible ones and adequate in covering

their experiences. Second, it is difficult to formulate unambiguous questions and alternative answers on a survey questionnaire, when the dimensions addressed are complex and contradictory (Alvesson & Due Billing 1999, 21). Third, the concepts and statements in the questionnaire may have various meanings for different respondents, and these meanings may differ from those intended by the researcher; some questions may seem irrelevant for some respondents, and the questions that would have been relevant for their take-up of parental leave may be missing from the questionnaire (Haavind 2001, 16–17). With some questions on our questionnaire, the respondents had the possibility to formulate their reaction to the question in their own words. Sometimes they have written additional explanations in the margins of the questionnaire, but they have not been able to ask us what we mean with our questions if something has been unclear to them (actually, a couple of respondents did call us and discuss some of the questions before sending their reply). So the observations and evaluations we can make on the basis of the survey material is limited in the sense that we have to trust that the respondents have understood the questions in the way they were meant to be understood, and that we as researchers can interpret their answers in the same way as they themselves have meant them to be interpreted (Haavind 2001, 16).

How can these limitations be handled? The survey questionnaire that has been used in this study does indeed have many well-established questions used in previous studies, reflecting prior or even outdated conceptions and categorisations of work and family life. On the other hand, many new questions have been designed for this study as there were no established designs available. These new questions are often based on knowledge gained from previous, often qualitative studies of parental leave in the Nordic countries. The questions understood as producing "background" information such as age, family structure, education, occupation and income mainly follow the standards of sociological survey, although some modifications were needed. For example, typical four-level categorisation of socio-economical status – blue collar, lower white collar, upper white-collar and management – was extended into six categories including blue collar workers, technical clerical workers, office clerical workers, expert consultants, supervisors and upper management in order to make visible more variation. Extra attention was given to the design of the questions regarding the respondent's position on the labour market. This was important especially for the mothers, as the precariousness of their employment is closely related to the take-up and duration of child care leave as well as to the sharing or not sharing parental leave with the child's father (Salmi 2000; Haataja & Nurmi 2000).

It has been our aim to get close to the everyday life of the respondents by formulating the questions as concretely and detailed as possible. The more abstract the formulations are, the more variation there is in the interpretations of the respondents, and the more challenging the definition of the variables and the evalu-

ations of the relations between variables becomes. The use of open-ended questions allows respondents to present their own perspectives which may broaden the researcher's horizon of meanings. Still, even the material from open-ended questions may not fully correspond to the experiences of people in their everyday life, as people usually write down their first reactions and thus the variation from day to day is excluded. The respondents may also not want to reveal some aspects of their life that they may see as socially problematic, for example the use of alcohol and drugs or violence in the family.

As in all social research, the picture produced on the basis of my data analysis will inevitably be partial. I may not have included all the relevant and important questions in the design of my study, and there may not be room for all alternative answers that mothers and fathers would like to give. When I analyse the questions and replies that are included in the study, I accept that alternative interpretations about the empirical results may be just as justified – or even more so – as those made by myself.

2.5 Data and analysis: possibilities and limitations

The empirical analysis of my study is based on a survey material with more than 5000 leave-taking parents – mothers and fathers – of young children in Finland. The data were collected in the Parental leave -study (Perhevapaatutkimus) project conducted by Stakes in 2001–2002. The aim of the study was to analyse the conditions and consequences of the take-up of parental leave for the position of women and men in working life; to clarify aspects related to the decision-making in families about parental leave as well as to find out how parents of young children think childcare ought to be organised in Finland (Salmi & Lammi-Taskula 2002).

Two samples of parents – fathers and mothers – with children born in 1999 were selected from the registers of the National Insurance Institute, covering all parental benefit recipients in Finland. For the mothers' sample, one in ten of mothers were selected. The mothers' response rate was 59%, and the data consists of 3 232 mothers who have received maternity and parental benefits (i.e. taken maternity and parental leave). For the fathers' sample, all fathers who had received parental benefit (i.e. taken parental leave) were selected, as well as one in twenty fathers who had received paternity benefit (taken paternity leave). The response rate among fathers was 48%; there are 1 413 leave-taking respondents in the fathers' data. (For more details, see Appendix 1.)

Unfortunately, a proper analysis of missing data was not possible as the information about the original sample was lost at the NII. Thus, the differences in relation to various socio-economic aspects between the respondents and the mothers and fathers belonging to the original sample are covered somewhat inadequately.

The representativeness of the data can be evaluated to some degree by comparing the mothers and fathers in the data with the national statistics. As nearly all mothers in Finland take maternity and parental leave and receive these benefits when they have a baby, the mothers' data is quite representative of the general population of mothers of young children. Also the take-up patterns of parental and paternity leave by the mothers' spouses are similar to that of the general population of fathers as shown in national statistics (see Appendix 1).

The male respondents, however are a highly selected group that is very different from the majority of fathers of young children in Finland. Although about 70% of all fathers take some paternity leave, parental leave is taken by only few fathers (Kela 2003). As more than a third of the respondents in the fathers' data have taken parental leave, the data is far from representative of the general population of fathers of young children. Of all men who become fathers, about a third does not take even a week of paternity leave – these fathers are not included in the benefit registers of the NII and are thus also missing from the fathers' sample. Thus, the fathers' data provides possibilities for comparisons between paternity leave takers and parental leave takers, but not between leave-takers and non-takers.

National statistics on recipients of parental benefits provide some information that can be used also in the evaluation of missing data. Compared to all parents who received parental benefits in the year 2000, there are less young parents in the data and respectively more older ones, especially fathers. Half of the fathers who replied were over 35 years old, when among the benefit recipients only one in three were in this age group (for details, see Appendix 1). This problem is handled by using an age weight in the descriptive analysis of the fathers' data.

The problems related to the limitations of the fathers' data can, at least to some extent, be overcome with the help of the mothers' data. In the mothers' as well as in the fathers' questionnaire, also questions about one's spouse were asked. Information about the spouse has been given by the respondent, not the spouse him/herself. This means that the reports about spouse's position, attitudes etc. are indirect and represent experiences of the respondent and may differ from his or her co-parent's experiences. Thus, interpretations about the relations between parents for example in the division of care responsibilities, or the desires and motivations related to choices between employment and leave, are based on the perspectives of one spouse only. By using both the fathers' and the mothers' data, a more complete but also a more complex picture of the situations and choices in the leave-taking families of young children can be produced.

If the relations and patterns of social life are understood as constructed and constantly re-constructed rather than stable and unchanged entities, causal relations between variables in the survey data become less interesting as "facts". Rather, they need to be understood as snapshots that reveal patterns of the respondents' interpretations of their experiences in a given moment of their life. The answers

are reports tied to a certain context, they are given in a different time and place than where the questions have been made. The frequencies and correlations of the variables are like clues or symptoms that are used by the researcher to make sense, produce interpretations and conclusions of the phenomena that is studied. The accuracy of these interpretations is, however never guaranteed. (Ronkainen 1999, 125-128.)

It is also possible that reports about conceptions, attitudes, and practices in the respondents' families do not reflect only the respondent's individual experiences. At the end of our questionnaire, we asked whether the respondent had answered the questions alone, with the spouse or with someone else. Mothers had more often than fathers completed the questionnaire themselves (81% vs. 62%), rather than together with the spouse. Young parents, both mothers and fathers, had more often replied with their spouse than those over 30. In these cases, the answers may be interpreted as products of negotiations and power relations between spouses. The negotiation processes remain unknown to the researcher so that we can not be sure whether it is the respondent or his/her spouse that is behind the answers given to the questions.

The "difficult to say" categories give a possibility for the respondent to express hesitation and indetermination, but in the analysis they are often treated as being of little importance, and are either left out or merged with other categories (Ronkainen 1999, 168-169). In this study, attention is paid not only to the more definite answers ("yes", "no", "agree", "disagree" etc) but also to the "difficult to say" answers in order to locate confusion and questions open to negotiation in relation to gender and parental responsibilities.

The analysis of empirical material proceeds from comparisons of leave-taking fathers' and mothers' responses on a general level to a more detailed analysis of the socio-economic variation of conceptions and practices. The gender configurations are first presented on the level of diversities and similarities between leave-sharing and non-sharing mothers and fathers, explored by cross-tabulations. To overcome problems related to the relatively low response rates of the survey data, the examination of small subgroups has been avoided in the analysis.

As there are many independent variables related to the take-up of parental leave (such as age, education, occupational position and income), all correlated with one another to varying degrees, the relevance of different aspects is then examined by using the logistic regression method. Logistic regression allows one to predict a discrete outcome such as take-up of parental leave from a set of variables; it is used in order to find out which variables predict the outcome; and whether a particular variable increases or decreases the probability of the outcome (Tabachnick & Fidell 2001, 517-519). It is possible to argue that multivariate statistical analyses of large data sets can provide the most truly "contextual" analyses of people's experience because they allow the incorporations of a large number of variables, and provide

insights into relationships among variables that may more closely resemble the complexity of the “real world” (Letherby 2003, 87; Tabachnick & Fidell 2001, 5).

In logistic regression, variables can be continuous, discrete or dichotomous. As some of the subgroups especially in the fathers’ data are relatively small, the use of multiple categories in the analysis may not produce statistically significant results. Thus, only dichotomous variables have been used i.e. the range of values or categories has been recoded into two values (0/1). This means that on the one hand, information is to some extent lost; on the other hand the use of dichotomies makes the interpretations more simple and unambiguous as respondents belonging to a certain subgroup (value 1) are compared to all others (value 0) rather than to a specific reference group.

As this study focuses on relations between leave-taking mothers and fathers, and also the empirical data consists of parents’ reports, the voices of children are missing. This practical limitation does not mean that the *well being of children* would not be of fundamental importance for me. Also the notion of *childcare work as valuable* – shared by Matti and a wide range of feminists – is a basic principle in my thinking although it is not explicitly discussed in this study. The basis for any parental activity is to take care of children who are dependent of their parents or other adult carers. In any conception or ideology of motherhood and fatherhood, the fact that young children cannot survive without care provided by the grown up generation can not be erased. Thus, whatever the division of labour between mothers and fathers, or the negotiations and power relations related to the practices of care, the dependence of children from their carers is always the context where the outcome is actualised. A parent who does not participate in childcare can not deny that care work still needs to be done by some other person as the child can not be left uncared for. Similarly, a parent who does not contribute to breadwinning can not deny that paid employment secures meeting some of the basic, necessary material conditions of the child’s everyday needs.

Negotiating an unequal division of parental responsibilities work implies there are more risks of losing the balance of care and material provision in case one of the segregated fields of paid and unpaid work for some reason fails to function. Mothers who mainly do caring and leave breadwinning for the father face more material risks in case of separation or divorce, while fathers who mainly do breadwinning and leave childcare for the mother risk losing contact with their children. In such situations, the welfare state can at least to some extent function as a buffer for the welfare of mothers and children, providing care services and income transfers; promotion of fathercare after parental separation is difficult if care responsibilities have not been shared before. It is my argument that shared parental responsibilities – shared child care, shared housework and shared breadwinning – can provide a buffer against risks of deficits in the well being of children, as well as mothers and fathers themselves.

3 Ideas of women and men, mothers and fathers

In order to handle the multiplicity and complexity of human social life, people have constructed different kinds of categories that give order to our thinking and social interaction. As human reproduction is of great importance for the development of any society, special attention has been given to the physiological capacities of human bodies to fertilize and give birth to children. Despite a plurality of genetic and physiological differences, people are categorised as either “male” or “female” (Badinter 1993, 61-66).

Not only human bodies but also a wide range of individual mental traits and characteristics, as well as material items and places, have been labelled as “male/masculine” or “female/feminine”. Almost any social situation bears gendered meanings that are understood as natural and thus difficult to escape. Not only are conceptions about “natural” positions, characteristics and tasks of women and men in a given society taken widely for granted, they also have a normative dimension; what is seen as “natural” is “how it should be”. In addition, the primacy of the “male/masculine” category implies that people, characteristics and institutions that are defined as male are valued more than those defined as female (Hirdman 1990, 77-79).

Ideas of gender are learned mainly in an unconscious manner as a self-evident part of the surrounding culture. Gender is performed and conceptions reproduced in everyday life interaction through language as well as through non-verbal symbols such as clothes, hair, make-up, use of voice, gestures and so on. Conceptions of gender are reflected in popular culture, and through media gender symbols produced in the western culture spread throughout the world, getting integrated into local cultures and transforming national or ethnic symbols (Connell 2000, 26).

Conceptions of gender are present also in more formal areas such as legislation, guidelines, research and statistics (Kinnunen 1996, 49). Through national legislation on parental leave and parental benefits, prevailing conceptions of motherhood and fatherhood can be both strengthened and questioned. Legislation creates possibilities as well as limitations for parental practices and the division of labour between mothers and fathers in paid and unpaid work. Gender is

nowever not only performed and reproduced but also modified and changed in interaction and communication.

Through national legislation on parental leave and parental benefits, possibilities as well as limitations are provided for parental practices and the division of labour between mothers and fathers in paid and unpaid work. The formal symbolic gender relations constructed in the parental leave legislation are also modified through parents' actualisation of leave possibilities. The symbolic gender relations operate on the level of cultural conceptions about "natural" characteristics and capabilities of women and men, i.e. what is commonly defined as feminine or masculine, and how ideal motherhood and fatherhood are understood. These ideas and conceptions are reflected also in official, normative institutions such as parental leave legislation or recommendations of childcare given by social welfare and health authorities.

In this chapter, the Finnish parental leave scheme is introduced, and the construction of gendered parental responsibilities in the scheme is discussed in relation to leave schemes in the other Nordic countries¹ (Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland). The gender ideology related to the actualisation of leave possibilities is analysed by looking at general attitudes towards parental leave among leave-taking mothers and fathers of young children, as well as justifications of take-up patterns reported by parents.

3.1 Finnish parental leave possibilities for fathers in Nordic comparison

Through laws and policy, all states shape the borders of fatherhood, fathering and father identities, and "make men into fathers" in different ways (Hobson & Morgan 2002, 14). In the Nordic countries, the role of state has been central in granting social rights for families (Esping-Andersen 1999), including possibilities for to take time off work in order to take care of one's child. Leave possibilities with income compensation have been available for fathers since the 1970's. During the past decade, fatherhood has been a focus area in the development of parental leave institutions (Haataja 2004). In some of the Nordic countries, individual and non-transferable rights for fathers have been introduced in order to promote the sharing of child care tasks between mothers and fathers. Several different policy elements allow fathers to take time off from employment in order to care for a child: paternity leave, transferable parental leave and child care leave, and non-transferable parental leave (quota).

¹ I will refer to Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Iceland and Finland as "Nordic countries" although the concept "Scandinavian countries" may be more known in Europe and elsewhere. Strictly (geographically) taken, Scandinavia only includes Sweden and Norway; "Nordic countries" is more inclusive and refers not only to geographical closeness but also to political, social and cultural similarities that exist despite of several differences between the five countries.

Paternity leave

The purpose of paternity leave is to promote the father-child relationship and to help the mother who is expected to be tired and weak after the childbirth. In order to be able to help the mother, the father needs a possibility to get to know the new baby and learn how to do some of the practical care work. A couple of weeks is defined as an adequate time to learn enough for this purpose: paternity leave is two weeks in Sweden, Norway and Denmark and three weeks in Finland. During these weeks, the mother is the primary parent who bears a longer term care responsibility as the father soon returns to employment outside the home. In Iceland, paternity leave does not exist any more, but parents can take parental leave at the same time so in practice fathers can take a similar helper's position.

In Finland, as the parental leave institutions have been made more flexible, paternity leave can be taken in one to four periods instead of one continuous leave period. The fragmentation of paternity leave does not support the construction of a close father-child relationship which has been one of the aims of this policy (Huttunen 2001, 201). Thus, the father is understood more as the mother's helper than a parent. On the other hand, also the mother's helper position has lost some of its significance as the timing of paternity leave has been loosened from the immediate post-natal weeks to the whole parental leave period. As the father may now take his leave later when the baby is older, no learning period is expected from him any more in the very beginning. The mother is now seen as more capable of surviving alone the first weeks at home with a newborn baby.

Parental leave

In all the Nordic countries, a father can share a certain period of parental leave with the child's mother, according to their mutual decision. The length of the transferable parental leave period varies from three months in Iceland to one year in Sweden. In principle, only one parent at a time stays at home on parental leave, taking full responsibility of childcare, while the other parent is at work or studying. The take-up of the transferable part of parental leave is left to be negotiated and decided by parents. When the mother returns to work and the father takes parental leave, she is supposed to leave the main carer position to him and he is supposed to take that position.

In practice, however it is possible and also quite usual that during the father's parental leave, the mother takes annual holiday or sabbatical leave and stays at home as well (Rostgaard 2002, Haataja 2004). She can also be a student, or unemployed or even retired from work, so he or she may actually be at home together quite a lot even if only the father is officially on parental leave. When this is the case, the status quo of gender relations i.e. the mother's primacy in childcare may not be challenged.

The father's quota

A third leave scheme for fathers is the father's quota of parental leave, which is a non-transferable leave period i.e. it can only be taken by the father. In case he decides not to take it, it can not be transferred to the mother. The father's quota makes a stronger case of challenging the traditional division of care work by shifting the main carer position from the mother to the father. Decisions about sharing or not sharing parental leave are no longer totally up to the parents.

Norway was the first country to establish a father's quota in 1994, followed by Sweden in 1995, Denmark in 1998, Iceland in 2001 and finally Finland in 2003. In 2002, the two week's father's quota was abolished in Denmark, whereas in Sweden the one-month quota was lengthened to two months. In Iceland, the father's quota was first one month, then two months in 2002 and finally three months in 2003.

In Sweden, Norway and Iceland, a mother's quota equal to the father's quota of parental leave has also been introduced. Having a quota for both the mother and the father implies that each parent could equally be taking the long parental leave and the main carer position, and a possibility must be guaranteed also for the other parent to take that position for at least the quota period.

In Finland only fathers have a quota of parental leave, and the quota is conditional. The father gets two bonus weeks of extra paternity leave only if he takes the two last weeks of parental leave. The father's bonus paternity leave can be interpreted as special support to fathercare, but it also implies that parental leave is mainly expected to be taken by the mother (Leira 2002). The four-month maternity leave around childbirth which is exclusively for the mother could be defined as a mother's quota. Thus, a bonus leave period for mothers is not seen as necessary.

Eligibility

Although Norwegian fathers were forerunners regarding the father's quota of parental leave, they have a tighter eligibility criteria than in the other Nordic countries. In Norway, the father's possibility to take parental leave depends on both his and the mother's employment; in order for the father to take parental leave, both parents must have been employed for six of the previous ten months (Brandth & Kvande 2003). In Iceland and in Finland, fathers are entitled to parental benefit and parental leave if they are living together with the mother of their child (Gislason 2004; www.kela.fi). In Sweden, also fathers who do not live with their child's mother are entitled to parental benefit and parental leave if the parents have shared custody and the child lives in Sweden (Nyman & Petterson 2002). Danish fathers are eligible for parental benefit if they have been in the labour market for at least three months prior to the leave, but also unemployed fathers can take parental leave (www.bm.dk).

Flexibility

Flexibility in the timing of parental leave is expected to facilitate the take-up of leave by fathers (Rostgaard 2002). The most flexible leave rights are provided in Norway where the time-account scheme allows five different alternatives for parents to work part-time (50, 60, 75, 80 or 90% work time) and receive a partial parental benefit that is paid for a longer period than the full-time leave benefit (Haataja 2004). In Sweden there are four alternatives of part-time parental leave (70, 50, 25 or 18% leave) combined with part-time employment. The father's quota can however only be taken full-time (Rostgaard 2002). In Denmark and in Iceland, parents don't have a statutory right for part-time parental leave but they can negotiate it with their employers (Rostgaard 2002; Gislason 2004).

In Finland, part-time parental leave was legislated later than in the other Nordic countries (2003), and the scheme is less encouraging as the conditions are tighter: part-time parental leave can be taken only if both parents shorten their working hours at the same time and take turns in childcare for at least two months (Haataja 2004). This is because part-time leave is meant to encourage more fathers to take parental leave whereas in the other Nordic countries the goal is to allow children more parental time.

Also the timing of parental leave periods is more rigid in Finland. Whereas in Denmark, Sweden and Iceland periods of parental leave can be taken during a long time span (until the child is 8–9 years old), in Finland parental leave possibilities with the income-related benefit must be seized during the child's first 10 months. Taking part-time parental leave does not prolong the leave period so it is mainly a means for mothers to return earlier to work on a part-time basis without taking the child to daycare, as the father will stay at home the other half of the day.

Benefits

Nordic parents receive both earnings-related and flat rate benefits during parental leave as compensation for lost income. In Sweden, paternity and parental benefits are earnings-related (80% of previous income) during the first year, and a low flat-rate benefit is paid during the last three months of the parental leave period (Haataja 2004). In Denmark, a rather large flat-rate benefit – 56% of average male production worker's income – is paid during paternity and parental leave (Rostgaard 2002). In Norway, wage compensation during paternity leave is not statutory but up to negotiations (Leira 1998); during parental leave an earnings-related benefit is 80–100% of previous income. Also unpaid periods are included in the parental leave scheme in Norway, where both parents have a right for one year's unpaid period of parental leave in addition to the period with compensation. In Iceland, 80% of previous income is paid during leave, with a ceiling on the amount

of money received (Eydal 2005). The level of the income-related parental benefit in Finland has been about 70% of average income. In the beginning of 2007, the benefit level during five first weeks of parental leave was raised to 75% in order to encourage more fathers to take leave, and to equalise the costs of parental leave between employers in female and male dominated branches.

Benefits are important for the family economy, but they also symbolise the importance of care work evaluated by the state. A low compensation level has been seen as less encouraging for fathers whose wages are in general higher than mothers' (Haataja & Nyberg 2006). The lower appreciation of childcare work in Finland and in Denmark shows a lack of encouragement of parents – fathers and mothers – to take parental leave.

Promoting fathercare?

As fathers in all the Nordic countries can share parental leave with the mother of their child, the quota countries – Norway, Sweden and Iceland – have a more determined orientation towards promoting fathercare and creating a more symmetrical division of labour between women and men. In addition to the quota, these countries have a high compensation level during parental leave and a lot of flexibility in how leave can be taken. Finland and Denmark, on the other hand, are more vague in striving for gender equality in promoting fathercare. The conditional bonus-quota in Finland and the abolished short quota in Denmark as well as a lower compensation level and less flexible take-up possibilities indicate that the actualisation of possible changes in gender relations is entrusted to individual parents.

The symbolic gender relation represented and constructed by the Finnish parental leave policy puts a weaker emphasis on the father's care than on mother's care. The late creation of the father's quota (i.e. the bonus paternity leave) as well as the compromised shape of it show how strong the reluctance to challenge the reproduction of mother's care has been in Finland. This has sent a clear message to the parents of young children: fathers may be expected to take some leave, but they should leave the long leave periods for mothers.

3.2 Support and critique for the hegemony of mothercare

On the level of general attitudes in Finland, the dual breadwinner family model and also the dual carer model are widely supported by both men and women; both parents are expected to contribute to childcare as well as to the child's maintenance. According to the national Equality Barometer study conducted by Statistics Finland and the Council for Equality (Melkas 2004), about 60% of both women and men fully agree (and an additional 30% agree partly) that men should participate more in the care and upbringing of their children.

A closer look at the formulations of questions and categories in the Equality Barometer revealed unwritten norms related to gender and family life. The question measuring attitudes on women's employment is a *statement* ("women have a full right to paid employment irrespective of their family situation") whereas the question addressing men's part in childcare is formulated as a *request* ("men should take more part in the care of their children"). Statements like "men have a full right to childcare" or even "fathers have a full right to paid employment" are not included in the questionnaire. These formulations not only implicate but also reproduce a symbolic gender order where women are counted on to combine care responsibilities with employment whereas confidence on men as caring fathers is not so high (Lammi-Taskula 2003).

Parents of young children are provided ideas of good motherhood and good fatherhood also in recommendations, guidelines and professional counselling. Despite of changes in family structure, the normative idea of family life that was developed after the Second World War still has a strong impact: a normal family consists of a mother who takes care of the home and the children, and a father who is responsible of breadwinning. For example, in textbooks on parenthood, the "parent" turns usually out to be the mother (Vuori 2001, 361). In the most recent guidelines given by the state for child and family health professionals, parents are mostly referred to in gender neutral terminology, but in the breastfeeding recommendations included in these guidelines, mothers are constructed as primary carers. Full breastfeeding (only mother's milk) is recommended for the baby's first six months and partial breastfeeding until the child turns one year (Hasunen 2004, 181-184). During the full breastfeeding period, the mother is intensively tied to the child and can thus not return to work. Although no explicit recommendations are given about the take-up of parental leave, the implicit recommendation is that it should be the mother who takes at least the first part of parental leave.

We asked the leave-taking parents of young children who responded to our survey about their attitudes towards sharing parental leave between mothers and fathers in general (see Appendix 2 for questionnaires). Support for the prevailing practice – where parental leave is mainly taken by mothers – can be interpreted as reproduction of "hegemonic mothercare", based on naturalised gender categories and a normative conception of separate responsibilities for mothers and fathers. A wish for a more symmetric take-up of parental leave – a wish that fathers took more parental leave than they do – can be understood as critique or deconstruction of such a hegemony.

The question related to general attitudes was "*Today mostly mothers take parental leave. Do you agree with the following statements related to parental leave?*". The first two statements² directly addressed the gendered pattern of take-up: "*The prevailing practice is good*" and "*It would be good if fathers took more parental leave*".

² The other statements handled modifications of the present scheme and are not reported here.

TABLE 1. Parents' general attitudes towards parental leave (%)

	Mothers	Fathers	
The prevailing practice is good			
Agree fully	29	24	
Agree partly	48	47	
Can not say	7	13	
Disagree partly	13	17	
Disagree fully	3	4	
Total	100	100	
(N)	(3175)	(1371)	$\chi^2=23.3$ DF=4 Sig=.000
It would be good if fathers took more parental leave			
Agree fully	32	44	
Agree partly	45	41	
Can not say	18	11	
Disagree partly	4	3	
Disagree fully	1	1	
Total	100	100	
(N)	(3220)	(1388)	$\chi^2=82.6$ DF=4 Sig=.000

The alternative responses were “agree fully”, “agree partly”, “difficult to say”, “disagree partly” and “disagree fully”.

Mothers in our data had mainly taken the whole parental leave period themselves, and a majority – three of four mothers – supported the prevailing practice which is in line with their own practice. Although the fathers had themselves more often taken parental leave than men in general, the difference in attitudes between mothers and fathers was rather small (Table 1). Similarly to mothers, also a majority of fathers of young children – five out of seven – agreed fully or partly that it is good that mothers take most of parental leave. Only one in five fathers criticized the prevailing, gendered practice of take-up.

It seems that other families' practices are not questioned even if they are different from one's own. Still, fathers wished more often than mothers that fathers in general took more parental leave. Almost half of fathers compared to a third of mothers fully agreed with this statement. Not many fathers or mothers disagreed with the wish for more equal sharing of parental leave in general, but mothers who were less familiar with sharing leave were more confused about it than fathers: almost one in five mothers could not report their opinion. Fathers, on the other hand, were more often confused about the prevailing practice as one in eight did not have an opinion about it.

Support for the prevailing take-up patterns of parental leave and the wish towards more equality in it are not mutually exclusive attitudes. Instead, it is quite typical that consent with hegemonic practices is combined with a desire for future development. The cross-tabulation of responses to the two statements in our survey shows that some respondents agree with both statements while some reject both (Table 2). In the typology of parents made on the basis of this cross-tabulation, the majority of both mothers (57%) and fathers (59%) think on the one hand that mothers' hegemony in parental leave is good, but on the other hand wish that also fathers took more leave. I have chosen to call these parents "balancers" as they balance their opinions between two perspectives by suggesting changes without directly criticizing the prevailing practice. This kind of position of passive support to gender equality has been called "the in-principle-man" (Jalmert 1983): in principle one sympathizes gender equality while in practice one does not promote or demand change in the division of labour and power between women and men. Here the balancing between opposite principles applies not only to many fathers but also to a large group of mothers.

Parents falling into the group who support the prevailing practice and think fathers do not need to take any more parental leave are in this typology called "anti-sharing". They make a very small minority of all respondents (3% of fathers and 5% of mothers). It seems to be quite difficult to explicitly oppose the general ideal of shared parenthood. On the other hand, also the parents who ex-

TABLE 2. Attitudes towards mothers' and fathers' take-up of parental leave (%)

The prevailing practice is good	It would be good if fathers took more parental leave				Total (N)
	Agree fully	Agree partly	Can't say	Disagree partly/fully	
Mothers					
Agree fully	6	12	8	3	100 (3155)
Agree partly	16	23	7	2	
Can't say	2	3	2	0	
Disagree partly	6	5	2	1	
Disagree fully	1	1	0	0	
Fathers					
Agree fully	6	10	5	2	100 (1361)
Agree partly	20	21	4	1	
Can't say	3	4	2	0	
Disagree partly	11	5	1	0	
Disagree fully	4	1	0	0	

press dissatisfaction with the present division of parental leave between mothers and fathers and who would be happy to see more fathers taking leave – they are here called “pro-sharing” – are not a very large group (20% of fathers and 13% of mothers). Perhaps critique towards mothers' hegemony in parental leave combined with support for fathercare is easily interpreted as underestimation of motherhood, which can be quite sensitive even in the present day context.

About one in five respondents (18% of fathers and 22% of mothers) can be characterized as “confused”; they can not or do not want to express an opinion on the present practice, or the fathers' share, or on neither statement. Through this confusion, they refrain from any reflection on the gendered division of parental responsibilities, or at least keep possible reflections to themselves. The avoidance of taking any position may hide both the reproduction of prevailing gender order as well as private deconstructions of it in one's own family life; deconstructions that are experienced as deviations rather than pioneering social innovations.

In principle, there would exist a fifth group in this typology consisting of those who are neither happy with the present situation nor want more fathers on leave, but in practice there are hardly any respondents falling into such a group.

As the fathers in our data are men who have shared parental leave with their spouses more than fathers in general, it is not surprising that they are more often pro-sharing than the mothers who have mainly taken parental leave themselves (Table 3). However, when the parents' general attitudes towards parental leave are analysed separately among those who have shared parental leave with their spouse

TABLE 3. Attitudes towards parental leave, according to take-up (%)

	Mothers			Fathers		
	Partner took parental leave			Took parental leave		
	Yes	No	All	Yes	No	All
Pro-sharing	25	13	14	29	15	20
Balancer	63	57	57	55	60	59
Confused	11	25	24	14	21	18
Anti-sharing	1	5	5	2	4	3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
(N)	(118)	(3022)	(3140)	(470)	(887)	(1357)
Differences among mothers: X ² =23.1 DF=3 Sig=.000			Differences among fathers: X ² =39.9 DF=3 Sig=.000			
Differences between mothers and fathers: All X ² =39.7 DF=3 Sig=.000 Shared parental leave X ² =2.7 DF=3 Sig=.436 Did not share parental leave X ² =8.5 DF=3 Sig=.037						

(at least for the minimum period of two weeks) and those who have not, differences between mothers and fathers mostly disappear. Among both mothers and fathers, pro-sharing attitudes are more common in families where the father has taken at least some parental leave than in families where the mother has taken the whole parental leave. There are no significant gender differences in the general attitudes among parents who have shared parental leave, but in the non-sharing families fathers are more pro-sharing or balancing than mothers. In other words, even if they have not taken parental leave themselves, they support the idea of more fathers taking parental leave.

Balancing between support for both mothercare and fathercare is also equally common among mothers and fathers, and here there are also no differences related to the take-up pattern of parental leave in one's own family. Confusion around the prevailing and alternative practice of take-up is to some extent gendered: in families where the mother has taken the whole parental leave period, mothers are more often confused than fathers i.e. they have more often answered "can't say" to questions related the prevailing practice of mothercare and/or future visions of fathercare. This confusion may be related to women's tendency to comment on personal matters rather than general policy issues (Ronkainen 1999); even if family policy and leave possibilities are closely related to the mothers' daily life, they do not want to commit themselves on a matter that is not part of their own experience.

Pro-sharing attitudes – thinking that it is not very good that mothers take most parental leave and that it would be good if fathers took more – among fathers are not significantly related to their socio-economic background (Table 4). This is probably related to the fact all fathers in the data have taken either paternity or parental leave. The experience of taking some leave seems thus to be more important than the father's age, education, occupation or income level, or the number of children. Among mothers, the level of pro-sharing attitudes is also quite similar within different socio-economic groups, but there is some variation according to professional education level and occupational position. Mothers with a higher education level as well as those in an expert position are more often pro-sharing than those with less education, or mothers in blue-collar or lower white-collar occupational positions. Differences between mothers are however not considerably big.

In families with young children, general attitudes towards sharing parental leave between mothers and fathers seem to be related to the actual experience of sharing parental leave in one's own family life rather than the parents' socio-economic background. Ideas of gender relations are thus important for understanding the take-up patterns of parental leave; on the other hand, actual experiences of leave also shape attitudes towards gendered parental responsibilities. In addition to general attitudes – ideas of how parents in general should exercise their right to parental leave – also conceptions about parental responsibilities in one's own

TABLE 4. Pro-sharing attitudes towards parental leave, according to socio-economic position (%)

	Mothers					Fathers				
	%	N	X ²	DF	Sig	%	N	X ²	DF	Sig
Age			1.4	2	.507			2.2	2	.326
Under 30	12	(1041)				18	(198)			
30–39	14	(1973)				18	(917)			
40+	14	(182)				22	(285)			
Number of children			2.6	2	.273			0.4	2	.811
One child	15	(911)				18	(408)			
2 children	13	(1434)				19	(603)			
3+ children	13	(950)				20	(402)			
Professional education			12.9	3	.005			8.1	4	.087
None	11	(312)				16	(109)			
Vocat. school or course	11	(906)				16	(509)			
College or polytech.	14	(1485)				23	(468)			
University	17	(546)				19	(317)			
Occupational position			13.6	3	.003			5.8	5	.328
Blue-collar worker	12	(1006)				17	(606)			
Lower white-collar	12	(416)				23	(128)			
Expert	19	(324)				19	(235)			
Manager	15	(148)				22	(230)			
Income/month before the birth of the child			0.9	1	.348			0.3	1	.558
10 000 FIM or less	13	(3004)				19	(1028)			
More than 10 000 FIM	16	(176)				18	(353)			

family are important. Actual take-up of parental leave may also reflect whether childcare and breadwinning are understood as more or less gendered parental responsibilities, and whether it is the parents' aim to share these responsibilities or to address separate responsibilities for the mother and for the father.

3.3 Shared or separate responsibilities in own family?

According to the Gender Equality Barometer Study, a pattern of shared rather than separate parental responsibilities seems to be culturally desirable in Finland. 71% of women and 61% of men disagree with men being primary breadwinners for families, and about 90 % of both women and men think housework should not be divided between spouses according to income level (Melkas 2005). Equal child-

care responsibility is supported by both men and women more commonly than equal sharing of other responsibilities of family life such as housework (Reuna 1998). However, perhaps based on experiences of unequal sharing women tend to emphasize their own responsibility in childcare. For example, equal responsibility in taking care of a sick child is presented as ideal more often by men than by women, while women more than men say the mother should be responsible for it (Seppälä 2000).

In our survey with leave-taking mothers and fathers of young children, conceptions of gendered responsibilities were studied in relation to justifications of parental leave patterns in the respondents' own family. Considering justifications of parental leave, the following question was asked: "*Which aspects were related to your decision about sharing or not sharing parental leave between parents?*". Altogether 21 statements were given to the respondents to each of which they could reply "yes", "no" or "*difficult to say*". The statements dealing with separate responsibilities for mothers and fathers were "*I think the mother is mainly responsible for childcare*" and "*I think the father is mainly responsible for breadwinning*". In addition to the respondent's own conceptions about parental responsibilities, we also asked about how the respondent assumed his/her spouse/partner to think about these responsibilities. The statements related to the partner's conceptions were "*My partner thinks the mother is mainly responsible for childcare*" and "*My partner thinks the father is mainly responsible for breadwinning*".

Spouses or partners do not always share similar ideals about gender and parenthood, and responsibilities need to be negotiated. Differences and contradictions between respondents' and their partners' ideas are presented in chapter 6 where power relations and negotiations in the family are discussed. Here, gender differences are analysed on aggregate rather than family interaction level, comparing mothers' and fathers' ideas of shared or separate parental responsibilities. Because of the non-representativeness of the fathers' sample i.e. the high take-up rate of parental leave among fathers, differences between mothers and fathers are analysed separately in leave-sharing and non-sharing groups. Also socio-economic divisions are taken into account, and the mutual relation of the two statements – mother's primacy in childcare and father's primacy in breadwinning – is analysed with cross-tabulations.

As the majority of the respondents have not shared parental leave with their spouse, it can be expected that separate parental responsibilities in childcare and breadwinning are common justifications for the actualisation of parental leave rights. Indeed, the mother's primacy in childcare as well as the father's primacy in breadwinning are quite often given as a justifications for the family's take-up pattern (Table 5). There are, however, clear differences between leave-taking mothers and fathers in their reporting of justifications. These differences are not due to the special composition of the fathers' sample: gender differences remain also when

the two groups of sharing and non-sharing parents are analysed separately.

