

## CHAPTER 2

# WHEN HUSBANDS AND WIVES DON'T AGREE, WHO 'WINS'? VALUE/PRACTICE DISSONANCE IN THE DIVISION OF WORK AROUND PARENTHOOD IN ITALY

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### ABSTRACT

*During the transition to parenthood, gender allocation regarding time and commitment between work and family undergoes a profound redefinition in response to both attitudes and the available resources. These attitudes may be concordant or discordant between two married partners, they may clash to a greater or lesser extent due to perceived financial or labour market constraints, and they may or may not provoke explicit conflicts and negotiations. In this study by combining quantitative and qualitative data, we focus on couples with young children or in transition to first child, and we explore what happens in the Italian case when partners have discordant views on gender divisions of paid and unpaid work. The findings show that the division of domestic and care activities seems more resistant to change and more responsive to the husband's attitudes*

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**Fathers, Childcare and Work: Cultures, Practices and Policies**  
**Contemporary Perspectives in Family Research, Volume 12, 45–76**  
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ISSN: 1530-3535/doi:10.1108/S1530-353520180000012003

*than does the division of paid work, as the latter is mainly driven by the woman's education and attitudes. The findings also show that very few couples overtly disagree. If they do so, the main issue in dispute is the allocation of domestic work. Moreover, although women have the 'leading' role in voicing and proposing solutions, these consist more in hiring external help than in obtaining the husband's greater participation. Compared with domestic work, the allocation of care seems to be a less disputed and more flexible issue: when women start negotiations on a more equal sharing, men are more willing to increase their participation. However, when a more equitable sharing is not attained, couples' narratives more frequently cite constraints on the man (typically his work) than on the woman, and recount women's rather than men's redefinitions of preferences for the best of the family.*

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**Keywords:** Gender; childcare; housework; female employment; couple's disagreement; parenthood

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Becoming parents for the first time changes the equilibrium between the couple to such an extent that, in a life-course perspective, the transition to parenthood is a crucial turning point (Fox, 2009; Grunow & Everston, 2016). During the transition to parenthood, the allocation of time and commitment between work and family within the couple undergoes a profound redefinition. As is well known, such reorganization is gendered. Although men's involvement has increased, it is still mainly women who are considered responsible for the family and allocating time to daily household chores and care activities. Such allocation, however, is not independent – on the one hand – from women's and men's educational and occupational resources, which affect their time availabilities and earning bargaining powers or, on the other hand, from their views concerning what is best for the child, the 'good' mother and father, and appropriate gender roles. In couples, such normative views, as well as desires or preferences for specific allocations of paid and unpaid work, may be concordant or discordant; they may clash to a greater or lesser extent with perceived financial or labour market constraints; they may or may not provoke explicit conflicts; they may change over time with the 'revolutionary' experience of becoming a parent or during the negotiation process with the partner.

A large body of research has analysed the link between attitudes and behaviours, and between values and practices. However, it has typically done so at the individual level rather than the couple level. It has concentrated on the dissonance between own attitudes and own behaviour without controlling for the partner's attitude or without explicitly analysing what happens when partners have discordant or concordant attitudes. This chapter seeks to redress this shortcoming by combining quantitative and qualitative data. First, by drawing on the Italian National Institute of Statistics' (ISTAT) 'Family and Social Subjects' survey of 2003 – the only large-scale Italian survey including information on both partners and on both attitudes and behaviours – the chapter focusses on couples with pre-school children and explores the weight of his and her attitudes, controlling for their relative resources and time availabilities, in influencing the allocation of paid and unpaid work. In particular, it considers what happens between partners when the husband and wife have discordant attitudes: whether their actual allocations correspond more to each of their attitude or more to each of their resources (so that his profile 'wins'), and whether or not they show more explicit conflicts than couples with concordant attitudes. Then, by drawing on a longitudinal qualitative study conducted in Turin from 2010 to 2012 with 17 dual-earner couples as part of an international project called 'Transparent', we explore how men and women account for such allocations, whether they recount them as deriving from explicit discussion and negotiation and whether they consider the final allocation achieved as resulting more from constraints than preferences – more from his rather than her preferences or constraints. AQ2

## **2. WHEN HUSBANDS AND WIVES DO NOT AGREE: DIFFERENT THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES**

Three strands of literature are relevant for addressing the link among attitudes, agreements or disagreements and between partners and gender practices concerning parenthood.

### *Gender Division of Housework (or Labour)*

The first strand comprises theories on the gender division of domestic work. These theories are usually categorized into three different perspectives labelled as 'relative resources', 'time availability' and 'doing gender'. The first

two – that of specialization (Becker, 1981) or that of bargaining and economic dependency (Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Brines, 1994) – consider investments in the labour market to be crucial in determining the allocation of time between family and work. Indeed, it is a well-established finding in the literature that income gives more bargaining power and that the opportunity costs of devoting time to unpaid work are greater for those who have invested in the labour market and have jobs because they furnish prestige, responsibility, income and security. However, as various studies show, these theories are based on strong assumptions: couples are treated either as harmonious units that maximize the same utility function and decide solely on the basis of instrumental rationality or as conflictual units in which the two partners, man and woman, share the same ‘tastes’ and use their superior income to make the other do what they do not want to do. Various studies instead show that gender matters – that women, even when they have resources similar if not superior to those of their male partner, do not have either the same ‘tastes’ or the same legitimation to invest in one or the other sphere. As Bittman, England, Folbre, Matheson, and Sayer (2003) and Kühhirt (2012) put it, ‘gender trumps money’. The allocation of time between market and family, in fact, has not only material but also symbolic implications involving individual and social definitions of what is required of a man and a woman. When children are born, these gender models intersect strongly with those concerning motherhood, fatherhood and what is the best for a child (Grunow & Evertsson, 2016; Naldini, 2015). Moreover, according to the ‘doing gender approach’, these models change during the life course. They are influenced by the culture predominant in the country or in the social group of reference, but they are constructed in everyday discourses and practices in response to constraints and preferences, and instrumental and moral rationality (Duncan, 2005; West & Zimmerman, 1987).

### *Preference Theory Revised*

The emphasis on the role of culture is also present in Hakim’s (1998, 2000) ‘preference theory’ which challenges what the woman considers to be the dominant feminist view on women’s employment patterns and gender division of labour: career breaks or part-time work, and these, Hakim argues, are not choices forced on women against their will by their family responsibilities and the insufficient welfare provision of childcare services. Rather, women’s disadvantaged and heterogeneous position in the labour market reflects the outcome of their differing family–work attitudes. As argued by Crompton

(2006), preference theory can be seen as belonging to sociological theories that emphasize individualization as the driving force behind change in late modernity (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Giddens, 1991). In line with the tenets of individuation theory, a body of evidence suggests that as women's orientations towards investments in education and work have increased their choices concerning the life course have become more individualized and the 'partner effect' has weakened. Yet, in contrast with both standard economic and individuation-type hypotheses, which tend to neglect the role of contexts and posit a convergence between contexts, a large body of evidence shows that inequalities along classic 'stratification' lines, such as education and class, persist in different ways across countries. Cross-national convergence has not been achieved because institutional and cultural contexts constrain or enable choices, moderating micro-level mechanisms, including those of relative resources, time availability and gender ideology involved in work-family gender arrangements (Dotti Sani & Scherer, 2017; Steiber, Berghammer, & Haas, 2016).

