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gender equality to the European Commission and has been a visiting scholar at Emory University School of Law and GEXcel Center of Gender Excellence.

This work addresses men, intergenerational transmission and social change, within the context of the change in the theorising and politicising of gender relations in the Nordic countries from the 1950s onwards. It adds to the thriving field of qualitative approaches to studying social change, among them intergenerational and longitudinal qualitative research designs, and is part of a more general turn towards temporal and spatial dimensions in social research including studies of men and masculinities. It is also part of the recent developments in historicising research and researchers.

The dissertation draws on a study of two generations of men, where the fathers participated in an experimental research project in Norway in the 1970s: the Work-Sharing Couples Project, led by the sociologist Erik Grønseth, a pioneer in Norwegian family research and studies on men. The project aimed at promoting egalitarian family relations through a spousal work-sharing arrangement that involved both spouses working part-time and parental shifts in the home. In a follow-up study thirty years later, the original participants and a sample of their adult children were interviewed.

In the follow-up study, the men were found to have played a key role in initiating the untraditional arrangement in their families. The sons were, however, found to be living in neo-traditional work–family adaptations. This dissertation aims to explain both the fathers’ untraditional work–family adaptations in the 1970s and the neo-traditional adaptations of the sons thirty years later, and, subsequently, the lack of intergenerational transmission of the untraditional work–family adaptation, through developing a multidimensional analysis of situated agency.

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MARGUNN BJØRNHOLT  
Modern Men

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3

2014



MARGUNN BJØRNHOLT  
Modern Men

Doctoral Dissertation

## Modern Men

### A Norwegian 30-Year Longitudinal Study of Intergenerational Transmission and Social Change

MARGUNN BJØRNHOLT  
*Gender Studies*

## Modern Men

*To my mother*

*Örebro Studies in Gender Research 3*



MARGUNN BJØRNHOLT

**Modern Men**  
**A Norwegian 30-Year Longitudinal Study of Intergenerational  
Transmission and Social Change**

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## Abstract

The dissertation addresses men and change, intergenerational transmission, historical change and agency, employing as a case a longitudinal follow-up study over two generations of men, where the fathers participated in an experimental research project, the Work-Sharing Couples Project, which aimed to promote egalitarian work–family adaptations in Norway in the early 1970s. The original project was based on both spouses working part-time and shift parenting. The summary presents a multidimensional analysis of the work–family adaptations of the two generations of men: the untraditional adaptation of fathers in the 1970s; and the neo-traditional adaptations of sons in the 2000s. Their different work–family adaptations are discussed as situated agency, taking into account different aspects of time and space, personal biography, discursive and material structures of opportunity, and intergenerational dynamics at the family level as well as at social level.

The five articles present the empirical material: Bjørnholt (2009a) presents the impact on the couple relation and the family of the the parents' work–sharing arrangement, concluding that the work-sharing arrangement was perceived by the participants to have been beneficial for their couple relationship as well as for the family as a whole. Bjørnholt (2011) explores the motivations of the work-sharing men to act as agents of change towards gender equality, concluding that personal biography, an authoritative way of being and new masculinity ideals, notably a partner-oriented masculinity, were important. Bjørnholt (2010b) analyses the consequences of the work-sharing arrangement on the work-sharing men's careers, concluding that there were few negative career effects. They were rather successful, and their house-father experiences tended to be valued by employers as management skills. Bjørnholt (2009b) concludes that a father–son design is insufficient in explaining intergenerational transmission and Bjørnholt (2010c) finds that the untraditional work–family arrangement had not been passed on to sons.

*Keywords:* fathering, intergenerational transmission, longitudinal qualitative research, masculinities, men, part-time, social change, work–family.

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## List of articles

**Article 1)** Bjørnholt, Margunn (2009a), Norwegian Work-Sharing Couples Project 30 Years Later. Revisiting an Experimental Research Project for Gender Equality in the Family.

Published in *Equal Opportunities International*, 28(4): 304-323.

**Article 2)** Bjørnholt, Margunn (2011), How Men Became the Local Agents of Change towards Gender Equality.

Published in *Journal of Gender Studies*, 20(1): 3-18.

**Article 3)** Bjørnholt, Margunn (2010b), Part-Time Work and the Career and Life Choices of the Men from the Work-Sharing Couples Study.

Published in *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*, 29(6): 573-592.

**Article 4)** Bjørnholt, Margunn (2009b), Fathers and Sons. Gender Socialization and Intergenerational Transmission Revisited.

Published in *NORMA: Nordic Journal for Masculinity Studies*, 4(1): 83-102.

**Article 5)** Bjørnholt, Margunn (2010c), Like Father, Like Son? The Transmission of Values, Family Practices and Work-Family Adaptations to Sons of Work-Sharing Men.

Published in *Fathering: A Journal of Theory, Research and Practice about Men as Fathers*, 8(3): 276-299.



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# Introduction

The present work addresses men, intergenerational transmission and social change, drawing on a study of two generations of men, where the fathers participated in an experimental research project in Norway in the 1970s. The original project aimed at promoting egalitarian family relations through a spousal work-sharing arrangement that involved both spouses working part-time and parental shifts in the home. In a follow-up study thirty years later, both the original participants and a sample of their adult children were interviewed. This dissertation is the result of the follow-up study of fathers and sons, that has resulted, so far, in twelve published articles, by myself and my colleague Tone Schou Wetlesen. Of the ten articles authored by myself, five selected articles are included in the dissertation, while the summary draws on all my articles.

The first part of the dissertation, Chapter 1–7 and Conclusion, contains the summary, a much shorter version of which has been published (Bjørnholt, 2014b). Different parts of the summary have further been published as part of other articles, or elaborated and expanded on in other articles. Bjørnholt (2010a) and Bjørnholt (2012) provide further detail on the historical background and policy development; an article by Bjørnholt and Farstad (2012) contains parts of the methods chapter and a further elaboration on the couple interview. Bjørnholt (2014a) presents an elaboration on theorizations of love in Norwegian family research, drawing on the same material, but extending beyond this dissertation. An eleventh, slightly related article (Bjørnholt, 2013) expands on theories of gender equality and justice.

The structure of the summary is as follows: Chapter 1 gives an introduction to and a brief overview of the research field, and a motivation of the present study, followed by the research questions (Chapter 2) that guided the study. In Chapter 3, the theoretical perspectives that inform the analysis are presented, and in Chapter 4, the conceptual model is developed, which is to be employed in the analysis. A brief introduction of the background of the case is also included in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5, the research methods and the different elements of the study are presented, as well as a section on ethical reflections. Chapter 6 contains the analysis, employing the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 7 gives short summaries of the articles that are part of the dissertation. The second part of the dissertation contains the five articles that are part of the dissertation. Supplementary information on the background, the analytical

process, the scientific quality of the study and systematizations of findings are provided in the Appendix I. Interview guides and letters to participants are included in Appendix II.