In all families, regardless of the take-up pattern of parental leave, mothers think more often than fathers that their care responsibility has been relevant for the decision about which parent will take parental leave (Table 5). This means that also in families where parental leave is shared, mothers' conception of childcare responsibility is more gendered than fathers'. Thus, sharing parental leave does not necessarily mean that mothers would give up on their position as the primary carer for the baby. The conception of the mothercare may also be related to the physiological capacity of the mother to breastfeed, which is seen to make her more suitable than the father to take parental leave, especially the first part of it.³

Fathers' parental leave periods are often quite short; two weeks or one months of parental leave does not seriously undermine mothercare. Neither does it undermine the father's breadwinner position, which may be reflected in the fact that both mothers and fathers in leave-sharing families see the father's breadwinning

TABLE 5. Mother's care responsibility and father's breadwinning responsibility as justifications for take-up of parental leave (%)

	Shared parental leave		Did not share parental leave	
	Mothers	Fathers	Mothers	Fathers
The mother should be primarily responsible for childcare				
Yes	37	16	47	32
No	55	79	46	60
Can't say	7	5	7	8
Total	100	100	100	100
N	(121)	(466)	(2668)	(823)
	X ² =28.9 DF=2 Sig=.000		X ² =62.4 DF=2 Sig=.000	
The father should be primarily responsible for breadwinning				
Yes	29	20	29	39
No	68	74	63	56
Can't say	3	6	8	5
Total	100	100	100	100
N	(120)	(469)	(2650)	(823)
	X ² =5.1 DF=2 Sig=.080		X ² =29.3 DF=2 Sig=.000	

³ As partial breastfeeding can continue after the mother has returned to work, we asked especially about the importance of full breastfeeding for not sharing parental leave between the parents. Half of the fathers as well as mothers said breastfeeding was a relevant aspect in the discussion about whether or not to share parental leave. Nine out of ten fathers who mentioned breastfeeding as a justification for parental leave said the mother wanted to full-breastfeed no longer than six months – breastfeeding was thus not an obstacle for a leave period taken by the father but more relevant for the timing of the father's period. In the mothers' data, the proportion of women who wanted to full-breastfeed longer than half a year was about one in ten.

responsibility as insignificant in relation to his take-up of parental leave. Despite of understanding childcare as her responsibility, mothers in leave-sharing families also see themselves as family breadwinners together with their spouse, and fathers share this conception of dual breadwinning. It probably is easier for the father to take parental leave when he is not expected to be the primary breadwinner.

In families where the mother took the whole parental leave period, parental responsibilities are more gendered than in the sharing families (Table 5). Conceptions of separate parental responsibilities are gendered in two ways. First, mothercare and father's breadwinning are more common justifications for parental leave. Second, the conceptions of mothers and fathers in these families are more different than in the sharing families. One in three fathers but half of the mothers emphasize mothercare, while two of five fathers but one in three mothers think the father's breadwinning responsibility was a relevant justification for the take-up of parental leave.

Some parents – about one in fifteen – were confused about the justifications and could not say whether there had been any connection between possible conceptions of the mother's care responsibility or the father's breadwinning responsibility, and actual parental leave practices in their family. In all families, each parent reported their own gendered responsibility as more important in relation to parental leave than the other parent's gendered responsibility. This "self-centered" understanding is to some extent self-evident as each person is best aware of their own ideas, values and motivations – but it may also reflect a lack of communication in families around parental responsibilities. The question of communication is further discussed in chapter 6 in relation to negotiations in the family.

As was seen in relation to general attitudes towards sharing parental leave between mothers and fathers, actual take-up patterns and experiences of sharing parental leave with one's spouse are significant for the conceptions related to gendered parental responsibilities (Table 6). Mothercare ideology – the mother's primary role as a carer – and male breadwinner ideology – the father's primacy in providing materially for his family – are however shared only by some parents of young children while others refuse them in their own family life. Parents who have shared parental leave are less likely to report the mother's primacy in childcare as a justification for parental leave in their family, regardless of their socio-economic background. It seems clear that in these families, the father's parental leave period has not been understood as a threat for mothercare, but rather as a complement for it. In practice, the mother's primacy in leave-sharing families may mean that she has taken the first and longer period of leave, and the father takes the latter, shorter part of it.

Socio-economic aspects are, however more relevant for the justifications used in relation to one's own choices than they are for general attitudes. Among fathers, those with only one child are less likely to report the mother's primacy in childcare

TABLE 6. Mother's primacy in childcare as a justification for parental leave (logistic regression)¹⁾

	The mother should be primarily responsible for childcare					
	Mothers			Fathers		
	B	Sig	Exp(B)	B	Sig	Exp(B)
Is under 30	.276	.002	1.318	-.018	.932	.982
Has one child	-.070	.436	.932	-.453	.006	.636
Has an academic degree	-.449	.000	.638	.040	.397	1.04
Is in blue-collar or lower white-collar position	-.017	.833	.983	-.107	.529	.898
Income before child less than 10t FIM/month	.004	.972	1.00	-.093	.576	.911
Father took parental leave	-.442	.025	.643	-.910	.000	.403
Constant	-.091	.535	.913	-.590	.003	.554
	X ² =40.5 DF=6			X ² =43.2 DF=6		
	Sig=.000 R ² =.020			Sig=.000 R ² =.057		
(N)	(2706)			(1093)		

1) In the model related to mothercare, the dependent variable gets value 1 when the respondent has reported the primacy of the mother as a justification of parental leave practices in his/her own family, and 0 when he/she has replied "no" or "can't say". The coefficient (B) taps the effect of each independent variable (coded as 1=yes, 0=no) on the likelihood that the dependent variable takes place. The bigger the absolute value of the coefficient is, the stronger is the effect. This effect is statistically significant i.e. not happening by chance, if the test value (Sig) is smaller than .05. The change in the odds ratio Exp(B) shows how much the likelihood of the dependent variable changes if the value of the independent variable grows by one unit.

than those with two or more children. When the first child is born, parents may hold expectations of shared care responsibility which are later realised as difficult to live up to. Thus, mothercare is emphasised more with the second or the third child regardless of parents' age or education level. Mothers with a higher education level are less likely to report this justification than the less educated mothers, while younger mothers are more likely than older ones to emphasize mothercare as a justification for the take-up parental leave. The differences in mothercare ideology among mothers may reflect the fact mothers with higher education level have better employment possibilities than young mothers with less education, and they have often taken shorter parental and child care leave periods (Lammi-Taskula 2004a).

When breadwinning is understood as mainly the father's responsibility, it can be seen as an obstacle for his parental leave. Taking leave from paid employment could be a risk for not only present income level but also for future career prospects. Among both mothers and fathers of young children, male breadwinner ideology was related to several socio-economic aspects (Table 7). Parents with only one child rejected the idea of the father's breadwinner responsibility as a justification for (not) taking parental leave more often than those with two or more children. The first child seems to be such an important life change that different parental responsibilities – care as well as breadwinning – are often understood as a shared between mothers and fathers rather than separated according to gender.

TABLE 7. Father's primacy in breadwinning as a justification for parental leave (logistic regression)¹⁾

	The father should be primarily responsible for breadwinning					
	Mothers			Fathers		
	B	Sig	Exp(B)	B	Sig	Exp(B)
Is under 30	.315	.001	1.37	.895	.000	2.448
Has one child	-.364	.001	.695	-.444	.004	.641
Has an academic degree	-1.02	.000	.361	-.110	.020	.896
Is in blue-collar or lower white-collar position	-.182	.044	.834	-.217	.176	.805
Income before child less than 10t FIM/month	-.904	.001	.405	-.210	.187	.811
Father took parental leave	.031	.886	1.031	-.942	.000	.390
Constant	.235	.424	1.265	-.078	.677	.925
	X ² =124.1 DF=6			X ² =79.3 DF=6		
	Sig=.000 R ² =.065			Sig=.000 R ² =.098		
(N)	(2690)			(1092)		

1) In the model related to breadwinning responsibility, the dependent variable gets value 1 when the respondent has reported the father's primary breadwinner position as a justification of parental leave practices in his/her own family, and 0 when he/she has replied "no" or "can't say".

However, younger parents, especially young fathers were more likely than those over 30 to emphasize the father's breadwinning responsibility. This may be related to young women's weaker position in the labour market: compared to men in the same age group, women under 30 have more often temporary work contracts and their income level is lower than men's (Pulkkinen 2005). With the mother's precarious situation and insecurity, the father's employment may indeed be quite important for fulfilling the material needs of young families.

Higher education level is related to ideas of shared breadwinning responsibility: regardless of actual take-up patterns, mothers and fathers with an academic degree were less likely than those with lower education level to report that the father's breadwinning responsibility had been a decisive factor for the take-up pattern of parental leave in their family. Among mothers, also the occupational position and income level are significant for the conceptions of how the breadwinning responsibility should be shared in their family. Women with a higher education level can be expected to hold white collar positions as experts or managers and have higher income level than other women, and thus be more willing to share family breadwinning responsibility with their spouse. However, the mothers' reports show the opposite: mothers in blue-collar or lower white-collar positions, as well as those with a lower income level are less likely to think their spouse's breadwinning responsibility has much to do with the take-up patterns of parental leave in their family. This may mean that other aspects are more important for them – such as their own care responsibility – or that they see themselves as important breadwinners for the family despite of rather modest income opportunities.

Taking the parent’s age, education, position and income as well as the number of children into account, gendered understandings of breadwinning as related to parental leave remain clear only among leave-taking fathers. Fathers who took some parental leave themselves were less likely to report their provider role as having anything to do with the family’s choices of sharing parental leave. Among mothers, the father’s take-up of leave was not a significant aspect for the likelihood of reporting male breadwinner ideology as a justification for leave practices. This may mean that mothers do not always share with their spouses the idea of his (higher) pay check as an excuse for not taking parental leave.

We have seen that general attitudes towards parental leave – supporting the prevailing practice of mothercare or encouraging more fathers to take leave – are not mutually exclusive and various combinations of support and critique are possible. This is true also for the gendered justifications of parental leave reported in relation to one’s own family life. Conceptions of gendered parental responsibilities can be combined in several different ways; mothers and fathers may agree with separate care responsibility but shared breadwinning responsibility, or vice versa. For some parents, both justifications have been relevant, and other parents none of them.

The conception of clearly separate responsibilities for mothers and fathers – the mother’s care responsibility combined with the father’s breadwinning responsibility – was not very common among the parents of young children. It was reported by one in five mothers and one in six fathers as related to the decisions made in their family about parental leave (Table 8). In the following analysis, I will call these parents “separatists”. The most common pattern was that neither the mother’s care responsibility nor the father’s breadwinning responsibility were important as justifications for parental leave; this was reported by half of the fathers and four in ten mothers. Respondents falling into this group will be called “sharers”.

TABLE 8. Combinations of mother’s and father’s responsibilities as justifications for parental leave (%)

The mother should be primarily responsible for childcare	The father should be primarily responsible for breadwinning					
	Mothers			Fathers		
	Yes	No	Can’t say	Yes	No	Can’t say
Yes	22	20	4	16	9	1
No	5	40	1	14	51	2
Can’t say	2	3	2	2	3	2
Total	100			100		
N	(2732)			(1270)		
	X ² = 618.5 Sig.=.000			X ² = 280.3 Sig.=.000		

One in five mothers – but only one in ten fathers – explained their family’s parental leave practice with the mother’s care responsibility but not the father’s breadwinning responsibility (Table 8). As these parents can be interpreted to attach a double responsibility to mothers, they will be called “mother’s double”. One in seven fathers – but only one in twenty mothers – reported the father’s breadwinning responsibility as important but not the mother’s care responsibility. I will call these respondents “father’s double” as they can be interpreted to see both childcare and breadwinning as the father’s responsibility. One in ten parents were more or less confused about the relation of ideas and practices in this respect and replied “can’t say” to one or both statements.

Again, the groups based on various combinations of justifications – separatists, sharers, mother’s double and father’s double – need to be looked in relation to the actual take-up patterns of parental leave in order to avoid bias due to the father’s sample. The analysis (Table 9) shows that fathers who have taken parental leave – perhaps only for two weeks – are more often sharers than other fathers, i.e. they reject the idea of separate, gendered parental responsibilities. Three of four fathers who took parental leave, compared to half of those who did not, reported that neither the father’s breadwinning responsibility nor the mother’s childcare responsibility have been relevant justifications for the take-up of parental leave in their family. Among mothers, the take-up pattern of parental leave was not significantly related to the combinations of gendered justifications.

In both leave-sharing and non-sharing families, fathers were more often sharers than mothers (Table 9). In families where the mother took the whole parental leave, mothers justified their family’s decisions of parental leave by separate responsibilities somewhat more often than fathers. It was also equally common for them to emphasize their double responsibility: they were primary carers, but shared breadwinning responsibility with their spouse. The gender difference was especially clear among those who actually shared parental leave: three of four fathers but only about half of mothers were sharers. One in four mothers in leave-sharing families reported separatist justifications and one in eight justifications related to their own double burden. In both cases, the mothers emphasise their own care responsibility as relevant for the take-up of parental leave in their own family.

Although fathers in the non-sharing families were less often sharers, one in five was a separatist who justified their spouse’s take-up of leave by both her care responsibility and his own breadwinning responsibility. One in five fathers who did not take parental leave themselves were in the “father’s double” group, i.e. they understood themselves as not only breadwinners but also as carers. The group of fathers in the non-sharing families who reported their spouse’s double responsibility as relevant was also quite small, only one in ten. This may reflect the fathers’ awareness as well as possible experiences of care responsibility that can also be

TABLE 9. Gendered justifications for parental leave, according to take-up of parental leave (%)

	Mothers		Fathers	
	Partner took parental leave		Took parental leave	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Separatist	24	25	10	22
Mother's double	15	23	7	12
Father's double	6	6	10	19
Sharer	55	46	73	48
Total	100	100	100	100
(N)	(107)	(2280)	(424)	(712)
	X ² =5.3 DF=3 Sig=.152		X ² =65.1 DF=3 Sig=.000	
Gender differences:	Shared X ² =25.7 DF=3 Sig=.000			
	Did not share X ² =123.7 DF=3 Sig=.000			

actualised as combined to paid employment – outside working hours in the evenings, weekends etc. – rather than by taking a leave period from work.

To piece together different relations between general attitudes towards parental leave, actual take-up practices and the justifications of these practices, a logistic regression analysis modelling the likelihood of shared rather than separate parental responsibilities is presented (Table 10). The model predicts the likelihood of the respondent being a “sharer” when gender, general attitudes and take-up as well as age, education and the number of children is simultaneously taken into account. This allows one to find out how significant each aspect actually is.

The analysis shows that gender does not predict the likelihood of being a sharer when the respondent’s take-up of leave and the general attitudes are taken into account. Also, when socio-economic aspects – age, education and the number of children – are controlled, mothers and fathers are even more similar in their justifications. Thus, mothers and fathers are equally likely to reject conceptions of separate responsibilities whenever they are in similar situations or positions. For example, if we have a mother and a father who are both over 30 years old and have an academic degree; both have one child only and both think the present practice of parental leave is good, they are likely to report similar justifications for their own parental leave practice.

Those who have pro-sharing general attitudes towards parental leave – i.e. who think the prevailing practice where mothers take most parental leave is not so good, and increasing fathers’ take-up is necessary – are more likely than others to reject the relevance of separate parental responsibilities in their own family. For example, if we have two fathers who are both over 30 and have two children, both

TABLE 10. No gendered justifications for parental leave (logistic regression)¹⁾

	B	Sig.	Exp(B)
Gender (woman=1, man=0)	-.057	.430	.944
Shared parental leave with partner	.521	.000	1.684
Pro-sharing attitude towards par. leave	.472	.000	1.604
Is under 30	-.148	.034	.862
Has one child	.309	.000	1.362
Has an academic degree	.345	.000	1.411
Constant	.056	.421	1.058

$X^2= 132.3$ DF=6
 Sig=.000 $R^2=.037$
 (N=4695)

1) In the model related to lack of gendered justification, the dependent variable gets value 1 when the respondent has reported neither mother's care responsibility nor father's breadwinning responsibility as justifications of prenatal leave practices in his/her own family, and 0 when he/she has reported one or both as justifications.

with no academic degree, it is more probable that the father who is anti-sharing reports separate responsibilities as a justification for (not) taking parental leave, whereas the pro-sharing father may report other kinds of explanations for the take-up pattern in his own family.

When other aspects are controlled, parents older than 30 years of age are more likely than others to be sharers; this is true also for those who have one child. For example, if we have two young mothers under 30 years of age with no academic degree, who both are pro-sharing in their general attitudes towards parental leave, it is the mother with three children rather than the mother with one child that is more likely to report separate responsibilities as a justification for parental leave in her family. Or, if we have two mothers with three children, both with an academic degree; and both are pro-sharing i.e. criticize the prevailing practice and wish that fathers took more parental leave, the older mother is less likely to report separate parental responsibilities in her own family.

3.4 Fathers as visiting care assistants

Parents of young children are surrounded with social expectations and normative ideas about gendered parental responsibilities they should bear as mothers and fathers; each parent is constructed as more suitable for certain tasks and less suitable for others. Parents are more or less aware of these gendered and gendering expectations when they make arrangements at home and at work to provide care as well as necessary material conditions for their child.

The symbolic gender relations include ideas of capacities and responsibilities related to parenthood – what mothers and fathers are expected to do and what they can or cannot do in certain situations and contexts. For example, as it is women who are physically able to give birth to children and to breastfeed them, they are categorised as “naturally” more suitable and morally responsible for the care of children than men, not only during the child’s first months but for several years. In relation to motherhood, fatherhood is thus understood as secondary parenthood, perhaps “shared” but more often “assisting”, sometimes “weak” or “absent” (Hutunen 2001, 153).

Fathers in Finland are provided possibilities to take paternity leave as well as to share parental leave with the mother of their child. Still, the low compensation level and inflexibility of the leave scheme do not promote fathercare to the same extent as in Sweden, Norway and Iceland. During the one to three weeks’ paternity leave, it is possible for the father to start creating a relationship with the newborn child and share childcare responsibility on a temporary basis. As the leave period is quite short, the father’s position during paternity leave could be characterized as one of a “visiting care assistant”. Instead of providing fathers with an individual, non-transferable parental leave quota, the negotiations and decisions about sharing parental leave are left for parents to make. This means the primacy of the mother in childcare usually is reproduced, which again puts more pressure to the father’s breadwinning responsibility.

Despite the general “in-principle” acceptance of shared parental care responsibility, the “hegemony of mothercare” can be found in the attitudes and conceptions reported by leave-taking parents of young children in our survey. Especially for the mothers, their primacy in childcare is important. A majority of the mothers have taken the whole parental leave period themselves, and compared to the fathers, they more often supported the prevailing practice – that mothers in general take most parental leave – as well as more often reported separate responsibilities – the mother’s childcare responsibility and the father’s breadwinning responsibility – as a justification for the take-up pattern of parental leave in their family. However, when actual take-up patterns as well as various socio-economic aspects were simultaneously taken into account, mothers and fathers were equally likely to report gendered justifications for parental leave.

Conceptions of categorically separate, naturalised parental responsibilities were not as common justifications for the actualisation of parental leave possibilities among the parents of young children as were each parent’s ideas of their own gendered responsibilities. Each parent was more likely to report their own gendered responsibility as related to the take-up of parental leave, than the spouse’s. For mothers, their childcare responsibility was more important than the father’s breadwinning responsibility. For the leave-taking fathers, the conception of being primarily responsible for family breadwinning was more important than the

mother's care responsibility. Conceptions of the father's breadwinning responsibility may not necessarily reflect the actual economic situation of the family; it may be equally important for the father's masculine identity as for the managing of daily livelihood. Similarly, childcare may be an important part of the mother's feminine identity as she anticipates the expectations of good mothering – expectations that do not seem to be declared so much by the fathers.

Mothers and fathers do not always act according to expectations, they may also deliberately want to change ideas of gender relations and participate in producing new kinds of parental practices that they find more suitable for their own situation. The fathers in our data have taken more parental leave than fathers in general, and they support the conception of shared rather than separate parental responsibilities. It seems that sharing parental leave is more often understood as a reflection of symmetric gender relations by the fathers than by the mothers. Fathers who take parental leave may see themselves as equal carers for their child, while mothers who have shared part of parental leave still think they are primary carers.

Still, many of leave-taking fathers think the mother should be primarily responsible for childcare. When one parent is seen as being the primary carer, the other parent's everyday activity may range from complete devotion to paid employment to intensive "helping" of the primary carer. Thus, a normative construction of mothercare can be meaningfully relevant for parental leave arrangements in different ways. The conception of hegemonic mothercare does not mean that part of parental leave could not be taken by the father; it may for example be relevant for the timing of each parent's leave period.

Also the father's breadwinning responsibility can be understood and actualised in different ways. The conception of the father's primary breadwinning responsibility need not always be a barrier for his parental leave. For young fathers and mothers, the father's breadwinning responsibility was more important in relation to the take-up of parental leave than for older parents. Young families as well as those with many children often struggle with economic problems, and because of gendered income differences, the father's breadwinning role is emphasized. Consequently, the mother's care responsibility is also seen as more relevant in these families. Gendered conceptions of parenthood are thus related to more general socio-economic patterns. The male breadwinner ideology in young families is an example of how ideologies are based on practical or structural aspects.⁴

⁴ It should be noted that the gendered conceptions and attitudes related to motherhood and fatherhood presented in this chapter only provide a partial picture of the alternative ways of understanding parental responsibilities. In the survey questionnaire, the respondents were asked to respond to the most usual justifications regarding parental leave. The analysis showed some diversities and complexities related to these justifications. However, we did not include such statements in the questionnaire as "the father should be primarily responsible for childcare" or "the mother should be primarily responsible for breadwinning". Some respondents might have appreciated these aspects as relevant in their families. Moreover, as so many parents of young children reported separate responsibilities as not relevant, they probably would have responded positively to a statement "childcare as well as breadwinning should be both parents' responsibility".

4 Doing responsibilities: division of labour

The division of labour between women and men – who does what and how often – is “doing gender” in practice. Gender is done in everyday life; in organizing various activities to reflect or express gender according to normative conceptions of what is appropriate for one’s sex category (West & Zimmerman 2002, 4-5). The heterosexual nuclear family is the one institution in which most of us display our gender on a daily basis in relation to the rules and behaviours expected of us as women and men (Risman 1998, 4-6).

The symbolic gender relations – conceptions of women’s and men’s or mothers’ and fathers’ responsibilities and capabilities – are actualised in the gendered division of paid and unpaid work within family life. On the other hand, the outcome of this actualisation – the organisation and allocation of tasks and responsibilities between women and men in families – reproduces or challenges conceptions of gender relations and affects the status and possibilities of women and men also outside family life, especially in working life.

In this chapter, I will focus on the actual practices and look at the gendered division of labour as reported by leave-taking mothers and fathers in families with young children. In heterosexual families with young children, two main aspects of the division of labour between female and male parents are the take-up of leave from paid employment in order to take care of a child; and the division of unpaid household tasks (Ahrne & Roman 1997, 31-36). The take-up and length of paternity and parental leave by fathers is analysed with focus on possible socio-economic differences in take-up patterns, as well as in relation to the parent’s gender ideology. The division of labour between mothers and fathers in unpaid housework is explored, as well as the potential links between sharing parental leave and sharing daily housework tasks.

4.1 Take-up of paternity and parental leave

The possibilities for sharing the care of young children between the parents are quite extensive on the institutional level, but in practice parental leave schemes have not had any radical impact on the division of labour in families in Finland. The short paternity leave has become very popular during the 25 years of its exist-

ence; today, more than two thirds of fathers spend a week or two at home together with their partner when a baby is born to them (Kela 2003). The longer parental and child care leave – which require taking full responsibility of childcare and need to be negotiated with the partner – have been taken by only few men. Compared to the other Nordic countries, the father's quota has not resulted in high take-up rates in Finland.¹

As fathers mainly take short leave periods, their share of all parental leave days is low. In 2002, before the new bonus scheme, fathers took 5% of all leave days. The average length of all leave (paternity and parental) among fathers was only 16 days i.e. two and a half weeks²; paternity leave periods taken by fathers were in average 14 days and parental leave periods 64 days.³ Mothers on the other hand took over 200 days of maternity and parental leave, and most mothers continued on child care leave after their parental leave period at least for some months. (Kela 2003.)

In the fathers' questionnaire, we asked "*Did you take paternity leave with your child born in 1999 (6–18 days while the mother is on maternity or parental leave?*" and "*Did you take parental leave (when the child was about 4–9 months old)?*". By specifying the definition of paternity and parental leave we wanted to make sure the respondent knew what type of leave the question was addressing, as the various types of leave are often mixed in everyday discourse. The alternative responses were "No" and "Yes", and in case the father answered yes he was asked to give the number of paternity leave days and/or parental leave weeks he had taken.

The general picture of the gendered division of labour between mothers and fathers is reflected also in our data. A majority of fathers in the data have taken paternity leave, but only a small group (8%) of them were "housefathers" at the time of the survey i.e. paid work outside the home was not their main activity, while more than half of the mothers in the data were "housemothers". A third of the "housefathers" were on paternity leave, a fourth on parental leave and one in ten on child care leave; the rest were unemployed or students, so their status was not based on childcare.

Previous research in the Nordic countries has shown that parental leave is shared between parents more often among those with a high education level. Especially fathers with a university degree as well as those whose partner has university degree have taken parental leave more often than others (Säntti 1990; Christoffersen 1990; Brandth & Överli 1998; Nyman & Pettersson 2002; Takala 2005).

1 In Norway, the introduction of the quota resulted in a take-up by three of four entitled fathers (Brandth & Överli 1998); in Sweden only one in four fathers have during a five-year period not taken any parental leave (Nyman & Pettersson 2002); and in Iceland more than 80 % of fathers took their month of parental leave during the first year of the new father's quota (Gislason 2004).

2 Parental benefits are not paid on Sundays; 6 days (Monday to Saturday) = one week.

3 In 2003, when the new "bonus-quota" was introduced, the average length of paternity leave among fathers was 14 days and parental leave 37 days; in addition, fathers took in average 12 days of the bonus paternity leave. Thus, the bonus resulted in shorter parental leave periods taken by more fathers.

The short paternity leave has, however become an “everyman’s mass movement” in Finland (Lammi-Taskula 1998). Thus, it can be expected to be taken by men from all socio-economic and occupational groups.

In the other Nordic countries, take-up rates of parental leave by fathers employed in different sectors have during the past decade shown that men employed in the public sector have taken parental leave more often than those employed in the private sector (Christoffersen 1990; Riksförsäkringsverket 1993; Brandth and Överli 1998). This is the case also in Finland: fathers who have taken parental leave are more often than those who have taken only paternity leave employed in public administration, education and research, or in public social and health care (Takala 2005, 9). According to the Work Environment Study in Finland 2003, those employed in the state sector have more often experienced encouragement at the workplace for men to take leave than those employed in the private sector (Lehto & Sutela 2004, 53).

Due to the sample selection of our study (see Appendix 1), almost all respondents (93%) in the fathers’ data have taken paternity leave, and also parental leave has been taken by a bigger proportion (38%) of fathers than in Finland in general (2% in 2002 when the survey was conducted). Almost all men in our material who took parental leave have also taken paternity leave – only 5% took only parental leave but not paternity leave. In order to analyse socio-economic patterns of the take-up of paternity leave, we must turn to the mothers’ data which provides information on a group of men (partners) who have not taken any leave. The father’s data provides possibilities for comparisons of different socio-economic groups among fathers regarding the length of paternity leave, as well as the take-up and length of parental leave. It is also possible to analyse the configurations of conceptions, attitudes and take-up practices in different groups among fathers.

The analysis of the mothers’ data supports the assumption of paternity leave as an “everyman’s mass movement”. According to the mothers, their partner’s education level or income did not make much difference for his take-up of paternity leave. According to national statistics on parental benefit receivers, fathers who take paternity leave are younger than fathers on parental leave (Takala 2005, 5). Also in our data, parental leave was taken more often by older than by younger fathers, while younger mothers’ partners had more often taken paternity leave (Table 11).⁴

According to the mothers, paternity leave was most common among partners employed in expert positions and somewhat less common both among blue-collar partners and those in manager positions. Paternity leave was taken more by

⁴ Note that the figures presented here of the take-up of **parental leave** provide relative rather than representative information about the take-up of parental leave; interpretations about the take-up rate of parental leave in different groups of men can not be made on the national level. The national take-up rate of parental leave among fathers is considerably lower in all socio-economic groups.

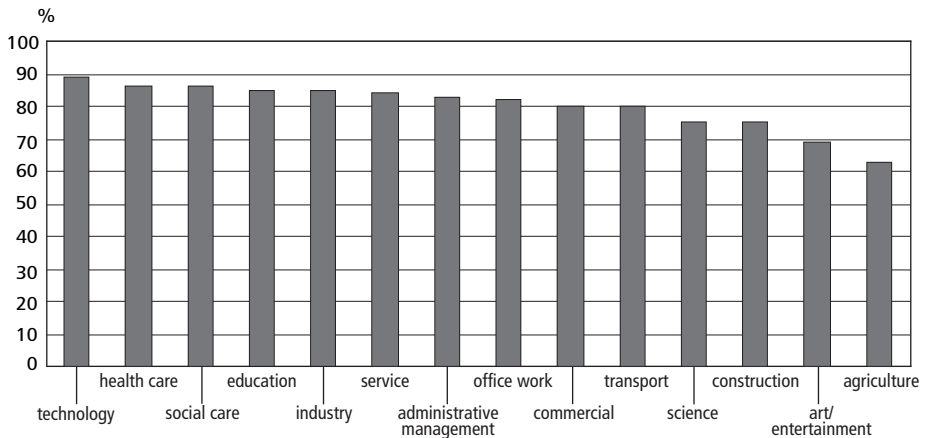


FIGURE 2. Take-up of paternity leave, according to the branch of employment (mother's account)

partners employed in the public sector – state or local government – rather than private sector enterprises. However, even though paternity leave was common especially among fathers employed in female-dominated, public sector branches such as social and health care and education, the take-up rate was highest in the male-dominated technology branch which is a common employer of male employees (Figure 2).

This is in accordance with the national statistics which show that a third of all fathers who took paternity leave in 2003 were employed in industrial work, and one in five in technical work, both typical male-dominated branches (Takala 2005, 8). Partners employed in agriculture, art, entertainment or construction had taken paternity leave least often. Men working in these branches may often be entrepreneurs or free-lancers, who seem to find it more difficult to take a leave.

Although there is a strong correlation between the partners' education levels⁵, it was rather the mother's than the father's education that was significantly related to the father's take-up of paternity leave (Table 11). Mothers with a university degree reported more often than those with a lower education level that the father of their child had taken paternity leave. Also the mother's income level was related to her partner's take-up of paternity leave, rather than the father's own income. Paternity leave was more common in families where the mother's net income was more rather than less than 10 000 FIM (1 700 €) per month. However, this income level was quite rare among mothers of young children.⁶

5 The correlation between the respondent's and his/her partner's professional education was .43 in the father's data and .45 in the mother's data. In 40% of the mothers' and 50 % of the fathers' families, both parents had a college or university degree.

6 The gross average income in Finland of female employees was 1 972 € and of male employees 2 412 € per month in 2002; the average disposable income of all employees was 1 820 € per month (Statistics Finland, Income statistics).

Women in Finland have a higher education level than men especially in younger cohorts, but in our data the fathers (who are a selected sample and do not represent the general population of fathers) are more highly educated than the mothers. Compared to men, women's high education level less often guarantees a high income level. In more than half of the families (fathers' data 61%, mothers' data 66%), the father had a higher education as well as income level compared to his partner. About one in four (28% / 25%) said the mother was more educated than the father but had a lower income, and only about one in twenty (6% / 4%) reported that the mother had a better education as well as income level. Thus, in addition to social divisions on a general level of gender relations, it is necessary to include different patterns of education and income differences between partners in the analysis.

Take-up of paternity leave was more common in families where the mother's education level was higher than her partner's than in other families; it was also more common in families where the mother earned less than her partner. With young women's high education level and the persistent pay gap in Finland, this kind of families – mother's higher education level but lower earnings – are probably getting more and more typical in Finland. A "small dose of fathercare" (Leira 2002) produced by the actualisation of paternity leave possibilities has been integrated as a "normal" part of this gender configuration.

The mother's income and education level were relevant also for the father's take-up of parental leave. Here, also the father's own education level played a role: those with a university degree had more often taken parental leave than other fathers. The higher the father's occupational position, the more common it was for him to take parental leave. In other words, blue-collar fathers took less parental leave than white-collar fathers; managers however somewhat less often than men in expert positions.

Again, the public sector seems like a more family-friendly employer in comparison to the private sector: Men employed in the public sector had taken parental leave more often than those employed in the private sector. The mother's sector of employment was not related to her partner's parental leave any more than it was related to his take-up of paternity leave.

The father's own income level did not make a difference for his take-up of parental leave as such, but the relative income in comparison to the partner's did. Unlike was the case for paternity leave, parental leave was taken more often by those fathers who earned less than their partners than by those who earned more than the mother of their child.

TABLE 11. Take-up of paternity and parental leave, according to socio-economic position (%)

	Mothers partner took paternity leave		Fathers took at least two weeks of parental leave	
	%	(N)	%	(N)
Age				
Under 30	79	(852)	25	(314)
30–39	81	(1828)	34	(929)
40–	71*	(160)	35**	(175)
Father's education				
No professional education	76	(208)	20	(111)
Vocational school or course	79	(1187)	26	(536)
College	83	(873)	33	(453)
University	83	(468)	46***	(305)
Mother's education				
No professional education	68	(244)	24	(75)
Vocational school or course	77	(772)	25	(287)
College	81	(1360)	27	(543)
University	84***	(512)	50***	(445)
Mother's education higher than father's				
Yes	82	(869)	36	(481)
No	78*	(2058)	33	(932)
Father's occupational position				
Blue-collar	84	(1122)	28	(606)
Lower white-collar	87	(254)	32	(128)
Expert	90	(314)	43	(235)
Manager	82(*)	(420)	40***	(230)
Father's net income/month before the birth of the child				
10 000 FIM or less	80	(1933)	31	(1073)
More than 10 000 FIM	83	(748)	37	(315)
Mother's net income/month before the birth of the child				
10 000 FIM or less	79	(2667)	33	(1226)
More than 10 000 FIM	84***	(167)	49***	(127)
Mother's net income before the child higher than father's				
Yes	73	(200)	48	(161)
No	80***	(2727)	32***	(1252)
Father's sector of employment				
Public	87	(1826)	45	(307)
Private	82*	(424)	30***	(849)
Mother's sector of employment				
Public	84	(709)	35	(441)
Private	80	(929)	33	(382)
All	79	(2927)	34	(1413)

(*) p<.07, * p<.05; ** p<.01, *** p<.001

4.2 The length of paternity and parental leave

Take-up patterns of paternity and parental leave show one dimension of the division of labour between mothers and fathers: how the care of a young child on the one hand, and paid work on the other are combined between the parents. At the time of the data collection – before the introduction of the new two-week bonus paternity leave – the length of paternity leave could vary from one day to three weeks. Paternity leave is a very short period and may not change the division of labour much as both parents are at home at the same time. The longer paternity leave is, the more time there is for a shared experience of life with a new family member to develop. This kind of sharing in the very beginning also provides a possibility to discuss and try different ways of dividing practical care tasks between the parents. Three weeks gives the father more opportunities to learn basic baby care than one week. Parental leave is not necessarily much longer than paternity leave, since it can be taken for a minimum of two weeks. The maximum is about half a year. As only one parent at a time can take parental leave, the care responsibility is much more comprehensive. The longer parental leave is, the more individual experiences about parenting one gets.

In our data, fathers reported somewhat longer paternity leave periods than mothers. The paternity leave periods reported by mothers as taken by their partner varied between 2 to 18 days, the average length reported was 13 days (about two weeks)⁷. Fathers had taken 15 days of paternity leave in average, ranging from 3 to 18 days. The parental leave periods taken by fathers were usually quite short. The mean length of parental leave taken by the father was ten weeks in the fathers' data and nine weeks in the mothers' data. In the fathers' data, 40% took no longer than one month and 58% no more than two months of parental leave. In the mothers' data, if the partner had taken parental leave, in three of four cases the leave period was not longer than two months.

A longer paternity leave was related to the take-up of parental leave by fathers as well as to a longer parental leave period. Those fathers who took all three weeks of paternity leave took also parental leave more often (40%) than those who had taken a shorter paternity leave (27%). Fathers who took all three weeks of paternity leave took in average 11.2 weeks of parental leave.

Three-week paternity leave periods were most common among fathers employed in the health care and social care sectors where about 80% had taken the maximum length of paternity leave (Figure 3). In the male-dominated branches of industry, technology and transportation, longer paternity leave periods were not as common. Fathers employed in the art and entertainment branch, and those

7 Paternity and parental benefit is paid 6 days per week. Thus, 6 days makes one week, 12 days two weeks and 18 days 3 weeks of paternity leave. 25 days makes one month of parental leave.

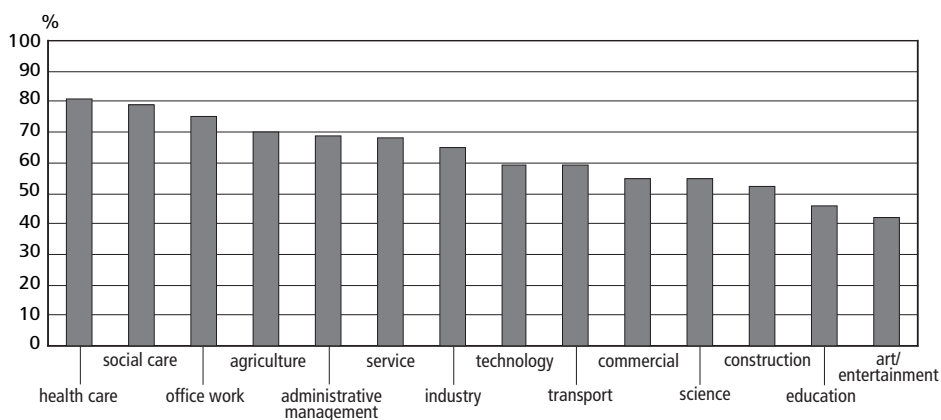


FIGURE 3. Three weeks' paternity leave, according to the branch of employment (father's account)

employed in education took the shortest paternity leave periods. While it may be easier to find a replacement for a teacher than to a performing artist, schoolchildren or students may not appreciate a three-week absence of their teacher.