Cultural and institutional contexts provide different opportunities for preference attainment. For example, Crompton, Brockmann, and Lyonette (2005), on observing a relatively weak linkage among gender attitudes, women's labour market participation and the gender division of domestic work, argue that this has mainly been due to a 'structural' rather than 'cultural' process. Women everywhere have become less traditional in their attitudes, and so too, albeit to a lesser extent, have men. However, as underlined by Gerson (1985), women's 'hard choices' in deciding about work, career and motherhood ensue from a negotiated process, whereby they respond to often unanticipated constraints and opportunities encountered during their life courses. Yet, the allocation of domestic work in couples is still rather imbalanced, and its association with attitudes has weakened over time; the increase in work intensification plays a crucial role. This is consistent with the findings of the research on the so-called 'work-life conflict' that the strain of reconciling work and family is strong not only among women but also among men, especially if they have high-level jobs or are self-employed. Men increasingly want to be involved fathers, but this seems to clash with the demands of their jobs and with the perception that they can only shed the image and the expectation of the 'unconditional worker' by incurring strong career penalties (McGinnity & Calvert, 2009; Musumeci & Solera, 2013).

Social policies and the organization of the labour market determine not only opportunities and constraints but also preferences. By favouring or not favouring some possible courses of actions, they also define normative models. Various studies have shown, in fact, that the relative contribution of

men and fathers increases in the presence of ‘good’ policies such as a large provision of subsidized high-quality childcare services and fully paid parental leaves with a specific quota reserved for fathers (Fagan & Norman 2013; Musumeci & Solera, 2013; Smith & Williams 2007), but their success also depends on their specific configuration and on the discourse around them: if family policies are framed in terms of supporting fertility, as in France, more than supporting gender equality, as in Scandinavian countries, the gender division of labour is more traditional and the work–life stress is higher (Crompton, 2006; Pfau-Effinger, 2005).

This second strand of the literature, namely Hakim’s preference theory and the debate on it – has produced very interesting research on the extent and correlates of attitude–practice assonance or dissonance. Yet, almost all such research has focussed on individual attitudes, disregarding that of the partner (Oláh & Gähler, 2014). Or when both partners’ attitudes have been included, the research has considered his and her attitudes separately (McHale & Crouter, 1992; Poortman & Van Der Lippe, 2009; Schober & Scott, 2012). What happens when husbands’ and wives’ have discordant views has been largely ignored, with the exception of some qualitative studies (e.g. Kompter, 1989).

#### *Marital Power and Negotiation Processes*

The focus of the conflict between married partners, including conflicting views, is present in studies on marital satisfaction and stability, the third strand of literature relevant to our research question. Coltrane (2000), for example, states that “the fit between husband’s and wife’s ideology is extremely important to marital satisfaction” (p. 444); when partners share expectations on how household labour will be divided, they are more likely to act in a manner consistent with those expectations. Yet, couples often do not share expectations, with as many as one-third of couples disagreeing about who should be responsible for a particular aspect of family labour. This lack of shared expectations can cause deterioration in relationship quality and, in turn, union stability (Hohmann-Mariott, 2006). However, how such discordant views are ‘resolved’ into the observed final division of labour is underexplored. An interesting framework to analyse this issue is provided by the ‘hidden power theory’, which maintains that the persistence of asymmetry between husbands and wives in decision-making, division of domestic and care work, as well as control of finances is only modestly affected by women’s economic standing, time demands of each spouse, and both men’s

and women's socialization and gender ideologies. This is because gender is a multidimensional and constitutive element of social structure (Risman, 2004; Risman & Davis, 2013), and, as such, it is closely tied to distribution of power and resources. Yet, power is not only what bargaining theory and most theories assume: the ability to impose one's will over the opposition of others. Power takes many forms: it may be manifest power, latent power or invisible power (Kompter, 1989; Lukes, 1974). For instance, it may be latent by preventing some issues from arising, or it may work invisibly through the ways in which institutional and cultural arrangements shape individuals even without their awareness (Zipp, Prohaska, & Bemiller, 2004).

Capturing power and negotiation process in general is very difficult, in both quantitative and qualitative terms. This is because it is not easy to measure marital power and because measurements should be repeated, which would require a time-sensitive approach like the 'life-course' approach (Elder, 1995). Yet, by using a mixed method – that is, by looking at how couples, where only he or only she holds traditional attitudes, statistically differ in their actual divisions of paid and unpaid work from those where they have concordant attitudes, and then by reconstructing how men and women account for these divisions and the conflicts around them – we shall add some insights on hidden power and attitude/practice dissonance issues in the Italian context.

### *The Italian Context*

In a comparative perspective, Italy is a country characterized by a still persistent traditional division of housework and care (Eurostat, 2008; Naldini & Jurado, 2013). Not surprisingly, in Italy the family is perceived, by both the general public and policy makers, as an inexhaustible resource for the 'weaker' sections of the society (Naldini & Saraceno, 2008) with specific assumptions on gender and intergenerational relations. Cross-country attitudinal data show that in Italy the share of the population supporting an equal involvement of women and men in the labour market (Arpino, Esping-Andersen, & Pessin, 2015) and weak obligations between adult children and parents (Naldini, Pavolini, & Solera, 2016) is still relatively low compared with that in most European countries. This persistent familialistic culture goes in tandem with a persisting mother-centred definition of what is best for the child (Bertolini, Musumeci, Naldini, & Torrioni, 2016) and with institutional 'familialism by default' (Saraceno and Keck, 2010) which hampers the development of care services, especially for very young children, and the adoption of measures for the reconciliation of work with family life. In

spite of an important shift in reconciliation policies (Law 53/2000), Italian parental leave is paid at only 30% of the wage for a maximum of six months. Furthermore, ‘atypical workers’, an expression which mainly applies to men and women in the reproductive age group, are excluded from some measures that protect motherhood or support reconciliation, while the take-up rate of parental leave by fathers is still very low (Italian National Institute of Statistics [ISTAT], 2011; Koslowski, Blum, & Moss, 2016). At the same time, childcare services for children under three years of age in Italy are below the average level of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries and the European Union. In 2012, the rate of children aged less than three years using a public childcare service was still 13.5% on a national level (ISTAT, 2014). Reconciliation policy in Italy is also inadequate at the company level, where the flexibility of work schedules, part-time work, and ‘family friendly’ measures are not widespread and/or many employees are unable to take advantage of them (see Chapter 6 in this volume; Den Dulk, 2001; Fine-Davis, Fagnani, Giovannini, Højgaard, & Clarke, 2004). Thus, in Italy the dilemma of work versus family is still largely relegated to the private sphere, to the family and couple level, while the tensions between change in women’s lives, especially regarding their participation in the labour market and resistant institutions, and the issues of gender imbalance are not addressed. It is within this scenario that this chapter will examine how couples with young children deal with the presence of discordant views between partners.

### **3. ATTITUDES, DISPUTES AND PRACTICES: A QUANTITATIVE CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY**

#### *Data and Variables*

By using the data from the ISTAT ‘Family and Social Subjects’ survey of 2003 and focussing on couples with young children (0–6 years old), we shall analyse whether and how in such couples divisions of paid and unpaid work respond more to the mother’s or father’s attitudes, or to attitudes of neither of them. Although the ISTAT survey is relatively old, we chose it because it is the only large-scale Italian representative survey<sup>1</sup> that contains information on both partners not only in terms of education and labour market profile but also in terms of attitudes. Moreover, it contains information on how often he and she disagree on a number of issues, including her labour market



participation and the division of domestic work. Thus, indexes of sharing of unpaid and paid work could be 'linked' to different profiles of couples in terms of both his and her 'preferences' and 'constraints'.