## Chapter 1. The research field

This dissertation addresses the thriving field of qualitative approaches to studying social change, among them intergenerational and longitudinal qualitative research designs (Henderson, Holland and Thomson, 2006; Henderson et al., 2007; Holland, 2011). It is part of a more general turn towards temporal and spatial dimensions in social research including studies of men and masculinities (Bjørnholt, 2009b; 2010c; Henwood, Neale and Holland, 2012; Gottzén, 2013). It is also part of the recent developments in historicizing research and researchers and the application of biographical approaches to the social sciences themselves through studying and linking the biographies, life stories and research agendas of social science pioneers (Brewer, 2004; 2005; Economic and Social Data Service, 2011), as well as revisiting classic studies (Savage, 2005).

More specifically, the dissertation addresses the field of research on men and changes in men's adaptations to work and care as well as studies of policies and initiatives aimed at changing men, including the promotion of fathers' hands-on caring for their children. The focus on change and the promotion of change is reflected in titles like *Changing Men* (1987) by Michael Kimmel, *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men* (1990) by Lynn Segal, and *Män i rörelse* [Men in motion] (2007) by Øystein Gullvåg Holter, all arguing that men can and do change, and emphasizing the need to build on these changes to move forward towards gender equality. Research on the men's movements of the 1970s and 1980s (Gronemann 1987; Kimmel 1996; Messner 1997; Hill 2007) addresses men's response to second wave feminism. This branch of the literature on changing men also includes research into men who supported the suffragette movement (Morgan, 1992) and studies of pro-feminist/antisexist men (Christian 1994).

A main branch of research on men and change addresses fathering. Andrea Doucet (2006) discusses involved fatherhood in *Do Men Mother?* employing Sara Ruddick's (1989) seminal approach to understanding and analysing the practices and intellectual disciplines involved in rearing children, while the title of a collected volume by Barbara Hobson, *Making Men into Fathers* (2002), draws attention to the measures and policies aimed at promoting men's caring; the title also indicates the aspirational character of involved fatherhood. Contemporary studies look at fathering practices and policy interventions within international and comparative perspectives (Doucet, Edwards, Furstenberg, 2009).



In the Nordic countries, the interest in men and gender relations has been closely linked to the radical and constructivist use of sex roles theory. In Bjørnholt (2009b; 2014a), I analyse early Norwegian family research, focusing on men and the men's role as well as theorizations of the relation between love and gender equality in early Norwegian family research, from the 1950s and today. In Sweden, Roger Klinth (2002) has studied how the Swedish state from the early 1960s, took an active role in trying to promote men's caring and men's direct involvement with their children.

In contrast to the great research interest and ample literature on men as fathers, within the literature on changing men, there is in comparison little attention to men as empowering partners in heterosexual relationships. In view of the strong interest in changing gender relations through reforming relations within the family, it is puzzling that the adult relation within the couple has so far received relatively little attention as a potential for change, as compared to the father-child relation. Few have studied the couple relationships as a driver for changing gender relations until recently, when Gunnel Karlsson (2008) has studied the importance of a supportive male partner and husband for one of the women who made it to the top in Swedish politics. Similarly, Yvonne Hirdman (2007) in her biography of Alva Myrdal also placed a strong emphasis on the couple relationship of Alva and Gunnar Myrdal. Finally, a recent volume edited by Berg, Florin and Wisselgren (2011) focuses on influential couples in Swedish 20th century politics and science, asking among other questions, whether marriage was a constraint or a resource in their public and professional lives.

Despite a growing body of research addressing men and change, there are also few studies of change over time and across generations within longitudinal and intra-generational designs. The UK Timescapes project (*Timescapes: Changing Relationships and Identities Through the Lifecourse*) is the first and the only study in the UK designed from the outset as a large-scale qualitative longitudinal study (Holland, 2011). It also contains a study of men as fathers (see Henwood et al., 2011 and Henwood et al., 2008). Despite the interest in longitudinal qualitative research, there are still relatively few longitudinal studies covering long time spans and several generations, and very few outside of the UK. One such Norwegian study is a study by Harriet Bjerrum Nielsen and Marianne Rudberg (2006) of three generations of women, in which they returned to subjects who were adolescents in the first study, a decade later.

Massey (1993; 1994) has argued for a four-dimensional sociology, which takes into account both time and space, the interrelations between them and, to move beyond this three-dimensional but static perspective towards a more dynamic one, Massey introduces movement as the fourth dimension. McLeod and Thomson (2009) see Massey's approach as 'opening up the possibilities to show the coalescence of place, time, subjectivity and the social' (p. 9). This dissertation could to some extent be seen as a bid for such a four dimensional sociology of intergenerational transmission. It revisits a piece of 'family silver' of Norwegian sociology of the family, an experimental research project of gender equality in the family, the Work-Sharing Couples Project in the early 1970s, and presents an analysis based on a longitudinal and intergenerational follow up-study of the men who participated in the project and their adult sons. The study also revisits the project itself and its originators, trying to capture all those elements within one conceptual framework that includes different aspects of time and space, as well as the movements involved in intergenerational transmission. The longitudinal follow-up study of the Work-Sharing Couples Project provides a good basis for discussing intergenerational transmission in relation to the individual as well as the wider social, historical and theoretical contexts over time.

The Work-Sharing Couples Project was initiated by Ola Rokkones, director of the Norwegian Family Council, and led by the sociologist Erik Grønseth at the University of Oslo, who since the 1950s had been a critic of the male breadwinner arrangement for its negative effect on gender relations. The aim of the project was to promote an egalitarian family model based on the reallocation of paid and unpaid work. The participants were couples with children below school age, and the design was for both spouses to work part-time and to share childcare and domestic work, on a parental shift basis (Grønseth, 1975). Sixteen couples participated in the original study. They were recruited through the media and snowballing techniques, resulting in a predominantly middle-class sample, which was the subject of criticism at the time (Grønseth, 1975: 3). I have argued (Bjørnholt, 2010b) that such a sample is particularly fit for the study of men belonging to the 'service class' (Goldthorpe, 1987). I also found (Bjørnholt, 2009a) that the sample was more diverse than previously assumed in the original study.

Of the original 16 couples, 15 were retraced for a follow-up study, and 14 fully participated in the follow-up study, in addition to seven sons, five of whom had established their own families with small children. In the

follow-up study, both the parents and sons were interviewed using biographical, retrospective life course interviews. The selection of sons who were in the same life phase as were the fathers during the Work-Sharing Couples Project, was central to the comparative, intergenerational research design, although the small number of sons who filled the criteria<sup>i</sup> is a limitation of the study.

In the follow-up study, the men were found to have played a key role in initiating the untraditional arrangement in their families (Bjørnholt, 2009a; 2011). The sons of these untraditional fathers were, however, at the time of the interview found to be living in neo-traditional<sup>ii</sup> work–family adaptations (Bjørnholt, 2009b; 2010c). This dissertation aims to explain both the fathers’ untraditional work–family adaptations in the 1970s and the neo-traditional adaptations of the sons and, subsequently, the lack of intergenerational transmission of the untraditional work–family adaptation. The focus is on men’s adaptation to work, as the fathers’ part-time work was the innovative intervention in the original project, and it is still rare for men to work part-time.