The socio-economic aspects of the length of paternity leave were somewhat different from those of parental leave (Table 12). The length of paternity leave was related to the father's individual situation whereas the length of parental leave – among those fathers who took parental leave – was also up to the relational position of parents. The father's age as well as his income level and the sector of employment were all significantly related to the length of his paternity leave. Fathers in the age group 30–39 had taken somewhat longer paternity leave periods than those in their twenties or forties, although the differences were not very considerable. Two of three fathers in their thirties took a three week paternity leave, compared to about half of fathers in their twenties. Perhaps older fathers have a more stable economic and professional situation than younger fathers who may still be students or in temporary employment. Thus, older fathers can both afford a longer paternity leave as well as have a better position in negotiating it with the employer. On the other hand, they may have advanced on their career to positions with more responsibility, which could make it more difficult to take a longer leave. However, there were no significant differences in the length of paternity leave between blue-collar and white-collar employees.

Fathers earning a relatively small income as well as those employed in the public sector took more often all three weeks of paternity leave, while those with a higher income level or employment in the private sector took more often shorter paternity leave periods. As the public sector is a female-dominated labour market, the take-up of childcare-related leave is quite common, and the leave periods taken by women are long. This may make a difference in the workplace culture so that

it is easier also for fathers to put their family ahead of their work and take more than the average two weeks of paternity leave. Income level in the public sector is lower than in the private sector, thus cultural aspects may also explain why lower earnings are related to longer paternity leave periods.

The length of the father's parental leave was also related to his income level, but not to the sector of employment (Table 12). Rather than the father's age, his education level and especially his relative education level in comparison to the partner played a role here. Fathers with a lower education level than the partner's took more often longer parental leave periods than those with a similar or higher education level. Long parental leave periods were also more typical among fathers who had earned less than 10 000 FIM per month before the birth of the child, and whose partner had earned more than him. Longer parental leave periods were more usual among fathers with vocational or college education than among fathers with university degree. For the academically educated fathers, it was most typical to take one to two months of parental leave. On the other hand, short parental leave periods were also more common among fathers with no professional education, relatively low income level and a more precarious position in the labour market⁸. Fathers employed in higher occupational positions had taken shorter parental leave periods than those who were employed as blue-collar or lower white-collar workers. An expert or managerial position allows perhaps more flexibility and autonomy in working hours, but the limits of this flexibility are met when absence from work is longer than the normal annual summer holiday period of about one month.

The number of children in the family did not make much difference for the length of either paternity or parental leave taken by the father. Those fathers who had been present in the birth of their child took somewhat more often than others all three weeks of paternity leave, but the differences were not statistically significant as the group of fathers who had not been present in childbirth was so small⁹.

Age, education, occupational position and income are all related to each other. In general, younger generations have higher education level than older generations; however those in their thirties have a more often graduated from higher education than those in their twenties. Those with a higher education level have in average a better position in the labour market or in the occupational hierarchy, i.e. they are more often in white-collar or managerial positions. Income level rises both with age and education as well as career development in the occupational hierarchy. (Naiset ja miehet Suomessa 2003.)

8 The correlation between net income before the child was born (a classified variable with a scale from 0 to 10) and occupational education (scale 1–4) was .28 ($p < .000$) among fathers. Fathers with no occupational education were more often unemployed, but on the other hand those with a university degree had more often a temporary work contract.

9 A majority of our respondents – 92% in the fathers' data and 88 % in the mothers' data – said the father was present in the birth of their child in 1999.

TABLE 12. Length of father's paternity and parental leave, according to socio-economic position (%)

	Length of paternity leave (weeks)				Length of parental leave (months)			
	1	2	3	total (N)	< 1	1–2	2 >	total (N)
All	10	29	61	100 (1272)	24	34	42	100 (532)
Age								
Under 30	10	35	55(*)	100 (172)	19	32	49	100 (63)
30–39	9	27	64	100 (842)	25	36	39	100 (347)
40–	12	31	57	100 (249)	26	28	46	100 (117)
Number of children								
One	11	30	59	100 (368)	29	33	38	100 (161)
Two or more	10	28	62	100 (904)	22	34	44	100 (371)
Father present in childbirth								
Yes	10	28	62	100 (1173)	24	35	42	100 (492)
No	13	33	54	100 (99)	30	23	48	100 (40)
Education								
No professional education	10	29	61	100 (92)	27	33	40 (*)	100 (33)
Vocational school or course	11	30	59	100 (460)	27	26	47	100 (160)
College	11	25	64	100 (267)	21	33	46	100 (174)
University	7	32	62	100 (295)	24	43	33	100 (159)
Father's education lower than partner's								
Yes	7	26	65	100 (428)	21	29	45 *	100 (188)
No	11	30	59	100 (844)	26	36	38	100 (344)
Net income/month before the birth of the child								
10 000 FIM or less	9	29	63 *	100 (920)	22	32	46 **	100 (375)
More than 10 000 FIM	14	30	56	100 (323)	31	37	32	100 (149)
Father's income lower than partner's								
Yes	7	24	70	100 (138)	18	44	38(*)	100 (79)
No	10	29	60	100 (1134)	25	32	43	100 (453)
Employed in the public sector								
Yes	6	23	71***	100 (285)	19	38	43	100 (150)
No	11	30	59	100 (987)	26	32	41	100 (382)
Occupational position								
Blue-collar	9	27	64	100 (550)	25	27	48 **	100 (195)
Lower white-collar	10	27	63	100 (118)	21	30	49	100 (47)
Expert	9	31	60	100 (219)	24	48	28	100 (110)
Manager	8	35	57	100 (217)	26	40	34	100 (104)

(*) p <.09, ** p <.01, * p <.05

TABLE 13. Take-up of maximum paternity leave (logistic regression)¹⁾

	The father took three weeks of paternity leave					
	Mothers			Fathers		
	B	Sig	Exp(B)	B	Sig	Exp(B)
Is under 30	-.037	.695	.964	-.522	.035	.593
Has one child	.074	.433	1.077	.091	.586	1.095
Has an academic degree	.298	.024	1.347	-.060	.350	.942
Partner has academic degree	-.180	.216	.835	.097	.073	1.102
Mother's education level higher than father's	.008	.934	1.008	.029	.888	1.030
Net income max 10 000 FIM/m	.338	.075	1.402	-.005	.979	.995
Partner's net income max 10 000 FIM/m	-.109	.294	.897	-.079	.776	.924
Mother's income level before the child higher than father's	-.421	.008	.657	.081	.756	1.084
Is in blue-collar or lower white-collar position	-.005	.995	.995	.251	.211	1.285
Partner in blue-collar or lower white-collar position	.452	.000	1.572	.272	.170	1.312
Father employed in the public sector	.477	.000	1.611	.491	.006	1.633
Father present in childbirth	.749	.000	2.116	.434	.125	1.544
Constant	-2.084	.000	.124	-.620	.124	.538
	X ² = 94.5 DF=12			X ² =25.9 DF=12		
	Sig=.000 R ² =.045			Sig=.011, R ² =.046 (Nagelkerke)		
	(N=2919)			(N=734)		

1) In the model, the dependent variable gets value 1 when the father has taken all three weeks of paternity leave and 0 when he has taken less or no paternity leave

With the help of logistic regression analysis, the above mentioned socio-economic aspects are looked at simultaneously so that the effect of each variable can be found by keeping other variables constant. It is thus possible to evaluate which aspects are the most relevant ones for the phenomenon we are interested in. As in the crosstabulations made from the fathers' data regarding the length of paternity leave, also the logistic regression model shows that fathers employed in the public sector are more likely to take the maximum length of paternity leave even when aspects like education, income and occupational position of each parent are controlled (Table 13).

A comparison of logistic regression models among fathers and mothers reveals some differences in the configurations of paternity leave. While the father's employment in the public sector is significantly related to the likelihood of a long

paternity leave both in the fathers' and in the mothers' data, an otherwise somewhat different picture is given by the two datasets. One aspect that is significant in the fathers' data but not in the mothers' data is the father's age: fathers in their twenties are less likely than older fathers to take a three-week paternity leave. Socio-economic aspects related to the mother's position – her education and income level – are significant in the mothers' data but not in the fathers' data. Among mothers, her academic education increases the likelihood of the partner's long paternity leave but her higher income level reduces it. The mothers' data also shows that partners who have been present in childbirth are twice as likely as others to take all three weeks of paternity leave. A respective likelihood is not significant in the fathers' data – probably because the number of fathers who did not participate in childbirth was so low among fathers.

Modeling the likelihood of the father's longer parental leave with the help of logistic regression method (Table 14) seems only relevant in the fathers' data where the number of respondents who have taken at least one month of parental leave is high enough. As leave sharing is less common among mothers, only one aspect – the father's sector of employment – seems relevant in predicting the likelihood of his longer parental leave. Compared to other partners, fathers employed in the public sector are almost twice as likely to take at least one month of parental leave irrespective of their age, the number of children, or their own or the mother's education or income level. The father's presence in childbirth seems also to be related to the length of the father's parental leave, but this aspect is not statistically significant enough.

In the fathers' data, the number of children in the family as well as aspects related to the child's mother are relevant for the likelihood of his longer parental leave (Table 14). The partner's academic degree increases, and her blue-collar or lower white collar occupational position decreases the likelihood of a parental leave period that is at least one month long. When other aspects are taken into account, fathers with only one child are more likely to take a longer parental leave than those with two or more children. Thus, if we have two 40-year old fathers who both went to vocational school and earn a modest income, and whose partners both have an academic degree and white collar position with a high income level, the father who has one child is more likely to take a minimum one month's parental leave than the one with two or more children, regardless of their participation in childbirth.

Despite the often mentioned argument of income differences between women and men, or negative economic consequences of the sharing parental leave between parents, the income level of neither the fathers nor the mothers is relevant for the take-up of a long parental leave period by the father, when other socio-economic aspects are taken into account. Although parental leave is taken more often

TABLE 14. Take-up of a long parental leave by fathers (logistic regression)¹⁾

	The father took at least one month of parental leave					
	Mothers			Fathers		
	B	Sig	Exp(B)	B	Sig	Exp(B)
Is under 30	-.229	.308	.795	-.283	.357	.753
Has one child	.337	.101	1.400	.369	.047	1.446
Has an academic degree	-.459	.139	.632	.050	.511	1.052
Partner has academic degree	.036	.911	1.037	.233	.000	1.263
Mother's education level higher than father's	.319	.145	1.375	.060	.815	1.062
Net income max 10 000 FIM/month	-.634	.089	.531	.362	.129	1.436
Partner's net income max 10 000 FIM/m	-.223	.341	.800	-.113	.704	.893
Mother's income level before the child higher than father's	.075	.821	1.078	-.082	.771	.921
Is in blue-c/lower white-collar position	.106	.594	1.112	.207	.377	1.229
Partner in blue-c/lower white-collar position	.144	.493	1.155	-.664	.002	.515
Father employed in the public sector	.616	.008	1.852	.243	.209	1.275
Father present in childbirth	.779	.068	2.178	.108	.745	1.114
Constant	-3.443	.000	.032	-1.549	.001	.212
	X ² = 24.3 DF=12			X ² = 77.8 DF=12		
	Sig=.019 R ² =.029			Sig=.000 R ² =.144 (Nagelkerke)		
	(N=2919)			(N=734)		

1) In the model, the dependent variable gets value 1 when the father has taken one month or more parental leave and 0 when he has taken less or no parental leave

by fathers with more education and a better occupational position, leave periods taken by upper white-collar fathers are usually quite short. Thus, when other aspects are simultaneously controlled, the likelihood of parental leave is quite similar among fathers in white-collar and blue-collar positions.

As the above mentioned socio-economic factors only cover a small part of the variation in the length of paternity and parental leave, in the next logistic regression model (Table 15), also the symbolic gender relations presented in the previous chapter (i.e. general attitudes towards sharing parental leave between mothers and fathers, and justifications related to gendered parental responsibilities and the take-up of parental leave in one's own family) are taken into account. Only those socio-economic aspects that were significant in the previous model – the mother's academic education and her occupational position, the father's employment in the public sector, and having only one child – are included in the following analysis.

As a result, two different configurations of ideas and practices are produced. The model based on the fathers' data presents a more nuanced picture of the aspects related to his longer parental leave than that based on the mothers' data.

Among mothers, the presence or absence of a gender ideology where mothercare is emphasized seems to be the main predictor of sharing parental leave. Mothers who are in a blue-collar or lower white-collar position are somewhat less likely than others to share parental leave with their partners, but the socio-economic position is only almost statistically significant in the model. As this is at least partly due to the small number of respondents in the mother's data who have shared parental leave during a longer period, the model is not very useful.

Among fathers, the model has more explanatory power as there is a bigger group of respondents who have taken a longer leave period themselves. According to the logistic regression analysis, the main aspect adding to the likelihood of the father's take-up of a longer parental leave is his pro-sharing ideology (Table 15). Fathers' general attitudes are in accordance with their own practices: those who criticize the prevailing division of labour where mothers take most parental leave and think it would be good if more fathers took parental leave, are more than twice as likely to have taken at least one month of parental leave themselves, compared to those who accept the non-sharing status quo.

Conceptions of the mother's primacy in childcare have an even stronger impact: if the father supports the normative conception of mothercare in his family, the likelihood of his parental leave is less than a third, compared to those who reject the primacy of mothers in childcare. For example, if we have two fathers who both think that in general, parental leave should be more equally shared, and they both have partners with an academic degree and an expert position in the labour market; and both reject being a primary breadwinner in the family, what is decisive for the take-up of a longer parental leave period by the father is his conception of motherhood.

The father's breadwinner ideology reduces the likelihood of his longer parental leave period: fathers who report their primacy in breadwinning as a justification for the take-up of parental leave in their own family are only half as likely to have taken parental leave themselves, compared to other fathers. Regardless of ideologies, also social divisions among mothers seem to be significant in the fathers' data. If the mother of the respondent's child has a university degree, it is more likely that the parents have shared parental leave for a period of one month or longer.

As the data is cross-sectional, i.e. the respondents have reported about their conceptions and attitudes after the parental leave period is over, it is of course not possible to know which was first: the conceptions of gender and parental responsibilities, or the practice i.e. the division of paid and unpaid work between parents. The fathers who have taken parental leave may have held pro-sharing attitudes and non-dichotomic conceptions of gender and parenthood already before their child was born. The take-up of parental leave would thus be actualising these ideas in practice. Highly educated women with a high income may have deliberately chosen a partner who is more care oriented and can support her career by taking

TABLE 15. Socio-economic and ideological aspects of the father's long parental leave (logistic regression)¹⁾

	The father took at least one month of parental leave					
	Mothers			Fathers		
	B	Sig	Exp(B)	B	Sig	Exp(B)
Has one child	.277	.421	1.319	.125	.487	1.133
Mother has academic degree	.357	.312	1.429	.194	.000	1.214
Mother in blue-collar or lower white collar position	-.706	.054	.493	-.558	.003	.572
Father employed in the public sector	.662	.062	1.938	.286	.136	1.332
Is pro-sharing	.326	.401	1.386	.937	.000	2.551
Thinks the mother should be primarily responsible for childcare	-1.578	.002	.206	-1.229	.000	.293
Thinks the father should be primarily responsible for breadwinning	-.587	.292	.556	-.679	.006	.507
Constant	-3.768	.000	.023	-.764	.000	.466
	X ² =36.4 DF=7 Sig=.000 R ² =.092 (N=2732)			X ² =148.6 DF=7 Sig=.000 R ² =.242 (Nagelkerke) (N=790)		

1) In the model, the dependent variable gets value 1 when the father has taken one month or more parental leave and 0 when he has taken less or no parental leave

his share of parental leave (Bekkengen 2002, 116). On the other hand, the way fathers think about gender and parental responsibilities may also have developed as a result from their experiences in family life with a highly educated partner, and in interaction with their child.

4.3 Division of labour in unpaid housework

Today, women's employment outside the home is not questioned in the Nordic countries; rather, it is supported by the state. Paid work provides an independent living as well as personal satisfaction. It has also become a yardstick of morals and identity – one's quality as individual and citizen is measured by one's ability to paid work (Siltala 2004, 23-41). Still, also unpaid work is highly necessary for the well-being of individuals as well as for the reproduction of societies. In addition to basic childcare, parents of children under school age do many hours of unpaid work – caring, cooking, washing, cleaning etc. – every day (Niemi & Pääkkönen 2001).

Modern economies consider housework as work because it is an activity that combines labour with raw materials to produce goods and services with enhanced economic value. Despite being unpaid, these activities are productive as they generate goods and services that could have been provided by someone else for pay. On the basis of this “third party criterion”, the following activities have been regarded as unpaid work: food preparation and clean up; laundry, ironing and clothes care; cleaning and tidying; garden, pool and pet care; home maintenance and car care; household management (paying bills, paperwork); transporting adults, children, and goods; purchasing goods and services; physical care of children; care for sick or disabled children; playing with children; teaching children; minding children; and travel associated with the above mentioned activities. (Bittman & Pixley 1997, 89-90.)

Simultaneously with the production of goods and services, doing housework supports the production of gender; engagement in housework is understood to draw on and exhibit femininity whereas passivity in housework is seen as reflecting and reproducing masculinity (West & Zimmerman 2002, 19). One cannot always distinguish clearly between housework and childcare as these activities are often intertwined and much housework embodies aspects of care (Kitterod 2002, 128). A lot of mental work such as planning and organising, as well as emotional and moral work is also included in the unpaid work of family life (Delphy & Leonard 1996, 79).

The effect of marriage or cohabitation in the division of labour in housework is diametrically opposite for men and women. Among women, time devoted to cooking, cleaning and laundry is dramatically increased when a couple starts a life in a shared home whereas for men, time spent in these tasks is reduced. There is a positive “cross-partner” effect between his housework and her housework: if he does more housework, so does she. On the other hand, he will not do more housework just because she does. The arrival of children has a radical effect into the same direction as marriage or cohabitation: women’s domestic workload increases further as young children need a lot of care, while men’s commitment to paid work peaks. The amount of time devoted to childcare by the father is independent of the age or the number of his children. (Bittman & Pixley 1997, 90; Deding & Lausten 2004, 18.)

Many different activities are included in the physical care of young children during parental leave and many years after: every day, often several times a day the child needs feeding, dressing and undressing, changing nappies, bathing, putting to sleep. In addition to this, taking care of the basic needs of a child requires a lot of household chores need to be done. For example, feeding the child requires that someone has shopped and prepared food as well as cleaned dishes; dressing the child requires that someone has bought, washed and organised the child’s clothes. Also, securing the child’s health and well-being requires that dust and dirt is re-

moved from the apartment by someone on a regular basis. According to time-use surveys, this “someone” is usually a woman. In 2000, mothers of young children (under 7) spent twice the time spent by fathers (six and a half hours daily) in housework, childcare and shopping, travel time included. (Niemi and Pääkkönen 2001).

Despite the broad subscription to values of gender equality in Finland (Melkas 2005), in practical family life there is little change in the uneven division of labour between women and men in Finland (e.g. Haavio-Mannila et al. 1984; Reuna 1998; Melkas 1998 & 2005; Lehto & Sutela 1999; Lammi-Taskula 2000; Niemi & Pääkkönen 2001). Especially in families with young children, women’s share of housework is still considerable and the time used in childcare and household chores is manifold compared to men. In 2000, married or cohabiting mothers of children under 7 spent 2 hours and 32 minutes and fathers 45 minutes in cooking, cleaning, laundry and clothes care per day. Fathers spent an hour per day in childcare, while mothers devoted two hours and 27 minutes to childcare. (Niemi & Pääkkönen 2001, 70-73.)

Changes towards more equal sharing in domestic work are thus more often a result of women’s reducing time in unpaid work than increase in men’s activity. Comparison of the Finnish time-use study in 2000 to that in 1988 shows that mothers devoted sixteen minutes less and fathers four minutes more to housework; the increase in childcare was fifteen minutes for fathers and thirteen minutes for mothers. Rise in education level as well as postponed marriage and child-bearing as well as reduction of family size may explain the shorter time spent by women in housework; increased time devoted to childcare, on the other hand can be related to rising expectations of parental time for children, created by popular psychology (Bittman & Pixley 1997, 137-144).

According to the Equality Barometer Study, everyday tasks in family life such as washing laundry and cooking meals are mainly taken care of by mothers in families with two parents and children under 18 years, whereas fathers take main responsibility of more infrequently performed tasks such as repairs and maintenance of the house and the car. Of the frequent housekeeping activities, cleaning is shared more than other tasks, but is still mainly taken care of by the mother in half of the respondents’ families. However, fathers are quite active in spending time with their children: equal responsibility in childcare is reported by half of the respondents. (Melkas 2005, 31-36.)

Women do more housework than men also in families where they are main breadwinners (their income is more than 70% of the total family income). The division of housework seems to be more equal when the proportion the female partner’s income of the total family income is higher. However, when both the family situation and the labour market position of mothers and fathers are controlled, the differences in time use according to the partners’ relative income level disap-

pear: women do about 60% of all unpaid housework. The connection between women's lower income and higher share of housework is partly explained by the fact that mothers of young children who are on parental or care leave (and receive a parental benefit which is lower than their usual income) do more housework (Takala 2005, 89-95).

The main responsibility of housework lies usually on the parent who is at home with the child on parental or child care leave. The other parent can, of course do his or her share after the workday or in the weekend. When parental or child care leave is over and the home parent returns to work, the division of labour that was constructed during leave will not necessarily change along the changed situation, because the leave period is long enough to stabilise the pattern and make it a habit. Usually it is the mother who after her parental leave goes on taking care of a bigger share of housework. When the father takes parental leave and the mother returns to work, he is the primary caretaker of the child and the home.

Taking parental leave does not necessarily mean getting a lot of housework done. If the father has not had time to learn enough about the basic care of their child before his parental leave, much more time and energy must be spent in learning the daily routine. It can be a surprise how time consuming childcare is, and less attention is given to household chores. Also, many mothers think the most important thing is the time spent by the father with the child, and they do not want to give advice or make demands about housework during his parental leave so that family unity will not be jeopardised. If the father continues his paid work at home while on parental leave, or visits friends, relatives and colleagues at workplace a lot, he has less time for cleaning the house or washing the clothes. The father's family orientation and activity in childcare before his parental leave period makes it easier for him to recognise the child's needs as well as the sleeping and eating patterns, so that household chores can be performed "in between". (Einarsdottir 1998; Olsen 2000; Bekkengen 2002, Brandth & Kvande 2003.)

Still, research in Norway and Sweden has shown that the take-up of parental leave by the father correlates with a more equal sharing of childcare and housework between the parents after leave (Brandth & Överli 1998, Haas & Hwang 1999). The longer the father's leave period, the more equal the sharing of everyday family responsibilities in cleaning, cooking, washing and shopping. Also the tasks included in childcare such as changing nappies, feeding the child, waking up at night as well as staying at home from work if the child was ill have been shared more equally in families where the father had taken a longer parental leave. The recent analysis of the receivers of paternity and parental benefit (Takala 2005) also shows similar results: shared responsibility in housework, childcare and the social life of the family is more common in families where the father has taken parental leave than in families where he only took paternity leave.

In our questionnaire, the questions related to the division of housework were

“Who in your family is mainly responsible for getting housework done?” and *“Who in your family takes care of the following tasks?”*. For the first question, the respondent could reply *“me”*, *“my partner”*, *“me and my partner equally”* or *“difficult to say”*. For the latter question, a list of 23 different tasks was given, with alternative responses of *“me alone”*, *“mainly me”*, *“me and my partner equally”*, *“mainly my partner”* and *“my partner alone”*. In addition to these alternatives, the respondent could also choose *“someone else for payment”*, *“someone else without payment”* or *“nobody / does not apply to my family”*.

The tasks selected for analysis here are those that are directly related to the care of young children (taking care of children's meals, getting children dressed, changing diapers, washing/bathing children, waking up at night) while questions related to older, school-age children are left out. Included are also questions about housework tasks that need to be done frequently (taking the garbage out, buying and preparing food, washing clothes, cleaning the house) as well as those that are performed more infrequently during the year and are usually more often performed by men (small repairs, gardening and yardwork, car maintenance).

In addition, a question related to possible changes in the division of labour was asked: *“Has the division of labour between spouses/partners in the following housework changed after the birth of your first child?”* Here, the respondent could answer on his or her own behalf *“I do more than before”*, *“I do as much as before”*, *“I do less than before”*, and on his or her partner's behalf *“my partner does more than before”*, *“my partner does as much as before”*, *“my partner does less than before”* in relation to six different housework tasks that are related to food, cleanness and repairs. In addition, also the alternatives *“someone else does more”* and *“difficult to say”* were possible. As there were not many who reported that someone else – e.g. a paid helper – would do housework in their family, these alternatives were treated as missing values in the analysis.

Mothers – who represent the general population where parental leave has mainly not been shared by parents – reported a high level of unequal division of responsibility in housework (Table 16). Three of four mothers said that in their family, they were mainly responsible for getting housework done. Mothers with only one child as well as those with an academic degree experienced more sharing of housework responsibilities between partners than mothers with two or more children, or those with a lower education level. Fathers, on the other hand – among whom both paternity and parental leave were much more common than among fathers in general – reported more often that housework responsibility was equally shared in their family. Equal sharing was experienced by fathers regardless of age, education or family size. Those fathers who had a relatively low income level compared to their partner reported more often equal sharing of housework, but a similar pattern among mothers was not statistically significant.

Differences between mothers' and fathers' reports on the division of house-

TABLE 16. Responsibility for housework, according to socio-economic position (%)

	In my family, the responsibility for housework is...				Total (N)	X ²	DF	Sig.
	held by me	shared equally	held by partner	can't say				
Mothers								
Is under 30	73	24	1	2	100 (1021)	4.5	2	.107
One child	69	29	1	1	100 (890)	6.3	2	.043
Academic degree	64	35	0	1	100 (544)	27.9	2	.000
Education level higher than partner's	72	27	0	1	100 (945)	0.4	2	.829
Income level higher than partner's	68	30	1	1	100 (271)	2.6	2	.268
All	72	26	1	1	100 (3257)			
Fathers								
Is under 30	3	46	48	3	100 (190)	5.5	2	.140
One child	3	56	39	2	100 (389)	1.6	2	.671
Academic degree	3	53	43	1	100 (311)	1.7	2	.637
Education level lower than partner's	3	55	41	1	100 (477)	2.4	2	.499
Income level lower than partner's	4	63	31	1	100 (159)	8.8	2	.033
All	3	53	43	2	100 (1375)			

work responsibility could be partly related to the tendency of both men and women to emphasise their own share more than the partner's activity in housework (Bittman & Pixley 1997). Furthermore, partners – especially women – tend to modify their reports according to their partner's known answers to the same questions (Zipp et al. 2004). The partner's influence is clear also in this study. Even though a majority of respondents say they replied to the questions by themselves, especially young fathers had negotiated their reports with their partner. Regarding the questions about housework, those who answered the questionnaire together with their partner emphasised the partner's responsibility more than those who answered by themselves. For example, 36% of mothers who replied with their partner but 24% of those who replied alone reported equal sharing of housework responsibility. Similarly, 50% of fathers who answered the questions with their partner said the mother is mainly responsible for getting housework done in their family, compared to 36% of fathers who answered alone.

However, comparisons between mothers and fathers on a general level are not accurate because of the special composition of the fathers' data. Thus, the division of labour needs to be analysed separately for those who have shared parental leave, and those who have not. As the responsibility of everyday household tasks may not change in a two weeks' time, a minimum of one months' parental leave by the

father is used as a criteria of categorisation of the two groups (Table 17).

Even if overstatements of one's own share may be possible, and the influence of partner's opinions to the respondent's report needs to be acknowledged, equal sharing of housework seems to be more common in families where the father has taken a longer parental leave period. Respectively, the mother's sole responsibility is less common in these families than in general.

A majority of parents in families where the father had taken at least one month of parental leave said both the mother and the father took equally care of the child's basic needs (Table 17). Fathers in these families mentioned more often than other fathers a shared responsibility in taking care of the daily childcare activities: dressing and undressing the child, feeding the child and changing diapers. Also the mothers whose partner had taken a longer parental leave reported more often than other mothers equal sharing of practical childcare tasks such as feeding and washing the child. According to the fathers, also more occasional, emotional care situations such as waking up at night when the child cries were more equally shared if the father had taken a longer parental leave.

The equalising effect of parental leave in practical childcare tasks was reported also in another Finnish study comparing fathers who had taken paternity or parental leave in 2003. For example, in half of the families where the father had taken only paternity leave, he said the mother was mainly responsible for feeding the youngest child, compared to a third of families where the father had taken parental leave. Also keeping the baby clean – changing diapers and bathing the child – was left for the mother more often if the father had not taken parental leave. (Takala 2005, 13.)

TABLE 17. Division of labour in childcare, according to the father's parental leave* (%)

He does as much as she, or more	Mothers					Fathers				
	Partner took long parental leave					Took long parental leave				
	Yes	No	X ²	DF	Sig.	Yes	No	X ²	DF	Sig.
Washing children	78	57	7.6	2	.022	79	74	3.3	2	.071
Changing diapers	55	42	4.7	2	.096	71	63	7.6	2	.022
Taking care of children's meals	59	29	16.8	2	.000	59	45	23.4	2	.000
Waking up with children at night	34	30	1.1	2	.588	55	48	6.1	2	.047
Getting children dressed	37	23	4.3	2	.118	44	38	3.3	1	.070
Putting children to bed	66	54	5.8	2	.054	76	73	3.3	2	.188
Playing with children	85	70	4.5	2	.106	87	83	4.0	2	.135
Taking/getting children to/from daycare/school	50	39	2.1	2	.353	52	53	2.2	2	.326
(N)	(41)	(3254)				(403)	(1010)			

* at least one month

Time-use studies show that cooking, cleaning and washing clothes are housework tasks that take most time especially among women. For example, in 1999–2000, women aged 25–44 spent in average 42 minutes per day cleaning the house, 41 minutes preparing food, and 19 minutes doing laundry work. The respective numbers for men were 16, 17 and 3 minutes. (Niemi & Pääkkönen 2001, 89-95.)

When household work is addressed as a totality without differentiating various tasks, the take-up of parental leave, compared to paternity leave does not seem to make much difference. About a third of fathers say their partner bears the main responsibility for housework, regardless of his paternity or parental leave. (Takala 2005, 13.)

However, when the division of labour between mothers and fathers in different tasks included in household work are looked at, the activity of fathers is related to his take-up of parental leave. Based on the mothers' as well as the father's own reports in this study, those fathers who have taken at least a month's parental leave take more responsibility than others especially for housework related to food and clothes (Table 18).

Leave-sharing fathers go shopping groceries and prepare meals, and they wash laundry more often than other fathers. Usually in families with children, clothes are washed several times a week and it is mainly mothers who take care of it: in 2000 women with partner and children spent in average two hours per week in laundry work, compared to 14 minutes spent by men (Aalto 2002, 41). By washing more clothes than men in general, fathers on parental leave thus cross one of the clearest boundaries of the prevailing gender order.

TABLE 18. Division of labour in housework, according to the father's parental leave* (%)

He does as much as she, or more	Mothers					Fathers				
	Partner took long parental leave					Took long parental leave				
	Yes	No	X ²	DF	Sig.	Yes	No	X ²	DF	Sig.
Taking the garbage out	92	74	6.8	1	.009	95	93	2.2	1	.140
Buying food	63	47	4.2	1	.041	71	65	4.7	1	.030
Preparing food (workdays)	38	19	9.4	1	.002	43	33	12.6	1	.000
Washing clothes	22	12	4.1	1	.043	29	22	7.3	1	.007
Cleaning	43	31	2.7	1	.101	59	56	1.6	1	.210
Small repairs	85	88	0.4	1	.541	98	98	2.6	1	.279
Gardening and yardwork	73	65	0.9	1	.351	81	79	1.3	1	.518
Car maintenance	86	91	1.2	1	.279	94	97	4.3	1	.115
(N)	(41)	(3254)				(403)	(1010)			

* at least one month

The most usual household work done by fathers of young children regardless of parental leave seems according to the fathers' own reports to be taking garbage out and doing small repairs. Car maintenance is also mainly the father's responsibility – although not directly related to the home, the car can be quite important for the everyday family life for example if there is a longer distance between home, shops, daycare and school.

In those families where the father has taken at least one month's parental leave, the experiences reported by mothers and fathers about the division of labour are more homogenous than in other families. Compared to the fathers' accounts about his share of household work, the mothers in these families did report somewhat lower numbers, but the difference was not as clear as in families where the mother had taken the whole parental leave or the father's leave had lasted less than a month. For example, more than half of the fathers in the latter families said they did as much house cleaning as their partner, but only a third of the mothers agreed that cleaning was equally shared. Three of four fathers said they put the children asleep as often as the mother did, whereas half of the mothers reported such a practice.

Having the first child has according to both mothers and fathers increased the amount of daily housework related to food and cleanliness (Table 19). At the same time, the gendered segregation of tasks has sharpened. Fathers reported they were especially doing more shopping for food, and mothers said that especially laundry work had increased after the child was born. The father's longer parental leave period did not make much difference among the fathers in reporting changes in their doing of housework after the first child. Among mothers, those who had shared parental leave with their partner for a longer period (at least one month), had experienced less increase in unpaid work related to the shopping and preparation of food. In these families, the fathers have taken more responsibility of cooking – perhaps already before the child, or as a result of their parental leave. It is also possible that fathers who are interested in food take more often parental leave than others.

Not only have mothers and fathers reported experiences of changes in the amount of their own housework, they have also noticed their partner's increased workload (Table 19). Regardless of the take-up pattern of parental leave, the fathers reported increase especially in their partner's washing of clothes, and mothers in their partner's buying of food. However, mothers reported more often increase in their partner's housework than was reported by the fathers themselves. This was true especially in families where the father did not take a longer parental leave period. On the other hand, also fathers reported more increase in their partner's housework than was reported by the mothers themselves. Although these fathers and mothers are not actual couples, this could be interpreted as a result of housework becoming not only more substantial but also more visible and recognised

TABLE 19. Changes in the division of housework after the birth of the first child, according to the father's parental leave* (%)

	Mothers					Fathers				
	Partner took long parental leave					Took long parental leave				
	Yes	No	X ²	DF	Sig.	Yes	No	X ²	DF	Sig.
I do more than before										
Preparing food (workdays)	18	34	10.1	2	.006	34	38	1.5	2	.466
Buying food	13	25	19.5	2	.000	31	29	0.4	2	.820
Washing clothes	29	38	0.91	2	.635	28	21	5.0	2	.082
Cleaning	18	31	2.9	2	.229	23	23	2.1	2	.344
Partner does more than before										
Preparing food (workdays)	40	46	2.7	2	.261	48	41	2.6	2	.276
Buying food	53	55	0.9	2	.654	28	32	2.5	2	.484
Washing clothes	22	35	3.1	2	.379	49	45	3.3	2	.353
Cleaning	36	43	0.7	2	.875	35	37	2.5	2	.468
(N)	(41)	(3254)				(403)	(1010)			

* at least one month

between partners when they become parents.

On the other hand, those respondents who have replied to the questions together with their partner have given somewhat different reports than those who have replied by themselves. The partner's influence is found especially among mothers who reported more equal sharing of housework responsibility if they replied with the partner. For example, mothers who replied alone said more often that their partner does less cooking (16% vs. 9%), washing clothes (16% vs. 11%) and cleaning the house (15% vs. 10%) than before the child was born. On the one hand, answering a questionnaire together may be related to a general spirit of community i.e. desire to do also other things such as housework together. On the other hand, also power relations can be at work here so that the respondent is not able to report her "true" experiences in the presence of the partner.

Highly educated mothers – those who have an academic degree – have more often than others experienced an increase in their housework load after the first child was born (Table 20). For example, half of these mothers say they prepare more meals than before, and another half report increase in the amount of laundry that they wash. The difference between highly educated mothers and those who don't have an academic degree could be explained in two different ways. These mothers may have had a lower housework activity due to work orientation as well as more equal sharing of housework between partners before the child was born, and the change in orientation and practices is bigger for them than for women

with a lower education level who have perhaps done more housework as well as a bigger share of it already earlier. The other interpretation is related to changes in the partner's activity; fathers with an academic degree report a smaller increase in preparing food as well as in cleaning the house than those with a lower education level. The partners of the highly educated women – often men with an academic degree – may have done more housework than other men already before the child, so the increase is experienced as relatively smaller. Those mothers who are used to doing a major part of all housework, on the other hand, may experience even a small increase by the father as a significant one. It is of course also possible that highly educated fathers of young children are more work and career oriented than other men and actually do not increase or may even decrease their share of housework as their partner takes maternity and parental leave.