More precisely, the division of unpaid work was derived from a question asking each partner to declare: 'In hours and minutes, how much time a week do you spend on domestic and family work (home chores, shopping, taking care of other members)?'. Summing the total of time declared by each partner, it was possible to calculate *her share of total unpaid work*, which was used as a continuous dependent variable. The division of paid work was considered by looking at her labour market participation: *whether or not the woman was employed* at the time of the interview.

The independent variables selected were intended to capture the dimensions that the theoretical debate has defined as significant. To grasp the relative resources of each member of the couple and their differing capacities for negotiation, we constructed an indicator of the *couple's educational profile* (with the following four categories: both are graduates, only the man is graduate, only the woman is graduate and neither of them is graduate) and, in the absence of information on income and wages, its *occupational profile* (measured as the combination of labour market positions of the man and the woman<sup>2</sup>). In order to grasp the time constraints on participation in unpaid work, we constructed an indicator of the couple's *participation in the labour market* (whether or not the couple was a dual earner) and *differences in terms of working hours*. Finally, in order to consider *gender orientations*, we constructed couple profiles depending upon how each member responded to the following three statements: 'housework lets a woman fulfill herself just as much as paid work'; 'if the parents are separated/divorced, it is better for the child to remain with the mother'; and 'when parents require care, it is natural for this to be provided by daughters rather than sons'. The responses to these statements were arranged on a 5-value Likert scale from strong agreement to strong disagreement. The respondent was defined 'egalitarian' if the average of his/her responses to the above two statements was greater than 3; otherwise she/he was 'traditional'. On the basis of this distinction, we defined couples as 'consistent egalitarian' when both members had egalitarian gender attitudes; 'consistent traditional' when both members were traditional in their attitudes; and 'mixed' when only the woman or the man approved of non-traditional gender roles. The ISTAT 2003 survey also contains information on *how often women disagree with their partners* on various issues, including whether or not she should work, and how domestic work should be divided. The possible answers were on a 4-value scale: often, sometimes, rarely and never. Dichotomising it (i.e. putting together 'often' with 'sometimes' and

contrasting it with ‘rarely’ and ‘never’), we built four categories of couple profiles: couples in which the partners often or sometimes argue about both issues; couples in which the partners argued only on her labour market participation; couples in which the partners argued only on their division of domestic work; and couples in which the partners argued on neither of the two. Finally, to control different life-course phases and context opportunities, we introduced into the models also the age of the partners, number and age of children and the area of residence.

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of all the variables used as covariates in the regressions, and their bivariate association with our outcome variables, the division of paid and unpaid work. Given the well-known process of homogamy (Blossfeld & Timm, 2003), the great majority of couples surveyed had very similar occupational and educational profiles: in 81% of couples neither the man nor the woman was tertiary educated. In 26% of couples, the partners had the same occupational class, a proportion which rose to 42% if only dual-earner couples were considered. Partners seemed to match each other in terms of attitudes as well: 70% of couples were either both traditional or both egalitarian in their views on gender roles. Moreover, the great majority of couples with young children did not explicitly disagree on how paid and unpaid work should be allocated: 64% of them declared that they never or rarely argued about whether or not she should work and how domestic work should be divided.

As the third and fourth columns in Table 1 highlight, different profiles of couples seemed associated with different divisions of paid and unpaid work. In all couples with young children, women undertake the bulk of domestic and care work: on average, women’s share is 83%. However, higher shares are observed in couples where both partners approve of traditional gender norms, where neither of the partners is tertiary educated, where he has a higher occupational position and/or he is the only breadwinner. Also, women’s participation in paid work is lower in specific types of couples: on average, only one in every two women with a young child of pre-school age is employed, but the proportion is even smaller in couples where both partners have traditional attitudes and low education. Interestingly, more unequal divisions of unpaid work are observed in couples where the partners disagree on both her labour market participation and domestic work, or only on her labour market participation. Yet, the underlying ‘causal’ relationship may operate in the opposite direction: it is not disputes that lead to more unequal divisions, but more unequal divisions (or ones perceived as such) that induce women to disagree. Women in conflictual couples, in fact, record lower levels of satisfaction with divisions of domestic and care work: 40% of them declare

**Table 1.** The Profile of Our Couples: All Couples Whose Youngest Child Was 0–6 Years Old.

	<i>N</i>	%	Her Share of Unpaid Work (Average)	Women Employed (%)
His and her gender role attitudes				
Both egalitarian (consistent egalitarian couples)	741	33.8	80.1	63.4
Only he is egalitarian	310	14.2	82.5	51.7
Only she is egalitarian	325	14.8	83.0	60.6
Both traditional (consistent traditional couples)	811	37.1	86.2	39.0
Disputes between him and her				
On both paid and domestic work	112	5.8	86.0	46.4
Only on her paid work	129	6.7	85.8	31.0
Only on their division of domestic work	458	23.7	83.5	64.1
Neither of the two issues	1,237	63.9	83.3	48.4
His and her education				
Both have tertiary education	123	5.5	75.8	84.5
Only he has a tertiary education	142	6.3	80.8	58.4
Only she has a tertiary education	152	6.8	76.1	78.9
Both without tertiary education	1,824	81.4	84.4	47.1
His and her occupational class				
The same class	587	26.2	78.5	82.8
He is of higher class	1,299	58.0	86.8	25.1
She is of higher class	355	15.8	77.3	100
His and her labour market status				
Dual earners	1,130	52.8	77.9	–
Only he works	973	45.5	89.1	–
Only she works	37	1.7	71.3	–
Total	2,191		83.1	52.1

Source: Famiglia and Soggetti Sociali (2003).

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themselves little satisfied as opposed to 23% in couples that disagree only on her working status, and 12% in couples that do not disagree on the division of either paid or unpaid work.<sup>3</sup>

#### *Correlates of Woman's Share of Total Unpaid Work*

Although straightforward, these descriptive figures suffer from the usual 'bivariate limitation'. On moving from a bivariate to a multivariate

environment, it is possible to determine, *ceteris paribus*, whether the effect of the man's or the woman's attitudes and their degree of 'conflict' persists after controlling for their relative resources and time availability, as maintained by 'doing gender' scholars, and whether his attitudes are more influential than hers, as argued by the 'hidden power' theory. This issue is analysed in Tables 2 and 3, where five models gradually including different types of variables are reported: In Table 2, the outcome variable is a continuous variable (i.e. the woman's share of total unpaid work); in Table 3, it is a discrete variable (i.e. woman's employment status). More precisely, model 1 includes as covariates only couple's profile in terms of attitudes; model 2 adds the variable on the frequency of disputes between partners; model 3 adds measures of relative resources (couple's profile in terms of educational level and occupational class); model 4 adds a measure of time availability (differences in terms of working hours); and model 5 combines all the covariates.