The research that forms the basis of the dissertation covers a long time span, in which gender relations, as well as theories of gender relations have undergone profound changes. So have the structures of opportunity and the welfare state benefits available to working parents in Norway, as well as the other Nordic countries. The study grapples with questions related to changing gender relations and in particular the question of changing men and the role of men in changing gender relations. The longitudinal two-generations follow-up study also brings to the fore questions of socialization, intergenerational transmission and the impact of historical circumstances on personal biography, as well as some of the big questions of sociology, such as structure and agency and social change. It also taps into a core element in current Norwegian gender equality policies—namely the promotion of involved fatherhood in early childcare.

Biographical and life course research may be designed, carried out and analysed in several ways. Like many other studies of biography and intergenerational transmission, the present study relies on semi-structured, qualitative interviews. This method produces rich data, and the analysis often relies on thick descriptions of selected cases and interview excerpts (see Brannen and Nilsen, 2011). The articles which form part of this dissertation provide such detail on different aspects of the empirical data (Bjørnholt, 2009a; 2009b; 2010b; 2010c; 2011), and other articles drawing on the same material provide more detailed analyses of policy devel-

opment (Bjørnholt, 2010a; 2012), research methods (Bjørnholt and Farstad, 2012) and theory development (Bjørnholt, 2014a).

In the summary of the dissertation, what is being foregrounded is not the individual informants, but rather the historical and social realities in which they are enmeshed, including the genealogy of and social realities behind the experimental research project in which the fathers participated. The project itself as well as fathers and sons in their respective contexts are the unit of analysis. To make such a generalisation I will have to simplify and downplay the variation within the groups as well as the uniqueness of each case. In line with this choice, the material will only to a limited extent be directly employed in the summary, namely in the Methods section and in the presentation of a detailed case analysis that preceded and informed the conceptual framework (Listening guide, Appendix I: B). Nevertheless, the present analysis relies on the close reading of the material, cut in several ways and analysed from different perspectives and with different focuses, including thick descriptions of selected cases and examples.



## Chapter 2. Research questions

The aim of this dissertation is to explore men's arrangements of work and care in two generations, the impact on men's work–family adaptations of arrangements of work and care in their parental home, and the potential for men to act as agents of change in relation to gender equality in the family. In the grant proposal to the Research Council of Norway, I formulated the following research questions, which were partly based on the preliminary results from a pilot study, which included half of the participants in 2005 (Appendix A). These research questions have guided my research and the writing of the articles:

- What made the work-sharing men become agents of change?
- What were the consequences for them as men, employees, husbands and fathers?
- Has the untraditional adaptation of the fathers been transmitted to sons?
- What are the relations between practices, motivations and contemporary discourses for fathers and sons?

The first three of the research questions have been dealt with in the five articles which are part of this dissertation, Bjørnholt, 2009a; 2011 2010b).

The fourth research question, which has to some extent been discussed in Bjørnholt (2009b) and Bjørnholt (2010c), forms the basis of the analysis of this dissertation. (A shorter version of the present summary: Bjørnholt, 2014b).

In the grant application I also pointed out the following three main issues to be explored theoretically:

- The relations between child oriented and gender-equality oriented masculinities.
- The relations between equal parenting and equal (heterosexual) relationships.
- The meanings of work and care in the subjects' constructions of masculinity.

These issues have been addressed in Bjørnholt (2009a; 2009b; 2010c and 2011). In the final discussion, I will return to these questions and discuss the findings as well as the questions in view of the analysis developed in the dissertation.

## Chapter 3. Theoretical perspectives

The present work draws on four different perspectives: a generational perspective, an intergenerational perspective, a gender perspective, focusing in particular on men and masculinities, and a genealogical/discourse analytical perspective.

### A generational perspective

In his ground-breaking study of children of the Great Depression and other studies (1974) (Elder, Pavalko and Clipp, 1993; Shanahan, Elder and Miech, 1997), Glen Elder showed how major historical events such as the Great Depression in 1929 and World War II influenced the life courses of the generations who were exposed to them as children and adolescents, and how such events influenced the life trajectories of the cohorts that were children and adolescents in these periods, in terms of shaping structures, opportunities for education and careers, and in terms of strain and personal challenges in childhood and adolescence. Elder showed that the influence of war and economic severity on children's later development differed between the age cohorts; for adolescents, there was a positive effect in terms of earlier maturing and the development of coping skills, whereas an adverse effect was observed in the younger cohorts. Elder has continued to develop a contextual and historically informed perspective on the life course as embedded in social institutions and history, showing the importance of time and place for human development (Elder and Giele, 2009; Elder et al., 2006; Shanahan et al., 1997).

Andersson, Fürth and Holmberg (1997) in their study of the '1970-alists' in Sweden, emphasized the importance of the general welfare level and social appeals such as the student revolt, leftist movements and the Vietnam war in shaping the values, attitudes and perspectives on the future of this generation. Bengtsson (2001), in her study of four cohorts of young students from the late 1950s to the 1990s, emphasizes the importance of the women's movement and the struggle for gender equality, which culminated in the 1970s.

Inspired by Mannheim ([1928] 1997), the concept of generation as something more than age cohorts has received increasing attention, drawing attention to the social, relational and technological factors that constitute a generational consciousness and shapes the historical role of particular generations (see Pilcher, 1994). According to Mannheim, the formative years, youth, are crucial in that respect. Edmunds and Turner (2002;



2004; 2005) suggest that active or strategic generations that succeed in producing social change alternate with more passive generations and that the success of one generation in achieving social change may limit the transformative potential and the opportunities of the next generation to form an active generation in that it will inherit the changes produced by the preceding generation.

In the present work the parents belonged to the generation that had their formative years during the 1960s. This generation has been identified as a strategic generation with a wide-ranging and continued impact, and in this generation gender relations, as well as authoritarian relations in working life, were challenged and reformulated. The sons were born in the 1970s, and subsequently belong to the generation following the strategic 1960s generation, inheriting the social changes initiated by the parental generation, among them a new gender regime.

### **An intergenerational perspective**

The intergenerational perspective shows how family heritage is taken up, shaped, transformed and resisted over generations, how the micro history of family links to broader social phenomena such as the reproduction of class and social mobility (drawing on authors such as Bertaux and Bertaux-Wiame, 1997; Thompson, 1997; Brannen et al., 2004; Büchner and Brake, 2006) and how socialisation takes place within the broad context of socialising environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1974; 1986). Bengtsson (2001, 2007) explores intergenerational transmission with a particular emphasis on parental identification and choice of education from the perspective of the younger generation.

According to Thompson (1997:33) ‘The nature of transmission between generations within families has been an issue surprisingly neglected by sociologists’. Since then, there has been increasing interest in this topic among sociologists over the last decades, starting with Thompson, Bertaux and Bertaux-Wiame (1997). This branch of research on intergenerational transmission draws heavily on Bourdieu’s concept of habitus and cultural capital as developed in *The Logic of Practice* (1990).