The relative education level of the parents is also significant for the changes experienced in housework load after the birth of the first child (Table 20). Here, leave-taking mothers and fathers report similar tendencies in relation to preparing food but give different accounts about changes in cleaning the house. When the father's education level is lower than his partner's, he reports having increased cooking and cleaning more than fathers in general. Mothers who have a higher education level than their partner have experienced less increase in their cooking

TABLE 20. Increase of own housework after the birth of the first child, according to socio-economic position (%)

	"I do more than before"			
	Preparing food (weekdays)	Buying food	Washing clothes	Cleaning
Mothers				
Age under 30	30	23	37	30
Has an academic degree	46***	30**	44**	37***
Education level higher than partner's	29**	22	33	30
Income level higher than partner's	35	29	43	34
All (N=2341-2847)	34	25	36	31
Fathers				
Age under 30	29	41	25	19
Has an academic degree	26**	37	21	18**
Education level lower than partner's	36**	38	28	28**
Income level lower than partner's	38	44	33	29
All (N=831-1075)	30	37	23	23

** p < .01, *** p < .001 (compared to others)

load than other mothers, but do not differ from others in relation to cleaning.

As home repairs is the third most time consuming housework task for men in the age group 25–44 – they did in average 15 minutes of home repairs per day while women only did 3 minutes (Niemi & Pääkkönen 2001, 89-95) – it is also taken into account in the next analysis where the most common housework tasks are combined into one variable describing everyday unpaid work at home. Even if the fathers' input in doing small repairs is included and very few mothers do as much home repairs as their partners, the unpaid workload of family life rests heavily on the mothers' shoulders. Only one in ten leave-taking fathers reported that they do all these tasks equally with their partner, or even more than she does (Table 21). The vast majority of mothers said they do most of the daily housework: as little as 3% of mothers reported that the everyday tasks in family life are equally shared or the partner does more.

There is little variation in reporting about the father's activity in everyday housework among mothers in different socio-economic positions. Mothers who are in expert or manager positions, and those who have a higher income level than their partner reported somewhat more often than others that in their family, the father does as much or more cooking, cleaning, laundry and repairs than she. The same difference is found in the fathers' data: fathers with a partner in expert position and/or high income level report higher participation activity than others. According to the leave-taking fathers, also those who have only one child seem to do more housework than those with two or more children.

The sharing of parental leave has a clear impact on the division of unpaid daily housework: if the father had taken at least one month of parental leave his share of housework was bigger than in average. This was true in both the mothers' and the fathers' reports; the relation between father's long parental leave and his activity was however more clear among mothers than among fathers who in general reported higher level of male participation in housework.

Fathers who were at home with their child at the time they responded to the survey – their child being about two years old, so the parental leave period was over and the father could be on care leave; on paternity leave with a new baby, unemployed or student – reported doing more daily housework than other fathers. Respectively, if their partner was at home with the child – on care leave, on a new maternity leave, unemployed or as a student – they reported less housework activity. If the father was at home with children, in most cases the mother also participated equally in daily housework or even did more. However, if the mother was at home with children, the daily housework was mainly done by her.

In order to simultaneously look at all the aspects that were statistically significant in the previous table, a logistic regression model is presented (Table 22). Also the respondents' conceptions of gendered parental responsibilities in their own family life are included in the model in order to see what the relevance of gender

TABLE 21. Sharing of everyday housework (cooking, cleaning, laundry, repairs) (%)

	The father does as much cooking, cleaning, laundry and repairs as his partner, or more			
	Mothers		Fathers	
	%	(N)	%	(N)
Age				
Under 30	4	(1041)	10	(198)
30–39	3	(1973)	10	(917)
40–	1	(182)	11	(285)
Number of children				
1	3	(911)	14*	(408)
2+	3	(2384)	9	(1005)
Father present in childbirth				
Yes	3	(2872)	10	(1296)
No	2	(423)	9	(117)
Father's education				
No professional education	2	(236)	10	(109)
Vocational school or course	3	(1319)	8	(509)
College	3	(944)	13	(468)
Academic degree	4	(495)	10	(317)
Mother's education				
No professional education	2	(312)	7	(75)
Vocational school or course	3	(906)	7	(287)
College	3	(1485)	10	(543)
Academic degree	3	(546)	13	(445)
Mother's education level higher than father's				
Yes	3	(949)	12	(481)
No	3	(2346)	10	(932)
Father's occupational position				
Blue-collar	3	(1214)	9	(606)
Lower white-collar	2	(217)	9	(128)
Expert	4	(332)	10	(235)
Manager	2	(435)	10	(230)
Mother's occupational position				
Blue-collar	3*	(1006)	10*	(452)
Lower white-collar	2	(416)	7	(137)
Expert	5	(324)	14	(194)
Manager	5	(148)	18	(94)
Father's net income/month before the birth of the child				
10 000 FIM or less	3	(2174)	11	(1028)
More than 10 000 FIM	2	(758)	10	(353)

Table 21 ...

	The father does as much cooking, cleaning, laundry and repairs as his partner, or more			
	Mothers		Fathers	
	%	(N)	%	(N)
Mother's net income/month before the birth of the child				
10 000 FIM or less	3	(3004)	10*	(1226)
More than 10 000 FIM	3	(176)	16	(127)
Mother's net income before the child higher than father's				
Yes	5*	(273)	16**	(161)
No	3	(3022)	10	(1252)
Father's take-up of paternity leave				
None	3	(1106)	13	(61)
Less than 3 weeks	2	(1245)	11	(492)
3 weeks	4	(944)	9	(780)
Father's take-up of parental leave				
None	3	(3170)	9	(935)
Less than one month	4	(84)	9	(75)
One month or more	12**	(41)	13*	(403)
Is at home with children				
Yes	1***	(1742)	26***	(113)
No	5	(1512)	9	(1300)
Partner is at home with children				
Yes	14***	(84)	4***	(584)
No	3	(3211)	15	(829)
All	3	(3295)	10	(1413)

* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001 (compared to others)

ideology is for the father's activity in daily housework. The analysis shows that among both mothers and fathers, the childcare arrangements at the time of replying to the survey very much determine how the respondents have reported about the sharing of housework between the parents. Fathers who said their partner was at home with children were less likely to report doing their share or more of cooking, cleaning, laundry and repairs. Mothers whose partner was at home with children were almost five times as likely to report that he was doing a lot of daily housework. Fathers who were themselves at home with children were however not as clearly more likely to report doing as much or more daily housework as their partner, and the difference between them and other fathers was not statistically significant.

The socio-economic factors that seemed to be related to the sharing of housework between parents – the mother's occupational position, income or the number of children – are not significant when the family's childcare arrangement as well

TABLE 22. Father's activity in daily housework* (logistic regression)¹⁾

	The father does as much, or more					
	Mothers			Fathers		
	B	Sig	Exp(B)	B	Sig	Exp(B)
Has one child	.047	.858	1.048	.057	.817	1.059
Mother in expert or manager position	.336	.235	1.399	-.236	.366	.790
Mother's income level higher than father's	-.374	.418	.688	-.072	.835	.931
Mother's income less than 10000 FIM before child	-.031	.947	.969	-.105	.773	.900
Father took at least one month of parental leave	.932	.083	2.539	.169	.503	1.184
Father at home with children	1.636	.000	5.135	.673	.093	1.960
Mother at home with children	-1.247	.000	.287	-1.811	.000	.164
Thinks the mother should be primarily responsible for childcare	-.534	.059	.586	-.643	.084	.526
Thinks the father should be primarily responsible for breadwinning	-.656	.104	.519	-.748	.045	.473
Constant	-2.927	.000	.054	-1.452	.000	.234
	R ² =.101			R ² =.120 (Nagelkerke)		
	X ² =60.7 DF=9 Sig=.000			X ² =47.7 DF=9 Sig=.000		
	(N=2654)			(N=776)		

* preparing food, cleaning the house, washing laundry and doing small repairs

1) In the model, the dependent variable gets value 1 when the father does as much or more each task than the mother and 0 when he does less or no housework.

as the respondents' conceptions of separate parental responsibilities are taken into account. Neither does the father's take-up of a longer parental leave increase the likelihood of a more symmetric division of labour in doing housework in any significant manner. According to the mothers, fathers who have taken a longer parental leave are twice as likely to do as much or more daily housework as their partners, compared to those who have not taken parental leave, but due to small numbers this difference is not statistically significant. The low significance of the father's parental leave for the likelihood of his doing housework may also reflect the temporary nature of possible changes in the division of labour during the parental leave period; his participation in the daily housework may have increased during his leave but diminished as he has returned to work after the relatively short leave period.

The gendered justifications for not sharing parental leave in one's own family has some importance for the likelihood of the father's high share of everyday housework. Fathers who supported separate responsibilities for each parent – care responsibility for mothers and breadwinning responsibility for fathers – were less likely than others to report that they were doing as much or more cooking, cleaning, laundry and repairs than their partner. Especially important seems to be the

father's conception of himself as a breadwinner. Thus, some fathers may think they are entitled not to do the unpaid daily housework because of their subjective conception of gendered breadwinner responsibility. On the other hand, those fathers who have a higher education level or higher income than their partner share housework in case they think fatherhood is not only about breadwinning but also about care.

4.4 Sharing of unpaid work as an ideological and practical choice

What women and men do and don't do as parents in their everyday life reflects the symbolic gender order: which tasks and responsibilities seem "natural" or "normal" in their social setting. Individuals can reproduce the prevailing gender conceptions through their actions as well as challenge and change it. In families with young children, conceptions of gendered parental responsibilities are actualized in the division of labour between mothers and fathers: in the take-up of leave from paid employment in order to take care of one's child, and in the daily unpaid housework.

The high popularity of **paternity leave** indicates that taking some leave from work to take care of one's child has become "normal" among fathers. Paternity leave is taken by fathers employed in all branches, also in the most male dominated ones such as technology and industry. Men in their thirties, employed in the public sector – e.g. in social and health care – were more likely to take a full three-week paternity leave, but also a majority of fathers employed in the private sector seem to take a week or two of paternity leave when their child is born. According to the mothers' reports, the father is more likely to take a long paternity leave when the mother is well-educated, and the presence of the father in childbirth also has a positive impact.

Crosstabulations show that the socio-economic variation among both the fathers and the mothers is related to the variation in the take-up of **parental leave**. Fathers with a high education level as well as those in white-collar occupational positions have taken parental leave more often than others. The respondent's income level also makes a difference, but the impact is gendered i.e. different among mothers and fathers. Those mothers who earned more than women in average more often reported having shared parental leave with their partner. High-income fathers, however took parental leave less often than those with low or medium income level. This difference probably reflects the general gender gap in income level: what is high income for mothers is medium income for fathers.

The aspects related to the father's or the mother's individual background and position do not consistently explain why some fathers take parental leave and others do not take it. As the sharing of parental leave between the mother and the

father needs to be agreed upon by both parents – both’s signature is needed in the benefit application form – the relative socio-economic position of each parent also plays a role in the family decision making. According to our data, the parents’ mutual differences in education and income level are related to the father’s take-up of leave. Fathers whose education level is lower than their partner’s more often than others take parental leave periods of two months or longer. The father’s relative advantage in income i.e. his higher income level – which is quite common among parents – did not seem to be a barrier for his short paternity leave. Differences in income level between parents were more related to the take-up of parental leave. The small group of fathers who earned less than the mother of their child seem to have taken parental leave more often the majority who earn more than their partner. The parental leave periods taken by these fathers were however not very long.

When the various aspects related to the father’s longer parental leave are evaluated with the help of a logistic regression analysis, the parents’ relative education and income level seem to lose their significance. Fathers with a partner who has an academic degree are more likely to take a longer parental leave period regardless of their own education level. It is also the mother’s occupational position rather than his or her relative position that is significant so that fathers with a partner in upper white collar positions are more likely to take leave.

Still, when the parents’ gender ideology is also taken into account, the socio-economic aspects – education, occupation, income – do not explain very much of the variation in the length of paternity or parental leave taken by the father. Conceptions of separate, gendered parental responsibilities seem to reproduce a segregated gendered division of labour where the mother’s sole responsibility of childcare is emphasized and parental leave is taken mainly or solely by her. According to the fathers’ reports, the mother’s education and her occupational position are still somewhat significant, but the father’s general attitudes towards sharing parental leave, as well as his gender ideology are more important. When the father is critical towards the prevailing hegemonic motherhood and supports fathers’ participation in the early childcare, he is more likely to actually take the leave opportunity provided by legislation. Also, when the father finds justifications related to separate parental responsibilities as irrelevant for his family’s decisions about parental leave, it is more likely that he has shared part of the parental leave period with his partner.

During paternity leave, both parents are at home and can take care of the child as well as the daily housework tasks. The parent who is on parental leave usually takes full responsibility of childcare, while the other parent is at work or studying. As fathers’ leave periods are mainly quite short and their share of all leave days taken is low, the division of labour between mothers and fathers does not necessarily change even if parental leave is shared. Taking parental leave does also not

always mean getting much housework done during the day if the child's needs are the first priority.

The mothers and fathers of young children who responded to our survey represent somewhat different kinds of families, and they also report a somewhat different picture about the division of general responsibility in getting housework done, as well as about the performance of different housework tasks by each parent. Leave-taking fathers more often report shared responsibility, while mothers mainly see themselves as primary bearers of this responsibility. This is true also when the actualisation of parental leave rights in one's family is taken into account, but the differences are not so clear. In general, both men and women tend to overestimate their own share which is usually is more known to them than the partner's contribution. Especially during parental leave, the other parent is not at home to witness what gets done during the day. However not only fathers themselves but also the mothers seem to recognise that those fathers who have taken a longer parental leave period also do more housework than other fathers.

The cross-tabulations of the division of various housework tasks, and the sharing of parental leave show that fathers who have taken a longer parental leave are more active than other fathers in taking care of children's meals also afterwards. According to the mothers, these fathers also take more responsibility related to food more generally: they take a more equal share of buying and preparing food than other fathers. These fathers may have adopted a new division of labour during their parental leave, or they may have done more housework than other men already before their leave period. According to the fathers, those who have taken parental leave also change the child's diapers more and wake up at night to comfort the child more than other fathers. Thus, a more intimate parent-child relationship seems to be built between fathers and their children during his leave period.

As fathers' leave periods are often short, long-term effects do not seem to be very radical especially if there are more than one child in the family and the mother's leave periods add up and strengthen her routine in getting the daily unpaid housework done. In reporting about the division of daily, unpaid housework in their family, the respondents seem to repeat the often heard comment "the one who is at home does what needs to be done". Hardly any mother who was herself at home with the child reported that her partner did as much cooking, cleaning, laundry and repairs as she did. The same was however not true among stay-at-home-dads: one in four said they performed these tasks equally to their partner, or more than her. Thus, while the mothers are saying "when I am at home, I do the housework", the fathers are saying "when I am at home, I may do some housework but she also does a lot".

When the actual situation of childcare arrangements, as well as the gender ideology related to the sharing of parental leave are taken into account, the take-up of parental leave by the father is no longer significant in predicting the his activity in

everyday basic housework. Doing housework is closely related to the conception of one's parental responsibilities. If the father reported his breadwinning responsibility as an important aspect for negotiating parental leave, he was more likely to report doing a lower share of daily housework. For these fathers, a short period of paternity or parental leave has been more of an exception than a turning point in the way they are doing masculinity through paid employment rather than unpaid housework.

5 Emotions and parental practices

Emotions pervade virtually every aspect of human experience and all social relations; they are the “glue” binding people together and generating commitments to large-scale social and cultural structures (Turner & Stets 2005, 1). Emotional reactions by the majority towards token individuals are often ambiguous; general positive appraisals of atypical choices by men are combined with suspicions (Williams 1993, 3). In public discussions and policy documents, fathers taking parental leave are positively welcomed as contributors to gender equality as well as promoters of the wellbeing of children (e.g. Committee on Fatherhood 1999,1). However, fathers who take their parental responsibilities seriously and manifest this by taking parental leave may not be taken seriously in their daily social setting; neither as a “real carers” nor as “real men” (Huttunen 2001).

In this chapter, the emotional aspects related to the sharing of parental leave between mothers and fathers are discussed. In the sociology of emotion, emotions have been defined as existentially embodied modes of being which involve an active engagement with the world and an intimate connection with both culture and self. The emotional dimension plays an important role in how human beings direct their energy and evaluate situations, circumstances and actions. Emotions divert our perceptions, what we see and hear, what we define as the most fundamental aspects of the world around us. The flow of interactions between people, including human rationality and decision making, is highly dependent on emotions. (Williams & Bendelow 1998, xvi; Turner & Stets 2005, 22-23).

Emotions are connected to biological, bodily processes and sense perceptions as well as mental and normative aspects; they are the result of a complex interplay among cultural, social structural, cognitive, and neurological forces. Emotions are wired into the body systems and often involve a biological component such as trembling or weeping. Emotional reactions related to survival and mental integrity can be so fast that they “take over” the body before completed by cognitive evaluation. Some emotions – such as happiness, pleasure, sadness, fear or anger – are understood as “basic emotions” i.e. inborn abilities to act in certain situations. A wide range of emotions are defined as “social emotions”, for example confusion, shame or guilt are first born in social relations before they become personal phenomena. (Varila 2004, 94-97; Hochschild 1998, 5-6; Puolimatka 2004, 103-108; Turner & Stets 2005, 9).

A social element is crucial in how feelings are defined, recognized, labeled, appraised, managed and expressed in different situations. We have a notion of culturally pre-named feelings that are available for us to be felt, and experiences and expressions of emotions vary according to culture and era. The inner experiences of individuals may more or less match the cultural dictionary of feelings and the emotion culture in a given context of time and place. The activation, expression and use of emotions are highly constrained by the emotion culture of a society. As individuals acquire the emotion culture of a society they develop understandings about which emotions are appropriate to various types of situations, and how these emotions should be felt and displayed. The culture of emotion prescribes what one should or shouldn't feel, when to feel and how strongly to feel certain feelings. Locally and culturally moulded emotions have different meanings in different places and times, the same emotional states can be charged with honour in one culture and with shame in another. (Hochschild 1998, 5-7; Näre 1999, 9; Turner & Stets 2005, 285-286.)

The contradictory elements of cultural conceptions and ambivalent reactions by others towards motherhood and fatherhood can create confusion in the minds of young parents. Matti – the teacher we met in the introduction part – writes how some men and women wanted to avoid him when he was on parental leave. While positive emotional experiences related to the very basic joy of intimacy pull fathers towards family life and childcare, negative experiences of social emotions such as frustration related to the lack of recognition as a competent carer simultaneously pull them away from their children. Social confusion, ambiguity and avoidance may be experienced as negative by the person who is being avoided – in Matti's case a male person in an uncommon primary carer position – and may lead to more conventional choices.

Similarly, the pleasures of work life – when talent is fulfilled or appraisal and rewards received at the workplace – pull parents away from the routines of unpaid care and housework. Negative emotions related to problems at work such as excessive burdening and pressure or bullying and harassment may be escaped by seizing the opportunity to take a long childcare leave.

5.1 Ideologies and emotions

In the prevailing understanding of gender relations, sexual desire plays a central role in a gender ideology based on polarities (Connell 1987; 1995; 2000). Gendered identities are based on the sexual desire for the “opposite” sex, located within more general patterns of polarities such as the segregation of work into male and female occupations and branches (Segal 1997, 101). A dichotomic conception of gender includes also understanding motherhood and fatherhood as essentially different.

Although there is always variety in actual parental practices and experiences, hegemonic ideologies of motherhood and fatherhood constrain the emotions related for example to the everyday patterns of care and breadwinning.

Making a clear distinction between masculinity and femininity has also been seen as a psychological protection system against existential anxiety and insecurity in the modern world (McInnes 1998, 13-15). From this perspective, the conceptions of gender differences are emotionally very charged and the questioning of naturalised symbolic gender relations may arouse forceful resistance. Especially in the area of human reproduction where existential questions of dependence and autonomy are inevitably present, ideologies of motherhood and fatherhood are very emotional.

Emotional attachments to the idea of mothercare as “natural” underline the ability and willingness of all women to take care of children. Such emotionally charged ideas create expectations towards all mothers to put their children ahead of their paid work and take as much childcare leave as possible. In doing so, a mother can experience satisfaction of being a “good mother” not only in the eyes of others, but also in her own judgement. In Finland, the ideology of “motherly instincts” suited well the national reconstruction after the Second World War; later the discussions of the mothers’ responsibilities were supplemented with interpretations of care as the mother’s enjoyment and pleasure (Heikkilä 1999, 229-241). Emphasizing the gratification of motherhood has implications for the take-up of parental leave: not only does the baby need someone to take care of him/her, the mother also needs to care as means of personal satisfaction and fulfilment.

Policy measures such as individual taxation, parental leave system and public day care have been created to enable and support mothers’ employment in Finland. However, the leave system simultaneously creates a standard, a norm for the length of the period that a “good mother” should stay at home with a child. Another normative standard for motherhood is constructed through recommendations on breastfeeding (Salmi & Lammi-Taskula 1999) that suggest 4–6 months of exclusive breastfeeding and as long as two years of partial breastfeeding (Hasunen et al. 2004). The mainstream pattern where the mother takes a long parental leave and the father takes no more than a short paternal leave is thus the “the correct choice” (Olsen 2000).

Despite of outspoken, positive attitudes towards the employment of mothers (Melkas 2004), mothers returning to work “too early” often experience their morals as a mother being questioned. Even if she is convinced that the child is in good hands with the father, she may still have feelings of guilt. The notion of “being a good mother” can be so binding that it makes it emotionally difficult for the mother to share parental leave at all. As one Swedish mother put it: “it would have been seen as quite weird, if I had not stayed at home when the child was young” (Plantin 2001).

When the parental practices support the primacy of the mother in childcare, as the prevailing take-up pattern of parental leave does, also the emotionally charged gender ideology based on distinction and separation of responsibilities is reproduced. The ideology of mothercare reproduces the outsider position of men in families. This could make it emotionally easier for fathers not to participate in daily childcare; they can still feel like “good fathers” even though someone else is meeting the basic needs of the child. In fact, it may be more difficult for a man to feel like a “good father” when on parental leave. “As a man one must also prove one's ability as a parent to some extent”, writes Matti who unlike most others shared parental leave with his partner. Matti also describes his emotions of exclusion experienced among mothers of young children: “In the parks and sandpits a man is often lonely as it can sometimes be problematic to take part in women's circles”.

However, a child is for many parents – also for many fathers – a long-awaited dream come true. Like in many Western countries, the age of becoming mother has been rising in Finland. In 2004, women giving birth to their first child were in average 27.8 years old, compared to 23.7 years in 1970 (Stakes, SVT Tilastotiedote 21/2005) Although it is perhaps more legitimate today than before not to want any children, most young women and men still include parenthood in their future plans but postpone it longer because of reasons related to education and employment as well as to finding a good candidate for co-parenting (Paajanen 2002).

Many fathers of young children want their child to be in home care as long as possible. Fathers may also long for time together with their child. In a Danish study (Olsen 2000), homecare was supported especially by distinctively family-oriented men who clearly prioritised family life over paid employment. Also for some of the work-oriented fathers, the child was a long-awaited fulfilment of hopes to have a family, and they wanted to take parental leave in order to spend time with him or her. Most Norwegian fathers who took the one month father's quota of parental leave said their motive to take the leave was their own desire to stay at home with the child – they felt the child needed a father and they wanted to do the caring in their own way (Brandth and Överli 1998). Almost all of the Finnish men who had taken a long parental leave said that the time they spent at home had brought them closer to their children, and more than half said parental leave had been the best time of their life (Huttunen 2001).

The caring person is the source of enjoyment and satisfaction for the child, but as the child grows, the primary carer also represents dependence and lack of autonomy. Mothercare has been understood as especially problematic for boys: while trying to develop their sense of individual autonomy understood as important for adult masculinity, they end up suppressing their care needs and take distance from intimate, emotional relations (Chodorow 1978). This interpretation reflects family practices based on a gendered, dichotomic division of labour where

the mother is active in the private family sphere doing unpaid care work, while the father is active in the world outside the home. The public sphere represents independent adult life while home and family represent dependency and intimacy. The father's activity in working life is combined with his passive, even distant position in the family everyday life.

As the same-sex parent is understood as a role model for a child, boys are supposed to identify with their father's (assumed) independence and become similarly distant breadwinners to their own children when they grow up. However, Nordic studies show that the previous male generation is rarely mentioned as a role model by fathers of young children. Instead, many men want to be different from their own fathers when they become fathers themselves (Holter & Aarseth 1994). A role model for parenting is often provided by one's mother as she has taken care of the same daily tasks of basic care and upbringing that the sons are now sharing with their partners (Olsen 2000). Thus, today's fathers have not necessarily adopted a distant breadwinner identity, at least not as self evident.

5.2 Internal and external motivations for leave

A man can take paternity and parental leave for many reasons, and the level of his motivation may vary. Motivation is a lot about emotions; we orientate towards practices that seem to promise rewards and emotional satisfaction, and avoid those where failure and negative emotions seem too probable. Both internal as well as external basis for motivation has been identified (Lindberg 1998). In this study, internal motivation can be understood as personal interest to nurture one's child and to learn new and exiting things about life along with the new family member. As Matti put it: "...it is very educative and magnificent that I can be with my children when they are young".

Taking leave can also be a means to positive accomplishments other than the actual father-child relationship, such as strengthening the couple relationship by helping the partner after childbirth or supporting her career. Matti is referring to a better understanding between fathers and mothers when he writes: "When you are at home with children, you will understand mothers in a different way". This kind of motivation has an internal source when the father finds personal satisfaction in supporting his partner; it can also be external in case support is not given voluntarily but because it is demanded by the partner. Parental benefits can also be the source of external motivation for taking leave as the father may feel he is getting some return for the tax money paid during many years.

We asked the fathers of our survey about their motivation and the reasons for taking paternity leave. Both external and internal sources of motivation were mentioned in the open-ended replies to the question "*Why did you take/not take*

paternity leave?". The most common explanation mentioned by the fathers was related to the partner: almost half (44%) of the men who had taken paternity leave said it was because they wanted to help the mother (Table 23). The second common motivation for the fathers was the need to create a relationship with the new baby. This was mentioned by more than a third of the fathers who took paternity leave (38%). One in six fathers mentioned both arguments as motivations for their paternity leave, and about one in three did not mention either one. For them, the argument for taking paternity leave was e.g. that one should seize a statutory possibility for leave and benefit, or that it is a self-evident duty to take paternity leave. Some fathers said taking paternity leave is something all fathers do today.

The arguments for paternity leave varied somewhat according to the father's socio-economic position. Especially men with one child said they took paternity leave because they wanted to get create a close relationship with their first born child. At the birth of the second, third or more children, the helping role was more central than relationship with the baby. With more children in the family, the father has less time for the newcomer during his paternity leave while he is busy with the everyday tasks related to the older siblings.

The need to establish a positive father-child relationship during paternity leave did not reduce the significance of the mother's care responsibility, but it was less common among those men who emphasized their breadwinning responsibility as fathers. Perhaps the social emotions related to the main provider position adopted by these men – avoiding assumed guilt and embarrassment when not putting

TABLE 23. Father's motivation for paternity leave, according to socio-economic and ideological positions (%)

	N	Motivation for paternity leave	
		Helping the partner	Father-child relationship
Is under 30	(108)	42	44
Has one child	(240)	40	45**
Has academic degree	(189)	39	43
Partner has adacademic degree	(261)	39*	41
Education level lower than partner's	(283)	45	33
Net income before the child under 10 000 FIM/month	(610)	46 (*)	38
Partner's net income before the child under 10 000 FIM/month	(740)	45	37
Income level lower than partner's	(93)	44	39
Took 3 weeks of paternity leave	(509)	41*	40
Thinks mother should be responsible for childcare	(198)	48	42
Thinks father should be responsible for breadwinning	(243)	44	29**
All fathers	(831)	44	38

(*) $p < .07$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ (compared to other fathers)

one's employment first – does not allow basic emotions such as the joy of intimacy to be taken into account. However, it seems to be easier to combine breadwinning responsibility with a supporting husband's position. Only among partners of highly educated mothers did the helping motivation play a smaller role. Helping the mother meant usually taking a rather short paternity leave; those who took the maximum of three weeks less often referred to helping as a motivation.

The fact that some men did not mention either helping the partner or creating a relationship with the baby as arguments for their paternity leave can of course not be taken as evidence of their lack of participation in childcare during the leave. It does also not need to mean that the father-child relationship would not be important to them. The arguments mentioned in the open question can rather be seen as related to a need to present oneself as a certain kind of man and father.

A father taking parental leave is in a different situation than a father taking paternity leave, and there may be different kinds of emotional dimensions related to sharing parental leave between parents. Instead of asking in an open-ended question why the father did or did not take parental leave, we used a list of statements related to the justification of take-up practices of parental leave in the respondent's family. Each of these statements may touch upon emotionally charged issues, but the ones referring explicitly to personal desire of the respondent or his/her partner to stay at home were related to the child on the one hand, and to the pressures and burdens of working life on the other.

For many fathers, the first child becomes something very special and important especially if the compromises between work and family life have included postponing parenthood. With little previous experience of childcare, and no routinised division of labour between the parents, the mother and the father may be more equal as potential carers for their firstborn child. On the other hand, the reproduction of non-symmetric take-up of parental leave may also be related to lack of information about various alternatives and statutory rights. Often, parents who are in the beginning of their "parental career" i.e. having their first child are less aware of the father's leave rights (Lammi-Taskula 2003). In the questionnaire, the respondent could reply "yes", "no" or "difficult to say" to the statements "Since the child was born after a long try, **I** wanted to stay at home with the child" and the same about the partner "Since the child was born after a long try, **my partner** wanted to stay at home with the child".

As working life has during the 1990s become more mentally burdening in Finland (Järnefelt & Lehto 2002), parental leave can provide a possibility for a break after many years of employment. The statements related to emotional aspects of working life as justifications for the respondent and his/her partner to take parental leave were "The leave period was a long-awaited pause from work for **me** after many years in working life" and "The leave period was a long-awaited pause from work for **my partner** after many years in working life".

Although it is more and more common to postpone childbirth and wait longer for the first child, this does not seem to have much impact on the take-up of parental leave, especially not in the case of fathers (Table 24). About one in ten fathers who have taken parental leave said he wanted to take leave because the child was a long-awaited dream come true. The mothers who had shared parental leave with the partner mentioned this argument somewhat more often than the fathers as related to her own leave period.

The emotional push away from working life was more often reported as a justification for parental leave than the postponing of having the child. According to the respondents, the possibility to take a break from work was an important motive for parental leave for mothers as well as for fathers. Two thirds of all fathers who have taken parental leave said his need for a break played a role when the sharing of parental leave was discussed in the family. Also half of the mothers experienced parental leave as a long-awaited break from employment irrespective of taking the whole leave or sharing it with the partner.

The desire to take a break from work is a personal desire and an internal source of motivation that is not necessarily communicated to others. Both leave-taking fathers and mothers saw the break aspect as less important for the partner as they did for themselves (Table 24). Only one in four fathers who took parental leave reported that the partner's need for a break from work was relevant for the take-up of parental leave. Similarly, only one in four mothers whose partner had taken parental leave reported that he had needed a break from work.

The mothers who have taken the whole parental leave period have usually not experienced that their partner had needed a break from work or a possibility to stay at home with a long-awaited child. Some of the fathers who had not been on parental leave did however refer to the break from work that the leave had provided for them – apparently they were thinking about the one to three week long paternity leave. In the families where the mother had taken the whole parental leave period half of the mothers and a third of the fathers said the mother's need for a break from work was relevant for her parental leave.

Compared to the fathers who have taken parental leave, the fathers who took only paternity leave or no leave at all refer more seldom to a need for a break or to the desire to stay at home with a long-awaited child (Table 24). This can be interpreted as telling about their situation or orientation: they did not need a break from work, they had not postponed having a child and/or even if they had waited a long time for the child, they had no desire to stay at home with the child. Another interpretation is that the mother's parental leave was so self-evident in the family that the father did not think it was possible or necessary to express his need for a break or his desire to be at home with the child.

For mothers, the need for a break from work as well as the desire to stay at home with a long-awaited child were important arguments for parental leave both

TABLE 24. Desire to stay at home as a justification for parental leave (%)

	Mothers					Fathers				
	Partner took parental leave					Took parental leave				
	Yes	No	X ²	DF	Sig	Yes	No	X ²	DF	Sig
The child was long tried for so the mother wanted to stay at home	17	14	1.2	1	.280	8**	11*	1.69	1	.194
The child was long tried for so the father wanted to stay at home	6	3	5.3	1	.022	11	5***	12.7	1	.000
Leave was an awaited break from work for the father	26	5	92.2	1	.000	65***	17***	286.9	1	.000
Leave was an awaited break from work for the mother	49	48	.084	1	.772	27***	34***	6.2	1	.012
N	(125)	(3170)				(478)	(935)			

* p<.05, ** p<.001, *** p<.000 (difference between mothers and fathers)

for those who took the whole parental leave and those who shared it with their partner. The difference between these two groups of mothers is in how they report their partner's needs and desires. On in four of the mothers who have shared leave with the partner said he needed a break from work, and one in five said her partner wanted to stay at home with a long-awaited child. Apparently at least in some families parental leave has been discussed as a possibility for both parents to be with the child and forget about the burdens of working life for a while.

As the years of employment are related to the age of the employee, older men usually have a longer work career than younger men. One could thus expect that older fathers would desire a break from work more than younger fathers. However, quite the opposite was reported by the respondents of our survey: among fathers who had taken parental leave, those under 30 said more often than older fathers that the need for a break was a relevant justification for their take-up of leave (Table 25). This desire was most often mentioned by leave-taking fathers whose education level was lower than the partner's.

Perhaps it is easier for the father to communicate his personal desire when it was not in contrast with the partner's desire to return to work that probably not only is paid quite well but also offers personal satisfaction and self-fulfilment. The recognition of work burden as a negative emotional push was more common among fathers employed in the public sector than in the private sector. As much as two thirds of fathers who took parental leave from public sector workplaces reported a need for a break as a justification for leave. Experiences of time pressure, workload and insecurity in the public sector may have been more common in the public sector due to downsizing and restructuring (Siltala 2004). On the other hand, the communication culture in public sector workplaces may also be more supportive for expressing emotions that in other contexts could be taken as signs of weakness and failure.

TABLE 25. Emotional justifications for father's parental leave, according to socio-economic position (%)

	The father took parental leave because		
	he needed a break from work	the child was long tried for	N
Is under 30	47**	6	(55)
Has one child	61	16*	(137)
Has academic degree	55**	9	(142)
Partner has academic degree	60*	7	(218)
Education level lower than partner's	72*	11	(169)
Net income before the child less than 10 000 FIM/month	65	12	(333)
Partner's net income before the child less than 10 000 FIM/month	65	10	(383)
Income level lower than partner's	55(*)	7	(74)
Employed in the public sector	67	14	(138)
All fathers	35	7	(1231)

* p<.01, ** p<.001, *** p<.000 compared to other fathers

As the emotional dimension of parental leave is related to socio-economic and ideological aspects, a logistic regression model is again needed in order to understand how these different aspects interact simultaneously (Table 26). The model shows that the main aspect related to the probability that the father reports his need for a break from work as a justification for his parental leave is his relative education level compared to the partner. A father whose education level is lower than his partner's is twice as probable to report a push from work as relevant for his motivation for parental leave. Also his sector of employment has an impact to his reporting the need for a break. Compared to other fathers, those employed in the public sector, regardless of age, education or other socio-economic aspects are more likely to justify their parental leave with a need for a break from work.

Unlike the father's own occupational position, the partner's position in working life makes some difference: when the mother is in a position with less possibilities for career development i.e. has a blue-collar or lower white collar job, the father is likely to report other justifications for his parental leave than his need for a break. Similarly, it is not his own breadwinner identity but rather his conception of the mother's primacy in childcare that makes him less likely to communicate his desire to take a break from work.

5.3 Do the father's emotions count?

Parental leave is not an individual right; the take-up patterns need at least in principle to be negotiated between the parents. Thus, neither the father's nor the mother's personal emotional experiences are not alone decisive for how leave is shared. Also, the outcome of various emotional pulling and pushing forces always takes place in a given socio-economic situation.

For a father, taking parental leave is emotionally different from taking paternity leave. A short paternity leave (one to three weeks while the mother is also at home) is not as emotionally charged as parental leave. As most fathers take paternity leave, it has become socially "normal" and a father usually does not need to justify or defend his leave for his peers, colleagues or others who may know about it. Many fathers take paternity leave in order to provide help to the mother of their child. They may be motivated by a conception of love as emotional – and perhaps

TABLE 26. Father's need of break from work as a justification for parental leave (logistic regression)¹⁾

The father	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	Sig	Exp(B)	B	Sig	Exp(B)
Thinks the mother should be primarily responsible for childcare	-.957	.000	.384	-1.144	.000	.318
Thinks he should be primarily responsible for breadwinning	-.260	.269	.771			
Is pro-sharing	.205	.344	1.228			
Under 30	-.499	.140	.607			
Has one child	-.179	.347	.836			
Has academic degree	.012	.877	1.012			
Partner has academic degree	.054	.380	1.055			
Has lower education level than partner	.599	.015	1.820	.695	.000	2.004
Blue- or lower white-collar position	.295	.215	1.344			
Partner in blue- or lower white-collar position	-.493	.027	.611	-.512	.002	.599
Employed in the public sector	.362	.069	1.436	.364	.044	1.439
Income less than 10000 FIM before child	-.043	.854	.958			
Partner's income less than 10000 FIM before child	-.091	.768	.913			
Income level lower than partner's	.138	.629	1.147			
Constant	-.556	.132	.573	-.428	.009	.652
	R ² =.145 (Nagelkerke) DF=14 X ² =71,5 Sig=.000 (N=645)			R ² =.119 DF=4 X ² =70,1 Sig=.000 (N=775)		

1) In the model, the dependent variable gets value 1 when the father has responded "yes" and 0 when he has responded "no" or "difficult to say" to the statement "I needed a break from work" as a justification for his parental leave.

also practical – support for one’s partner in a situation of family transition. The practical support is however temporary, as the father soon returns back to work and leaves the mother at home with the baby.