Model 1 in Table 2, where only attitudes are presented, shows that 'consistent traditional couples' have also the most traditional behaviours in the division of unpaid work, followed by couples where at least one partner has traditional views, regardless of whether it is female or male. However, when measures of relative resources or time availability are introduced (models 3–5), his attitudes seem to 'win'. When he has egalitarian views, divisions are also more egalitarian, regardless of her views: levels of sharing are indeed not statistically different between couples where both he and she are egalitarian ('egalitarian consistent couples') or only he is egalitarian; likewise, levels of sharing do not statistically differ in couples where both are traditional ('traditionally consistent couples') or only the male is traditional. However, on controlling for attitudes and labour market positions, the strongest effect is given by education with no 'winner' between male and female: in couples where both he and she are not tertiary educated, her share of unpaid work increases by six percentage points compared with couples where at least one partner is tertiary educated. The effect for attitudes was half as strong, around three percentage points. Put differently, high education, regardless of whether it is held only by male, female or both partners, engenders less traditional gender divisions.

#### *Correlates of Woman's Employment and Couple's Disputes*

Table 3 estimates the effects on the probability of women with pre-school children being employed, and it shows different models with the gradual addition of relevant covariates as done in Table 2, except for models 4 and 5,

**Table 2.** Effects on Women's Share of Total Unpaid Work (Couples with Youngest Child Aged 0–6 Years; Linear Regression Coefficients).

	M1: Attitudes	M2: Attitudes + Disputes	M3: Attitudes + Disputes + Relative Resources	M4: Attitudes + Disputes + Time Availability	M5: Attitudes + Disputes + Relative Resources + Time Availability
<i>His and her gender role attitudes (ref.: both egalitarian)</i>					
Only he is egalitarian	2.06*	1.49	0.67	1.04	0.76
Only she is egalitarian	2.66**	3.15**	3.02**	2.96**	2.61**
Both traditional	4.78***	4.74***	3.50***	3.65***	3.23***
<i>Disputes between him and her (ref.: both on paid work and domestic work)</i>					
Only on her paid work		-1.14	-1.60		-2.98†
Only on division of domestic work		-1.38	-0.52	-0.83	-0.88
Neither of the two		-2.00	-1.84	-2.50†	-2.67†
<i>His and her relative resources</i>					
Education (ref.: both tertiary education)					
Only he has tertiary education			2.82		3.10†
Only she has tertiary education			2.80		1.45
Both without tertiary education			6.97***		6.01***
Occupational class (ref.: the same class)					
He is of higher class			5.74***		0.21
She is of higher class			-2.14*		-1.69†
<i>His and her time availability</i>					
Labour market status (ref.: dual earner)					
One earner				2.26**	1.30
Working hours difference: his minus her				0.19***	0.18***
Control variables					
His age	0.02	-0.04	-0.06	-0.09	0.00
Her age	-0.30***	-0.22*	-0.07	-0.01	-0.03
Number of children	2.08***	1.88***	1.36**	1.16**	1.03**
Age of the youngest child (ref.: 0–3)					
3–6	2.73***	2.41***	2.21***	2.07**	1.87**
Area (ref.: North)					
Centre	1.83*	1.25	0.87	1.19	1.31
South	5.60***	5.30***	4.43***	4.43***	4.49***
Constant	82.27***	85.16***	73.05***	76.54***	70.05***
R <sup>2</sup>	0.059	0.058	0.10	0.13	0.14
N	2,149	1,865	1,865	1,865	1,865

Source: Famiglia and Soggetti Sociali (2003).

Notes: † $p < 0.20$ , \* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

**Table 3.** Effects on Women's Probability of Being Employed (Couples with Youngest Child Aged 0–6 Years; Logit Regression Coefficients).

	M1: Attitudes	M2: Attitudes + Disputes	M3: Attitudes + Disputes + Relative Resources
<i>His and her gender-role attitudes (ref.: both egalitarian)</i>			
Only he is egalitarian	-0.42***	-0.35**	-0.16
Only she is egalitarian	-0.07	-0.08	-0.28
Both traditional	-0.81***	-0.77***	-0.64***
<i>Disputes between him and her (ref.: both on paid work and domestic work)</i>			
Only on her paid work		-0.46†	-0.55†
Only on division of domestic work		0.63***	0.44†
Neither of the two		0.03	-0.12
<i>His and her relative resources</i>			
Education (ref.: both tertiary education)			
Only he has tertiary education			-0.68*
Only she has tertiary education			-0.71†
Both without tertiary education			-1.68***
Occupational class (ref.: the same class)			
He is of higher class			-3.01***
She is of higher class			-
Control variables			
His age	-0.01	-0.01	0.01
Her age	0.09***	0.09***	0.07***
Number of children	-0.52***	-0.47***	-0.53***
Age of the youngest child (ref.: 0–3)			
3–6	-0.20**	-0.20**	-0.31**
Area (ref.: North)			
Centre	-0.44***	-0.48***	-0.39**
South	-1.15***	-1.13***	-1.35***
Constant	-0.89**	-1.18***	2.27***
Log-likelihood	374.21	347.67	789.84
N	2,187	1,895	1,602

Source: Famiglia and Soggetti Sociali (2003).

Notes: † $p < 0.20$ , \* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

since in this case time availability (measured as time free from labour market commitment) becomes part of the dependent variable. The results in Table 3 show a slightly different picture for participation in paid work compared with unpaid work, the former being driven more by her than his attitudes. It indeed emerges that 'consistent egalitarian couples', that is, couples where both hold

egalitarian gender role attitudes, have, *ceteris paribus*, the same probability of being employed as couples where she is the only egalitarian, while the probability decreases when she is traditional and he is egalitarian, reaching the minimum level when they are both traditional. As regards the division of unpaid work, education proves to be the strongest correlate. Yet, unlike for unpaid work, participation in paid work is driven mainly by her level of education: when she is not tertiary educated, her probability of being employed is lower, regardless of his level of education. Moreover, while for the division of domestic and care work, disagreements between partners seem not to matter for the division of paid work they do so: couples who often explicitly disagree on the allocation of domestic work have higher female employment rates than non-conflicting couples. Yet, again the causal link behind this association may be the reverse: employed women tend to be less satisfied with the actual allocation of unpaid work, feeling the double burden to be excessive, so they tend to 'voice' and have explicit disputes with their partner.

Table 4 gives further insight into the conflict issue. By running logit regressions on couples' probability of disagreement (with the covariate in Table 2: 'Discussions between he and she' transformed into a binary dependent variable: 'neither of the two' vs. the rest) and by showing four models in place of five (model 2 as in Table 2 could not logically be run because disputes here become the dependent variable), one can see what profile the conflicting couples are more likely to have. Very few factors seem to influence couples' disagreements. Couples with discordant attitudes tend to disagree more than concordant couples, but only when she is egalitarian and he is traditional, whereas when she is traditional and he is egalitarian, disagreement is not expressed. Her characteristics also seem to weigh more (she 'wins') in case dissonance regards occupational position: when she has a higher occupational position, couples disagree more. Yet, if one looks at education, his education has a stronger effect on couples' tendency to disagree (he 'wins'): when couples are not homogamous, and he is the only tertiary educated partner, they disagree more, whereas when she is the only highly educated partner there is no difference with respect to homogamous couples with either low or high education. This might signal innovative men who push more traditional wives towards new gender practices.

Although interesting, these cross-sectional quantitative analyses suffer from endogeneity problems. Attitudes, disagreements, behaviours and resources, including education and labour market positions, are measured at the same point in time, that is, at the time of the interview. Moreover, while showing the diffusion of more or less egalitarian divisions and their associations with different types of couples in terms of both preferences

**Table 4.** Effects on Couple's Probability of Disputes over Her Labour Market Participation and Their Division of Domestic Work (Couples with the Youngest Child Aged 0–6 Years; Logit Regression Coefficients).