Despite the widespread proliferation of Bourdieuan concepts, empirical studies into the formation of habitus and cultural capital have been few. Over the last decade, this has been changing, with Tomanović focusing on class-differentiated family practices, lifestyle and habitus as structuring environments for children in a time of crisis (in Serbia) (2004) and Büchner & Brake (2006) on the role of families in the transmission of culture,

education in particular, as well as feminist-Bourdieuian theoretical and empirical approaches to class and gender (Adkins & Skeggs, 2004; Reay, 2005). Stefansen (2011) discusses class culture and social reproduction in the context of pre-school parenting practices, drawing on Bourdieu as well as involving the concept of ‘family practices’ coined by David Morgan (1996). While some (Reay; Stefansen) focus on the intra-familial parental work, as well as extrafamilial work, involved in the transmission of cultural capital, others (Büchner & Brake) emphasize the work and investments that is needed by the younger generation for the appropriation of family heritage and its subsequent transformation into currently valid cultural capital in the process of intergenerational transmission. Far from being mechanical or automatic, these researchers claim the transmission and appropriation of habitus and cultural capital rely on dynamic processes, the outcome of which is not given once and for all.

The present study found that the innovative work–family adaptation in the parental generation was not passed on to the next generation and, further, that a broad, contextualised approach was needed in order to explain how the men in the young generation became the men they did (Bjørnholt, 2009b; 2010c). The ambition in this dissertation is to contribute to such a ‘thick’ contextual approach to intergenerational transmission in the context of social change.

## **A gender perspective**

The third perspective is a gender perspective. Studies of gender and gender relations cover a wide range of perspectives and theorizations, and it is a field of considerable complexity, drawing on multiple disciplines, theoretical influences and perspectives. There is, however, also a certain consensus across different perspectives and theories, in that, today, many agree on an approach, that sees gender as predominantly constituted in practices and in the everyday relations between men and women, between women and between men (West and Zimmermann, 1987; Carrigan et al., 1985; Connell 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Bengtsson, 2001; 2007). On the other hand, a relational and practice-oriented gender perspective covers very different and even diverging and conflicting perspectives and study areas, ranging from feminist materialist approaches investigating the creative *and* exploitative nature of gender relations (Jónasdóttir, 1994; 2009; 2011; McMahan, 1999) to cultural approaches studying the performative aspects and the inherent instability of gender as fixed categories

(Butler, 1990), as well as possibilities of changing gender and gender privilege, drawing on such influences (Pease, 2000; 2010).

As I am studying men and changing gender relations, theories of men and masculinities are central to the gender perspective in the analysis being developed in this dissertation. The relations between feminist gender studies and masculinity studies have been ambiguous, although Connell has argued that studies of men and masculinities should be part of a wider theory of gender relations (Connell, 1987). Increasingly, however, researchers of men and masculinities involve with feminist theory (see for instance Whitehead, 2002; Pease, 2000; 2010; McMahan, 1999), while at the same time scholars within feminist theory study men and masculinities, drawing on different parts of feminist theory. Further, feminist scholars involve with concepts and theories developed in studies of men and masculinities (Gardiner, 2002). University courses in gender studies also increasingly include studies of men and masculinities.

Since it was coined by Connell and colleagues (Carrigan et al., 1985), the concept of multiple masculinities, and 'hegemonic masculinity' in particular, has generated a wide research literature, but has also been the object of criticism, including for being static and monolithic, and for constructing typologies of men which do not fit well with real men, as well as for the lack of clarity. In the on-going theoretical discussions within the field of masculinity studies, Hearn has repeatedly suggested that men should be analysed, and moreover deconstructed as men, advocating a focus on men and the hegemony of men (Hearn, 2004) rather than only or primarily on masculinities. I also find problematic the present tendency for studies of men to turn automatically into studies of masculinity/ies. In my view, there is an inherent danger in focusing on masculinities instead of focusing on men and men's practices, which may easily lead to a disregard of men's agency and responsibility.

Recently Hearn (2008; 2012) has drawn attention to the processual usage of the concept of masculinities as it was developed by Connell and colleagues (1983; 1993; 1995 and Carrigan et al., 1985). Their work on gendered processes within patriarchy emphasizes processes of hegemony, dominance/subordination, complicity and marginalization, as well as counter hegemonic processes of resistance, protest and ambivalence. In contrast to the most common uses of the concept, 'hegemonic masculinity', in masculinity studies, its processual usage has been less influential, Hearn claims. In their reassessment and reformulation of the concept of masculinities, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) also emphasize its pro-

cessual use. Bengtsson introduced and expanded on Connell's work in a Swedish context (with Frykman, 1987; Bengtsson 2001), and she has employed and further developed a processual usage of the concept of masculinities. Bengtsson suggests the term 'contradictory masculinity positions' as a potential for analysing men's involvement in, and resistance to (Goode, 1982), changing gender relations.

According to Bengtsson there are different possible masculinity positions in which men may invest. Bengtsson argues that this frame has several advantages, such as the possibility of keeping an analytical distance between the concepts of the individual and of contradictory subject positions, which may be adopted by individuals in different discursive practices, thus avoiding categorizations of men based on different masculinities. It also avoids the determinism of much discourse analysis, as 'it becomes possible to show that men may position themselves and invest in egalitarian oriented discourses in some cases, while falling back on subject positions based on illegitimate male dominance in others' (160, my translation). In her analysis, Bengtsson relies on the potential of change resulting from the inherent contradictions of current masculinities and she points out the possibilities of multiple, renegotiable and 'fluid' identities as a potential for change. In a slightly different way, Pease (2000; 2010) argues that a reformulation of men's interests into a pro-feminist men's standpoint is possible, through the formulation of alternative conceptualizations of men's interests, actively deconstructing and resisting male privilege by men and groups of men, drawing on the therapeutic tradition, but even more on the possibilities of multiple, renegotiable and 'fluid' identities offered by postmodern feminism. Nordberg (2005; 2007) has analysed masculinity in Deleuzian terms as fluid, contradictory *assemblages of discourses* as an alternative to Connell's 'hegemonic' and subordinate masculinities. As I see it Bengtsson's approach and that of Nordberg have much in common.

For this study of men as agents of change in relation to the arrangements of work and care in their families, the concept of multiple and contradictory masculinity positions offers the possibility of keeping men, rather than masculinities in focus. A relational and processual concept of gender, and thus of masculinities, is also useful in seeing the production of masculinities not only as a matter among men or different groups of men, but may also include women, femininities, relations between men and women, and relations between women. The fathers' agency will be discussed in relation to emerging and new ideals of masculinity in the 1970s,

and I will also discuss the sons' adaptations at a time when the once-radical masculinity of the paternal generation has become mainstream.

So far I have presented three different theoretical perspectives, all of which will inform the final analysis. All these perspectives have important virtues, but none of them can provide the overarching theoretical framework that is needed to address the question of the relations between personal agency, historical change and discourses, which is the aim of the final analysis.

### **A genealogical, discourse analytical perspective**

The fourth perspective is a genealogical, discourse analytical perspective drawing on Foucault, acknowledging how what is taken for granted in the present is constituted by the layering of discursive traces of the past, as well as how some ideas are taken up by, and become part of, the power apparatus and the governing of the self (Henriques et al., [1984] 1998; Rose, 1985; [1990] 1999; 2008). In the present work the analytical framework is based on a broad genealogical/discourse analytically informed approach, which involves integrating contemporary discourses in the analytical framework, as well as situating and historicizing the original research project and its founding fathers.