When the prevailing emotion culture is based on understanding mothercare as natural, fathercare may be met with suspicion and confusion at least when it is actualised through atypical practices such as longer parental leave periods. For many fathers – just like for many mothers – there are simultaneous pulling and pushing emotional motivations for making choices between paid employment and parental leave. The negative emotions related to paid work – such as time pressure, insecurity of jobs, less meaningful tasks, or social conflicts at the workplace – may today have an increasing importance for the actualisation of leave rights. At the same time, there are also positive emotions related to recognition and rewards in working life, at least for some employees.

The minority of fathers who have taken parental leave often experience their leave period as much needed break from work. This is true especially for the young and highly educated fathers, who may experience a highly competitive work environment where they are expected to prove their ability and secure their position. However, mothers do not seem to realise that their partner may need a break from work, which indicates a lack of communication around these emotional questions in the family.

The father’s emotions become relevant only in relation to the mother’s emotions and desires, which are related to her socio-economic position in the labour market and her situation in working life. The partner’s weaker position – low education level and little career possibilities – reproduces gender ideology where the mother’s care responsibilities are emphasized. The father’s personal and emotional motivation for parental leave, especially those related to the need to escape the burdens of work life, seem to be possible to communicate mainly in situations where the mother’s desire to return to work creates space for them.

6 Power relations: negotiating possibilities and obstacles

In his message written on the questionnaire, Matti recommends staying at home with children on parental or care leave for all men. However, no man can simply “choose” to take parental leave in Finland as there is no individual, non-transferable leave right for fathers. Sharing parental leave between mothers and fathers is always negotiated between parents. The father’s desire to stay at home and take care of his child, or not to do so are combined with the respective desires of the child’s mother. In addition, the possibilities of each parent to actually fulfil the desired combination of paid work and unpaid care work at home are structurally guided, especially in relation to their labour market situation.

It has been argued that most public institutions are characterised by men's domination over women as well as the domination of some men over other, less powerful men: the power positions in governments, parliaments and enterprises are held by men (Collinson & Hearn 1996, 10; Connell 2000, 24). These power positions provide men with resources that could empower them to make choices about their life according to their own desires: good income, autonomy of work and authority to promote their personal interests and satisfaction. If becoming a father and spending time with one’s child is important for a man, an empowered position should support his possibilities to take parental leave.

Power relations are, however neither axiomatic nor determinate but under constant negotiation (Foucault 1981, 92). In these negotiations, the rewards and costs, threats and promises of alternative actions are considered (Scott 2001, 138). In the everyday family life, power relations can come about as a struggle over who is master of the situation; who can decide who is what, who does what, and who gets what, when and how (Jonasdottir 2001, 38-39). As women face a disadvantaged position in the labour market – lower pay level, more insecurity and weaker career possibilities despite of higher education level – they seem to have less power resources in the family negotiations. On the other hand, it has also been argued that in the private sphere, women are actually more powerful than men; men are thus often being dominated by women in family life and other intimate relations. Especially motherhood is supposed to give women power in the family. The mother’s expectations towards the father as well as her evaluations of his abilities and capabilities in parenting create a frame of practical activities for him. For example,

mothers set the standards of housework and childcare and expect fathers to participate in these activities according to those standards (Holter & Aarseth 1994).

The rewards and costs related to alternative patterns of sharing parental responsibilities and tasks can be material as well as mental and emotional. Promises of satisfaction and threats of deprivation can be related to money that provides a sense of security as well as to respect and recognition of social status; and to the need of love, intimacy and acceptance. Personal desires are not always clear to people and they often make choices along socially and culturally accepted and normalised paths and realise the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of their choices only afterwards. The weaker labour market position tends to push mothers out of paid employment and into unpaid care work, while the better opportunities pull men into paid work and away from family life (Lehto & Sutela 1999; Lammi-Taskula 2004a; Haataja 2005).

In this chapter, the negotiations related to gender ideology and parental responsibilities are discussed, as well as the socio-economic resources that empower or constrain choices made by leave-taking parents. In the negotiations between mothers and fathers, definitions about parental responsibilities and the assumed expertise or lack of capabilities create the symbolic power relations that enable or restrain certain choices. The pushing and pulling forces of the socio-economic context strengthen or weaken possibilities to question gendered expectations and redefine parental responsibilities in order to fulfil one's desires. Negotiations about the division of paid and unpaid work in the family are followed by negotiations about parental leave at the workplace. Assumed reactions by supervisors as well as by colleagues towards a father taking leave are at least as powerful as real ones.

6.1 Consensus, conflict or confusion of ideals in the family?

The family as a unit with united interest is a presupposition that has been criticized by feminist research. When the division of labour in families between women and men, mothers and fathers is discussed, it is necessary to take into account the possibility of conflicting needs and interests of the family members. It has been suggested that domestic conditions, especially women's reproductive labour in the home, form a basis for gendered power relations (Hollway 1996, 26-27).

In case parents share similar ideals of parental responsibilities such as childcare and breadwinning, little explicit negotiations may take place in finding solutions about the gendered division of labour. If both think childcare is the mother's responsibility, her taking the whole parental leave period may seem "natural". If both the mother and the father think childcare is a shared responsibility, a "normal" part of doing fatherhood may well include taking parental leave. When the parents disagree about ideal parental responsibilities, self-evident conceptions are

questioned and negotiations are needed. In negotiating responsibilities, the power relation becomes visible in how each parent's ideals are compromised or actualised.

The analysis of the ideals of mother's and father's responsibilities in relation to parental leave showed that each parent focused more on the expectations towards their own gender while putting less weight on the other parent's responsibilities (see chapter 3). The mother's primacy in childcare was more relevant for mothers than for fathers in relation to the take-up of parental leave; the father's primacy in breadwinning was more significant for leave-taking fathers than for mothers. In other words, the ideals of motherhood were more reflected by mothers and the ideals of fatherhood by fathers. These differences between the two samples may indicate that also in the families of our respondents, ideals are not necessarily experienced as shared by both partners, and disagreement as well as confusion can be expected.

We asked the respondents not only about their own ideals of parental responsibilities as justifications for parental leave, but also about the experiences or assumptions of how their partner thinks about the mother's primacy in childcare as well as the father's primacy in breadwinning. A majority of leave-taking mothers as well as fathers reported agreement between partners (Table 27). Experiences of consensus were especially common among the fathers, who more than men in general had taken both paternity and parental leave. Mothers, who represent the typical pattern of parental leave being an extension of maternity leave, reported somewhat more conflicting and confused patterns of ideals in their family.

The patterns of consensus were also different among mothers and fathers. As can be expected on the basis of different take-up patterns among the mothers' and the fathers' samples, mothers reported more often consensus in supporting separate responsibilities for each parent, while fathers mainly reported mutual rejection of such a gendered division. One in three mothers compared to one in five fathers said both parents agreed the mother's primacy in childcare was a relevant justification for parental leave; one in four mothers compared to one in five fathers said there was a consensus between partners about the father's primacy in breadwinning. Almost two thirds of the fathers, compared to less than two of five of mothers reported a mutual rejection of the mother's primacy in childcare as a justification for parental leave in their family. Three of five fathers but half of the mothers reported a consensus in rejecting the father's primacy in breadwinning.

Conflicting conceptions between partners regarding the mother's primacy in childcare were reported by one in seven mothers and one in twelve fathers. One in seven mothers and one in ten fathers said the partners did not agree about the relevance of the father's breadwinning responsibility for parental leave practices in their family. For some respondents, the relation between ideal parental responsibilities and the take-up of parental leave was unclear. One in seven mothers and

TABLE 27. Parents' conceptions of separate responsibilities as justifications for parental leave (%)

Partner thinks*	Mothers Respondent thinks				Fathers Respondent thinks			
	Yes	No	Difficult to say	Total	Yes	No	Difficult to say	Total
The mother should be primarily responsible for childcare								
Yes	34	7	2		21	4	1	
No	8	38	1		4	61	1	
Difficult to say	5	2	4	100	2	2	5	100
	(N=2764)				(N=1276)			
	X ² = 1530.3 Sig.=.000				X ² = 1158.1 Sig.=.000			
The father should be primarily responsible for breadwinning								
Yes	25	12	2		19	2	1	
No	2	48	1		8	60	1	
Difficult to say	2	3	5	100	5	1	4	100
	(N=2741)				(N=1283)			
	X ² = 1865.5 Sig.=.000				X ² = 883.8 Sig.=.000			

* as reported by the respondent

one in ten fathers found it difficult to say whether or not their own or the partner's opinions about the mother's care responsibility had been a relevant justification for parental leave. One in eight mothers and fathers expressed uncertainty about the importance of the father's breadwinning responsibility in deciding who will take parental leave.

The high take-up rate of parental leave among the fathers is reflected in their reports of consensus about shared rather than separate parental responsibilities. An even stronger connection between sharing parental leave and the partners' consensus of ideals is seen when fathers who have taken parental leave are compared to those who only took paternity leave (Table 28). A large majority of fathers who have taken parental leave (81%) report an agreement with their partner about the mother not being the primary carer for their child. Also mothers whose partner has taken parental leave report consensus between partners about shared child care responsibility more than other mothers.

However, sharing parental leave between parents does not always mean the parents unanimously reject separate parental responsibilities. A small group of fathers took parental leave in a contradictory situation: either because their partner did not think she should be the primary carer even if the father expected her to be that (4%), or because the father persuaded his partner to share part of the leave even if she held herself as the primary carer (3%). Among those who have shared parental leave, one in ten of the fathers and more than one in four mothers

TABLE 28. Parents' conceptions of childcare responsibility, according to take-up of parental leave (%)

	Mothers		Fathers	
	Partner took parental leave		Took parental leave	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Both think she is the primary carer	28	35	12	25
He thinks she is the primary carer, she doesn't	5	9	4	7
She thinks she is the primary carer, he doesn't	8	12	3	7
Both think she is not the primary carer	59	44	81	62
Total	100	100	100	100
N	(119)	(2645)	(462)	(814)
	X ² = 10.7 Sig= .013		X ² = 52.0 Sig=.000	

reported a mutual agreement in the family about the mother being the primary carer for the child. In these families, the father's parental leave may have been a practical solution and not understood as his taking full care responsibility. Agreement about the mother's primacy can also be related to the timing and length of the father's leave period so that it is short and takes place as late as possible. One explanation for the existence of this group can also be confusion about leave terminology. There can well be some fathers who have reported their paternity leave as parental leave, and during paternity leave the mother has also been at home acting as the primary carer.

In addition to differences in leave-sharing and non-sharing families, the patterns of family consensus on parental responsibilities as justifications for parental leave also vary according to socio-economic aspects. Consensus about separate responsibilities is more significant in families with three or more children, as well as among mothers with a lower education level. Respectively, separate responsibilities are rejected more often in families with only one child, where both parents have an academic degree; where the father is over 30 and not employed in the private sector (Table 29).

In addition to the clearly asymmetric and symmetric patterns of consensus, there are also patterns where both parents support the mother's primacy in childcare but reject the father's primacy in breadwinning as arguments for parental leave (7% of fathers, 12% of mothers); and patterns where both parents support the father's primacy in breadwinning but reject the mother's primacy in childcare (6% of fathers, 5% of mothers). As the frequencies in these patterns are small, most differences between socio-economic groups are not statistically significant. However, both of these patterns are less common in families where the father has taken parental leave than in other families.

TABLE 29. Parents' consensus on separate responsibilities as justifications for parental leave (%)

	According to the respondent, both partners...				N (mothers/ fathers)
	reject separate responsibilities		support separate responsibilities		
	Mothers	Fathers	Mothers	Fathers	
Is under 30	29**	35***	22***	11	(782/198)
Has one child	41*	52	14*	3***	(700/408)
Father has academic degree	45*	54*	12	6	(444/317)
Mother has academic degree	50***	61***	7***	4***	(492/445)
Father's education level lower than mother's	31	54**	12	7	(949/481)
Employed in the private sector	35	45**	13*	10	(870/849)
Income before child less than 10 000 FIM/ month	29*	48	14***	8*	(3004/1028)
Partner's income before child less than 10 000 FIM/month	30	47**	13*	9	(2174/1226)
Father's income level lower than mother's	30	62***	4***	2**	(273/161)
All	35	48	16	9	(2696/1413)

* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p <.001 (compared to others)

In the beginning phase of a family relationship, there is usually more explicit negotiation between partners, whereas later there is more implicit negotiation. This means the shared understandings and common everyday practices can be developed step by step almost unobserved and unrealised (Ahrne & Roman 1997, 5-6). Differences in the accounts of consensus as well as reports of disagreement and confusion can be interpreted as signs of contradictions that can bring about explicit negotiations and disputes in families related to the actualisation of parental leave possibilities.

Sometimes even persuasive influence may not be needed if culturally formed cognitive meanings are shared widely enough (Scott 2001, 8-15). Symbolic power is the capacity of the dominant to force through their own definition of reality in a way which makes invisible the linkage between the symbolic system and the interests of the powerful (Järvinen 1999, 9). Symbolic constructions of motherhood are especially powerful as there is a physiological link of the mother and the child during pregnancy. The power of the mother is evident as the fetus is part of her body and thus totally dependent of her. The shift from physiological symbiosis during pregnancy into a care relationship between two separate beings considerably weakens this dependency. Although other persons are able to provide adequate care for the baby, symbolically the mother-child relationship is understood as primary to other relationships. Historical and cultural versions of mothercare can thus appear as natural and inevitably based on the feminine physiology. Ac-

cordingly, also “male breadwinning responsibility” gets a character of inevitability as the mother is symbolically closed inside a small circle of the private sphere i.e. the home, leaving her dependent on others to provide the basic maintenance for her and the child.

This kind of “natural order of things” powerfully maintains a gendered segregation of parental tasks and responsibilities even in the context of a Nordic welfare state where the parental benefits provide some income for mothers who stay at home with a child.

6.2 Domestic discussions

Regarding parental leave, negotiations between partners are – at least in principle – more relevant for sharing parental leave than negotiations at the workplace. An employee has a statutory right to take leave during his or her parental benefit period, but in case the parents live together, the parental benefit cannot be applied for without the other partner’s signature in the application form¹. Each married or cohabiting parent can only take parental leave as long as the other parent explicitly accepts it.

A precondition for negotiating and eventually taking parental leave is that each parent is aware of the various alternatives to choose from. Paternity leave has been part of the Finnish family policy for over 25 years and parental leave for fathers for nearly 20 years, so these possibilities are not so new any more. In spite of living in an information society, all fathers – or mothers – may not be aware of leave rights for fathers. In previous Nordic research, lack of information about fathers’ leave possibilities has been mentioned as a factor that reproduces asymmetric gender relations. Danish researchers were surprised that in the beginning of the 1990’s, it was quite common that parents of young children did not know the father could also take parental leave (Rostgaard et al 1999, 34-35). Thus, one in five couples had never even thought about sharing parental leave.

Parents are persuaded to make choices of paid and unpaid work by referring to the best interest of their child. For example, many parents – advised by child professionals – think the child should be in home care as long as possible (Olsen 2000, Salmi & Lammi-Taskula 2004b). Also fathers are encouraged to take parental leave. Information campaigns have been launched in all the Nordic countries, also in Finland to introduce parental leave as a shared project for the parents. Knowledge about father’s leave possibilities can also come from the example of other families – friends, neighbours and relatives – who have shared parental leave.

¹ In practice, the mother’s signature is needed in the father’s application, but the father’s signature is not asked for at the National Insurance Institute (KELA) office when it is the mother who is applying for parental benefit (Haataja 2005).

As parental leave has mainly been taken by mothers, role models for fathers taking leave are rare, but such models seem to have a positive impact. In Denmark, only one father in four knew a man who had taken parental leave, compared to half of the fathers who had taken parental leave themselves (Rostgaard et al 1999, 34-35).

In her analysis on the arguments of sharing or not sharing parental leave between the parents in Finland, Riikka Kivimäki (2001) argues that the mother's paid work or her desire to be in paid employment is hardly ever mentioned in the answers concerning the mother's staying at home on leave. The father's work, on the contrary is often described as demanding and as an obstacle for parental leave. Kivimäki wonders if the alternative take-up patterns of parental leave are negotiated at all in families. The primary argument given by parents seems to be the mother's choice. This choice is however deeply embedded in the prevailing symbolic definitions of parenthood. Social recognition is not easily given to choices that resist the power of cultural conceptions.

As mothers and fathers are routinely reproducing prevailing symbolic meanings of masculinity and femininity in everyday family life, they are doing gender (West & Zimmerman 2002, 4-5). At times, the gendered parental practices of paid and unpaid work may be negotiated explicitly through discussions. To a large extent, they are negotiated and reproduced implicitly, making more or less unconscious observations of each other (Ahrne & Roman 1997, 5). Thus, in face-to-face everyday encounters, someone can have power without actually exercising it, as others may anticipate his or her expectations and reactions and act accordingly (Scott 2001). Through such routine performances actualised by both women and men, mothercare remains more dominant and obvious, and fathercare as more marginal and questionable. Similarly, father's paid employment remains inevent while the mother's employment outside the home is met with suspicion if the child is very young.

The analysis of our material shows that only a minority of fathers either did not know about the possibility to take parental leave or did not find it meaningful in their situation. In the questionnaire, the respondents could reply "Yes", "No" or "Difficult to say" to the statements regarding the various aspects related to the sharing of parental leave between parents in the respondents family. The statements related to information and discussions were "*I knew about the father's possibilities to take parental and care leave in addition to paternity leave*" and "*We discussed with my partner about the possibility to share parental leave and/or care leave*". Nearly all fathers (94%) who took parental leave experienced the information as relevant for their take-up of leave (Table 30). A majority (77%) of fathers who only took paternity leave said they had known about the possibilities of sharing parental leave and care leave when decisions of take-up were made in their family. Similarly, most mothers (72%) whose partner did not take parental leave said they had been aware of the father's possibilities.

Most fathers (89%) who took parental leave said discussions with the partner had been important for their decision to take parental leave, whereas those fathers who did not take parental leave less often reported discussions with their partner as relevant for their decision (Table 30). For mothers, discussions about the father's parental leave possibilities were less important than for fathers in relation to their take-up pattern. Half of the mothers who shared parental leave with the father of their child said discussions played an important part in the negotiation. In the families where the mother took the whole parental leave, only one in four mothers saw discussion about the father's possibilities as relevant even though they were aware of these possibilities.

Knowing about the father's parental leave possibilities and finding that information relevant and meaningful for one's situation does not necessarily mean that the division of the take-up of parental leave is actually discussed in the family. In families where parental leave was taken only by the mother, half of the fathers but only one in three mothers who said they knew about the father's leave rights reported discussing the possibility to share leave between parents. In other words the decision not to share leave was so self-evident that no discussion was needed despite of knowing about alternatives. On the other hand, also the decision to share parental leave seems to have been self-evident in some families: half of mothers whose partner took parental leave said it was relevant she knew about the father's rights but no actual discussion between partners took place. As only 8% of fathers who had taken parental leave reported similar combination of his awareness but not discussions with the partner as, the question arises whether fathers and mothers had different understanding of what counts as "discussion". For the mothers, lack of discussion may indicate a mutual understanding and willingness to share care responsibilities that is culturally valued, while for the fathers lack of discussion may mean use of power either by him ("I knew about my rights and told her I want my leave period, no need to discuss it") or by her ("She told me to take part of parental leave and would not discuss it").

TABLE 30. Information and discussions as justifications for parental leave (%)

	Mothers		Fathers	
	Partner took parental leave		Took parental leave	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
I knew about the father's possibilities	79	72	94***	77
We discussed with my partner about the possibility to share parental leave	51***	27	89***	40
I knew about possibilities but we did not discuss them	39***	66	8***	51
N	(125)	(3170)	(457)	(962)

*** p<.001 (difference between leave sharing and others)

Questioning self-evident patterns in explicit negotiation on the basis of knowledge about alternatives is related to the education level as well as to the age of parents (Table 31). In the families of young mothers and fathers (under 30), the take-up pattern of parental leave had more often been decided without information about the father's leave rights, or without taking this information into consideration. The lack of information or the smaller relevance of it among younger parents can be related to their being in the beginning of the "parental career" – for example, the child born in 1999 was the first and only child for almost half of the under-30-year-old fathers. Older parents as well as those with a higher education level or better occupational position reported more often than others that the information they had about fathers' rights as well as discussions between partners were relevant for the division of leave periods in their own family. The relevance of information was highest among fathers with an academically educated partner: nine of ten said the information about the father's leave rights played a role when the patterns of sharing parental leave were considered. Mothers employed in expert or managerial positions reported more than others that information and discussion with the partner had been relevant in their family. Information about the father's leave rights and discussions about sharing parental leave had also been more relevant in those families where the mother's income level was higher than the fathers.

TABLE 31. Information and discussions as justifications for parental leave, according to socio-economic position (%)

	Knew about the father's leave rights		Discussed sharing leave with partner	
	Mothers	Fathers	Mothers	Fathers
Is under 30	65***	77**	23***	47***
Has one child	70	86	31	62
Has academic degree	78**	89**	41***	72***
Mother's education level higher than father's	74	85	30	62
Income before the child under 10 000 FIM/month	72	84	28	60
Mother's income level higher than father's	86***	89	42***	77***
Expert/manager position	80*	89**	42**	66**
Employed in the private sector	73	82*	29*	52**
Father took 3 weeks of paternity leave	75**	86*	37***	65***
All	72	84	28	60
N	(2757)	(1300)	(2782)	(1301)

** p<.01, ***p<.001 (compared to others)

While a majority of fathers had taken some paternity leave, those who had taken the maximum length of paternity leave (three weeks) were better aware of their parental leave rights than other respondents. They had also more often than others discussed these rights with their partner. The same was true for mothers whose partner had taken all three weeks of paternity leave.

In addition to socio-economic aspects, the gender ideology related to parental responsibilities was also relevant for both the awareness of alternative patterns, and the level of reflecting these alternatives in explicit discussions between partners (Table 32). Less discussions were reported by those who supported the dichotomic gender ideology where parental responsibilities are separated between parents and the mother is seen as primarily responsible for childcare. Those fathers who identified themselves as primary breadwinners had less often known about their leave possibilities, or had not been interested to find out about them in order to be able to consider them. Thus, also less discussions between partners had taken place: less than half of the fathers supporting separate parental responsibilities reported discussions about who will take parental leave.

When the different aspects related to the parents' awareness and explicit negotiation about the father's leave rights are simultaneously looked at (Table 33), socio-economic as well as ideological aspects remain as significant for the likelihood of reporting discussions based on relevant information about leave possibilities as relevant for the take-up of parental leave. A higher likelihood is related to the mother's high occupational position and relatively high income level, and the father's high education level. Also mothers whose partner has taken the maximum three weeks of paternity leave while the mother was on maternity leave are twice as likely to report negotiations about parental leave in their family. The experience of paternity leave was, however not significant among fathers in this respect. This may be due to the high take-up of both paternity and parental leave among the fathers, as well as the high awareness level and frequency of discussions so that there was not so much variation among fathers as there were among mothers.

TABLE 32. Information and discussions as justifications for parental leave, according to gendered conceptions of parental responsibilities (%)

	The mother should be primarily responsible for childcare				The father should be primarily responsible for breadwinning			
	Mothers		Fathers		Mothers		Fathers	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Knew about the father's leave rights	68***	76	82	85	67**	74	81**	87
Discussed sharing leave with partner	20***	36	43***	65	19***	32	45***	67
N	(1262)	(1475)	(329)	(948)	(780)	(1956)	(398)	(874)

** p<.01, ***p<.001 (difference between yes/no groups)

TABLE 33. Information and discussion as justifications for parental leave (logistic regression)

	I knew about the father's leave rights and discussed them with my partner					
	Mothers			Fathers		
	B	Sig	Exp(B)	B	Sig	Exp(B)
Thinks the mother should be primarily responsible for childcare	-.621	.000	.537	-.791	.000	.454
Thinks the father should be primarily responsible for breadwinning	-.393	.021	.675	-.503	.012	.605
Father/partner took 3 weeks of paternity leave	.584	.000	1.794	.103	.544	1.109
Is under 30	-.271	.084	.763	-.633	.027	.531
Has one child	.030	.817	1.031	-.003	.985	.997
Has academic degree	.320	.052	1.377	.135	.034	1.145
Income less than 10 000 FIM/month before child	-.245	.288	.783	.345	.093	1.413
Employed in the private sector	-.211	.085	.810	-.501	.008	.606
Expert or manager position	.312	.047	1.366	.292	.182	1.339
Partner in expert or manager position	-.113	.434	.893	-.939	.000	.391
Mother's education level higher than father's	.009	.948	1.009	-.025	.898	.975
Mother's income level higher than father's	.424	.036	1.528	.342	.221	1.408
Constant	-.548	.042	.578	1.049	.002	2.855
	X ² =110.3 DF=12			X ² =113.1 DF=12		
	Sig=.000 R ² =.101			Sig=.000 R ² =.20 (Nagelkerke)		
	(N=2654)			(N=702)		

1) In the model, the dependent variable gets value 1 when the respondent has replied "yes" to both statements "I knew about the father's possibilities to take parental and care leave" and "we discussed with my partner about the possibility to share parental leave", and 0 when he/she has replied "no" or "difficult to say" to one or both statements.

A lower likelihood of reporting explicit negotiations was related to conceptions of separate, gendered parental responsibilities. Those parents who justified their take-up patterns with the mother's primacy in childcare or the father's primacy in breadwinning were less likely to report that negotiations about the father's leave rights had been relevant in their family. They may have known about these rights, but ignored them as not applicable in their own family. Among fathers also the respondent's young age as well as his employment in the private sector was related to a lower significance of explicit negotiations between partners. Young fathers may need more information whereas those employed in the private sector may need more encouragement.

It is interesting that the likelihood of discussing the father's leave possibilities was lower also among fathers whose partner was in a high occupational position. These fathers may have taken it as self-evident that they have leave rights and that leave is shared between parents. Thus, discussions and negotiations were not reported as relevant by them. In these families, the mother may have gained symbolic power to redefine parental responsibilities based on economic power.

Her relatively good position and high income have given economic independence from the partner, which may lead to more equality in the family.

6.3 Economic power

Parental choices between employment and unpaid care work have often been seen as manifestations of the parents' – usually the mother's – individual values or orientations (e.g. Hakim 2003). These choices are, however connected to the prevailing labour market structures and economic cycles. The most common arguments reported by parents against the father's parental leave are according to previous studies the work situation and economic rationality (Säntti 1990, Salmi & Lammi-Taskula 1999, Kivimäki 2001). Economic power has been interpreted as having more power to decide about one's own life (Betänkande... 1998, 14-16). The division of paid and unpaid labour between women and men produces unequal economic resources and power relations.

A high level of dependence undermines the ability to resist social expectations by choosing alternative parental divisions of labour (Ahrne & Roman 1997, 12; Scott 2001, 28-30; 135-142). A parent who is economically or emotionally dependent of the partner will be more submissive to the desires of the other rather than struggling for their own interests. Power relations are weaker and there is more room for alternative patterns if the level of dependence is low and needed resources can be found also elsewhere. In the Finnish context, the economic dependence of the partner's income during parental leave is to some extent reduced by the state, reducing the risk of poverty but not totally eliminating it. Especially in families with young children, the risk for relative poverty is bigger than in other families (Moisio 2005).

During the 1990's recession years, women's position in the labour market deteriorated (Naiset ja miehet Suomessa 2003). As a consequence, a growing share of mothers on parental leave have been unemployed or had a temporary work contract prior to the birth of the baby (Sauli, Savola & Haataja 2000). At the same time as there were less employment possibilities – especially permanent jobs – available, the home care cash benefit that enables child home care more than two years after the parental leave period became more popular (Kela 2003). Especially younger women with a lower education level who had less options to choose from took the cash benefit as an alternative for unemployment (Lammi-Taskula 2004a). In a decade (1990–2000), the share of two-breadwinner model in families with two parents decreased from 73% to 62% (Haataja 2005).

Choosing different responsibilities and tasks than would be expected – such as putting one's career ahead of child home care – the may bring economic gains for women, but often these gains are combined with social costs such as disrespect

(Betänkande... 1998,16). For men, non-conventional choices may be even harder as social costs are combined with economic losses. If the parents have a joint family budget, the total net result of these gains and losses need to be calculated. Parents of young children often assume that the family budget would not bear the father's parental leave. In fact, this is not always true. A Danish study showed that one family in four would have benefited economically from sharing parental leave, and in one third of the families there were no implications for the family budget (Rostgaard et al 1999, 34-35). Calculations based on average male and female wages in Finland have shown that the net cost of a father's three month parental leave for the family is less than 30 euros per month on an annual level (Ojala 2002).

In the questionnaire, the statements related to the economic justifications of (not) sharing parental leave between parents were *"We made calculations about the economic implications of the father's possible leave period"* and *"We expected the family economy to suffer if the father took leave"*. The alternative answers were "Yes", "No" and "Difficult to say". Among the leave-taking parents of young children, expectations of economic losses related to a father's parental leave period were often the main reason for not sharing parental leave between parents (Table 34). More than half of fathers who did not take parental leave (54%), and mothers who took the whole period themselves (61%) said they had expected the family economy to suffer if the father had taken parental leave. Often, however, these expectations had not been verified by calculations. Especially mothers whose partner had not been on parental leave had rarely made calculations about the impact of the father's eventual leave period on the family budget.

A logistic regression model (Table 35) shows that gender ideology is quite relevant for the likelihood of reporting expectations of economic losses as justifications for not sharing parental leave. Regardless of their actual socio-economic position, parents of young children who think the father should be the primary breadwinner in the family are more than twice as likely to report expectations of economic losses as relevant obstacles for sharing parental leave. However, the relevance of these expectations is also related to actual economical positions and

TABLE 34. Economy and calculations as justifications for parental leave (%)

	Mothers		Fathers	
	Partner took parental leave		Took parental leave	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
We expected the family economy to suffer if the father took parental leave	44***	61	23***	54
We made calculations about the economic implications of the father's leave period	45***	27	61***	39
N	(125)	(3170)	(457)	(962)

*** p <.001 (difference between yes/no groups)

situations. On the one hand, fathers who were not in a primary breadwinner position (because they had a lower income level than their partner) had a lower likelihood of reporting family economy as a justification for parental leave. On the other hand, the mother's low income level adds to the probability of naming family economy as a significant aspect for the take-up pattern of parental leave in one's own family. Compared to families where the mother was earning more than the average female income, mothers with a lower income level were three times as likely and fathers with a low-income partner twice as likely to report economic obstacles for the father's take-up of parental leave.

While conceptions of the father's breadwinner position were clearly linked to expectations of economic losses if he took parental leave, the mother's primary care responsibility was not measured in economic terms. Compared to other mothers, those who reported their primacy in childcare as an important justification for their parental leave were less likely to refer to economic aspects, regardless of their socio-economic background. For these mothers, a strong ideology of mothercare seems to overrule any economic expectations or realities: even if the father had no income at all, or the mother had a high income herself, she would not report family economy as relevant for sharing or not sharing parental leave.

When other aspects were controlled, mothers with only one child were less likely to refer to family economy as a justification for the take-up of parental leave in their family. When the first child is born, a lot of emotional experiences may seem more relevant than counting money. With the second or third child, parents have more experience of how the family economy actually changes in relation to parental leave. They may also have a need for new family investments such as a bigger home that require changes in the family budget. Thus more explicit calculations may have been made and expectations verified also in relation to the take-up of parental leave.

Fathers who actually had taken parental leave, as well as mothers who had shared leave with their partner, were less likely to report expectations of economic losses as relevant for their leave choices, regardless of their socio-economic situation or their gender ideology. One explanation is that they had actually calculated the economic consequences and realised no such expectations were relevant in their family. It is also possible that these families had such a strong economy that there was no need for worrying about possible economic losses related to sharing parental leave. However, as there were not too many high-income couples among the respondents, it is more likely that money was less important than other aspects for these parents.

Among fathers, the aspects missing from the model seem to be related to reducing the relevance of family economy, while among mothers they add to its relevance. These missing aspects could well be related to the child. For the fathers, the father-child relationship could have been more important than money in con-

TABLE 35. Economy as a justification for parental leave (logistic regression)

According to the respondent	we expected the family economy to suffer if the father took parental leave					
	Mothers			Fathers		
	B	Sig	Exp(B)	B	Sig	Exp(B)
The mother should be primarily responsible for childcare	-.325	.001	.723	-.099	.654	.906
The father should be primarily responsible for breadwinning	.715	.000	2.045	.862	.000	2.367
Father/partner took parental leave	-2.101	.000	.122	-.977	.000	.376
Is under 30	.307	.003	1.359	.568	.054	1.765
Has one child	-.240	.018	.786	-.283	.149	.754
Has academic degree	-.475	.001	.622	.073	.338	1.075
Partner has academic degree	.043	.776	1.044	-.092	.146	.912
Father has lower education level than mother	.051	.627	1.053	-.042	.859	.959
Blue- or lower white-collar position	.041	.673	1.042	-.134	.567	.875
Partner in blue- or lower white-collar position	-.061	.528	.941	.659	.005	1.932
Employed in the public sector	-.079	.471	.924	.009	.967	1.009
Income less than 10 000 FIM before child	1.107	.000	3.026	-.280	.238	.756
Partner's income less than 10 000 FIM before child	-.766	.000	.465	.802	.034	2.229
Father's income level lower than mother's	-1.282	.000	.277	-.909	.012	.403
Is pro-sharing	.081	.531	1.084	.457	.049	1.580
Constant	.793	.002	2.210	-1.067	.012	.344
	X ² =317.1 DF=15 Sig=.000 R ² =.16			X ² =151.0 DF=15 Sig=.000 R ² =.27 (Nagelkerke)		

1) In the model, the dependent variable gets value 1 when the respondent has replied "yes" and 0 when he/she has replied "no" or "difficult to say" to the statement "we expected the family economy to suffer if the father took leave" as a justification for the take-up of parental leave.

siderations of parental leave. For the mothers, doubts about fathercare as good enough for the child could make them more likely to report family economy as an obstacle for his parental leave.

It is quite interesting that fathers with pro-sharing attitudes i.e. those who supported a more equal sharing of parental leave in general, were more likely to report expectations of economic losses as relevant obstacles for sharing leave in their own family. Either these fathers are examples of the "in-principle" discourse (Jalmert 1983) – supporting gender equality for others but not in their own family – or they are truly sorry about not being able to fulfil their ideals themselves because of actual, significant pay differences between partners.

6.4 Disharmony about housework

Doing unpaid housework is the main cause of family conflicts between partners in Finland (Reuna 1998). When a child is born to a couple, the amount of time and energy that needs to be spent in housework increases. The parent who is taking care of the child at home easily ends up doing more than her or his share of tasks that are not directly related to childcare: cleaning, cooking, washing clothes etc. As childcare itself can be quite time-consuming and takes at times a lot of energy, the parent who is at home may expect participation and support from the other parent. If these expectations are not met, conflicts are not unusual. These conflicts and struggles are not only a question of unevenly divided household chores or having free time. A more deep-seated power relationship is that of gendered appropriation and commitment (Jonasdottir 2001, 103-108): women are required (and require of themselves) to commit themselves to care work while men appropriate the caring and loving powers of women without giving back in kind.

According to the leave-taking mothers and fathers in our study, the increase of the amount of household work and the changes in the responsibilities indeed did not always happen without negotiations or conflicts in their families. One in ten of the mothers say they often argue about unpaid housework with her partner, and more than a third report such arguments to happen now and then. Fathers report conflicts less often than mothers: one in seven say they never have disharmony about housework and only 6% reports frequent conflicts (Table 36).

Reporting housework conflicts is as common among blue-collar and white-collar parents of young children, or among those with lower and higher education level. Leave-taking fathers and mothers with only one child report somewhat more such conflicts than parents with two or more children, although the workload of the latter should be bigger. Also younger parents seem to experience more disharmony between partners related to unpaid housework. Older parents with two or more children may have in time adapted to the increase of unpaid housework and developed such division of labour that is satisfactory enough for both parents.

Mothers report more conflicts about housework if their partner has a lower income level in relation to their own. The low income level may be related to unemployment, which in principle would allow the father to use more time in unpaid housework. Perhaps these mothers expect their partner to show more activity at home as compensation for weaker breadwinning ability, while the fathers identify with a general male pattern of lower activity rate at home. It is different if the father is at home because of paternity or parental leave: a longer paternity leave is related to reporting no conflict about housework by fathers. Also mother report less conflicts in case their partner has taken parental leave.