	M1: Attitudes	M3: Attitudes + Relative Resources	M4: Attitudes + Time Availability	M5: Attitudes + Relative Resources + Time Availability
<i>His and her gender role attitudes (ref.: both egalitarian)</i>				
Only he is egalitarian	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01
Only she is egalitarian	0.26*	0.28**	0.27*	0.29**
Both traditional	0.01	0.02	0.06	0.07
<i>His and her relative resources</i>				
Education (ref.: both tertiary education)				
Only he		0.52*		0.52*
Only she		0.32		0.25
Neither		0.07		0.13
Occupational class (ref.: the same position)				
He is of higher class		0.01		0.19†
She is of higher class		0.36**		0.34**
<i>His and her time availability</i>				
Labour market status (ref.: dual earner)				
One earner			-0.19†	-0.20†
Working hours difference: he vs. she			-0.00	
Control variables				
His age	-0.01	-0.01	-0.00	-0.01
Her age	0.01	-0.00	-0.00	-0.01
Number of children	-0.05	-0.04	-0.03	-0.02
Age of the youngest child (ref.: 0–3)				
3–6	0.03	0.04	0.05	0.06
Area (ref.: North)				
Centre	-0.03	-0.02	-0.01	-0.02
South	-0.02	0.00	0.03	0.04
Constant	-0.08	-0.13	0.14	-0.05
Log-likelihood	7.28	19.7	14.9	25.2
N	1,895	1,895	1,895	1,895

Source: Famiglia and Soggetti Sociali (2003).

Notes: † $p < 0.20$ , \* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

and constraints, they furnish no information on the processes and meanings behind them. The longitudinal qualitative interviews conducted with first-time parents will complete the picture, helping to shed light on whether and how partners negotiate the allocation of paid and unpaid work during the transition to parenthood, what are the most disputed issues between them,



what motivations they give for the final division achieved, especially when it is not consistent with own attitudes/preferences or pre-childbirth expectations.

#### **4. HOW PARTNERS NEGOTIATE DISAGREEMENTS DURING TRANSITION TO PARENTHOOD: A QUALITATIVE LONGITUDINAL STUDY**

##### *Data and Codes*

As mentioned in the Introduction, to explore negotiation and disagreement during the transition to parenthood, we used a longitudinal qualitative study based on 68 in-depth interviews conducted in Turin from 2010 to 2012 with 17 dual-earner couples, aged 26–45 years (mostly aged 30–39 years) in the process of becoming first-time mothers and fathers. The aim of the three-waves longitudinal design (pre-pregnancy period, which was reconstructed retrospectively in the course of antenatal interview, pregnancy and finally when the child was about one-and-a-half-year old) was to see whether these couples relatively egalitarian in both behaviours and attitudes remained as such after becoming parents.<sup>4</sup> More precisely, by selecting couples through contacts and formal requests for collaboration with institutions, structures and foundations of the Turin area (birth centres, counselling services, centres of midwives and gynaecologists), we interviewed men and women separately and together at two points in time (before and after childbirth). In order to capture potentially innovative practices and accounts, we mainly selected highly educated men and women. Consequently, the majority of subjects were employed in the service sector as teachers, researchers, administrators, social workers, nurses, technicians and lawyers. However, most jobs were unstable in terms of financial and social security: only 5 of 17 couples were in 'Fordist employment', that is, had full-time permanent jobs; the rest were couples experiencing a mixture of standard and 'non-standard' employment or non-standard and self-employment. AQ6

In line with the results of quantitative analyses, the degree of homogeneity was also quite high in our dual-earner couples, where female and male respondents showed fairly similar education and employment positions. Nevertheless, only in 3 out of 17 couples did the woman earn more than her male partner, the average monthly income in case of women being around €1,200 and that of men around €1,700. Yet, both for men and women the range of variation was high, ranging from a minimum of €600 to a maximum

of €2,000 monthly for women and from €1,200 to 2,500 monthly for men. A lower degree of homogamy was observed in individual attitudes. In fact, while almost all men were work oriented and very worried about finding themselves in a precarious or unstable work situation, women formed a more heterogeneous group. Most of the expectant mothers described work as a source of satisfaction and sometimes of self-gratification, although two other ‘types’ of women also emerged: those who did not consider work to be a priority, being in a position to reduce or leave work (maybe temporarily) after childbirth; and others who appeared to have ambivalent attitudes towards their job, as a consequence of a redefinition of their priorities vis-à-vis their new condition as a mother-to-be.

The quantitative analyses reported in the previous section showed that educational and occupational homogamous couples, and thus with more symmetric time availabilities and bargaining powers, tend to have more egalitarian divisions than non-homogamous couples. This is in line with the (pre-child-birth) share in our interviewed couples, in which the prevailing pattern was ‘egalitarian’ (7 out of 17 couples), where partners shared housework equally and/or had a subjective perception of ‘fair’ share. In these couples both partners had similar preferences on how unpaid work should be divided and how woman’s commitment to paid work should take place. Besides the ‘egalitarian’ group of couples who shared both unpaid and paid work equally and had egalitarian attitudes, there was an intermediate (and in transition) group that we label as ‘neo-traditional’ (6 out of 17 couples) who exhibited certain features next to egalitarian couples in terms of both attitudes and behaviours, but with some important differences, because women had a lower commitment than their partner vis-à-vis their job and/or their attitudes were not aligned. Lastly, we found a small group of couples (4 out of 17 couples) that we term ‘traditional’ because they showed a high gender division of roles in housework and labour market, as well as both (consistent) traditional attitudes.<sup>5</sup>

AQ7 In order to analyse the interviews, the corpus of the texts was subjected to content analysis (Smith, 2000) using the Atlas.ti7 software, and inter-subjectivity was created within a multidisciplinary research group and main relevant issues were identified by using disposal codes (Naldini, 2015). With regard to the driving questions of this chapter, although conflicts were not explicitly explored with the interview, the collection of data and narratives on the negotiation processes around parenthood made it possible to explore this aspect indirectly. In particular, for the purpose of this chapter, we used the quotations for code ‘agreement/disagreement’ (264 quotations found for the queries) and merged this code with the code ‘satisfaction/dissatisfaction’. The emerged content analysis is described as follows.

To start with, in line with the general picture yielded by the quantitative analysis, disagreement is very rarely apparent in couples' interviews before and after childbirth. Couples' narratives, in fact, very rarely speak about either overt quarrels or 'pacific' discussions, pointing to explicit negotiation processes. Instead, the recurrent narrative is that there are no conflicts on the division of labour and that the final allocation of work in the couple has been reached 'spontaneously', without disagreements: 'We got it naturally'; 'there is no need to plan those allocations'. Yet, deeper analysis using the code 'agreement/disagreement' revealed some areas and forms of dispute.