This study addresses the personal agency and biographies of the subjects studied. It also covers a long time span, in which substantial change in gender relations as well as in welfare state level and policies has taken place. Not only the material circumstances, but also the thinking, politicizing and theorizing of gender relations have undergone profound change. To pull the findings of the study together and discuss their implications, I need to attend theoretically to how personal biography, historical materiality and discourses interact and diverge to shape agency (Jamieson, Morgan, Crow & Allan, 2006).

Taking as my starting point the dialectic relation between knowledge and its social basis, as pointed out by Berger and Luckmann (1966), I use a genealogical approach, drawing on Foucault. Genealogy, originally the study of families and lineage, when used in philosophy, is a historical technique in which one questions commonly held philosophical and social beliefs by showing alternative, contradictory and subversive histories of their development. It relies on the works of Nietzsche, who in *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887) proposed the use of a historical philosophy in order to critique modern morality by supposing that it developed into its current form through power relations. Foucault developed this approach

into a counter-history of the position of the subject that traces the development of people and societies through history. His method is about examining the discursive traces and orders left by the past, looking at history as a way of understanding the processes that have led to what we are today. The genealogical approach represents a partial and selective approach to history; its aim is to answer questions of the present rather than describing the past (Venn, 1998).

The early Norwegian sociology of the family and Erik Grønseth's ideas in the 1950s, linking gender equality to a critique of the male breadwinner model, informed the Work-Sharing Project in the 1970s. These ideas, in their historical context of early Norwegian family research and theorizing, represent the starting point for my analysis of the relations between discourses, social structures and individual agency with relation to gender relations in the 1970s and today. The shift in gender relations during the 1970s rested on a theoretical/ideological shift that had started in sociology and the early family research of the 1950s, with some of its roots extending even further back (Bjørnholt 2010; 2012; 2014a). Present views and institutionalisation of gender relations to a large extent still rest on the institutionalisation and implementation of ideas of gender relations that became accepted in the 1970s. Taking into account the theorization and politicization of gender relations in the periods studied, I will include the historical setting as well as the drag of history on thinking and practices for the two time periods which are the focus of the study: the 1970s and the present, that is, the beginning of the 21st century.

The time map below situates the work-sharing project and the follow-up study in a broad historical context. The idea is to give an indication of how the project fits into the wider picture including the structures of opportunity for working parents and major contemporary cultural and political influences. The map is inspired by the time map presented by Bengtsson (2001:16), who in turn draws on Andersson, Fürth and Holmberg (1997).

**Table 1. Time map**

Study groups, welfare state development and major events in Norway

Year	Welfare/care systems	Events	Study group	Methods
2007-2008	*****	Full coverage of childcare White Paper on men and gender equality Men's panel Several father-friendly family law reforms in the 2000s	Fathers and sons from the Work-Sharing Couples Study	Retrospective interviews
2005-2006	*****	Expansion of parental leave Paternal quota of parental leave extended to 5, and then 6 weeks	Couples from the Work-Sharing Couples Study	Retrospective couple interviews
1998	*****	Cash-for-care introduced for under three year olds		
1993	*****	4 weeks paternal quota of parental leave		
1988		<i>Mannsrolleutvalget</i> (Commission on men's role)		
1987-1993	*****	Expansion of parental leave from 18 to 42 weeks Increased rights for non-resident fathers		
1986	****	Brundtland government 40% women		
1981	****	New Children's Act, removal of mother-presumption		

1978	****	Gender Equality Act Abortion on request within 12 weeks The first administrative state agency with responsibility for gender equality established <i>Norges familieråd</i> (Norwegian Family Council) lost state funding		
1977	****	Work Environment Act, part-time workers' rights Parental leave extended to 18 weeks paid and 52 weeks unpaid leave and made gender neutral. Secretariat for Women's Studies established		
1975	**	UN Women's Year The establishment of the anti-consumerist organization <i>Framtiden i våre hender</i> (The future in our hands)	Work-Sharing Couples Study completed	
1973	**	White Paper on the family, dual breadwinner model		
1972	**	EEC membership rejected in referendum Political radicalization Vietnam war Women's movement Anti-EEC movement Anti-war movement Environmental movement	Work-Sharing Couples Study	Questionnaires, time diaries, couple interviews
1969	**	State funding of <i>Norges familieråd</i> (Norwegian Family Council)	First initiative Work-Sharing Couples study	



1964	**	Abortion legalized on medical indication		
1950s-60s	**		Grønseth and colleagues' studies of seamen's families	
1946	**	12 weeks paid maternity leave Universal child benefit		
1945	*	World War II ended		
1933-34	*	Wilhelm Reich in Norway		
1909	*	New Matrimonial Act: securing women's financial rights in marriage, mother presumption upon divorce. 6 weeks paid maternity leave		

\* Expansion of benefits for working parents.

## **Chapter 4. Towards a conceptual framework for studying changing gender relations in the Nordic countries from the 1950s and onwards**

The present study addresses the profound changes in the gendered division of paid work and care and a change in the theorising and politicising of gender relations in the Nordic countries from the 1950s onwards. Covering the same period, Bengtsson (2001; 2007) has developed a conceptual framework for studying changing gender relations and changing gendered subjectivity, which has inspired the conceptual framework for the present dissertation. Bengtsson's study of gendered subjectivities 1959-1990s covers four decades and takes as its starting point the change in conceptualizations and theorizing of gender relations that took place in the late 1950s. She employed as an 'anchor study' a study of parental identification and gender identity carried out among students at Lund University in 1959 (Marke & Nyman, 1963). Using the same questions like the Marke/Nyman study, Bengtsson carried out studies of young students at Lund University in the 1970s, the 1980s and the 1990s. In Bengtsson (2001) and (2007) she reinterprets the results of these studies within a broad conceptual framework that includes historical and theoretical change in the whole period studied.

The time of investigation of the parental generation in my study does to a certain extent correspond to Bengtsson's 1970s sample; although the work-sharing couples were somewhat older (born in the 1940s) than the young students (born in the 1950s) in Bengtsson's study, they belong to the generation that was deeply influenced by the change in gender relations that took place between the 1950s and the 1970s. The children of the work-sharing couples were born during the 1970s, and the young generation in my study corresponds to Bengtsson's study of young people born in the 1970s, starting at the university in the 1990s. Finally, the Work-Sharing Couples Project was based on ideas that were first formulated in the 1950s, and which were part of a general change in the theorizing of gender relations in the Nordic countries that took place in this period. This is also a parallel to Bengtsson, who takes this same period as her starting point.

An important difference between our studies is that Bengtsson's study is a cohort study, while mine is a longitudinal and intergenerational follow-up study. Further, Bengtsson studied relatively large groups of (different)

young people in different decades, while my follow-up study is of one, small and highly selected group of couples over time and their now adult children. Despite these differences in design, I find Bengtsson's study very useful, and in trying to deal with questions of historical change, personal agency and intergenerational transmission I will employ a modified version of the conceptual framework she developed in her study. Her findings also represent an important point of reference against which I will discuss my findings.