TABLE 36. Conflicts about the division of housework, according to socio-economic position (%)

	Mothers			Fathers		
	Often	Never	N	Often	Never	N
Is under 30	9	8***	(1041)	9	7**	(198)
Has one child	11	9*	(911)	9*	14	(408)
Has academic degree	10	12	(546)	8	15	(317)
Partner has academic degree	8	12	(495)	8	13	(445)
Father's education level lower than m's	10	11	(949)	6	14	(481)
Net income before the child less than 10 000 FIM/month	9	10	(3004)	6	13	(1028)
Partner's net income before the child less than 10 000 FIM/month	10	10	(2174)	6	14	(1226)
Father's income level lower than m's	14*	9	(273)	5	11	(161)
Employed in the public sector	10	10	(773)	6	11	(307)
Blue-collar or lower white-collar	11	10	(1422)	5	12	(734)
Partner blue-collar or lower white-collar	10	10	(1485)	6	12	(589)
Father took 3 weeks of paternity leave	9	11	(944)	7	15	(780)
Father took parental leave	6	17*	(125)	6	14	(403)
All	10	10	(3295)	6	14	(1375)

*** p<.001, ** p<.01, * p<.05 (compared to others)

Equal sharing of unpaid housework is related to a lower level of conflicts between parents (Table 37). Leave-taking mothers and fathers who say they share the responsibility for housework equally with their partner report lack of conflicts more than other parents. According to the mothers' accounts, equal sharing is the case in about a fourth of families with young children, whereas half of the fathers report their division of household work as equal. About one in five parents of young children who have reported equal practices also report harmony in the division of housework. If one of the parents – in most cases the mother – has the main responsibility of household work, or if the respondent has not been able to say how the responsibility is shared, occasional or frequent arguments are usually reported. However, a large majority of all parents – despite the level of equality in sharing housework – seems to negotiate the division of housework at least sometimes in a manner that they experience as disharmony or conflict. These negotiations are thus quite a normal part of family life, but they can be reduced by developing equal sharing so that frustration, anger, and conflicts can be avoided.

When the attitudes about parental responsibilities are taken into account, the conceptions of the mother's primacy in childcare appear among leave-taking fathers – but not among mothers – as an explanation of eventual conflicts between partners about the division of housework (Table 38). Compared to other fathers,

TABLE 37. Conflicts about housework, according to the division of responsibility (%)

Conflicts	Who is mainly responsible for getting housework done					
	Mothers			Fathers		
	Me	Partner	Equally	Me	Partner	Equally
Never	8	11	20	5	9	18
Frequently or sometimes	92	89	80	95	91	82
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	(2359)	(18)	(846)	(39)	(565)	(741)
	X ² =93.4 Sig=.000			X ² =27.2 Sig=.000		

those for whom the mother's primacy in childcare has been a relevant justification for the take-up pattern of parental leave in his family are twice as likely to report frequent conflicts about housework.

The conceptions of the father's breadwinning responsibility, or his take-up of paternity or parental leave do not add or reduce the likelihood of reporting family conflicts about housework. The one-child effect remains so that those parents – especially fathers – who only have one child are more likely to report conflicts, regardless of their age, relative income level, their attitudes towards gendered pa-

TABLE 38. Conflicts about the division of housework (logistic regression)

	We often have conflicts about housework					
	Mothers			Fathers		
	B	Sig	Exp(B)	B	Sig	Exp(B)
Thinks the mother should be primarily responsible for childcare	.008	.958	1.008	.661	.012	1.938
Thinks the father should be primarily responsible for breadwinning	-.014	.929	.986	.427	.110	1.533
The father took parental leave	-.397	.290	.672	.122	.632	1.130
The father took 3 weeks of paternity leave	-.108	.455	.897	.183	.453	1.201
Is under 30	-.153	.311	.858	.284	.352	1.329
Has one child	.299	.042	1.348	.790	.001	2.204
The mother's income level before child higher than father's	.631	.005	1.879	.064	.874	1.066
The mother does more daily housework* than the father	.817	.000	2.263	.434	.081	1.543
Constant	-2.807	.000	.060	-3.702	.000	.025
	X ² =45.7 DF= 8			X ² =27.5 DF=8		
	Sig=.000 R ² =.036			Sig=.001 R ² =.057 (Nagelkerke)		
	(N=2732)			(N=1258)		

*cooking, cleaning and laundry

rental responsibilities, the degree of equal sharing of housework, or their take-up of leave. Mothers who do most of the daily housework tasks (cooking, cleaning, laundry) alone are more than twice as likely to report conflicts over housework with their partner, whereas the unequal division of housework is not related to reporting conflicts among fathers.

6.5 Negotiations at the workplace

At the workplace, employees may always not be able to negotiate their workload, working time, or leave periods according to their family needs. The employer holds power based on economic dependency that undermines the possibilities of employed parents to choose between work and family (Ahrne & Roman 1997, 12; Scott 2001, 28-30; 135-142). Employment provides economic security that may not easily be obtained elsewhere in times of high unemployment. With widespread insecurity in the labour market, the willingness to confront expectations by the employer is reduced and long periods of absence are avoided despite own desire to take parental leave.

Parents themselves may also prefer paid employment and career development rather than childcare because of material and social rewards. Fathers participate in the symbolic reproduction of mothercare – and sometimes mothers try to promote fathercare – in order to encourage the partner to take the main responsibility at home. In today's labour market, marginality in family life is often a precondition of empowerment in paid work and a possibility to perform as a "proper employee". Empowerment can here be understood as self-confidence based on social recognition at work. The ability and willingness to fulfil the expectations of the employer provides satisfaction. The parent who leaves the basic needs of dependent family members to someone else's responsibility is able to orientate most of his (or her) activities according to the needs of paid work. The rewards received accordingly make the work-oriented parent even more loyal and attached to paid work.

Matti who took parental leave writes about negative reactions at the workplace towards fathers who choose childcare over paid employment: "Male colleagues, especially men of older generations easily wonder and make dismissive remarks". Doing career is at the same time doing gender; in other words it may have different meanings for women and men, especially when they are mothers and fathers. Success at work can make a father feel like a real man who is respected and needed by his supervisors, colleagues and customers. At home, he expects his financial contribution to be a sufficient source of recognition. Rather than constantly reflecting upon such symbolic meanings, the father is usually actualising this breadwinner position in a more routinised manner.

Paternity leave makes fatherhood visible at the workplace. It is easier for a father than for a mother to keep his family situation and family life hidden at work as pregnancy is visible only at the mother's workplace. When a man is becoming a father, his colleagues and supervisors will know about it if he tells about it. It is, however quite unusual that a man would not tell about his fatherhood at the workplace. If he is to take paternity leave he needs to inform his employer about the leave. As a majority of fathers take paternity leave, it is no longer seen as exceptional but rather as "normal" at all kinds of workplaces.

Taking parental leave means one takes a longer break from paid employment. The longer the break, the more implications it has for the employer: a substitute may be needed or tasks divided to colleagues while the person usually responsible for them is not available. Different kinds of jobs and occupations allow different degree of flexibility in re-organising tasks. In some cases, it can be hard to find another employee who has the expertise needed while in others the task is familiar to many or can be quickly learned. Depending on market situation, the employer can suffer or benefit from the parental leave of an employee: when times are not so good, the employer can save the costs of a high salary. Employees with more expertise and better "market-value" have a stronger negotiation position: they can choose another job if the conditions provided by present employer – such as flexibility in working hours or possibility for leave – is not satisfactory to their needs.

At the workplace, the possibility of a father taking parental leave is often unusual and unfamiliar. Fathers are not encouraged to take leave, and if they do they may face difficulties. Only one in ten of the respondents in the equality barometer study in Finland found that fathers are encouraged enough at workplaces to take parental leave; one in five did not know how to respond to the question (Melkas 2005, 17). Reactions to short paternity leave were evaluated to be mainly positive, but longer parental and care leaves were expected to be more difficult for men, especially in the private sector. Less than half of those employed in the private sector, compared to 70% in the public sector believed that it would not be difficult at all for a father to take parental leave at their workplace (ibid, 30-31).

A Norwegian study (Holter & Aarseth 1994) showed that in workplaces with traditional work culture, paternity leave was seen as a statutory right that was not paid much attention to. Negative attitudes against men taking paternity leave were coming mainly from the managers of older generation. In modern, dynamic workplaces paternity leave could be interpreted as a sign of weaker commitment. As tasks were more tied to individuals with special expertise and the employees were expected to bear responsibility of the company's success, obstacles of father's take-up of leave had more to do with internal contradictions and ambiguities of the fathers themselves.

Still, especially in some private sector enterprises, the influence of family life on work performance and career opportunities is seen in negative light by the

management. Paternity leave is seen as incompatible with a dynamic and effective work culture, and promising young men are expected to concentrate fully on their paid work without any disturbances caused by sharing housework or the need to collect their children from daycare (bisnes.fi 2003).

Previous research on men on parental leave has shown that fathers who take parental leave usually receive more positive than negative attention from their colleagues, and their closest supervisor are mainly neutral (Brandth and Överli 1998, 59; Huttunen 1999). Bekkengen (1999) distinguishes between individual and group performances at work as relevant to the possibilities of men (and women) to take parental leave in Sweden. In work based on individual performance, a longer absence of an expert has more relevance for the totality of the work process rather than for the colleagues each working with their own, specialised tasks and projects. The attitudes towards parental leave on such workplaces can thus be negative among the management whereas the reactions of colleagues can be neutral or positive when someone takes a leave. The absence of one employee from a more collectively organised work process is not as relevant for the management as it can be for the colleagues. The re-division of tasks can add to the workload of colleagues and they may need to spend time in tutoring a substitute employee.

It has been suggested that it is easier for men employed in female-dominated occupations to take leave than it is for those in working in male-dominated fields (Carlsen 1994; Andersen et al 1996; Olsen 2000). In female-dominated workplaces, absences of employees due to parental leave are usual, and routines in arranging substitutes and reorganising tasks during leave have been created. In female-dominated public sector organisations, leave periods are less often than in the private sector perceived as a sign of lower commitment and weaker performance (Carlsen 1994). Managers in the public sector may be more positive towards parental leave than those in private sector, and female supervisors – which are more typical in the female-dominated public sector – more supportive than male supervisors (Andersen et al 1996). Also female colleagues often give positive attention to men taking parental leave (Brandth and Överli 1998). Among the employees of 15 workplaces in Finland, especially middle-aged, white-collar women were positive towards fathers' parental leave (Salmi and Lammi-Taskula 1999).

In our questionnaire, we asked about the attitudes and reactions towards parental leave at the workplace. The question for mothers was: *“What kinds of reactions were there at your workplace towards your maternity and parental leave?”* and for fathers there were two separate questions: *“What kinds of reactions were there at your workplace towards your paternity leave?”* and *“What kinds of reactions were there at your workplace towards your parental or care leave?”* Five statements were related to the negotiations about leave at the workplace. The respondents could reply “yes” or “no” to each statement. To measure the positive attitudes and support at the workplace towards fathers' paternity leave and mothers' maternity

and parental leave, three positive statements – “*it was easy to talk about the leave*”, “*my supervisor congratulated*”, and “*my colleagues congratulated*” were combined into one variable where “yes” means all three aspects were simultaneously true. As negative experiences were quite rare, the two negative statements – “*my supervisor gave negative comments*” and “*some colleagues gave negative comments*” were combined so that “yes” means one or both aspects were true. Regarding parental leave by fathers, there was no statement about congratulations (as congratulations are usually situated at the time of childbirth and parental leave is taken somewhat later). Thus, positive attitudes at the workplace towards parental leave are measured by the statement related to the father's experiences of how easy it was to talk about leave.

According to the fathers, negative comments towards paternity leave are unusual at workplaces in Finland (Table 39): less than one in ten fathers who took paternity leave got any negative reactions from their supervisors or colleagues. Fathers report that their supervisors as well as colleagues have given their congratulations when the child was born, and they also have found it fairly easy to discuss paternity leave with them. Maternity leave seems to be more difficult than paternity leave as mothers have more often met negative reactions at their workplaces than fathers. This may be due to the differences in the length of maternity and paternity leave: paternity leave is only one to three weeks, while maternity leave followed by parental leave is about ten months. Unlike a long maternity and parental leave, a short leave of absence may not require any special arrangements at the workplace.

TABLE 39. Reactions to leave at the workplace, according to sector and gender structure (%)

	Public sector	Private or third sector	Female-dominated	Male-dominated or balanced	All
Maternity and parental leave					
Positive attitudes	69	66	68	67	68
Negative comments	13**	18	13**	19	16
N (Mothers)	(514–559)	(1096–1163)	(866–938)	(469–504)	(1442–1610)
Paternity leave					
Positive attitudes	78	78	68**	80	78
Negative comments	9	11	12	10	8
N (Fathers)	(260–268)	(840–877)	(103–107)	(943–984)	(1100–1145)
Parental leave by fathers					
It was easy to talk about	88	86	82	87	86
Negative comments	23	27	20	26	25
N (Fathers)	(163–172)	(392–433)	(56–60)	(465–509)	(555–605)

** p < .01 (compared to other workplaces)

Those who take paternity leave are a majority in many male-dominated workplaces, which makes negotiations quite easy. Men who take parental leave are however a minority among fathers, and on most workplaces they will be the token man doing something peculiar that is new to most colleagues and supervisors. It could thus be expected that a father who wishes to take several weeks or even several months of parental leave might find it difficult to take up the subject at the workplace, and that negative comments would be more common than regarding paternity leave. Indeed, one in four fathers who took parental leave reported negative reactions by supervisors or colleagues.

Our data show that fathers and mothers employed in female-dominated workplaces have different kinds of experiences of negotiating leave. For mothers, reactions towards maternity and parental leave seem to be more positive in the female-dominated public sector than in other workplaces, but for men this is not the case. Fathers in our data have experienced positive attitudes towards the short paternity leave as much in the private as in the public sector, and more in workplaces that are male-dominated or gender-balanced than in female-dominated ones. Still, one can say that the female-dominated public sector may be somewhat more supportive towards fathers taking parental leave than the male-dominated private sector as parental leave is more common among fathers employed in the public sector.

While the attitudes towards fathers taking leave are in general predominantly positive, there are some branches where even a two-week paternity leave is more difficult to negotiate. In our data, fathers working in male-dominated construction and transport branches had experienced somewhat more negative reactions related to their short paternity leave than other fathers, although the differences were not statistically significant due to small numbers (Table 40). Still, taking paternity leave is very common also among blue-collar fathers in these branches (Takala 2005). Fathers who build houses or drive a bus for their living may need to take somewhat more jokes or complaints because of their paternity leave, but they still seize their statutory rights. And even if these branches, it was only one father

TABLE 40. Negative comments to father's leave at the workplace, according to branch (%)

	Supervisors and/or colleagues gave negative comments					
	Commercial	Construction	Transport	Social and health care	Research	Education
Paternity leave	10	15	14	7	4	4
Parental leave	50**	34	34	14	10	7
N paternity leave	(69)	(83)	(70)	(72)	(24)	(45)
parental leave	(30)	(32)	(38)	(42)	(21)	(27)

** p < .01 (Compared to other branches)

in six who had negative experiences. Fathers taking parental leave received much more often unfavourable comments at the workplace: one in three in the construction and in the transport branch, and as much as half of those employed in the commercial branch. In business and trade, the employee's presence in person is often important for developing and sustaining successful customer relations, and replacing someone who takes a longer leave may turn out difficult.

Although most fathers who had taken parental leave said they needed a break from work after many years of employment, a long break from work was not experienced as easy to take for many fathers (Table 41). Almost half of the men who had not taken parental leave said that a long absence from work would have been difficult. Especially men with a university degree reported these difficulties. Still, only one in ten fathers said their employer did not find a long parental leave suitable. The experienced difficulty was thus an individual evaluation that was not based on discussions with the supervisors at the workplace. Those fathers who had actually taken parental leave reported less often than other men that it was difficult for them to take a long leave from work, and more often that it was difficult for their partner to take a long leave.

According to Bekkengen (1999), many Swedish fathers combine a short parental leave period with summer holiday. Prolonging holiday with parental leave may cause less negative reactions at the workplace than taking a long parental leave as such. Annual holiday taken according to childcare needs may also for many fathers represent a substitute for parental leave. Among the fathers in our data, combining rather than substituting parental leave with annual holiday seems more popular: leave taking fathers have, in addition to their parental leave period, taken annual holiday on the basis of childcare situation more often than other fathers.

TABLE 41. Negotiations of leave at the workplace as justifications for parental leave, according to take-up (%)

	Mothers		Fathers	
	Partner took parental leave		Took parental leave	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
It is difficult for the father to take a long leave from work	50***	65	25***	49
It is difficult for the mother to take a long leave from work	15	9	31***	14
A long parental leave was not approved by the father's employer	16**	10	13***	10
A long parental leave was not approved by the mother's employer	3	3	7***	4
The father took annual holiday on the basis of childcare situation	39	31	39***	29
N	(125)	(3170)	(457)	(962)

** p<.01; *** p<.001

If parental leave is not discussed at the workplace, wrong assumptions about colleagues' and supervisors' attitudes and reactions may be made. On the other hand, experiences of difficulties may also be based on observations of passive resistance. Fathers' possibilities to take parental leave are not actively supported at the workplaces; for example, only one in four workplaces in Finland has an equality plan where such a support could be included (Ahponen & Paasikoski 2003).

There can be both individually and collectively organised tasks – specialist and experts as well as those whose work can more easily be replaced – in the same workplace. This means that the attitudes and practices in regard to parental leave are not unambiguous on workplaces but vary according to person and his or her position and situation. The reactions of management are also related to the predictability and control of work/family situations: at how early stage they are informed about the pregnancy and plans about parental leave, how possible it is to plan ahead and reorganise tasks and how easy it is to hire a substitute.

6.6 Compromises between the needs of paid work and family life

Taking parental leave is not the only practice parents of young children can choose when trying to combine paid employment and family life in a satisfactory manner. While employed, one can not spend as much time with one's family as much as one would like to, or as much as would be necessary in order to meet the care needs of one's baby or toddler. Still, the demands and desires of paid work can be played down and modified because of family situations and needs. Similarly, the pressures and dreams related to family life can be put on hold because of work. Making a compromise is to find an intermediate way between conflicting aims, to modify one's course of action so that a balance – often a temporary one – is achieved.

We asked our respondents about their experiences of compromises between paid work and family life. The question was: *“When you think about your life this far, have you had to make specific 'compromises' in favour of either work or family, if the combination of these has seemed difficult?”* The respondents could reply “yes”, “no”, “does not apply” or “difficult to say” to eight different kinds of compromises. Six of the compromises were related to adjusting paid work to family needs: working part-time, reducing tasks, giving up education possibilities or career development, or giving up a job. Two of the listed compromises were related to obstacles of reproduction i.e. postponing having children, or limiting the number of children because of reasons related to paid work.

Among both fathers and mothers in our data, compromises in paid work because of family reasons have been more usual than compromising reproduction because of reasons related to paid employment (Table 42). More than half of the

TABLE 42. Compromises between paid work and family, according to take-up of parental leave (%)

Has reported...	Mothers				Fathers			
	Partner took parental leave				Took parental leave			
	Yes	No	X ²	Sig	Yes	No	X ²	Sig
Compromises at work because of family reasons	61	59	0.1	.744	64	52	19.3	.000
Compromises in having children for work-related reasons	21	13	6.5	.011	6	5	0.3	.620
N	(125)	(3170)			(478)	(935)		

mothers as well as fathers have made compromises at work in order to reconcile work and family. Among fathers, those who have taken parental leave have also reported more compromises at work because of family reasons than other fathers. However, also those fathers who have not taken long leave periods from work to take care of their child – i.e. they have only taken one to three weeks of paternity leave- have often modified their working hours or work tasks in order to have time and energy for family life.

Major family decisions of whether or not have a child or more children, and when to have a child have not been compromised by the fathers because of work: only one in twenty reported having postponed fatherhood or having limited the number of children because of their work. This could reflect the family-orientation of fathers in our data, which could mean they have not been willing to compromise their fatherhood. Compromises in reproduction are somewhat more usual among mothers, especially among those who have shared parental leave with their partner. As it is mothers who are pregnant and usually take long leave periods after childbirth, they may also need to think more than men about the “proper time” to have children in relation to their situation in the labour market. For some mothers, the negotiations of parental responsibilities may have been one aspect related to the postponing of motherhood.

As a compromise between paid work and family life, working part-time is more typical among mothers than among the leave-taking fathers of young children (Table 43). Fathers however report more than mothers that they have limited the time and energy given to paid work within a full-time working day. More than one in three fathers and one in four mothers say they have cut down some tasks at work, and one in ten parents have refused to take new, more challenging tasks because of family reasons. Mothers and fathers in their thirties or forties, as well as those with an academic degree report more than younger or less educated parents setting limits to work tasks. These parents probably have accumulated more tasks as well as more autonomy at work along with career advancement. For them, the need for compromises and reduction of work pressure is quite compelling if they

TABLE 43. Compromises at work for family reasons, according to socio-economic and ideological positions (%)

	Mothers			Fathers		
	Because of family reasons I have...			Because of family reasons I have...		
	worked part-time	has cut down tasks at work	has refused more challenging tasks	worked part-time	has cut down tasks at work	has refused more challenging tasks
Is under 30 (197/987)	16***	18***	7***	10*	31*	5*
Has one child (403/856)	20	27	9	12	35	8
Has academic degree (313/536)	26***	44***	19***	15	53***	18***
Employed in the public sector (304/ 755)	25***	32***	12***	15***	43	13*
Mother's education level higher than father's (471/926)	21	29	11	16	37**	10
Mother's income level higher than father's (160/269)	23***	39***	17***	19	40	13
Is pro-sharing (269/429)	22	30	14	18*	47*	13
Thinks the mother should primarily responsible for childcare (329/1270)	23**	27*	10	10	35	13
Father took 3 weeks of paternity leave (770/915)	23	28	12	15	41	12
Shared parental leave with partner (472/120)	26	30	8	17*	43	14
All (1388/3171)	22	28	10	14	39	11

* p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001 (Compared to others)

want to have time together with their young children. The lack of compromises among young parents, as well as among the less educated ones can partly be related to lack of employment, lower work load and/or remote career possibilities in the first place.

One in five mothers and one in seven fathers have worked part-time in order to better meet family needs. Part-time work is slightly more common among leave-taking parents employed in the public sector, as is also limiting or dropping work tasks for family needs. This may be related to a more understanding organisation culture where it is easier to negotiate about lessening tasks and reducing working hours because of family situation. It may also reflect the personal orientations of employees who have sought employment in such occupations where compromises between work and family are more feasible.

Making compromises in paid employment in favour of family life is also related to one's attitudes towards sharing parental leave and care responsibilities. Fathers who are pro-sharing i.e. they criticize the prevailing take-up patterns and

are in favour of more fathers taking parental leave report more than other fathers having worked part-time as well as having dropped tasks at their paid work because of family reasons. Mothers who think themselves as being primarily responsible for childcare have more often worked part-time, but they report somewhat less compromises related to cutting work tasks – which of course would be more difficult in part-time than in full-time employment. In addition to these attitudes or ideologies, also the actual practice of sharing leave that is linked with (other) compromises in working life: men who have themselves taken parental leave have more experiences of part-time work than other fathers. Taking parental leave and re-organising work are thus not alternative ways of meeting the needs of family life but often complementary strategies of certain fathers.

6.7 Presumptions negotiated

However constrained the choices may be, one always has the ability to choose among alternative courses of action (Foucault 1981; Scott 2001, 3). Despite the compelling character of socially and culturally constructed gender relations, there is also room for redefinitions of motherhood and fatherhood (Vuori 2001, 88). A range of different solutions are possible to actualise also in the division of care and breadwinning responsibilities between parents.

Being powerful in family or workplace negotiations does usually not mean direct use of coercion or repression. This kind of domination is often not necessary if power is used through persuasive influence i.e. by the offering and acceptance of reasons for acting in a certain way (Scott 2001, 1-5). An individual's own desire is not irrelevant; for example nobody can force a parent to take leave against their own will. In addition to being able to pursue one's intentions, power also includes the freedom to resist definitions, expectations and demands of others. Each parent can thus resist the gendered conceptions and ideals of motherhood and fatherhood prevailing in their socio-cultural environment.

Not all rejections of leave possibilities by fathers are a result of explicit decisions based on profound, rational reflections between partners. Rather, individuals often adapt to pre-existing social norms and orientate themselves according to prevailing ideals of femininity and masculinity. Common mental orientations and routinised actions are forms of social control even if they are not recognised as such. Cultural conceptions of gender and parenthood constrain both women's and men's choices; institutions and ideologies provide obstacles and limits for the activities of both women and men. Of course, a father is not able to take parental leave without knowing about his possibilities. Thus, information is an evident aspect related to the family choices of who will take leave. Accurate and clear information is a supportive aspect in the considerations of sharing leave between mothers and fathers.

Also emotional dependence – the need for intimacy and love – may also be an obstacle for resistance in family struggles. Especially in the early years of a relationship, one is keen to fulfil the expectations – or the assumed expectations – of the loved one in order to keep him or her happy. Later, one may regret choices made simply to please the other, often against one's own interest in the long run. For example, while mothers of young children emphasise the importance of mothercare as a mutual choice, mothers whose children have grown take a more critical position towards the prevailing, gendered division of labour between parents (Lammi-Taskula 1998).

Discrepancies in the leave-taking fathers' and mothers' experiences seems to be an integral element in the power relations between mothers and fathers. It is on the one hand a product of the prevailing socio-economic gender relations; on the other hand the family conflicts challenge this context and force alternative patterns to be considered not only in families but also on a more general level of society.

7 Concluding discussion: perspectives on fathercare

Fathers' staying at home with their children would promote equality in many ways, thinks Matti who is a father of two children and took parental leave himself. In his comments to the researchers written at the end of the Parental leave study questionnaire, Matti describes the change of gendered practices in the family level when parental leave is shared between parents. According to him, a father who takes parental leave gets to enjoy the emotional rewards of being together with one's child. Furthermore, his staying at home can add to his understanding of the amount of everyday unpaid work in family life.

The focus of this study has been the gendered patterns of the actualisation of parental leave possibilities by mothers and fathers of young children in Finland. The sharing of leave between parents has been approached from different but interconnected perspectives based on R.W.Connell's structural model of gender relations (Connell 1987; 2000). Survey data with about 5 000 leave-taking mothers and fathers of young children was analysed with regard to conceptions of gendered parental responsibilities; the actualisation of these conceptions in the practical division of labour between mothers and fathers; emotional motivations pulling parents into gendered practices or pushing them away from such practices; and power relations present in negotiations and possible conflicts about parental responsibilities.

In this chapter, the research results are summarised in relation to the seven research questions presented in the Introduction. The first research question asks what kinds of gendered conceptions of parenthood the parental leave legislation reflects. The second question is related to the understanding of gendered parental responsibilities among mothers and fathers of young children. The third question asks about the socio-economic and ideological aspects related to the division of paid and unpaid work between parents; the fourth one concerns the relation of take-up of parental leave and the division of unpaid housework in families. The fifth research question asks what kinds of emotional aspects are relevant for sharing parental leave between mothers and fathers. The two last questions are related to negotiations about parental leave: the sixth one concerns negotiations in leave-taking families, and the seventh one negotiations about father's take-up of

leave at the workplace. A roundup of the main results of the study is followed by an evaluation of the methodology in studying gender relations related to parental leave. Finally, some future directions and policy challenges are discussed: the role of welfare state family policy and labour market changes for gender relations in parenthood, as well as possibilities of doing fatherhood in work organisations and in family life are considered.

7.1 Conceptions, practices, emotions and negotiations

Formal norms such as legislation defining the rights and responsibilities of mothers and fathers are an important part of the everyday life of families, but these rights are not always actualised according to the explicit institutional aims. The analysis of the leave schemes shows that despite the general aim to promote fathercare, mothers are understood as primary carers. On the level of family life, the gendered division of paid and unpaid work between mothers and fathers is an outcome of explicit or implicit negotiations related to cultural conceptions of gender, as well as emotional motivations experienced by each of them – whether these are communicated or not. The results of this study indicate that in general, each parent emphasises their own gendered responsibility more than that of their partner's: mothers emphasise their own childcare responsibility and fathers their breadwinning responsibility. High education level is more often combined with a gender ideology that rejects a dichotic conception of parental responsibilities.

The idea of separate or shared responsibility is actualised in the division of paid and unpaid work in everyday life: the analysis shows that sharing parental leave between mothers and fathers is related to sharing also daily housework. In addition to the practical sharing of care tasks, the emotional level of sharing is also important. In the context of a burdening worklife, the intimate parent–child relationship provides emotional compensation for paid work also for the father. At the workplace, growing visibility of fathercare promotes equal career opportunities and pay level for women and men. The results of this study indicate that instead of taking longer periods of parental leave, many fathers make other kinds of compromises at work. Family and workplace practices are part of the reproduction or change of the prevailing gender system. Through the daily negotiations and choices, gender ideologies and attitudes towards mothercare and fathercare are moulded, and space for new practices created.

Gender neutral leave legislation?

Parental leave as a welfare policy supports the reconciliation of employment and family responsibilities. In principle, the parental leave legislation reflects a gender

neutral conception of parenthood where both the mother and the father are understood as capable carers for the child. From the legislators' perspective, mothers are seen as primary carers during the first three or four months after the birth of the baby i.e. during the maternity leave period. For the remaining leave period, parents are in principle free to decide among themselves who will stay at home with the baby and who will participate in paid employment. In practice, mothercare remains as primary also after the maternity leave period and the mother continues her leave by taking parental leave. Thus, "gender neutral" leave means in practice "mother's leave", and fathers mainly take such leave periods that are specifically labelled as theirs.

The high popularity of paternity leave indicates that taking some leave from work to take care of one's child has become a "normal" part of doing fatherhood in Finland. However, only a small minority of fathers take parental leave and the main responsibility of childcare. Fathers' leave periods are mainly quite short and their share of all leave days taken is low. Thus, the hegemonic pattern of gender relations is still far from symmetric gender relations. The fathers taking parental leave and the mothers returning to work before the end of the parental leave period challenge the prevailing practices in both family life and in working life; they are tokens or pioneers whose position is neither practically nor emotionally easy.

Unlike in Norway, Sweden and Iceland, fathers in Finland do not have an individual right to a non-transferable father's quota of parental leave. Although the focus of institutional development of parental leave has during the past years been on fathers' leave rights – new schemes have been introduced and campaigns launched to promote fathercare – not much change has occurred in the gendered take-up patterns of parental leave. The new bonus paternity leave has won some favour with fathers who have received two extra weeks of paternity leave if they have first taken the last two weeks of the transferable parental leave. The bonus leave is quite a short period, and in many cases the mother is simultaneously at home instead of returning to work as most mothers want to continue on care leave. The extra bonus may have been an economic incentive to share parental leave in some families, but it is still a very minor modification for the grand pattern of mothers' hegemony in the take-up of parental leave.

Not separate, but not shared either: parents' conceptions of parental responsibilities

The aims of the parental leave legislation to promote fathercare are reflected also in general attitudes that recognise the importance of fathers' involvement in childcare. There is wide general support in Finland for a combination of a dual breadwinner family model – based on a long tradition of full-time employment by women – and a dual carer model where also the father does his share of the

unpaid childcare and housework. However, these ideas are not directly actualised in the gendered division of labour within family life: there is a gap between ideas of increased fathercare as something desirable, and everyday life practices.

Contradictions between general attitudes expressed in surveys and barometers, and reports of family practices in paid and unpaid work suggest that the gender ideology emphasising the mother's primacy in childcare has not been seriously challenged. The findings of this study show ambiguity between accepting the primacy of mothers while simultaneously supporting the idea of sharing parental leave. This ambiguity reflects the two main principals of the gender system: difference and hierarchy (Hirdman 1990). Fathers are expected to be different from mothers and to engage in different rather than similar activities than mothers. Naturalised assumptions about mothercare mean childcare is understood as female activity and thus something men are not expected to engage too much with. What fathers do – engagement in paid employment and breadwinning – has more prestige and masculine value than care work that is categorised as female.

It is thus quite understandable that the two aspects of the division of labour are quite rarely combined into a pro-sharing attitude among leave-taking parents. Despite the fact that in heterosexual families, an increase in the father's activity in doing childcare and housework would in practice mean a decrease of the mother's workload, the wish of more fathers taking parental leave is often not embedded in a critique towards the prevailing practice of not sharing parental leave between parents. Among the respondents of our survey, only one in five leave-taking fathers and one in seven mothers were critical towards the prevailing, gendered actualisation of parental leave possibilities and wished to see a change towards more equal sharing of leave between mothers and fathers. Quite a lot of the respondents chose the "difficult to say" alternative when asked about these attitudes in the questionnaire. The research results suggest that a majority of leave-taking mothers and fathers are balancing between seemingly contradictory attitudes: yes, fathers should take more leave than they do at the moment, but yes, the hegemony of mothers in take-up of parental leave is still all right.

Parents of young children put the prevailing ideological and cultural conceptions of women's and men's responsibilities and capabilities as parents into practice on a daily basis. On a general level, neither the completely shared nor completely separate parental responsibilities are widely supported among parents of young children. However, the findings of this study show that a gendered segregation of care and breadwinning responsibility is quite important in the leave-taking parents' own family life. Decisions about taking or not taking parental leave were justified by many respondents by conceptions of mothercare as well as the father's breadwinning responsibility. Moreover, both mothers and fathers tend to emphasize their own gendered responsibility rather than that of the other parent. The primacy of mothercare was a more important justification of parental leave

for mothers than their partner's breadwinning responsibility, while breadwinning was a more relevant justification for leave-taking fathers than the mother's care responsibility.

The differences in conceptions of parental responsibilities may reflect social pressure as well as material conditions experienced by mothers and fathers. Mothers seem to take very seriously the importance of parental involvement and early parent–child attachment that has been emphasized in the media and in popular and educational literature aimed for parents of young children. They feel that in order to gain social approval and recognition, they should take the majority of the parental leave, despite the father's readiness to share childcare responsibility also by taking a longer leave period. The importance of mothercare for the female respondents may also be based on the emotionally fulfilling experience of being with one's child – which could also be experienced by fathers in case they have an opportunity to stay at home. The fathers' rejection of the mother's primacy in childcare may reflect the special nature of the fathers' sample – the respondents took more paternity and parental leave than fathers in general – but it also proves that there is a group of fathers who think of themselves as capable and willing carers for their children, rather than some kind of secondary helpers for their partner.

Socio-economic and ideological aspects of sharing parental leave

Most fathers in Finland take paternity leave. The popularity of paternity leave – where the mother is also at home during the father's leave period – is in line with the general attitudes towards the gendered division of childcare. Paternity leave is a good choice for fathers who balance between promoting fathercare while refusing to criticize mothercare; in practice it is a way to increase the father's involvement in childcare without expectations of the mother's returning to work.

The research results of this study confirm previous findings that have shown only minor differences in the take-up rate of paternity leave between socio-economic groups. Take-up is somewhat higher among highly educated couples and among fathers who are employed in the public sector; but also a majority of fathers with no professional education, as well as those employed in the private sector take paternity leave when their child is born. While most fathers take less than the maximum three weeks of paternity leave, those employed in the female-dominated social and health care more often take the whole period of three weeks.

The Finnish family policy enables several months of parental leave also for fathers. The main pattern during parental leave is that one parent at a time is at home with the baby while the other parent is at work. In the small minority of families where parental leave is shared between parents, fathers employed in the public sector as well as those with a relatively good socio-economic position are over-represented. As the public sector female-dominated work organisations are

more used to employees taking long leave periods, also fathers may receive somewhat more support for the actualisation of their leave rights than men employed in the private sector, which is more male-dominated. The findings of this study suggest that in addition to the father's individual background and position, social divisions among mothers as well as the parents' mutual differences in education and income levels are of some significance for the take-up of leave by fathers. When both parents have a high education level, the father's is more likely to take a longer parental leave period. Sharing parental leave may be economically more feasible in these families, and the mothers are more likely to have a job where their expertise is difficult to replace and their return from parental leave is expected.

The research results show that in addition to socio-economic aspects, the parents' gender ideology is an important factor for the gendered division of paid and unpaid work. Supporting a dichotic conception of women and men as different – and thus with differentiated responsibilities and tasks in parenting – reproduces the prevailing pattern of overlooking fathers' possibilities for parental leave. It is more likely that the father's leave rights are actualised when the conception of separate parental responsibilities for mothers and fathers is rejected. Regardless of education, occupation or income level, pro-sharing fathers are more likely to take parental leave than those who are more ambiguous in their general attitudes towards mothercare and fathercare. Compared to those with less education, highly educated mothers more often emphasize the importance of sharing childcare responsibility between parents in general, as well as in their own family. It is precisely this group of women whose partners also more often take paternity as well as parental leave.

Sharing parental leave and sharing unpaid housework

The ideologies related to parental responsibilities, as well as the practices of sharing parental leave between mothers and fathers are also related to the division of unpaid housework in the family. In families where the mother takes the whole parental leave period and stays at home during the child's first year, the parents develop separate spheres of experiences. Their different perspectives and understandings of the everyday needs of family life are related to differentiated tasks.

The father who is in paid employment may do the shopping for food on the way home from work. Compared to the time before the child was born, the mother who is at home is faced with a growing pile of dirty clothes and dishes. Each parent often sees the division of housework differently because they often do not realise all the work the other parent is doing. Differences between leave-taking mothers' and fathers' reports of housework responsibilities shown in this study may be due to either overstatements of own share, or understatements of the other parent's share, or both.

It is also probable, that one or both spouses exaggerate their own housework load because of social expectations. Emphasizing the mother's responsibility of both childcare and housework reproduces an image of a "supermom" who should and who can handle the family all by herself. As a good mother should not only be available for her child but also to support her spouse's fatherhood (Kuronen 1994; Vuori 2001), taking the main responsibility of housework may represent an attempt to create time and space for the father-child relationship by freeing him from daily routines of family life. On the other hand, expectations of gender equality may contribute to mothers' eagerness to report their spouse's activity in unpaid housework as somewhat higher than it is in reality. By doing so they are able to present a picture of a modern, equal family that they desire for themselves.

The parents' critical position towards the idea of separate responsibilities for mothers and fathers is reflected in more active sharing of not only parental leave, but also the daily housework tasks. The take-up of parental leave by fathers seems to challenge the gendered segregation of parental tasks, and to strengthen the development towards more equal sharing of everyday family responsibilities.