### *The Allocation of Domestic Labour*

As found by the quantitative study, the qualitative analysis showed that even though there were substantial differences, the allocation of domestic work tended to be the most disputed issue, regardless of the type of couple. Indeed, divergences in the allocation of domestic labour were found among egalitarian-oriented couples, as well as among neo-traditional and traditional couples. Ginevra and Giuseppe,<sup>6</sup> for instance, were an egalitarian couple in terms of both attitudes and behaviours. They both had a university degree, and at the time of the first interview he was working (on a fixed-term contract) for a company providing information on financial markets, while she was working as an aeronautical engineer with an open-ended contract (thus, she had more relative resources than him). They were a very work-oriented couple, for different reasons: Giuseppe wanted to consolidate his professional position (which was still precarious); Ginevra wanted to pursue a career and capitalize on her many years of university study. They expressed some disagreement on the allocation of domestic work during both the first and the second interview:

Housework is one of those things on which we repeatedly argue [...] that is: we divide the chores fifty/fifty but then this becomes fifty-one for me, then fifty-two, then fifty-three, then fifty-four and when it reaches ninety per cent, we have a row and start all over again, from the beginning. (Ginevra, aeronautical engineer, II wave)

La cura domestica è una di quelle cose sulla quale ripetutamente, ciclicamente litighiamo [...] ovvero: ci dividiamo i compiti al 50% poi questo 50% diventa 51 per me, 52 per me, 53 per me, 54 e quando arriva al 90% scatta il litigio e si ricomincia da capo, da capo, da capo. (Ginevra, aeronautical engineer, II wave)

Ginevra's story of transition to parenthood is interesting because it highlights what happens when the female partner has more resources, as well as more agencies, than her male partner. However, it is not only her higher

resources that allow the couple to activate negotiation processes but more widely her egalitarian gender expectations.

Domestic work may be a disputed issue not only for egalitarian couples, as seen in the above case of Ginevra and Giuseppe, but also for less gendered-oriented couples. For instance, we found disagreement on domestic work in neo-traditional couples. Neo-traditional couples are defined as those in whom we found a dissonance or not perfect alignment between his and her attitudes or behaviours. In some ways, in neo-traditional couples, negotiation processes tended to be quite frequent and cited more overtly in couple's narratives with regard to not only domestic work but also other household issues, and/or expectations about gender roles. This is rather well exemplified by Raniero and Rachele. Rachele (the mother-to-be) was a temporary full-time researcher at the University of Turin, while Raniero was employed in an open-ended contract as a full-time mechanical designer at a company which at the time of the interview was hit by economic crisis and obliged Raniero to remain for a while at home. Although they agreed that domestic work should be equally divided, they had divergent views on the level of cleaning and orderliness in their home. Raniero did not deny that sometimes there were arguments because he believed he was doing more than her, especially during the first phase of their cohabiting period because of Rachele's extra time devoted to work (and study). He admitted that at the beginning of their ménage he agreed with such division, but he later started to feel dissatisfied with being the main organizer of the household work. Before they got married, Raniero indeed expected Rachele to be more of a 'home-maker' (and Rachele was aware of this expectation):

Maybe it was an illusion because I knew what she was like. But this is what I expected. Really, she is less a homemaker than, I don't know, my mother .... Truly there is an abyss. (Raniero, mechanical designer, I wave)

Forse un po' illudendomi perché un po' la conoscevo, però forse avevo quest'aspettativa qui. In realtà, lei è un po' meno casalinga, che ne so, rispetto a mia madre ... proprio c'è un abisso. (Raniero, mechanical designer, I wave)

On the other hand, Rachele thought that orderliness in their home was not crucial for her and their life:

No, (laughs) sometimes we fight because he is too homely. No, this doesn't at all reflect what I was expecting, that is, in my opinion sometimes, perhaps it depends on his mentality, he gives too much importance to housework: for me if you go to bed with dirty dishes in the sink nothing happens, for him it is something inconceivable about which we end up fighting. (Rachele, temporary researcher, II wave)

No (ride) certe volte litighiamo perché lui è troppo casalingo. No, non rispecchia assolutamente quello che mi aspettavo; cioè, secondo me, a volte, magari dalla mia mentalità, lui dà troppa importanza ai lavori casalinghi: per me se vai a dormire con i piatti sporchi nel lavandino non succede niente, per lui invece è una cosa inconcepibile per cui alla fine cozziamo su queste cose qua. (Rachele, temporary researcher, II wave)

Indeed, a good solution for Raniero would be for Rachele to switch to part-time work after the baby's arrival. This case shows that divergent preferences between the partners may generate other disputed issues (i.e. working time) and this underlines how disagreement and tensions within a couple may lead to wearisome negotiation processes.

Allocation of unpaid work was the main (manifest) reason of disagreement among the different couples. For example, Tiziana and Tommaso were a traditional couple in terms of division of domestic work and orientation to work. Tiziana had already said during the first interview that, because of the hard work of her husband, a lawyer, she had to do almost all the domestic work.

I do everything, we don't have a cleaning lady; For now I'll do it when I get my belly I think ... my mom told me he was helping me or he helped me (laughs). I do everything. I do everything. (Tiziana, secretary, I wave)

Faccio tutto io, non abbiamo una signora delle pulizie; per adesso ce la faccio quando poi avrò la pancia penso che ... mia mamma mi ha già detto che mi aiuta oppure mi aiuta lui (ride). Faccio tutto io. Faccio tutto io. (Tiziana, secretary, I wave).

Tommaso, who, during the first interview, admitted that he did 'less than five per cent', however, pointed out that the reason was not bad will but lack of time, and that there was a task carried out only by him: washing dishes: 'washing dishes has always been my kingdom' (Tommaso, lawyer, II wave). At the time of the second interview, Tommaso was still overwhelmed by work and expressed dissatisfaction with this situation: he would like to reduce his work commitment and return home early in the evening. Meanwhile, Tiziana had hired a woman to help her with 'heavier jobs'. Use of external help was her strategy to bring changes in the case of overload on her shoulders or disagreement on the allocation of domestic work. This 'externalisation' appears to be a common strategy, being declared by many other couples. For example, in Luana's words:

"we've decided that to quarrel over the weekend is not nice [...] now we quarrel less and we love each other more, since we have more time to do things together. (Luana, administrative employee, I wave)

Abbiamo deciso che litigare nei weekend non era bello così litighiamo meno e ci amiamo di più e abbiam più tempo per fare le cose che vogliamo fare insieme, perché senno

appunto, il tempo che possiamo insieme passarlo a pulire casa non è bello. (Luana, administrative employee, I wave)

Also, Rachele and Raniero in the second wave adopted this strategy: hiring a cleaning woman for some hours during the week in order to have fewer disputes. Yet, this did not prevent Rachele from feeling guilty at not responding to gender expectations, and she felt that she should devote more time to housework and to family life, while in Raniero's opinion, the ideal solution would be for her to go for part-time work.

However, in general, bringing about a change in this area is not a powerless process, and it requires a great deal of negotiation and also some emotional work (Hochschild, 1979). This is well exemplified by Gina and Giulio. They were a traditional couple in terms of attitudes and division of domestic work. He was a freelancer, working in the IT sector, while Gina was a social worker with a very fulfilling job. In the first wave, they displayed quite 'traditional' attitudes and a clear gender division of housework. Yet, in different parts of Gina's narrative, there emerged divergences on the division of domestic labour and the changes she was making in order to have somebody to help her with domestic work.