In her analysis, Bengtsson explores three analytical dimensions.

1. *Social gender appeals*, including political appeals and psychological truth regimes at each point of time. The concept of social appeals includes political appeals and scientific knowledge regimes. It more or less equals that of discourse, but has the advantage that it reflects to a greater extent the fact that not all appeals are successful in the ongoing struggle for hegemony between competing appeals.
2. *Lived experience* in terms of upbringing and personal history.
3. *Local context*, which in Bengtsson's study was study area.

Finally Bengtsson discusses the *relations between these three dimensions* for each of the groups studied in four different time periods between 1959 and 1993. To Bengtsson's framework I add a fourth element:

4. *Structures of opportunity* for work and care in terms of welfare state benefits for working parents and parents' rights in working life.

For my study, I also modify the analytical dimensions or elements of Bengtsson's framework. Instead of Bengtsson's concept 'Lived experience', I will use the concept 'Personal biography'. 'Local context', in Bengtsson's study was study area; in my study is the work-family adaptation. Instead of 'Psychological truth regimes' I will use the concept 'Scientific truth regimes', which cover the scientific ideas of gender relations at the time. Bengtsson's concept 'Social gender appeals', in my framework, includes 'Political appeals' and 'Scientific truth regimes'.

This framework forms the basis of the analysis; first, it broadly informs the presentation of the background of the Work-Sharing Couples Project

and, subsequently, it forms the basis of a more structured analysis of the main findings in the follow-up study of fathers and sons from the Work-Sharing Couples Project. For this analysis, I have developed the model below.

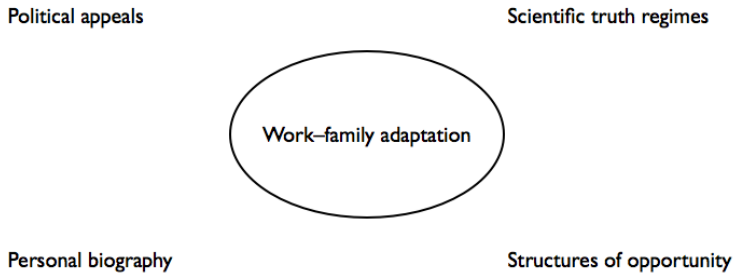


Figure 1 Conceptual framework

### **Background of the Work-Sharing Couples Project**

During the 1950s and 1960s authoritarian relations were challenged in working life as well as in the family. In Norway Erik Grønseth was among the foremost advocates of a more egalitarian family model, drawing on the psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich and the Norwegian feminist pioneer Margarete Bonnevie (1932). The theoretical and ideological shift that took place in this period was part of the use in the Nordic countries of sex-role theory in a critical and social constructivist way. Norwegian sociology was from the outset an oppositional science (Mjøset, 1991)—its pioneers studied institutions and organisations from within from a bottom-up perspective—against this background the topic and the experimental design of the Work-Sharing Couples Project may have appeared feasible and scientifically acceptable.

The first in Norway to argue in public that men should participate more in the care of their families was the psychologist Åse Gruda Skard. In a speech to the Norwegian Association for Women's Rights in 1953, she argued that, for gender equality to proceed, men had to take a larger share of the everyday care of their children (Skard 2009). In family research during the 1950s and early 1960s, men were high on the family research agenda. In a number of studies, Erik Grønseth as well as other Norwegian family researchers (Brun-Gulbrandsen, 1962; Tiller, 1962) addressed the question of men's role in the suppression of women as well as the costs of the male provider role for children and of the male sex role to men

(Bjørnholt, 2009b; 2010a; 2012; 2014a). Although a pioneer in theorising and studying work, gender equality and love, Grønseth was in many ways the odd man out in relation to the 'scientific truth regime' with respect to gender relations in Norway due to his inspiration from Wilhelm Reich and his reputation as a controversial advocate of sexual liberation. Grønseth also integrated his personal quest for liberation with his research agenda in a way that was unusual at the time, and openly admitted that he chose topics of research that were of personal interest to himself (Nordberg and Otnes, 2004; Sand, 2006). In the 1970s many of the ideas that Grønseth had advocated, such as egalitarian family arrangements and sexual freedom, became part of the political appeals of social movements at that time, and in political documents the male breadwinner model was replaced by a dual breadwinner model.

A parallel development took place in working life from 1960 with the cooperation of The Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) and the National Employer Organisation (NAF) with the experiments that aimed at the democratisation of relations in working life and were part of action research initiatives which involved Norwegian researchers in collaboration with the Tavistock Institute. They represented the outset of half a century of combined research and innovation, identified as the 'Norwegian model' (Engelstad et al., 2010). This general spirit of cooperation and democratisation probably served as a facilitating factor in setting up an experimental project aimed at democratising the family, which included experiments about part-time work in the workplace.

The Norwegian Family Council<sup>iii</sup> and its founder and director, Ola Rokkones, who initially came up with the idea and took the initiative to launch the Work-Sharing Couples Project, represent an interesting part of the story. Rokkones, a civil engineer and physician, established the Norwegian Family Council in 1964 with the aim of promoting structures for a more caring society such as nursing homes for the fragile elderly, and architectural designs that favoured intergenerational relations. Its solution to the perceived threat against the family as an institution were thus institutional, calling for the social provision of care and structures that supported family relations. The dual part-time solution in the Work-Sharing Couples project was part of a modernisation as well as a reevaluation and a defence of the family against the increasing demands of paid labour implied in the emerging dual-earner model. From the first part of the 1970s, when 45% of women were in paid employment, women's paid employ-

ment reached 63.7% in 1987 (Statistics Norway Historisk statistikk, 1994).

The Family Council obtained state funding from 1969, the same year the Work-Sharing Couples Project was launched. Although the project was famous in its time, it was not so popular among those who formulated the Norwegian family policy at the time—the same government ministry that administered the Family Council’s funding. After several initiatives, the ministry eventually succeeded in persuading the Storting (the Norwegian Parliament) to cut the Family Council’s funding in 1979 (Vollset, 2011).

In summary, the Work-Sharing Couples Project was both the idea and the initiative of Ola Rokkones and the materialisation of Grønseth’s theoretical critique of the male breadwinner model. It was part of a general tendency towards liberatory research agendas in the Norwegian sociology as well as of a social-democratic spirit of cooperation and a belief in social engineering, and a general change in gender relations. It was both a ‘child of its time’ and, in defending the family sphere and challenging the full-time worker norm and the institutionalisation of childcare, it challenged the emerging model of work, family and gender equality, pursued by the political establishment at the time.



## Chapter 5. Methods

### Biographical interviews

The biographical interview tries to map the informant's life course; it is chronologically ordered but may focus on certain aspects. The life-biographical method has a long tradition in sociology, and it was used within the interactionist and urban social anthropology of the Chicago School as a method to study the implications of social and economic change in American society.