During a longer parental leave the father is alone with the child taking full care responsibility. As the father feeds, washes and comforts the baby several times a day during his parental leave, a more intimate parent-child relationship is built between fathers and their children during his leave period. Experiences of bearing the main care responsibility produce a more realistic understanding of the scope and amount of daily housework. Fathers who take parental leave are also more active than fathers who have only taken paternity leave in the necessary daily cooking, cleaning and laundry work related to the everyday family life.

The fact that women and men who have shared parental leave with their spouse are more similar in their reports of the division of housework suggests that a shared experience makes the other parent's unpaid work more visible. However, as fathers' leave periods are often short, a long-term effect on gender equality may not be very radical. On the other hand, it is also possible that the fathers who take parental leave have been more care-oriented and done more housework than other men already before their leave period.

Emotional barriers and incentives of parental leave

The main purpose of the parental leave institution is to secure parents a possibility to take care of their young child by taking a break from paid employment without losing one's job. In addition to the child's obvious care needs, also the parents' own emotional needs and experiences play a significant part in the take-up of parental leave. These emotions are related to family life as well as working life.

In a demanding and stressful working life, a need for a break is an important source of motivation for leave. However, this motivation is often not communicat-

ed between spouses: parents report their own need for a break much more often than their spouse's even if both had taken parental leave. The prevailing emotion culture seems to prohibit expressions of frustration, insecurity or fatigue related to paid employment especially for men as work performance and the material rewards related to it have been important elements of masculinity. Perhaps it is easier to admit in an anonymous survey than in family negotiations that parental leave represents a kind of holiday from paid employment – even if it brings along a lot of new tasks and responsibilities.

The culturally constructed emotional dictionary of motherhood is different: for a good mother, employment, income and career should never be as important as the care needs of one's child. The child becomes even more important if pregnancy is postponed and plans to have a family compromised, often because of education and the work situation. By taking parental leave, mothers not only commit themselves to the great amount of care work, they are also able to enjoy the emotional satisfaction of being together with a long-awaited child. The same could be true for fathers if leave was shared between parents – and in fact, fathers who have taken leave often think the experience is magnificent.

The father-child relationship is especially important for fathers who have taken a longer paternity leave, whereas those who take less than three weeks more often see themselves as the mother's helper. The father's emphasis on his breadwinner responsibility is combined with a more passive role in caring, and thus a more distant position in relation to the child's daily needs. If the father desires to be emotionally closer to his child and/or to take a break from the burdens of paid employment, his possibilities of communicating these needs are often dependent of the mother's position. In case both parents are able and willing to resist prevailing cultural and social expectations of doing motherhood and doing fatherhood, existing statutory rights are more likely to be actualised and childcare responsibility shared.

Negotiating fatherhood in the family and at the workplace

Parental leave is transferable; parents can negotiate and decide between themselves how the leave period is shared. As only the mother can take maternity leave during the first months of parenthood, she is likely to gain expertise power based on her specialised knowledge and skills in childcare (Scott 2001, 18-23) in comparison to the father's competence in childcare. With everyday care responsibility comes also power to define the standards of child care and housework.

As most mothers support the general idea of increasing fathercare, one could think that their expert position in the family sphere would provides them with a justified right to give commands to other family members, including their partner. However, the mothers' childcare competence does not give them legitimate

authority over their partner (Jonasdottir 2001, 38-39). For example, the influence related to the family expertise does not make mothers powerful enough to command the father to take parental leave against his will. It has also been argued that mothers rarely actively use their power in family life to prevent fathers from taking care responsibility (Bekkengen 2002, 104). Rather, they end up taking responsibilities that the father is not interested in.

Having power also means one is in a position to do something that has consequences for other's possibilities to choose. The rejection of parental leave possibilities because of individual interests such as professional and career ambitions has social consequences: someone else must take care of the child. A father can be interpreted to have less power – and the mother to be the “winner” – if he chooses to take parental leave reluctantly, because of demands made by the partner. Similarly, he can be understood as having more power when he chooses not to take parental leave despite pressure from the spouse based on her desire to share leave and return to the labour market – in this case the mother would be a “loser” of the negotiations.

Understanding power relations as a “zero sum” – one can only win if someone else loses – emphasises the repressive aspects of power. When the facilitative and productive aspects of power are stressed there need not be any winners or losers (Scott 2001, 6-9). In a “win-win situation”, both parents feel quite powerful and satisfied with their mutual choice: for example, when one parent wants a longer break from an inflexible and burdening job and happily stays at home with the child, while the other has enough autonomy over work hours and tasks so that time for family life and care responsibilities can be arranged. “Lose-lose solutions”, on the other hand, leave both parents powerless and unhappy. Mutual powerlessness can take place for example when one parent wishes to return to work and is willing to share parental leave with the spouse, but has no employment opportunities; and the other would like to spend some time at home with the child and take the opportunity for a break from work, but feels constrained to keep working because of family economy and/or job insecurity.

If the father is understood to be different from the mother “by nature” i.e. less competent in childcare, his parental leave rights may not be negotiated at all in the family. Not taking parental leave because of “less competence in childcare” will not necessarily make a father powerless in family life, as his authority may be based on his breadwinner position. Among parents of young children, the father's breadwinner position and implications for the family economy are typically reported as obstacles for his take-up of parental leave, but these reports are based more on assumptions than explicit discussions and actual calculations. The lack of negotiation about parental leave in families reflects and reproduces the prevailing, unequal division of paid and unpaid work.

The negotiations are however going on in an indirect way as unequal division of unpaid housework is a source of many conflicts between parents of young children. While the mother's parental leave may be a decision based on a consensus between the parents, in many leave-taking families this consensus does not cover unpaid housework. As the "normal" pattern of doing fatherhood is taking only some weeks of paternity leave, the amount of housework remains to a large extent invisible for many fathers and gets done every day by "someone" who "happens" to be at home, i.e. the mother. Thus, the unequal division of housework is related to an unequal practice of parental leave, based on conceptions of the mother's primacy in childcare. Family conflicts could be reduced by a critical reflection of the gender ideology related to the everyday parental practices. In addition to avoiding negative emotions such as frustration and anger between parents, new and more equal ways of doing fatherhood could also better meet the needs of children.

Negotiations in the family about the division of labour are interrelated with negotiations about the take-up of leave by fathers at the workplace. With growing demands of effectiveness combined with more insecurity, the possibilities of employees to present their family needs at the workplace may have decreased. Taking paternity or parental leave makes fatherhood visible at the workplace, and the re-organisation of work tasks creates reactions from not only superiors but also other colleagues. Negative comments towards a short paternity leave are not common, but many fathers expect a longer leave of absence such as parental leave to be problematic and do not even take up such a possibility at the workplace. Those who have enough autonomy at work make other kinds of compromises such as reducing overtime work by cutting less important tasks. For many fathers, the take-up of a longer parental leave period is perceived as quite a big step towards compromising one's career. Those who have taken this step also later work part-time more often than other men. Part-time work in general is uncommon in Finland and certainly so among men. It takes a lot of courage to be the token man at the workplace who takes fathercare seriously not only in principle but also in practice.

7.2 Researching gender relations in leave practices

Understanding gender relations as socially constituted practices provides a starting point for research on parental leave that recognises the shifting patterns of policy, as well as the different and changing ways of actualising statutory possibilities in everyday life. Were motherhood and fatherhood taken as essentially "natural", there would not be any point in studying historical, cultural and social variation in the division of paid and unpaid work between parents. As the conditions of family life as well as the labour market are changing, also interpretations of gender need to give space to possible contradictions and changes.

In addition to the variation in ideas and practices related to parenthood, also the conception of family is one that changes in time and place. In this study, heterosexual couples with young children have been studied; other family forms have not been discussed much. The questions and aspects discussed in this study in relation to heterosexual mothers' and fathers' caregiving and breadwinning responsibilities might be relevant also in separated or reconstituted families, or in families with same-sex parents. However, somewhat different perspectives on the organisation of gender relations should also be applied. In families with one parent, the lack of another parent to share responsibilities with requires new aspects to be taken into account as well.

In order to understand the reproduction and change in gender relations in heterosexual families, a multilevel approach is needed. Ideas of motherhood and fatherhood can not be understood without looking at material conditions and actual practices of doing motherhood and doing fatherhood; practices in families and in working life can not be grasped without analysing conceptions and ideologies related to women and men, femininities and masculinities. Individual choices made by women and men take place in certain structural conditions; prevailing social structures and institutions are supported or challenged by the activities of individual people. Thus, the interconnections of micro, meso and macro levels need to be taken into account in order to produce a comprehensive analysis and understanding of gender relations. Although some of these levels and perspectives may necessarily predominate in any specific study, the others need to be discussed to some extent as well. My solution has been to do research on the "middle level", starting from the practices of everyday family life and reaching in the direction of both structural and institutional, and to the intimate and individual.

In this study, the structural model of gender relations developed by R.W. Connell was used as a frame of analysis. In this model, four levels of gender relations are outlined. These four levels – symbolic relations, division of labour, emotional relations, and power relations – are interrelated i.e. social realities on one level influence those of the other levels. Ideas contribute to the shaping of practices, desires and negotiations; power relations create conditions for choices in everyday life as well as the expression of ideas and emotions. Actual experiences of doing something – in this case fathercare – may also change ideas and conceptions, as well as emotional motivations, and influence negotiations of future division of labour.

The operationalisation of this theoretical model into empirical tools of research is a challenging task. Some of the perspectives on gender relations in the four-level model are related to quite intimate and private experiences, while others deal with more general and public issues. This means that different kinds of methods are needed for analysis on each level. Symbolic gender relations as well as patterns of emotional relations can only to some extent be explored through

quantitative methods. Thus, survey data provides quite a partial picture of these levels of gender relations. The survey method is more functional in the analysis of the division of labour, and to some extent also in researching power relations. Quantitative data provides information on the prevalence and frequencies of various ways of doing motherhood and doing fatherhood, as well as on the socio-economic conditions of these practices. While the patterns of economic power relations also fit quite well for a quantitative analysis, other important aspects of power such as negotiations in the family or at the workplace might be tapped in a more comprehensive way through qualitative analysis. The most subjective emotional and bodily experiences, as well as the most subtle forms of power may escape the formulation of questions and alternative answers. On all the four levels of gender relations, the interpretations would benefit from the combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods.

In this study however, only a quantitative survey method was used. The questionnaire sent to mothers and fathers was designed with a particular aim of touching concrete rather than abstract aspects of family life. Well-established survey questions were combined with ones that were specifically designed for this study. Especially the new questions related to the justifications of take-up of leave proved to be important for providing a more detailed picture about the various aspects of sharing leave between mothers and fathers. Interesting differences between mothers and fathers in reporting ideological and emotional justifications were found. Although new questions are always risky and need to be tested and developed for a longer period of time, the use of only traditional questions known to be reliable would at least in this study have limited the scope of the results, and some relevant aspects about sharing parental leave would not have been covered.

As the focus of the study was in gender as relational, data was gathered from both women and men. Previous studies had shown that surveys sent to families are usually replied by mothers, and the fathers' voice remains vague. Special emphasis was given for finding a large enough group of fathers with young children who have taken not only paternity leave but also parental leave. An analysis based on one gender category only – using only the mothers' data, or only the fathers' data to gain knowledge about both mothers and fathers – would not have provided as comprehensive knowledge as did the analysis and comparison of the two data sets together. The research process with the “double data” convinced me of the importance of looking at relational and interactional rather than individual aspects of gender. Doing fatherhood takes place in the ideological as well as material context of doing motherhood, and vice versa.

The challenges of representativeness related to the highly gendered take-up patterns of parental leave – fathers in our sample are exceptional rather than “normal” – could be handled by looking separately at paternity and parental leave takers. Also in future research on gender relations in work-family reconciliation, it is

important to recognise the different implications of these two forms of leave for doing fatherhood. The fathers who did not take any leave were missing from the sample; studying their positions, conceptions, experiences, and motivations is an interesting challenge for future research on parental leave.

7.3 Future directions and policy challenges

Equal sharing of unpaid childcare work between mothers and fathers has been considered to promote gender equality, the position of women in the labour market, as well as the position of men in families. From this perspective, an ideal society is one where women and men have equal career and income opportunities, and in heterosexual families mothers and fathers take equal share of not only breadwinning but also care responsibilities. When childcare is a shared responsibility, children's care needs are met by both parents, and fathers as well as mothers can have a close relationship with their children.

The prevailing gender relations in Finland are still far from this kind of symmetry in paid and unpaid work. A gradual change has taken place in general attitudes, but the division of labour in unpaid care work and housework between men and women has remained unequal and women's position in the labour market is not equal to that of men. Segregated gender relations seem to prevail in many spheres of work and family life: women and men are employed in different sectors and occupations, there is a gender gap in the pay level of women and men; and the division of housework is unequal. Despite women's high educational level, high employment rate and the prevalence of full-time work in Finland, the quite extensive institutional possibilities for sharing the care of young children between the mothers and fathers are not actualised. Women take a majority of the transferable parental leave days that could in principle be shared between parents.

The choices of individual men and women are embedded in policy conditions and material structures, as well as ideologies related to gender. Thus, the gendered patterns in the division of labour between parents of young children are open to change in time and place. The aims of welfare state family policy and the gender relations reflected in statutory leave rights may have some impact on the general recognition of fathers' leave rights. However, women's precarious position in the labour market, as well as the lack of information and discussion in families and work organisations about fathercare reproduce the ideological and practical segregation of mothers' and fathers' care and breadwinning responsibilities. In order to promote change towards more equal gender relations, interventions are needed on the level of family policy as well as in working life and in family interaction.

Welfare state policy: father's quota

The tools of welfare state policy are necessary for promoting fathercare, although they may need to be supplemented with other measures in order to promote the actualisation of leave rights. In the other Nordic countries, the introduction of a non-transferable part of parental leave – the father's quota – has promoted new ways of thinking about mothercare and fathercare, and equalised the practices of doing gender in families with young children. The father's quota can not be transferred to the mother: if the father does not take his period of leave, the mother can not take it, either. Having an individual right to take parental leave means the father does not need to negotiate sharing this part of the leave period.

Despite the fact that the father's work situation has been reported in the Nordic research as one of the most usual obstacles for men's take up of longer parental leave, the take-up of the quota has been high. This indicates that it is in the personal interest of many fathers to take parental leave, and the existence of a father's quota empowers them to negotiate take-up of leave with their employers.

At the moment, the fathers taking a longer parental leave period make a small group of token men in Finland. Real promotion of fathercare would require an introduction of a genuine fathers' quota giving fathers individual parental leave rights. A quota is a signal for fathers that it is up to their own decision, not that of the mother to take the leave period. An increase in the number of men taking parental leave would normalise practices of fathercare and make the leave-sharing fathers less extraordinary.

Labour market

Like most other European countries, Finland is currently facing a challenge of an aging population structure despite of a relatively high fertility rate. The situation in the labour market is changing as the post-war baby-boom generation is retiring from the labour market, and new employees and tax-payers are needed. Late starts, early retirements and long leave periods are seen as problematic as all potential employees – including fathers and mothers of young children – are needed in the labour market (Babies and Bosses, OECD 2005).

Despite restructuring due to globalisation, labour shortage is a growing challenge in many workplaces. In this situation, practices supporting the reconciliation of work and family life, such as promotion of parental leave and flexible working hours for fathers as well as mothers can be a recruitment asset for work organisations. Furthermore, in the long run employers will need new employees. Thus, reproduction and good care of children is in their best interest. Sharing childcare responsibility more equally between parents may not reduce the total length of periods of absence from the labour market, as children's care needs

should not be compromised by labour market needs. However, more flexible patterns of childcare practices can provide more flexibility in labour supply among parents of young children.

During the past decade in Finland, a large proportion of women in their twenties and thirties have had a precarious position in the labour market. Despite their high educational level, they have not been able to get permanent work contracts. This situation has pushed many mothers into long childcare leave periods; the statutory leave rights have provided an alternative to unemployment. The increase in the take-up of leave by fathers can reduce discrimination of potential and actual mothers in the labour market.

Women have a higher number of university degrees than men in the younger cohorts in Finland, but their career possibilities and their pay level are not equal to that of men. In case women's position in the labour market will improve, the socio-economic changes in gender relations can create new conditions for challenging prevailing patterns in the gendered division of labour, and the expectations of an actualisation of fathercare will grow.

Workplaces

When a father would like to take several months of leave from paid work in order to take care of his child, he needs to be prepared for some negative reactions at the workplace. As long as it is uncommon for men to take any more than two or three weeks of paternity leave, reactions towards fathers' parental leave can range from confusion to disrespect, or even discrimination and sacking. Colleagues or superiors who have never met a man who took parental leave may react as if the father were "seriously ill and needed support and comforting", or they start to avoid him like Matti – one of the few fathers who have taken a longer parental leave – described in the citation presented in the introduction chapter. If different kinds of negative attitudes at the workplace are expected by many fathers, they may never even take up the possibility of parental leave with their superiors. This way the expectations of a lack of support become self-fulfilling, and parental leave is left for the mother to negotiate at her workplace.

Although fathers in Finland are still not often negotiating parental leave at their workplace, they do negotiate other kinds of compromises between paid work and family responsibilities. Fathers of young children are interested in modifying their working hours or work tasks in order to have more time and energy for family life, and there seems to be possibilities for doing so. This may gradually pave the way to more support and understanding towards fathercare at the workplace level. However, the development could be promoted by raising the awareness of personnel management and superiors about fathers' leave rights, and about the gendered aspects of sharing parental leave between parents.

Family practices

Ideologies and practices of gendered parental responsibilities are reproduced and changed by individual women and men in everyday life. Mothers and fathers either support or restrain the creation of new patterns of care and breadwinning that can transgress the prevailing gender order. The emotional aspects related to the actualisations of parental leave rights make the negotiations of fathercare more complicated, and the atypical choices more difficult to make.

It seems that the definition of new rights and responsibilities of mothers and fathers through legislation has not been a successful way to change the cultural conceptions of ideal motherhood and fatherhood. The hegemony of mothercare in families with young children is widely accepted as a “normal” practice. The implication of the prevailing practice for gender relations is that fathers are easily pushed into an “outer circle” of family life. Space needs to be created for fathercare in family life by both parents through discussion and mutual emotional support.

A wider variety of choices in parental practices is important for parents and their children. Moreover, the balance of family life and paid employment is vital for future development of the society. When the legitimacy and appeal of social and cultural institutions – such as parental leave rights, labour market structures, or workplace practices and thinking patterns – is challenged by a large number of people, these institutions can change. Ideologies that today seem insuperable may one day become historical relics. Practices that seem natural today may seem hilariously old-fashioned tomorrow. Parental leave may one day be for all fathers, not just for statistical deviations like Matti.

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Appendix 1. Samples and representativeness

Samples

The Parental leave study data comprises of two samples: one of mothers and one of fathers who have children born in 1999. The respondents were selected from the registers of the National Insurance Institute (NII), Finland.

The mothers' sample was constructed by picking all women born on the 8th, 18th or 28th day of any month from the NII benefit register. This sample represents one tenth of all mothers of children born in 1999. The mothers' sample comprised of a total of 5 570 women, of whom 6 had died, and for 63 women the address was missing. The questionnaire was sent to 5 501 mothers. The first round produced 2 228 replies and the second round 1 004 more. The final amount of respondents in the mothers' data is 3 232 and the response rate for mothers is 59 %.

The fathers' sample was designed on the basis of two principles: those who have received parental benefit were all included in the sample and one in twenty of those who have received only paternity benefit were randomly selected. Unfortunately, due to technical problems, a third sub-sample comprising of those fathers who have not received any benefit i.e. have not taken neither paternity nor parental leave was not possible to realise as had been planned.

The fathers' sample comprised a total of 2 959 men, of whom 1 246 had received parental benefit and 1 713 only paternity benefit. Of them, 3 men had died and for 41 men the address was missing, so the questionnaire was sent to 2 915 fathers. We first received 906 replies and a second round produced 524 replies, making a total of 1 430 respondents. 17 replies were abandoned, most of them empty questionnaires sent back by Swedish-speaking respondents. The final amount of male respondents is thus 1 413 and the response rate for fathers is 48%.

Representativeness

Due to the selection process, the fathers' data is not representative of all fathers with young children in Finland. This is clearly seen in the take-up patterns of paternity and parental leave among fathers (Figure 1). While about three of four fathers in the general population took paternity leave in 2000, the take-up rate is over 90% in the fathers' data. In the mothers' data, the take-up rate paternity leave among spouses is quite close to the general rate. The take-up rate of parental leave by fathers is somewhat above the general level in the mothers' data, and considerably higher in the fathers' data. Almost two of five male respondents and one in ten spouses of female respondents have taken parental leave, while the take-up rate in the general population is only 3%. This means that also among mothers, those who have shared parental leave with their spouse have been more active in responding to our questionnaire than those who took the whole parental leave themselves.

Compared to the national statistics, the fathers and mothers in the data are somewhat older than the general population of benefit recipients. The mothers' age ranges from 19 to 47 and the fathers' age from 21 to 57 years. The mean age is 32 years for mothers and 35 years for fathers. Especially the fathers' data is not representative of the whole population (Figure 2). Because of this, an age weight for the fathers' data has been used in the analysis.

The respondents both in the mothers' and the fathers' data are better educated than the population in general, which implies that the silence ratio is higher

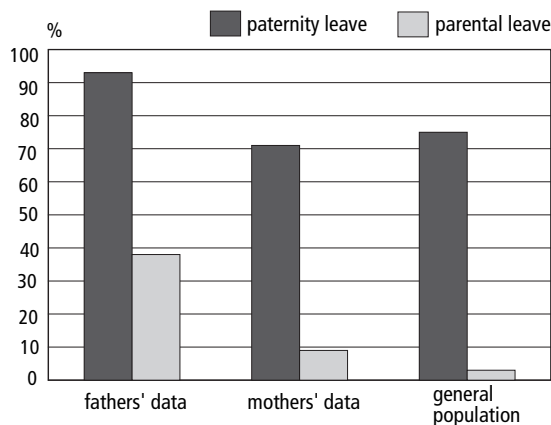


FIGURE 1. Take-up of paternity and parental leave in the data and in general population* in 2000, %

* The percentage is calculated as a relation of fathers receiving paternity/parental benefit per number of parturitions in 2000; the real percentage may be higher as the number of eligible fathers is lower than the number of parturitions.

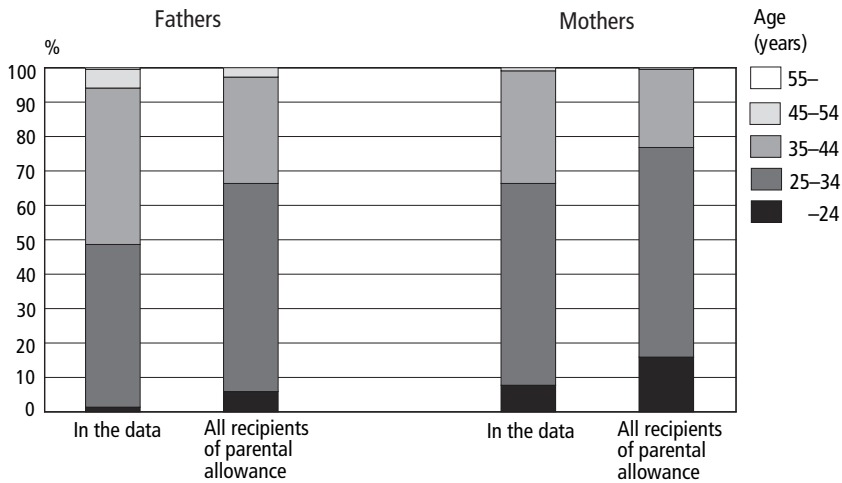


FIGURE 2. Age structure of fathers and mothers in the data, and recipients of parental allowance

among those with a lower educational background. According to national statistics (Naiset ja miehet Suomessa 2003), 19% of women and 14% of men aged 30–34 had a university degree in 2001. In the respective age group in our data, 22% of mothers (20% of their spouses) and 26% of fathers (33% of their spouses) had a university degree. Thus, especially the families in the fathers' data represent a more educated part of the population.

To evaluate the representativeness of the data regarding education level, the parents in the data should be compared to all fathers and mothers of young children instead of all men and women in the same age group. This information is, however not available on the population level. We know that men with a higher education level and a better position in the labour market have more often families than those with lesser socio-economic resources (Nikander 1995). It is thus probable that the fathers' data is not as different compared to all fathers as it is compared to all men.

The employment level of the mothers in our data represents quite well all women in the same age group or family situation. Nearly half of the mothers who have replied were in paid employment, which corresponds well to the fact that in 2001, about half of 2-year-old children were in daycare (STM 2000). Of those respondents who were employed, three of four had a permanent job contract – the same was true for all employed women aged 25–39 in 2002 (Naiset ja miehet Suomessa 2003).

1. How old are you? _____ years

2. Are you

- 1 married
- 2 cohabiting
- 3 separated or divorced
- 4 widow
- 5 single

3. Who lives with you?

- | | yes | no |
|---|-----|----|
| a) spouse/partner | 1 | 2 |
| b) children from the current relationship | 1 | 2 |
| c) partner's children | 1 | 2 |
| d) my children with previous partner | 1 | 2 |
| e) other adults, who? _____ | | |
| f) other children, who? _____ | | |

4. Family situations vary, e.g. reconstituted families are becoming more common. The statutory rights of biological and social parents are different. For these reasons we ask: is your current partner the father of your child born in 1999?

- 1 yes
- 2 no

5. When were your children born?

- 1 first child _____ (mmyy, e.g. 0499)
- 2 second child _____ (mmyy)
- 3 third child _____ (mmyy)
- 4 other children _____ (mmyy) _____ (mmyy) _____ (mmyy)

6. What is your and your partner's basic education?

If you don't have a partner, answer the following questions only for yourself.

a. me

- 1 elementary school
- 2 comprehensive school
- 3 upper secondary school

b. partner

- 1 elementary school
- 2 comprehensive school
- 3 upper secondary school

7. What is your and your partner's professional education?

a. me

- 1 no professional education
- 2 vocational school or course
- 3 college or polytechnic
- 4 university

b. partner

- 1 no professional education
- 2 vocational school or course
- 3 college or polytechnic
- 4 university

8. What is your and your partner's occupation?

a. me

b. partner

9. What is your and your partner's main activity at the moment?

(you can choose several alternatives)

a. me

- 1 at home with a child(ren)
- 2 in paid employment
- 3 self-employed / entrepreneur
- 4 unemployed / laid off
- 5 student
- 6 retired or long-term illness
- 7 other, what?

b. partner

- 1 at home with a child(ren)
- 2 in paid employment
- 3 self-employed / entrepreneur
- 4 unemployed / laid off
- 5 student
- 6 retired or long-term illness
- 7 other, what?

Answer the following questions if you are currently taking childcare leave.

Otherwise, if you are unemployed, go to question 34, or if you are in paid employment, go to question 16.

10. If you are at home taking care of a child(ren), are you

- 1 on maternity leave (before childbirth or the child is under 4 months old)
- 2 on parental leave (after maternity leave, the child is about 4-9 months old)
- 3 on care leave or home with home care allowance after parental leave (the child is over 9 months but under 3 years old)
- 4 at home with no home care allowance or parental benefit
- 5 part-time work, the child is not in daycare

11. If you are on maternity leave, parental leave or care leave, have you got a valid work contract i.e. a workplace where to you will return after the leave?

- 1 yes
- 2 no, because
- 1 my temporary contract ended before the child was born
- 2 I am a student
- 3 I was unemployed before the child was born
- 4 I was taking care of children at home before the birth of my child (1999) and intend to stay at home also after this leave period
- 5 other reason, what?

12. If you are on maternity or parental leave, what are you going to do after the leave period?

- 1 take care leave from my workplace until the child is _____ years old
- 2 stay at home with home care allowance until the child is _____ years old
- 3 return to my previous job
- 4 look for a new fulltime job
- 5 look for a new part-time job
- 6 register at the unemployment office
- 7 continue my studies
- 8 other, what? _____

13. If you are on care leave / partial care leave / home care allowance, what are you going to do after the leave/allowance period?

- 1 return fulltime to my previous job, when the child is _____ years old
- 2 return part-time to my previous job, when the child is _____ years old
- 3 look for a new fulltime job, when the child is _____ years old
- 4 look for a new part-time job, when the child is _____ years old
- 5 register at the unemployment office, when the child is _____ years old
- 6 continue my studies, when the child is _____ years old
- 7 take a new maternity leave
- 8 stay at home without home care allowance, until the child is _____ years old
- 9 other, what? _____

14. If you are on maternity leave or parental leave or care leave, how do you think the leave period will affect your position and career possibilities in working life?

- 1 not in any way
- 2 weaken them to some extent
- 3 weaken them considerably
- 4 improve them to some extent
- 5 improve them considerably
- 6 other, what?

15. If you are on maternity leave or parental leave or care leave and you have a valid work contract, do you get information from your workplace?

_____ I have no valid work contract

	yes	no
a) my supervisor phones me	1	2
b) my colleagues phone me	1	2
c) I phone my workplace	1	2
d) I email my workplace	1	2
e) I visit my workplace weekly	1	2
f) I visit my workplace every month	1	2
g) I visit my workplace occasionally	1	2

The following questions are related to your and your partner's employment.

If you are employed but your partner has no work contract, or you do not have a partner, answer questions 16-19 only on for yourself.

If you have no work contract but your partner is employed, answer questions 16-19 on your partner's behalf and go then to question 33.

16. Describe your and/or your partner's present employment

a. my employment

- 1 permanent full-time work
 - 2 temporary full-time work
 - 3 permanent part-time work
 - 4 temporary part-time work
 - 5 occasional employment
 - 6 other, what?
-

b. partner's employment

- 1 permanent full-time work
 - 2 temporary full-time work
 - 3 permanent part-time work
 - 4 temporary part-time work
 - 5 occasional employment
 - 6 other, what?
-

17. Describe your and/or your partner's employer

a. my employer

- 1 private company
 - 2 municipality
 - 3 state
 - 4 organization
 - 5 other, what?
-

b. partner's employer

- 1 private company
 - 2 municipality
 - 3 state
 - 4 organization
 - 5 other, what?
-

18. What is your and/or your partner's occupational position?

a. me

- 1 blue-collar worker
- 2 industrial or technical white collar
- 3 office white collar, secretary
- 4 expert
- 5 supervisor
- 6 manager

b. partner

- 1 blue-collar worker
- 2 industrial or technical white collar
- 3 office white collar, secretary
- 4 expert
- 5 supervisor
- 6 manager

19. In which branch do you and/or your partner work?

a. me

- 1 technology
- 2 science
- 3 education
- 4 health care
- 5 social care
- 6 administrative management
- 7 office work
- 8 commerce
- 9 service industry
- 10 transportation
- 11 manufacturing
- 12 construction
- 13 agriculture
- 14 art or entertainment

b. partner

- 1 technology
- 2 science
- 3 education
- 4 health care
- 5 social care
- 6 administrative management
- 7 office work
- 8 commerce
- 9 service industry
- 10 transportation
- 11 manufacturing
- 12 construction
- 13 agriculture
- 14 art or entertainment

20. How many employees work in your work organisation?

- 1 1 – 4
- 2 5 – 9
- 3 10 – 19
- 4 20 – 29
- 5 30 – 49
- 6 50 – 99
- 7 100 – 199
- 8 200 – 499
- 9 500 or more

21. How many employees work in your work unit?

- 1 1 – 4
- 2 5 – 9
- 3 10 – 19
- 4 20 – 29
- 5 30 – 49
- 6 50 or more

22. Are the employees in your work unit

- 1 all women
- 2 mostly women
- 3 both men and women equally
- 4 mostly men

23. Is your nearest supervisor

- 1 woman
- 2 man
- 3 I have no supervisor

24. Have you during the past year unexpectedly stayed 1-4 days at home because your child has fallen ill?

- 1 no *->go to question 27*
- 2 my child has not been ill
- 3 sometimes
- 4 several times

25. If you have stayed at home with a sick child, how were your duties taken care of during your absence? (you can choose several alternatives, if there has been different practices in different situations)

- 1 a substitute was hired to do my work
- 2 my work was divided among colleagues
- 3 my work piled up to be continued when I returned
- 4 my work was not done at all
- 5 other, what? _____

26. If you have stayed at home with a sick child, how did your colleagues and management react?

	Colleagues	Management
a) positively, it was accepted	1	1
b) somewhat negatively; f. ex. they reminded of difficulties	2	2
c) very negatively; f. ex. regarded me as disinterested in my work, I needed to defend my choice, I was bullied	3	3
d) other, what?	4	4

27. Does a short absence because of a sick child (1-4 days) have an effect on your income?

- 1 no
- 2 a reduction is made in my income
- 3 my team's bonus is smaller
- 4 other effect, what? _____
- 5 difficult to say

28. Does your employer provide a carer for a sick child as a company benefit?

- 1 yes and I have used it
- 2 yes but I have not used it although my child has been ill
- 3 yes but my child has not been ill
- 4 no
- 5 difficult to say

29. Does your partner's employer provide a carer for a sick child as a company benefit?

_____ my partner is not employed _____ I have no partner

- 1 yes and my partner has used it
- 2 yes but my partner has not used it although our child has been ill
- 3 yes but our child has not been ill
- 4 no
- 5 difficult to say

30. How would you react if a colleague of yours unexpectedly stayed at home for a couple of days because of a sick child?

- 1 I would completely accept it
- 2 I would understand the situation
- 3 it would irritate me
- 4 I would not accept it at all

31. Have you during the past year, because of your work spent less time than you wanted with...
(one selection on each row)

	never	sometimes	often	constantly	does not apply	difficult to say
a) with child(ren)	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) with partner	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) with friends	1	2	3	4	5	6
d) with own parents	1	2	3	4	5	6
e) with other relatives	1	2	3	4	5	6
f) doing hobbies	1	2	3	4	5	6
g) in organizational activities	1	2	3	4	5	6
h) other, what?	1	2	3	4	5	6

32. People sometimes face demands at home and at work that are difficult to reconcile. Do you agree with the following statements? (one selection on each row)

	fully agree	agree somewhat	disagree somewhat	fully disagree	does not apply	difficult to say
a) when I get home, I stop thinking about my work	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) I feel I neglect my home life because of work	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) I would stay in employment even if it was not economically necessary	1	2	3	4	5	6
d) I sometimes lay my family aside when I become absorbed in work	1	2	3	4	5	6
e) I often have difficulties in concentrating at my work because of a home situation	1	2	3	4	5	6
g) it is nice to be free from family hustle at the workplace	1	2	3	4	5	
h) I have more energy for my children when I also have my work	1	2	3	4	5	6
i) my partner relationship is better when I also have my work	1	2	3	4	5	6

33. Do the following statements match those of your partner?
If you have no partner, go to question 36.

	fully agree	agree somewhat	disagree somewhat	fully disagree	does not apply	difficult to say
a) my partner thinks I have too much overtime work	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) my partner thinks I have too many overnight business trips	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) my partner is content with my working hours	1	2	3	4	5	6
d) my partner thinks I bring too much work home	1	2	3	4	5	6

34. Do you agree with the following statements about your partner's work?

	fully agree	agree somewhat	disagree somewhat	fully disagree	does not apply	difficult to say
a) my partner has too much overtime work	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) my partner has too many overnight business trips	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) I am content with my partner's working hours	1	2	3	4	5	6
d) my partner brings home too much work	1	2	3	4	5	6

35. Do you agree with the following statements about your partner's leisure time?

	fully agree	agree somewhat	disagree somewhat	fully disagree	does not apply	difficult to say
a) my partner spends too much time with hobbies	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) my partner has too many organisational activities or positions of trust	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) my partner spends too much time with friends	1	2	3	4	5	6

36. If you are unemployed or your partner is unemployed, how long has the unemployment lasted?

a. me _____ months **b. partner** _____ months

37. If you are returning to paid employment, have you considered part-time work e.g. by taking partial care leave (working hours being max. 30 h/week)?

- 1 I intend to work part-time
- 2 I would like to have part-time work, but it is not economically possible
- 3 I would like to have part-time work, but it is not possible because of the nature of my work
- 4 I would like to have part-time work, but none is available
- 5 I have considered part-time work, but I rather like to work full time
- 6 I have considered part-time work, but my employer does not find it desirable
- 7 I have not considered part-time work
- 8 I have not been aware of the possibility to take partial care leave

38. Who in your family takes care of the following tasks?
(you can choose several alternatives on each row)

	me alone	mainly me	me and my partner equally	mainly my partner	my partner alone	someone else for payment	someone else without payment	nobody/ does not apply
a) preparing food on weekdays	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
b) buying food	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
c) taking care of child(ren)'s meals	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
d) washing dishes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
e) washing laundry	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
f) getting children dressed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
g) ironing clothes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
h) bathing/washing children	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
i) cleaning (e.g. vacuuming)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
j) small home repairs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
k) car maintenance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
l) taking garbage out	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
m) taking care of bills	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
n) garden and yard work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
o) putting child(ren) to bed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
p) waking up at night with children	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
q) changing diapers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
r) playing with child(ren)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
s) teaching child(ren) in using the computer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
t) taking child(ren) to/from daycare or school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
u) taking children to hobbies	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
v) attending parents' meetings	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
x) helping children with school homework	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
y) other, what	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

39. Many studies show that the division of labour in housework is one of the main causes of conflicts between spouses/partners. Does housework cause disputes between you and your partner?

- 1 often
- 2 sometimes
- 3 rarely
- 4 never

40. Who in your family is mainly responsible for getting housework done?

- 1 me
- 2 my partner
- 3 me and my partner equally
- 4 difficult to say

41. Has the division of labour between spouses/partners in the following housework changed after the birth of your first child?