[...] At first [...] my husband was not too supportive of an external person to clean the house because he was not used to it, had never considered the thing, it was not something he had ever had in his family. So he disagreed. I think he had in mind, when we had to think about our life together, that we would have done things together and shared them. But this didn't really happen, because then, despite good will, he with his work couldn't do it, and when he did it I wasn't satisfied, I have to admit it, because he didn't do it as it should have been done because he didn't have the experience, etcetera. (Gina, social worker, I wave)

[...] All'inizio [...] mio marito non era troppo favorevole all'intervento di una persona esterna perché non era abituato, non aveva mai preso in considerazione la cosa, non era una cosa che aveva mai avuto nella sua famiglia quindi non era d'accordo. Io credo che lui avesse in mente, quando dovevamo pensare alla nostra vita in comune, che avremmo fatto le cose insieme e le avremmo condivise poi in realtà questa cosa non si è tanto realizzata perché comunque poi lui, al di là della buona volontà, col lavoro comunque non riusciva a farlo, quando lo faceva io non ero soddisfatta, devo ammetterlo, perché comunque non lo faceva come avrebbe dovuto essere fatto perché non aveva l'esperienza ecc. (Gina, assistente sociale, I wave)

Gina's words illustrate not only the process of negotiation but also the emotional work that she had to perform to align her gender ideology of parity (Hochschild & Machung, 1989), partially shared by her husband, with the reality: her husband did not (or could not) share domestic work and she had too high standards (female) of expectations about cleanliness.

So there were continuous tensions. Then I insisted a lot and I arranged to get this help. Now it seems to me that he's happy and that he understands the meaning. (Gina, social worker, II wave)

Quindi c'erano continue tensioni. Allora lì io ho insistito tantissimo e mi sono impuntata per avere questo aiuto. Adesso mi sembra che ne sia contento anche lui e che ne capisca di più il senso. (Gina, assistente sociale, II wave)

With the use of external help, Gina tried to find an answer to why, despite the tacit arrangements of a more 'equal' allocation of housework, the division was in practice very distant from it. During the second interview, there was a turning point, since Giulio unexpectedly decided to reduce his workload to take care of the baby. This innovative gender practice was recounted by the couple because of more constraints than choices. An adaptation strategy was necessary as Gina's employer refused to accept her request to shift to part-time. Her preferences, strongly focussed on the idea that it would be good for the child in the early years of life to remain with the mother (or the parents), clashed with job demands so that the couple had to rely on his time availability for care. This is one of the rare cases of 'undoing gender' in the Italian context (Musumeci et al., 2015). Also in this case, similar to the ones mentioned above, the gender strategy adopted to achieve a more equal division of domestic work was to hire a cleaning woman, a strategy which seemed to make both partners happier. AQ8

### *Sharing (or Not) Parental Leave*

If the sharing of domestic work is one of the most disputed issues, the sharing of parental leave seems 'untroubled'. Before illustrating the narratives on parental leave, it should be pointed out that in Italy the law (Law 53/2000) stipulates that working mothers and working fathers of a newborn child are individually entitled to 6 months (10 months in total for the couple) of parental leave until the child reaches the age of 8, but neither parent may take more than 6 months of such leave (if the father takes at least 3 months, the couple is entitled to 11 months in total). However, the main shortcoming of this measure, as mentioned above, is the low pay rate (only 30%), and that temporary workers are only entitled to it for a limited extent. The available research shows that the take-up salary rate of males (fathers) is very low; hence the majority of the entitled mothers use it. Moreover, in Italy paternity leave (*congedo di paternità*) was introduced only in 2012 (i.e. after the interviews) and to a very limited extent in terms of days (only two days). The analysis AQ9

of the narratives on parental leave shows indeed that most of the couples did not actively negotiate over who should take it, since it was assumed that the mother would do so. In almost all the cases analysed the mother was the one who was planning, expecting and afterwards using it (Musumeci, Naldini, & Santero, 2014). For example, Raniero's narrative shows how disagreement on parental leave and desires during the negotiation processes might not result in fulfilling the shared desire. Raniero was entitled to (optional) parental leave but he did not plan to take it because of the economic crisis of his firm. Work had the central role in his life, and especially at the time when the company was under strain because of the crisis; he was trying not to get a bad reputation and to appear a 'trustworthy worker' in order to avert the risk of dismissal and the negative economic consequences on his family. He said:

I'd like to take at least two weeks of leave after the child's birth but I'm afraid I'll ask for only one.... I don't see another possibility, I can't take too much advantage of my job given the economic situation. (Raniero, mechanical designer, I wave)

Vorrei prendere almeno due settimane di ferie dopo il parto, ma temo che ne chiederò solo una.... Non vedo un'altra possibilità, non posso pretendere troppo dal mio lavoro dato il periodo economico. (Raniero, disegnatore meccanico, I wave)

Raniero's intention not to take parental leave led to discussions with his wife, who at first would have preferred him to take at least a short period of parental leave given that she, as a temporary worker, was not entitled to it. However, after an initial disagreement, Rachele understood and accepted her husband's decision. She was aware that in Italy it is not 'normal' for Raniero's as in other workplaces for a father to take parental leave.

I think that taking a long period of parental leave would have created a lot of difficulties for him because he works in an environment where it is absolutely not normal for a man to take it. (Rachele, temporary researcher, I wave)

prenderlo proprio per dei mesi in modo continuativo; penso che gli avrebbe creato molte difficoltà prenderlo perché lavora in un ambiente in cui non è assolutamente normale il fatto che l'uomo lo prenda. (Rachele, ricercatrice precaria, I wave)

He planned to compensate by providing little care by doing a large part of the housework, especially if Rachele would breastfeed the baby, while she expected to change her working time (having more 'defined' working hours). After the birth of the child, Rachele started to redefine her career prospects somewhat; before the pregnancy and also before the marriage, her work career was her first priority; after the baby she seemed much more orientated towards family and motherhood:



Now I am more resigned, It will go as it should go. I give priority to my family, I want to have a baby and even more than one even if this means sacrificing my work career. (Rachele, temporary researcher, II wave)

Adesso con il matrimonio e la gravidanza forse punto anche su altre cose, nel senso che sono un po' rassegnata che andrà come deve andare però ci tengo anche a costruire fuori dal lavoro, ci tengo alla mia famiglia, ci tengo ad avere un bimbo e altri se ne verranno anche a costo di sacrificare la carriera lavorativa. (Rachele, ricercatrice precaria, II wave)

Raniero did not think that the child's birth would affect his professional life, although he was sure that it would impact Rachele's career. After the baby's birth, Rachele maintained the same job; she took leave for a month and reduced her working hours for some months; she also declared that her income came down by about 30% during that period. Raniero's working conditions did not change: in coherence with the childcare plans declared in the prenatal interviews, he continued to work after the baby's birth and did not take parental leave.

More innovative gender practices are instead observed in the case of Carlotta and Carlo, an egalitarian couple with an alignment between attitudes and behaviour as their attitudes were stronger than those of Raniero and Rachele. At the time of the first interview, before childbirth, Carlo was an assistant manager in a bank; Carlotta was a temporary university researcher in law. Carlotta was a very career-oriented mother-to-be who gained great gratification from her job and was waiting for a tenure track position at the university. Given the expectations and prospects of Carlotta's career development, she was already during the first wave actively looking for childcare services, which would enable her to remain attached to her job. Carlo was very much in agreement with Carlotta's desire to invest in her career. Hence, while awaiting the baby, they (in agreement) had already explored the options concerning 'breastfeeding leave' (working time reduction) and 'parental leave' for Carlo. However, Carlotta, as a lawyer, was much more dynamic and active in exploring whether her partner could use these policy options. She said: 'I studied his contract ... and found that he could take this 'breastfeeding leave'. Carlotta succeeded in bringing about a change. After the child's birth, Carlo took breastfeeding leave (reduction in working hours by two hours a day until the baby's first birthday). As explained above, this strategy was strongly suggested and actively pursued by Carlotta.