The retrospective story-telling involved in a biographical interview evokes several questions; one is about the biographical genre itself. It has become increasingly clear that the concept of biography in terms of a chronologically ordered account of life is itself a cultural construct. This way of accounting for the self is not 'natural', but is 'thoroughly enmeshed within a specific and unique form of discourse and understanding' (Freeman, 1993:44). In the biographical genre, shared cultural ideas are embedded, such as the formative power in adult life of childhood experiences. The pervasiveness of this idea is due to the influence of psychoanalysis and the psy-disciplines, which I discuss in the theory section. In the retrospective self-reflection involved in the telling a biography, such underlying shared ideas serve as perceptual lenses.

Another question that the biographical genre evokes is the question of the quality and epistemological status of memories. Whereas memories were once accepted as the exact representations of the past as it was, today it is more common to focus on the narrative aspects of storytelling as part of people's constructions and representations of self, with the researcher remaining agnostic of the 'real' experiences behind the story. In recent years, as the narrative aspects of biographical research have become important, there has been a shift in focus from life histories towards life stories and towards life stories as text (Johansson, 2005:213). The narrative approach diverges from the naturalistic approach, in which biographies have been seen as more or less exact accounts of life history as it was, based on memories that are direct representations of the past. The narrative approach focuses more on the act of storytelling as self-reflective, relational and socially and culturally situated, and on the textual character of the stories told. Today, the narrative approach has become the preferred approach in biographical research as well as in much other



qualitative research, and some researchers point out that there is a risk in too strongly focusing on narrativity and text:

if we emphasize narrativity too much, we shall lose sight of the relationship between life and society. In the final analysis, what we as sociologists are interested in are the social implications of life stories. And these are not only narrative constructions. (Roos 1991:101)

According to Roos, people's lives as they tell them are not primarily stories but also their personal biography, which should be respected as such. Similarly, Hollway and Jefferson (2000:3) argue for a 'critical realism', and try to rescue some of 'real experience' by arguing: 'though it is far from transparent, there is a relationship between people's ambiguous representations and their experiences'. Öberg (1999) suggests the concept 'retrospective reflection' as a middle road between a realist and a constructivist approach. This approach sees 'life stories as windows, though not completely transparent, to history, culture and mind' (110). This perspective allows for paying respect to lived life as well as the reinterpretation in retrospect of their life story according to their current situation.

Regardless of which side of the realist/constructivist scale one prefers, there is a need for analytical clarity on the different aspects of life histories. Bruner (1986) has distinguished between life as *objective reality* (what actually happens in life; one is born, gets teeth, learns to walk, goes to school, marries etc.) versus life as *subjective experience* (subjective experiences and the interpretation of these, feelings, thoughts and meanings) and, finally, life as told (how these experiences are expressed in a *narrative form*: the life story is told according to cultural conventions of storytelling in each particular society and in relation to a particular public and context). Johansson (2005:225) suggests adding a fourth aspect: the *life story text* that is produced by the researcher as a result of a specific reading or interpretation, in which the researcher employs certain rhetorical tools.

### **Couple interviews, 2005, with participants in the Work-Sharing Couples Project from the 1970s**

The couple interview is carried out with couples together. It is mainly used in family research, such as research on parenting, the domestic division of labour and/or the intimate life of couples. Different techniques may be employed; in this study I carried out semi-structured, qualitative interviews with both partners present. The interview started with focusing on the couple's common life and experiences, related to the work-sharing

arrangement; the interviews also contained an individual section, covering both partners' individual professional biographies. When explaining how they came to actively promote the work-sharing model in their families, many of the men spontaneously brought up childhood experiences from their families of origin. The couple interviews were carried out in the informants' homes, with one exception. I was received as a guest and usually I was treated to coffee, cakes and/or sandwiches. I had the impression that, in most cases, the wife was the one who had prepared the food, and in that case, no mention was made of who had prepared it. In some cases, it was the husband who had made the food, and, in that case, either the husband or the wife pointed it out. Some men used this as an example to emphasize their domestic skills.

During the couple interviews, the atmosphere was relaxed, and I had the impression the participants were in general enthusiastic about the follow-up study and eager to share and reflect upon their experiences. Some had made preparations, such as checking their work record to be able to give an account of their career track, employers and positions and how long they had worked part time. Some were curious about me, how old was I, did I have children; and when they learned I had four, how did I manage four children and work? Despite the generational difference – most of them were closer to my parents' generation than to mine –, I felt we had much in common.

In Bjørnholt (2009a) and Bjørnholt (2010b), I discuss the limitations as well as the value of couple interviews. My conclusion is that the couple interviews provided rich and valid data both on the couple and individual level and that the couple context represented a productive setting for telling both couple and individual stories. Using the same material in combination with other samples (Bjørnholt and Farstad, 2012) my co-author and I argue that the couple interview indeed has particular advantages in interviewing couples, due to intra-couple dynamics in the interview situation. Below I will give some examples of how the couple context added to the richness and detail of the interviews, and how couple interaction brought up arguments and topics that would not have been attained so easily in an individual interview. Sometimes the couple context opened up for common reflection and the co-development of arguments, as in this example:

**Rita:** I think I also became more attractive to you.

**David:** Yes, you did, I like independent women with a will of their own, and having a job is part of that.

**Rita:** I also became more self-confident, and that had an impact on our relationship.

**David:** And I became less confident when you went out to work and met other men, this adds a little to the relationship.

In other sequences, the couple interaction revealed controversies or topics that turned out to be delicate, sometimes to one of the spouses' surprise, such as in the example below. In this case, both spouses had the same education and were employed in the same organization; the wife as a top level manager and the husband as a senior advisor. In this part of the interview, we are talking of her, being a woman, having made it to the top of the organization:

**Vera:** There is no doubt I have had an opportunity in being a woman exactly during this period...

**Robert:** (eagerly breaks in): That was exactly what I, too, wanted to say (laughs) – it is a little mean to say though, but taking into account that there have been so few women (...), there are some who have accused you of it; coming easily to it because you are the right person and the right gender at the right time.

**Vera:** But you have never accused me of that, I hope (laughs).

Later in the interview, we talk about the fact that she earns more than he does:

**Margunn:** (to the wife): Now you earn more than he does?

**Vera:** Yes.

**Robert:** Much more – almost double.

(Vera tries to break in)

**Robert:** Oh yes you do.

**Vera:** (with emphasis) You cannot count, I tell you (laughs).

**Robert:** Yes I can count, um.

**Margunn:** (to the husband): How do you feel about that?

**Robert:** (laughs): Well, I – how much did I earn? – I earn 450,000 and you 800,000. That is not far from the double (laughs).

**Vera:** But it mostly goes to taxes you know. But (to her husband) what do you think of it – um – about what we just talked about?

**Robert:** Well, I have to admit that I think it is a little unjust; (turning to me) I do not think she does such a big job that it justifies

her earning twice as much as me. No, I do have some problems with that, if I can say it straightforwardly.