	I do more than before	I do as much as before	I do less than before	my partner does more than before	my partner does as much as before	my partner does less than before	someone else does more	difficult to say
a) preparing food on weekdays	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
b) buying food	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
c) washing dishes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
d) washing laundry	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
e) cleaning	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
f) small home repairs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
g) other, what?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

42. When you think about your life this far, have you had to make specific "compromises" in favour of either work or family, if the combination of these has seemed difficult?

(one selection on each row)

	yes	no	does not apply	difficult to say
a) I have worked part-time because of family	1	2	3	4
b) I have passed over education possibilities because of family	1	2	3	4
c) I have given up a job because my family moved to another place after my partner's job	1	2	3	4
d) I have given up a job or a job offer because of family	1	2	3	4
e) I have refused a more challenging work task because of family	1	2	3	4
f) I have cut down work tasks because of family	1	2	3	4
g) I have postponed having children for the sake of my work	1	2	3	4
h) I have limited the number of children for sake of my work	1	2	3	4
i) other, what?				

43. In case you have needed help, how often have you during the past year received help from your own parents, or your partner's parents?

- 1 always
- 2 in most cases
- 3 sometimes
- 4 rarely
- 5 never

The following questions are related to your child born in 1999.

The take-up of leave is often understood as related to the economic resources of the family. These resources are affected by income both before and after the birth of a child. Thus we ask the following questions about your family income separately before the birth of your child born in 1999 and at this moment.

44. How much approximately was your net income per month (after taxes) before the child was born? How much was your partner's income? Take into account also income from allowances (maternity, parental and unemployment benefit, homecare allowance). Include also possible extra income related to shiftwork, overtime work or seniority.

- | | a. me | | b. partner |
|----|---------------------|----|---------------------|
| 0 | 0 FIM | 0 | 0 FIM |
| 1 | under 4000 FIM | 1 | under 4000 FIM |
| 2 | 4000-6000 FIM | 2 | 4000-6000 FIM |
| 3 | 6001-8000 FIM | 3 | 6001-8000 FIM |
| 4 | 8001-10000 FIM | 4 | 8001-10000 FIM |
| 5 | 10001-12000 FIM | 5 | 10001-12000 FIM |
| 6 | 12001-14000 FIM | 6 | 12001-14000 FIM |
| 7 | 14001-16000 FIM | 7 | 14001-16000 FIM |
| 8 | 16001-18000 FIM | 8 | 16001-18000 FIM |
| 9 | 18001-20000 FIM | 9 | 18001-20000 FIM |
| 10 | more than 20000 FIM | 10 | more than 20000 FIM |
| 11 | difficult to say | 11 | difficult to say |

45. How much approximately is your net income per month (after taxes) at the moment? how much is your partner's income? Take into account also income from allowances (maternity, parental and unemployment benefit, homecare allowance). Include also possible extra income related to shiftwork, overtime work or seniority.

- | | a. me | | b. partner |
|----|---------------------|----|---------------------|
| 0 | 0 FIM | 0 | 0 FIM |
| 1 | under 4000 FIM | 1 | under 4000 FIM |
| 2 | 4000-6000 FIM | 2 | 4000-6000 FIM |
| 3 | 6001-8000 FIM | 3 | 6001-8000 FIM |
| 4 | 8001-10000 FIM | 4 | 8001-10000 FIM |
| 5 | 10001-12000 FIM | 5 | 10001-12000 FIM |
| 6 | 12001-14000 FIM | 6 | 12001-14000 FIM |
| 7 | 14001-16000 FIM | 7 | 14001-16000 FIM |
| 8 | 16001-18000 FIM | 8 | 16001-18000 FIM |
| 9 | 18001-20000 FIM | 9 | 18001-20000 FIM |
| 10 | more than 20000 FIM | 10 | more than 20000 FIM |
| 11 | difficult to say | 11 | difficult to say |

46. Maternity and parental leave can last until the child is about 9 months old. How long was your maternity and parental leave with your child born in 1999?

- 1 I took the whole leave period
- 2 I was on leave until the child was _____months old

47. What kinds of reactions were there at your workplace towards your maternity and parental leave?

_____ I did not have a job at that time

	Yes	No
a) it was easy to talk about the leave	1	2
b) my supervisor congratulated	1	2
c) my colleagues congratulated	1	2
d) my supervisor gave negative comments	1	2
e) some colleagues gave negative comments	1	2
f) there were concrete implications, what?	1	2

48. Have you taken care leave after parental leave with your child born in 1999 (when the child was between 10 months and 3 years old)?

- 1 I am still on care leave
- 2 I took care leave until the child was _____years_____months old
- 3 I took partial care leave from when the child was _____years_____months until the child was _____years_____months old
- 4 I didn't take any care leave

Which aspects were related to your taking or not taking care leave?

49. What kinds of reactions were there at your workplace towards your care leave?

_____ I did not have a job at that time

	Yes	No
a) it was easy to talk about the leave	1	2
b) my supervisor was content	1	2
c) my supervisor gave negative comments	1	2
d) some colleagues gave negative comments	1	2
e) there were concrete implications, what?	1	2

50. Were there any organisational changes at your workplace during your parental or care leave?

_____ I have not returned to work -> *go to question 53*

- 1 no
 - 2 yes, what kinds of changes?
-

51. When you returned to work from parental or care leave, were there any changes in your work tasks?

- 1 no, my work and my tasks were quite the same as before
 - 2 yes, what kinds of changes?
-

52. When you returned to work from parental or care leave, did you receive information and orientation to possible changes in your work?

	Yes	No	Does not apply
a) there had been no changes	1	2	3
b) my substitute informed me	1	2	3
c) my colleagues informed me	1	2	3
d) my employer gave me training	1	2	3
e) I found out by myself	1	2	3
f) other, what? _____			

The following questions are related to take-up of leave by the father of your child born in 1999.

53. Was the father present in childbirth

	Yes	No	Does not apply
a) in 1999	1	2	3
b) with other children	1	2	3

Why was the father present in childbirth, or why wasn't he present?

If the father was not employed at the time of childbirth, go to question 59.

54. Did the father take paternity leave (6-18 days while the mother is on maternity or parental leave)?

- 1 Yes, for _____ days
- 2 No

Why did the father take/not take paternity leave?

55. Did the father take parental leave (when the child was about 4-9 months old) or care leave (when the child was about 10 months – 3 years old)?

- 1 Yes, he was _____ weeks on parental leave and/or _____ months on care leave
 2 No

56. Which aspects were related to your decision about sharing or not sharing parental leave and/or care leave between parents?

	Yes	No	Difficult to say
a) I knew about the father's possibilities to take parental and care leave in addition to paternity leave	1	2	3
b) we discussed with my partner about the possibility to share parental leave and/or care leave	1	2	3
c) we made calculations about the economic implications of the father's possible leave period	1	2	3
d) a long absence from work is difficult for me	1	2	3
e) a long absence from work is difficult for my partner	1	2	3
f) I think the mother is mainly responsible for childcare	1	2	3
g) my partner thinks the mother is mainly responsible for childcare	2	3	
h) the leave period was a long-awaited pause from work for me after many years in working life	1	2	3
i) the leave period was a long-awaited pause from work for my partner after many years in working life	1	2	3
j) we expected the family economy to suffer, if the father took leave	1	2	3
k) my employer implied that a long leave period was not desirable	1	2	3
l) my partner's employer implied that a long leave period was not desirable	1	2	3
m) I think the father is mainly responsible for breadwinning	1	2	3
n) my partner thinks the father is mainly responsible for breadwinning	1	2	3
o) our friends' practice influenced our decision	1	2	3
p) our social network would have found it strange if I had not taken the whole leave period myself	1	2	3
q) our social network would have found it strange if my partner had not taken any parental or care leave	1	2	3
r) I wanted to full-breastfeed (no other nutrition) for ____ months	1	2	3
s) since the child was born after a long try, I wanted to stay at home with the child for a longer period	1	2	3
t) since the child was born after a long try, my partner wanted to stay at home with the child for some time	1	2	3
u) my partner took his annual holiday according to childcare needs	1	2	3
v) other aspect, what?	1	2	3

57. Did your plans about sharing/not sharing parental or care leave change during the leave period?

- 1 No
- 2 Yes, how and why? _____

58. Has the father during the past year stayed at home from work for 1-4 days in case the child born in 1999 has fallen ill?

- 1 no
- 2 the child has not fallen ill
- 3 yes, sometimes
- 4 yes, several times

Finally some questions about how the care of young children should be arranged.

59. Today, mothers take most parental leave (when the child is under 10 months). Do you agree with the following statements related to parental leave?

(one selection on each row)

	fully agree	agree somewhat	difficult to say	disagree somewhat	fully disagree
a) the prevailing practice is good	1	2	3	4	5
b) it would be good if fathers took more parental leave	1	2	3	4	5
c) parental leave should be shared so that <u>a separate period of the present leave was set apart for fathers</u> without the possibility to transfer it to the mother	1	2	3	4	5
d) parental leave should be shared so that <u>an extension of the present leave was set apart for fathers</u> without the possibility to transfer it to the mother	1	2	3	4	5
e) parental leave should be made longer on prevailing terms	1	2	3	4	5
f) parental leave should be available on part-time basis, with the leave period being made respectively <u>longer</u> (prevailing leave ends while the child is about 9 months)	1	2	3	4	5
g) parental leave should be available on part-time basis, with the leave period being <u>as long as now</u>	1	2	3	4	5
h) parental leave should be available on part-time basis only if <u>both parents</u> shorten their working hours	1	2	3	4	5

60. How long should the parental leave period with income-related benefit be?

The income-related benefit should be paid until the child is _____ old.

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61. Mothers also take most care leave (when the child is about 10 months - 3 years old). Do you agree with the following statements related to care leave?
(one selection on each row)

	fully agree	agree somewhat	difficult to say	disagree somewhat	fully disagree
a) the prevailing practice is good	1	2	3	4	5
b) it would be good if fathers took more care leave	1	2	3	4	5
c) care leave should be shared so that a separate period was set apart for fathers without the possibility to transfer it to the mother	1	2	3	4	5

62. Home care allowance is paid after parental leave for families with children under 3 years who are not in public day care. The basic allowance is 1500 FIM/month. In addition, a sibling supplement of 300-500 FIM and an income-related supplement of 1000 FIM can be paid, as well as a municipal supplement in some municipalities; the maximum amount is about 4000 FIM/month. The partial home care allowance paid to parents of children under 3 who reduce their working hours to part-time (maximum 30 h/week) is 375 FIM/month. **Do you agree with the following statements related to home care allowance?**

	fully agree	agree somewhat	difficult to say	disagree somewhat	fully disagree
a) The amount of the home care allowance is sufficient	1	2	3	4	5
b) The <u>basic allowance</u> should be higher	1	2	3	4	5
c) The <u>income-related supplement</u> should be higher	1	2	3	4	5
d) Partial home care allowance paid to parents employed part-time should be higher	1	2	3	4	5
e) Home care allowance should be much higher only if parents share the care leave period	1	2	3	4	5
f) Home care allowance can be abolished	1	2	3	4	5

63. How much should the home care allowance be? _____ FIM/month

64. How much should the partial home care allowance paid to parents reducing their working hours (to max 30 h/week) be, in order to raise your interest in this possibility?

_____ FIM/month

65. Every child under school age has since 1996 had a subjective right to get a place in public day care. Do you agree with the following statements related to day care?

	fully agree	agree somewhat	difficult to say	disagree somewhat	fully disagree
a) the right to day care for all children should definitely be preserved	1	2	3	4	5
b) I want to use the right to day care for my older child while I am on maternity/parental leave with a baby	1	2	3	4	5
c) the right to day care should be <u>part-time</u> , if one of the parents is on <u>parental leave</u> with a younger sibling	1	2	3	4	5
d) the right to day care should be <u>removed</u> if one of the parents is on <u>parental leave</u> with a younger sibling	1	2	3	4	5
e) the right to day care should be <u>part-time</u> , if one of the parents is <u>unemployed</u>	1	2	3	4	5
f) the right to day care should be removed if one of the parents is <u>unemployed</u>	1	2	3	4	5

66. Different aspects of life hold a different significance to different people. How significant are the following to you? (one selection on each row)

	very significant	rather significant	not very significant	not at all significant	difficult to say
a) work as a source of income	1	2	3	4	5
b) the contents of work	1	2	3	4	5
c) social relationships at work	1	2	3	4	5
d) home and family life	1	2	3	4	5
e) leisure activities	1	2	3	4	5

67. Did you fill this questionnaire alone or with your partner, or with someone else?

- 1 alone
- 2 with my partner
- 3 with someone else, who _____

Thank you for your answers!

You are welcome to comment on this form or the issues it deals with. Are you willing to be interviewed on the issues of this questionnaire? If so, write your name and contact information.

1. How old are you? _____ years

2. Are you

- 1 married
- 2 cohabiting
- 3 separated or divorced
- 4 widower
- 5 single

3. Who lives with you?

	yes	no
a) spouse/partner	1	2
b) children from the current relationship	1	2
c) partner's children	1	2
d) my children with previous partner	1	2
e) other adults, who? _____		
f) other children, who? _____		

4. Have you got children under 18 who do not live with you?

- 1 yes
- 2 no

5. When were your children born?

- 1 first child _____ (mmyy, e.g. 0499)
- 2 second child _____ (mmyy)
- 3 third child _____ (mmyy)
- 4 other children _____ (mmyy) _____ (mmyy) _____ (mmyy)

6. Were you present in childbirth

	Yes	No	Does not apply
a) in 1999	1	2	3
b) with other children	1	2	3

Why were you present in childbirth, or why not?

7. What is your and your partner's basic education?

If you don't have a partner, answer the following questions for your yourself only.

a. me

- 1 elementary school
- 2 comprehensive school
- 3 upper secondary school

b. partner

- 1 elementary school
- 2 comprehensive school
- 3 upper secondary school

8. What is your and your partner's professional education?

a. me

- 1 no professional education
- 2 vocational school or course
- 3 college or polytechnic
- 4 university

b. partner

- 1 no professional education
- 2 vocational school or course
- 3 college or polytechnic
- 4 university

9. What is your and your partner's occupation?

a. me

b. partner

10. What is your and your partner's main activity at the moment?

(you can choose several alternatives)

a. me

- 1 at home with a child(ren)
- 2 in paid employment
- 3 self-employed / entrepreneur
- 4 unemployed / laid off
- 5 student
- 6 retired or long-term illness
- 7 other, what?

b. partner

- 1 at home with a child(ren)
- 2 in paid employment
- 3 self-employed / entrepreneur
- 4 unemployed / laid off
- 5 student
- 6 retired or long-term illness
- 7 other, what?

The following questions are related to your and your partner's employment.

If you are employed but your partner has no work contract, or you do not have a partner, answer questions 11-149 only on for yourself only.

If you have no work contract but your partner is employed, answer questions 11-14 on your partner's behalf and go then to question 19.

11. Describe your and/or your partner's present employment

a. my employment

- 1 permanent full-time work
 - 2 temporary full-time work
 - 3 permanent part-time work
 - 4 temporary part-time work
 - 5 occasional employment
 - 6 other, what?
-

b. partner's employment

- 1 permanent full-time work
 - 2 temporary full-time work
 - 3 permanent part-time work
 - 4 temporary part-time work
 - 5 occasional employment
 - 6 other, what?
-

12. Describe your and/or your partner's employer

a. my employer

- 1 private company
 - 2 municipality
 - 3 state
 - 4 organization
 - 5 other, what?
-

b. partner's employer

- 1 private company
 - 2 municipality
 - 3 state
 - 4 organization
 - 5 other, what?
-

13. In which branch do you and/or your partner work?

a. me

- 1 technology
- 2 science
- 3 education
- 4 health care
- 5 social care
- 6 administrative management
- 7 office work
- 8 commerce
- 9 service industry
- 10 transportation
- 11 manufacturing
- 12 construction
- 13 agriculture
- 14 art or entertainment

b. partner

- 1 technology
- 2 science
- 3 education
- 4 health care
- 5 social care
- 6 administrative management
- 7 office work
- 8 commerce
- 9 service industry
- 10 transportation
- 11 manufacturing
- 12 construction
- 13 agriculture
- 14 art or entertainment

14. What is your and/or your partner's occupational position?

a. me

- 1 blue-collar worker
- 2 industrial or technical white collar
- 3 office white collar, secretary
- 4 expert
- 5 supervisor
- 6 manager

b. partner

- 1 blue-collar worker
- 2 industrial or technical white collar
- 3 office white collar, secretary
- 4 expert
- 5 supervisor
- 6 manager

15. How many employees work in your work organisation?

- 1 1 – 4
- 2 5 – 9
- 3 10 – 19
- 4 20 – 29
- 5 30 – 49
- 6 50 – 99
- 7 100 – 199
- 8 200 – 499
- 9 500 or more

16. How many employees work in your work unit?

- 1 1 – 4
- 2 5 – 9
- 3 10 – 19
- 4 20 – 29
- 5 30 – 49
- 6 50 or more

17. Are the employees in your work unit

- 1 all women
- 2 mostly women
- 3 both men and women equally
- 4 mostly men

18. Is your nearest supervisor a

- 1 woman
- 2 man
- 3 I have no supervisor

19. If you are unemployed or your partner is unemployed, how long has the unemployment lasted?

- a. me** _____ months **b. partner** _____ months

If you are not on paternity, parental or care leave at the moment, go to question 23.

20. If you are at home taking care of a child(ren), are you

- 1 on paternity leave (1-3 weeks)
- 2 on parental leave (after your partner's maternity leave, the child is about 4-9 months old)
- 3 on care leave after parental leave (the child is over 9 months but under 3 years old, you have a job to return to)
- 4 at home with home care allowance (the child is over 9 months but under 3 years old, you have no job to return to)
- 5 at home with no home care allowance or parental benefit
- 6 part-time work, the child is not in daycare

21. If you are on paternity leave, parental leave or care leave, have you got a valid work contract i.e. a workplace where to you will return after the leave?

- | | | | |
|---|-------------|---|---|
| 1 | yes | | |
| 2 | no, because | 1 | my temporary contract ended before the child was born |
| | | 2 | I am a student |
| | | 3 | I was unemployed before the child was born |
| | | 4 | other reason, what? |
-

22. If you are on paternity leave or parental leave or care leave and you have a valid work contract, do you get information from your workplace?

_____ I have no valid work contract

- | | yes | no |
|--------------------------------------|-----|----|
| a) my supervisor phones me | 1 | 2 |
| b) my colleagues phone me | 1 | 2 |
| c) I phone my workplace | 1 | 2 |
| d) I email my workplace | 1 | 2 |
| e) I visit my workplace weekly | 1 | 2 |
| f) I visit my workplace occasionally | 1 | 2 |

23. Have you considered part-time work e.g. by taking partial care leave (working hours being max. 30 h/week)?

- 1 I intend to work part-time
- 2 I would like to have part-time work, but it is not economically possible
- 3 I would like to have part-time work, but it is not possible because of the nature of my work
- 4 I would like to have part-time work, but none is available
- 5 I have considered part-time work, but I rather like to work full time
- 6 I have considered part-time work, but my employer does not find it desirable
- 7 I have not considered part-time work
- 8 I have not been aware of the possibility to take partial care leave

24. Have you during the past year unexpectedly stayed 1-4 days at home because your child has fallen ill?

- 1 no ->go to question 27
- 2 my child has not been ill
- 3 sometimes
- 4 several times

25. If you have stayed at home with a sick child, how were your duties taken care of during your absence? (you can choose several alternatives, if there has been different practices in different situations)

- 1 a substitute was hired to do my work
- 2 my work was divided among colleagues
- 3 my work piled up to be continued when I returned
- 4 my work was not done at all
- 5 other, what? _____

26. If you have stayed at home with a sick child, how did your colleagues and management react?

	Colleagues	Management
a) positively, it was accepted	1	1
b) somewhat negatively; e.g. they reminded of difficulties	2	2
c) very negatively; e.g. regarded me as disinterested of my work, I needed to defend my choice, I was bullied	3	3
d) other, what?	4	4

27. Does a short absence because of a sick child (1-4 days) have an effect on your income?

- 1 no
- 2 a reduction is made in my income
- 3 my team's bonus is smaller
- 4 other effect, what? _____
- 5 difficult to say

28. Does your employer provide a carer for a sick child as a company benefit?

- 1 yes and I have used it
- 2 yes but I have not used it although my child has been ill
- 3 yes but my child has not been ill
- 4 no
- 5 difficult to say

29. Does your partner's employer provide a carer for a sick child as a company benefit?

_____ my partner is not employed

- 1 yes and my partner has used it
- 2 yes but my partner has not used it although our child has been ill
- 3 yes but our child has not been ill
- 4 no
- 5 difficult to say

30. How would you react if a colleague of yours unexpectedly stayed at home for a couple of days because of a sick child?

- 1 I would completely accept it
- 2 I would understand the situation
- 3 it would irritate me
- 4 I would not accept it at all

31. Have you during the past year, because of your work spent less time than you wanted with...
(one selection on each row)

	never	sometimes	often	constantly	doesn't apply	difficult to say
a) with a child(ren)	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) with partner	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) with friends	1	2	3	4	5	6
d) with own parents	1	2	3	4	5	6
e) with other relatives	1	2	3	4	5	6
f) doing hobbies	1	2	3	4	5	6
g) in organizational activities	1	2	3	4	5	6
h) other, what?	1	2	3	4	5	6

If you have no partner, go to question 35.

32. Do the following statements match those of your partner

	fully agree	agree somewhat	disagree somewhat	fully disagree	does not apply	difficult to say
a) my partner thinks I have too much overtime work	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) my partner thinks I have too many overnight business trips	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) my partner is content with my working hours	1	2	3	4	5	6
d) my partner thinks I bring too much work home	1	2	3	4	5	6

33. Do you agree with the following statements about your partner's work?

	fully agree	agree somewhat	disagree somewhat	fully disagree	does not apply	difficult to say
a) my partner has too much overtime work	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) my partner has too many overnight business trips	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) I am content with my partner's working hours	1	2	3	4	5	6
d) my partner brings too much work home	1	2	3	4	5	6

34. Do you agree with the following statements about your partner's leisure time?

	fully agree	agree somewhat	disagree somewhat	fully disagree	does not apply to me	difficult to say
a) my partner spends too much time with hobbies	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) my partner has too many organisational activities or positions of trust	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) my partner spends too much time with friends	1	2	3	4	5	6

35. People sometimes face demands at home and at work that are difficult to reconcile. Do you agree with the following statements?

(one selection on each row)

	fully agree	agree somewhat	disagree somewhat	fully disagree	does not apply	difficult to say
a) when I get home, I stop thinking about my work	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) I feel I neglect my home life because of work	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) I would stay in employment even if it was not economically necessary	1	2	3	4	5	6
d) I sometimes put my family aside when I become absorbed in work	1	2	3	4	5	6
e) I often have difficulties in concentrating on my work because of a home situation	1	2	3	4	5	6
g) it is nice to be free from family hustle at the workplace	1	2	3	4	5	6
h) I have more energy for my children when I also have my work	1	2	3	4	5	6
i) my partner relationship is better when I also have my work	1	2	3	4	5	6

36. Who in your family takes care of the following tasks?

(you can choose several alternatives on each row)

	me alone	mainly me	me and my partner equally	mainly my partner	my partner alone	someone else for payment	someone else without payment	nobody/ does not apply to my family
a) preparing food on weekdays	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
b) buying food	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
c) taking care of a child(ren)'s meals	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
d) washing dishes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
e) washing laundry	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
f) getting children dressed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
g) ironing clothes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
h) bathing/washing children	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
i) cleaning (e.g. vacuuming)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

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j) small home repairs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
k) car maintenance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
l) taking garbage out	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
m) taking care of bills	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
n) garden and yard work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
o) putting child(ren) to bed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
p) waking up at night with children	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
q) changing diapers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
r) playing with child(ren)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
s) teaching child(ren) in using the computer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
t) taking child(ren) to/from daycare or school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
u) taking children to hobbies	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
v) attending parents' meetings	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
x) helping children with school homework	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
y) other, what	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

37. Many studies show that the division of labour in housework is one of the main causes of conflicts between spouses/partners. Does housework cause disputes between you and your partner?

- 1 often
- 2 sometimes
- 3 rarely
- 4 never

38. Who in your family is mainly responsible for getting housework done?

- 1 me
- 2 my partner
- 3 me and my partner equally
- 4 difficult to say

39. Has the division of labour between spouses/partners in the following housework changed after the birth of your first child?

	I do more than before	I do as much as before	I do less than before	my partner does more than before	my partner does as much as before	my partner does less than before	someone else does more	difficult to say
a) preparing food on weekdays	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
b) buying food	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
c) washing dishes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
d) washing laundry	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
e) cleaning	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
f) small home repairs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
g) other, what?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

40. When you think about your life this far, have you had to make specific "compromises" in favour of either work or family, if the combination of these has seemed difficult?

(one selection on each row)

	yes	no	does not apply	difficult to say
a) I have worked part-time because of family	1	2	3	4
b) I have passed over education possibilities because of family	1	2	3	4
c) I have given up a job because my family moved to another place after my partner's job	1	2	3	4
d) I have given up a job or a job offer because of family	1	2	3	4
e) I have refused a more challenging work task because of family	1	2	3	4
f) I have cut down work tasks because of family	1	2	3	4
g) I have postponed having children for the sake of my work	1	2	3	4
h) I have limited the number of children for the sake of my work	1	2	3	4
i) other, what?				

41. In case you have needed help, how often have you during the past year received help from your own parents, or your partner's parents?

- 1 always
- 2 in most cases
- 3 sometimes
- 4 rarely
- 5 never

The following questions are related to your child born in 1999.

The take-up of leave is often understood as related to the economic resources of the family. These resources are affected by income both before and after the birth of a child. Thus we ask the following questions about your family income separately before the birth of your child born in 1999 and at this moment.

42. How much approximately was your net income per month (after taxes) before the child was born? How much was your partner's income? Take into account also income from allowances (maternity, parental and unemployment benefit, homecare allowance). Include also possible extra income related to shiftwork, overtime work or seniority.

- | a. me | b. partner |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 0 0 FIM | 0 0 FIM |
| 1 under 4000 FIM | 1 under 4000 FIM |
| 2 4000-6000 FIM | 2 4000-6000 FIM |
| 3 6001-8000 FIM | 3 6001-8000 FIM |
| 4 8001-10000 FIM | 4 8001-10000 FIM |
| 5 10001-12000 FIM | 5 10001-12000 FIM |
| 6 12001-14000 FIM | 6 12001-14000 FIM |
| 7 14001-16000 FIM | 7 14001-16000 FIM |
| 8 16001-18000 FIM | 8 16001-18000 FIM |
| 9 18001-20000 FIM | 9 18001-20000 FIM |
| 10 more than 20000 FIM | 10 more than 20000 FIM |
| 11 difficult to say | 11 difficult to say |

43. How much approximately is your net income per month (after taxes) at the moment? how much is your partner's income? Take into account also income from allowances (maternity, parental and unemployment benefit, homecare allowance). Include also possible extra income related to shiftwork, overtime work or seniority.

- | a. me | b. partner |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 0 0 FIM | 0 0 FIM |
| 1 under 4000 FIM | 1 under 4000 FIM |
| 2 4000-6000 FIM | 2 4000-6000 FIM |
| 3 6001-8000 FIM | 3 6001-8000 FIM |
| 4 8001-10000 FIM | 4 8001-10000 FIM |
| 5 10001-12000 FIM | 5 10001-12000 FIM |
| 6 12001-14000 FIM | 6 12001-14000 FIM |
| 7 14001-16000 FIM | 7 14001-16000 FIM |
| 8 16001-18000 FIM | 8 16001-18000 FIM |
| 9 18001-20000 FIM | 9 18001-20000 FIM |
| 10 more than 20000 FIM | 10 more than 20000 FIM |
| 11 difficult to say | 11 difficult to say |

If you were unemployed after the child was born, go to question 51.

44. Did you take paternity leave with your child born in 1999 (6-18 days while the mother is on maternity or parental leave)?

- 1 yes, _____ days
 2 no

Why did you or did you not take paternity leave?

45. What kinds of reactions were there at your workplace towards your paternity leave?

_____ I did not have a job at that time

	Yes	No
a) it was easy to talk about the leave	1	2
b) my supervisor congratulated	1	2
c) my colleagues congratulated	1	2
d) my supervisor gave negative comments	1	2
e) some colleagues gave negative comments	1	2
f) there were concrete implications, what?	1	2

46. Did you take parental leave (when the child was about 4-9 months old) or care leave (when the child was between 10 months and 3 years old) with your child born in 1999?

1 yes, I took _____ weeks of parental leave and/or _____ months of care leave
 2 no

47. If you took parental leave or care leave, what kinds of reactions were there at your workplace?

_____ I did not have a job at that time

	Yes	No
a) it was easy to talk about the leave	1	2
b) my supervisor gave negative comments	1	2
c) some colleagues gave negative comments	1	2
d) there were concrete implications, what?	1	2

48. Which aspects were related to your decision about sharing or not sharing parental leave and/or care leave between parents?

	Yes	No	Difficult to say
a) I knew about the father's possibilities to take parental and care leave in addition to paternity leave	1	2	3
b) we discussed with my partner about the possibility to share parental leave and/or care leave	1	2	3
c) we made calculations about the economic implications of the father's possible leave period	1	2	3
d) a long absence from work is difficult for me	1	2	3
e) a long absence from work is difficult for my partner	1	2	3
f) I think the mother is mainly responsible for childcare	1	2	3
g) my partner thinks the mother is mainly responsible for childcare	1	2	3
h) the leave period was a long-awaited pause from work for me after many years in working life	1	2	3
i) the leave period was a long-awaited pause from work for my partner after many years in working life	1	2	3
j) we expected the family economy to suffer if the father took leave	1	2	3

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k)	my employer implied that a long leave period was not desirable	1	2	3
l)	my partner's employer implied that a long leave period was not desirable	1	2	3
m)	I think the father is mainly responsible for breadwinning	1	2	3
n)	my partner thinks the father is mainly responsible for breadwinning	1	2	3
o)	our friends' practice influenced our decision	1	2	3
p)	our social network would have found it strange if my partner had not taken the whole leave period	1	2	3
q)	our social network would have found it strange if I had not taken any parental or care leave	1	2	3
r)	my partner wanted to full-breastfeed (no other nutrition) for ____ months	1	2	3
s)	since the child was born after a long try, my partner wanted to stay at home with the child for a longer period	1	2	3
t)	since the child was born after a long try, I wanted to stay at home with the child	1	2	3
u)	I took annual holiday according to childcare needs	1	2	3
v)	other aspect, what?	1	2	3

49. Did your plans about sharing/not sharing parental or care leave change during the leave period?

- 1 No
- 2 Yes, how and why? _____

50. If you are or have been on paternity leave or parental leave or care leave, how do you think the leave period will affect your position and career possibilities in working life?

_____ I have not taken any leave

- 1 not in any way
 - 2 weaken them to some extent
 - 3 weaken them considerably
 - 4 improve them to some extent
 - 5 improve them considerably
 - 6 other, what?
-

Finally some questions about how the care of young children should be arranged.

51. Today, mothers take most parental leave (when the child is under 10 months). Do you agree with the following statements related to parental leave?

(one selection on each row)

	fully agree	agree somewhat	can't say	disagree somewhat	fully disagree
a) the prevailing practice is good	1	2	3	4	5
b) it would be good if fathers took more parental leave	1	2	3	4	5
c) parental leave should be shared so that <u>a separate period of the present leave was set apart for fathers</u> without the possibility to transfer it to the mother	1	2	3	4	5
d) parental leave should be shared so that <u>an extension of the present leave was set apart for fathers</u> without the possibility to transfer it to the mother	1	2	3	4	5
e) parental leave should be made longer on prevailing terms	1	2	3	4	5
f) parental leave should be available on part-time basis, with the leave period being made respectively <u>longer</u> (prevailing leave ends while the child is about 9 months)	1	2	3	4	5
g) parental leave should be available on part-time basis, with the leave period being <u>as long as now</u>	1	2	3	4	5
h) parental leave should be available on part-time basis only if <u>both parents</u> shorten their working hours	1	2	3	4	5

52. How long should the parental leave period with income-related benefit be?

The income-related benefit should be paid until the child is _____ old.

53. Mothers also take most care leave (when the child is about 10 months - 3 years old). Do you agree with the following statements related to care leave?

(one selection on each row)

	fully agree	agree somewhat	can't say	disagree somewhat	fully disagree
a) the prevailing practice is good	1	2	3	4	5
b) it would be good if fathers took more care leave	1	2	3	4	5
c) care leave should be shared so that <u>a separate period was set apart for fathers</u> without the possibility to transfer it to the mother	1	2	3	4	5

54. Home care allowance is paid after parental leave for families with children under 3 years who are not in public day care. The basic allowance is 1500 FIM/month. In addition, a sibling supplement of 300-500 FIM and an income-related supplement of 1000 FIM can be paid, as well as a municipal supplement in some municipalities; the maximum amount is about 4000 FIM/month. The partial home care allowance paid to parents of children under 3 who reduce their working hours to part-time (maximum 30 h/week) is 375 FIM/month. **Do you agree with the following statements related to home care allowance?**

	fully agree	agree somewhat	can't say	disagree somewhat	fully disagree
a) The amount of the home care allowance is sufficient	1	2	3	4	5
b) The <u>basic allowance</u> should be higher	1	2	3	4	5
c) The <u>income-related supplement</u> should be higher	1	2	3	4	5
d) Partial home care allowance paid to parents employed part-time should be higher	1	2	3	4	5
e) Home care allowance should be much higher only if parents share the care leave period	1	2	3	4	5
f) Home care allowance can be abolished	1	2	3	4	5

55. How much should the home care allowance be? _____ FIM/month

56. How much should the partial home care allowance paid to parents reducing their working hours (to max 30 h/week) be, in order to raise your interest in this possibility?
_____ FIM/month

57. Every child under school age has since 1996 had a subjective right to get a place in public day care. Do you agree with the following statements related to day care?

	fully agree	agree somewhat	can't say	disagree somewhat	fully disagree
a) the right to day care for all children should definitely be preserved	1	2	3	4	5
b) I want to use the right to day care for my older child while I am on maternity/parental leave with a baby	1	2	3	4	5
c) the right to day care should be <u>part-time</u> , if one of the parents is on <u>parental leave</u> with a younger sibling	1	2	3	4	5
d) the right to day care should be <u>removed</u> if one of the parents is on <u>parental leave</u> with a younger sibling	1	2	3	4	5
e) the right to day care should be <u>part-time</u> , if one of the parents is <u>unemployed</u>	1	2	3	4	5
f) the right to day care should be <u>removed</u> if one of the parents is <u>unemployed</u>	1	2	3	4	5

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58. Different aspects of life hold a different significance to different people. How significant are the following to you? (one selection on each row)

	very significant	rather significant	not very significant	not at all significant	I do not know
a) work as a source of income	1	2	3	4	5
b) the contents of work	1	2	3	4	5
c) social relationships at work	1	2	3	4	5
d) home and family life	1	2	3	4	5
e) leisure activities	1	2	3	4	5

59. Did you fill this questionnaire alone or with your partner, or with someone else?

- 1 alone
- 2 with my partner
- 3 with someone else, who _____

Thank you for your answers!

You are welcome to comment on this form or the issues it deals with. Are you willing to be interviewed on the issues of this questionnaire? If so, write your name and contact information.

Appendix 3. Descriptive statistics for variables used in the analysis

	Mother	Father
	%	%
Age		
-30	33	14
31-40	62	66
41+	5	20
Total	100	100
N	(3283)	(1400)
Number of children		
1	28	29
2	44	43
3+	28	29
Total	100	100
N	(3295)	(1413)
Is at present home with children		
Yes	53	8
No	47	92
Total	100	100
	(3295)	(1413)
Spouse at present home with children		
Yes	3	41
No	97	59
Total	100	100
	(3295)	(1413)
Father present in childbirth		
yes	87	92
no	13	8
Total	100	100
N	(3277)	(1408)
The father took paternity leave		
yes	79	96
no	21	4
Total	100	100
N	(2927)	(1372)
The father took parental leave (at least two weeks)		
yes	4	34
no	96	66
Total	100	100
N	(2993)	(1321)
Professional education		
none	10	8
vocational school or course	28	36
college or polytechnic	45	33
university	17	23
Total	100	100
N	(3249)	(1404)

	Mother	Father
	%	%
Father's education lower than mother's		
yes	29	34
no	71	66
Total	100	100
N	(3295)	(1413)
Occupational position		
blue-collar worker	53	50
industrial or technical white collar	5	9
office white collar, secretary	17	2
expert	17	20
superior	7	17
manager	1	2
Total	100	100
N	(1894)	(1201)
Net income before child		
0-4000 FIM / month	5	
4001-6000	25	11
6001-8000	27	32
8001-10000	10	25
10000+	5	27
Total	100	100
N	(3180)	(1396)
Father's income lower than mother's before child		
yes	8	11
no	92	89
Total	100	100
N	(3295)	(1413)
Father's employment sector		
private	72	67
municipality	8	12
state	9	12
NGO	1	1
other	10	8
Total	100	100
N	(2676)	(1265)
Pro-sharing attitudes		
yes	13	19
no	87	81
Total	100	100
N	(2745)	(1270)
Mothercare ideology in own family		
yes	47	26
no	53	74
Total	100	100
N	(2789)	(1289)
Male breadwinner ideology in own family		
yes	29	32
no	71	68
Total	100	100
N	(2770)	(1292)