However, unexpected constraints emerged and their preferences were no longer attainable. At the time of the second interview, while Carlo had rescheduled his working time, Carlotta had lost her position at the university. She continued to study for a public competition for the magistrature and collaborated once a week at a lawyer's office. Carlo was even taking care

full-time of the baby every weekend while Carlotta was attending a training course. However, since the prospects of an academic career had faded away, Carlotta had to redefine her priorities. On the other hand, Carlo was removed from his assistant manager's position (vice director) of the bank, although he did not perceive this as direct consequence of his decision on breastfeeding. In other words, even if Carlotta's desires and strategies took priority in the couple, they could not achieve the allocation preferred because she did not obtain the desired position.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

This chapter adds interesting insights to the literature on the value–practice dissonance in the division of paid and unpaid work concerning parenthood by focussing on case studies in Italy when partners have discordant attitudes/preferences. It brings out conditions of their disagreements and explicit negotiation processes and practices that correspond more to his than her preferences and his than her constraints.

AQ10

The quantitative (cross-section) data containing information on both partners and their behaviours and attitudes show that, when measures of relative resources or time availability are introduced, male attitudes 'win' in affecting the division of unpaid work: when he has egalitarian gender role views, divisions are also more egalitarian regardless of her views. In any case, controlling for attitudes and labour market positions, the strongest effect is exerted by education with no 'winner' between him and her: high education leads to less traditional gender divisions regardless of whether it is possessed by only him, only her or both. A slightly different pattern emerges for participation in paid work, which seems to be more driven by her than his attitudes and by her than his education. Moreover, while disagreements between partners seem not to affect the division of domestic and care work, they do affect the division of paid work: couples that explicitly disagree on the allocation of domestic work have higher female employment rates than those of non-conflicting couples. Finally, regression analyses on the correlates of conflicting or non-conflicting couples show that couples with discordant attitudes tend to disagree more than couples with concordant attitudes, but only when she is egalitarian and he is traditional (whereas when she is traditional and he is egalitarian, disagreement is not expressed), or when she has a higher occupational position than his position (so that, as maintained by bargaining theory, she also has greater bargaining power). Overall, these quantitative results

suggest that, in line with 'doing gender theory', 'gender trumps money', but also that 'education trumps money'. The effect of education remains significant when controlling for other covariates because high education entails both an instrumental and a moral rationality: it is an instrumental means to achieve important current and future monetary labour market returns (not fully captured by the use of a classification of occupational class into only four macro-groups as done in this work); it is also a means to develop non-traditional views on gender models as well as on motherhood and fatherhood models (not fully captured by the use of only three attitudinal items as done in this work).

The quantitative analyses also suggest that 'doing gender' is much stronger (and 'undoing gender' much more difficult) in the private compared with the public sphere: the division of domestic and care work seems more resistant to change and more respondent to men's attitudes than the division of paid work, an area in which women indeed have become more independent concerning their own work careers, as maintained by Hakim and individualisation theories. Moreover, if there is openly a 'voice' for change in the gender division of work, it comes mainly from women: men, even when they are egalitarian in their declared attitudes, do not push for a more equal division or for greater household and care participation. This is strongly consistent with the Italian institutional and cultural context. As argued by various studies (Anderson & McGuire, 2010; Bridges & Pascoe, 2014; England, 2010), definitions of femininity have increasingly included the traditional male traits linked with the labour market or public sphere, while definitions of masculinity more problematically include traditional female traits linked with the private caring sphere. In other words, if a woman works as much as a man, she is still considered and perceives herself 'as a good woman' (at least if she does not give up family responsibilities), whereas if a man tends to be strongly involved in care and domestic work, he becomes 'mammo' (like a mother) even if his full participation in the labour market does not cease (Magaraggia, 2013). As suggested by the hidden power theory, since these persistent asymmetric definitions of gender roles and identities are embedded not only in micro-practices and discourses but also in macro-institutional and structural settings, characterized, for example, by the absence of paternity leave or fully paid parental leave or widespread childcare services, they are probably more subtle and 'unconsciously interiorised' than declared so that asymmetric divisions within marriage are taken for granted.

By interviewing men and women in partnership before and after the birth of their first child and by asking not only about their normative views but also their preferences (i.e. not only what people should do and be but also

what they would like to do and be) and the process behind observed practices, the qualitative longitudinal study has enriched the picture furnished by quantitative research. In line with the hidden power theory, this study confirms that very few couples during transition to parenthood overtly disagree. Among those couples in which disagreement emerged, the main issue was the allocation of domestic work, with the 'leading' role of women in voicing and finding solutions. The couples' narratives indeed indicated that negotiation processes are always activated by the female partner and that they tend to be sensitive to life-course events (to cope with the newborn baby's care demands). They also reveal a strong emotional work involved in such negotiation and the difficulty of changing the gender division so that the main strategy to reduce disputes and conflicts is to externalize work by hiring a domestic helper for some hours a week.

AQ11 A different pattern emerges concerning the division of parental leave, which seems even less discussed compared with the division of domestic work, and it is taken for granted that the mother will take such leave. Yet, negotiations on parental leaves seem to succeed more by men's greater involvement compared with those on domestic work. Before and after childbirth, compared with women, as for the division of domestic work is concerned in the couple who actively 'demand' negotiation on a more equal sharing, but unlike for domestic work, men are more responsive and willing to assume a greater workload, suggesting, as argued by Fuochi, Mencarini, and Solera (2014), that the models of fatherhood and the definitions of what is good for the child (having a father who looks after him/her) have changed more than gender models. Although care sharing is more negotiable and changeable than domestic sharing, the driving factors behind it are still strongly gendered: in couples' narratives, labour-market conditions, such as long working hours or risk of penalties if leave is taken, are mentioned as the constraining choices. Yet, these weigh much more in the case of men than for women and are justified through a redefinition of women's work preferences for the best of the child and the family, reinforcing traditional divisions.

## NOTES

1. The 'Family and Social Issues' survey is part of the multi-scope household survey cycle conducted by ISTAT and has been conducted every five years since 1998 on a sample of about 24,000 families (for a total of about 50,000 individuals) distributed in 809 Italian municipalities of different demographic sizes. Since, as underlined in the previous section, the link among attitudes, agreements and disagreements between

partners and gender practices is context-embedded, the Italian context shows a particularly strong institutional and cultural 'inertia'. Hence, we think that the time gap between the quantitative and qualitative data used in this chapter is not problematic. It is indeed reasonable to assume that processes, behaviours and accounts of couples with young children have not markedly changed in a 10-year period, for example, between 2003 and 2010, when the quantitative and qualitative interviews were conducted respectively.

2. The classes were derived from the variable in the 15-category questionnaire that determined the types of occupational position declared, which, following Schizzerotto (2002), were grouped into four macro-classes: bourgeoisie, white-collar middle class, petty bourgeoisie and working class. Then, as in Bernardi and Nazio (2005), these classes were hierarchically ordered and used as proxies for individual resources. Combining the job positions of him and her (in three cases: same class, man in superior class and woman in superior class), we obtained an indicator of relative resources to test the bargaining theory. This was obviously a very weak indicator, but, in the absence of variables on wages or greater details on job position from which to derive at least a scale of occupational prestige (e.g. the De Lillo and Schizzerotto scale or the Hope–Goldthorpe scale), this seemed to be the best measure of relative resources available.

3. Extra calculations are not shown in the tables.

4. xxxxx.

5. This qualitative study is part of an international project entitled 'Transparent'. <http://www.transparent-project.com/info.html>. For a full description of the Italian sample, see Naldini (2015).

6. These are invented names.

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