In addition to providing a common reflective space, the couple interview reveals patterns of communication between the spouses. In this example the couple context provided very rich interview data as well as observational data in terms of intra-couple exchange, including body language, laughing and voice levels. In this case, the husband lowered his voice, almost mumbling the rather harsh views that appear in the excerpt from the interview. His wife spoke in a high and clear voice and was clearly surprised and also curious. The sound and tone of this particular exchange confirmed the impression that this was a highly controversial and delicate topic. In an interview with another couple, the husband spoke most of the time, despite the attempts by the researcher to question the wife directly and obtain her opinion as well. When the husband was asked about his motivation for taking part in the work-sharing arrangement, one of the reasons he gave was the fact that he was generally quite dominant and that his wife needed some autonomy from him. Having stated this, he referred to the interview itself: it was indeed obvious that he dominated the interaction by speaking most of the time.

Bjørnholt and Farstad (2012) argue that couple interviews represent a particular kind of qualitative research interviews, and that the research interview may be seen as one of several spaces for couples to ‘display family’ (a concept launched by Janet Finch (2007)—the researchers being one among other audiences for displaying family. The idea of displaying family is also useful in interpreting the project and its participants and their interaction with the wider public. As the object of researcher’s interest there is obviously a possibility of a research effect (Hawthorne effect).

In addition, the project and some of its participants attracted a lot of media interest in Norway as well as internationally. As one of them commented: ‘We had TV-teams here every week’. Promoting the project in the media was indeed part of the project’s interventionist design, as its aim was to influence policy. The Family Council and its director, Ola Rokkones asked some of the couples to represent the project in the media, and some of the couples saw themselves as the ambassadors of a new gender order. Others chose to stay out of public sight, and they were also very cautious with regard to advocating their own work–family adaptation as the solution for others. Being the object of great interest, both from researchers and the media, may definitely have influenced the way the par-

ticipants saw themselves and how they interpreted the project of which they were part. The question is if this is only a limitation. This may also be a way of these couples making meaning of their own lives and of their 'displaying family' using the technologies and audiences that had become available in the 1970s, among them television and other popular media. Similarly one could argue that research studies had also become part of people's lives after World War 2, as sociology and other social sciences were established, opening up a new space for displaying family.

My follow-up study also attracted a great interest in the media, and after having given the first interview on the work-sharing couples, journalists soon wanted to interview the participants themselves. When I told them I could not give them access to my informants, some of them traced participants whom they had in their archives, and some of them appeared on Norwegian television, in one of the largest Norwegian newspapers and in Time Magazine. I was unprepared for this aspect of longitudinal research, which is important to have in mind for future longitudinal researchers. Standards of research ethics change over time, and over the decades that have passed, there has been an increased emphasis on protect participants' anonymity. When returning to participants in previous projects, this should be taken into consideration, even if, in the future, this problem will probably be even more pressing, as a large majority now live 'on display' continuously in different media including social media.

### **Individual interviews, 2007, with sons of work-sharing couples**

The sons were interviewed individually. The semi-structured individual research interview is one of the most frequently used methods in qualitative research. In the articles I have not discussed the methodological aspects of individual interviews, which I will do here. In the individual interviews I/we employed a chronologically ordered interview guide, starting with the informant's early childhood memories, including memories of his parents' work-sharing arrangement. I let the informants choose the location for the interview, and approximately half chose to be interviewed at home and the other half came to my office. In the home interviews, the researcher(s) (on two occasions we were two researchers)<sup>iv</sup> was/were received as a guest; there were candles on the table and a friendly and open atmosphere. There was always coffee and sometimes cakes. Some had prepared themselves by asking their parents about the details of their work-sharing arrangement, as many of them did not remember their parents' work-sharing themselves.

The interviews aimed at a chronological account of the informant's life course and current work–family adaptation as well as reflecting on the impact of parents' work-sharing arrangement in childhood and on their own work–family adaptation. The informants were friendly and helpful. In contrast to their parents, however, they remained in the role of informants and did mostly not ask me of my work–family adaptation. I felt sympathetic with them, but I did not identify as strongly with them as with their parents. In relation to the sons the generational difference was the other way round, as I was probably perceived as being closer in age to their parents than to them. In contrast to the interviews with the parents, which I had experienced as exciting, extraordinary and different from all other interviews I have done, the interviews with the sons were more ordinary research interviews. Nevertheless, I was deeply moved by some of the son's stories.

The interviews that I carried out in the informants' homes turned out to be the richer ones, although the home interviews also demonstrated some of the challenges involved in interviewing people in their homes. Some of the interviews were disturbed by a wife or partner being present, by children making noise, or in demanding the attention of the father during the interview and/or by pets playing with and eventually pulling my recorder down off the table. Sometimes several disturbances occurred simultaneously. In one case a carpenter used a motorized saw to tear down a wall in the same room, while, the wife was present but did not take part in the interview, rather, she was moving back and forth, and joined the conversation on and off, while their little son was playing with a vehicle with a loud whistle and hard plastic wheels; when he was not climbing on his father, whom I was trying to interview. Partly due to the noise and confusion, I forgot to turn the recorder back on after pausing when my informant left to fetch coffee, and this was probably just as well, as the intolerable noise would have been very difficult to handle during transcription. Such situations highlight the practical and mundane aspects of qualitative interviewing. As a guest, the researcher will have to put up with circumstances that might seriously interfere with the aim of obtaining a neat, taped story that can later be transcribed and analysed as text.

Despite the difficult circumstances, and eventually the loss of the recording, this particular interview provided invaluable observational data that adds to the general picture of the variety of careers and lifestyles among the now adult children of the work-sharing couples. This interview gave me a glimpse into the life of this young family in which both held

low-skill jobs and had little formal education. They lived in a newly built, rather spacious house with a view of the lake nearby. The living room was rather messy, with toys all over the floor and the dinner leftovers still on the table. Their casual reception of the researcher (me) and their apparently relaxed attitude towards the general mess in the house, the child with food all over his face, all challenge the commonly held perceptions of the spotless home as a showpiece, particularly for working-class women.

The individual interviews varied more than the couple interviews, approximately half of the individual interviews with sons also provided rich oral data, while the other half gave more scarce interview data. There are several possible explanations for why not all the interviews with sons gave equally rich data. The interview setting may have played a role; the interviews conducted in my not too cosy office tended to provide scarcer data. Further, the research topic may have played a role; the parents' life story and the parents' untraditional work–family arrangement was the reason we contacted them' in the first place. Unlike their parents the sons had not actively striven to live differently, and when interviewed they were found to live in what I call neo-traditional work/care adaptations (Bjørnholt, 2010c; 2014b). The sons may not have felt the same motivation as the parents who were aware they had a very special story to tell.

Finally, conducting individual interviews with men on family issues is recognised as a well known methodological challenge (Lareau 2002). Some informants seemed to see the researcher as looking for problems, and answered my questions in a defensive, 'no problem' manner, rather than in a narrative way. In some of the individual interviews, I obviously did not succeed in bringing the informants 'to the brink of telling' (Plummer 1995). In these interviews, one can trace my growing nervousness vis-à-vis a taciturn informant, formulating the questions in an increasingly detailed way, which gave rise to a negative dynamic between us. Although the pattern was not systematic, and the sample is too small to draw any general conclusion, I wonder if there is a class dimension to this problem. The self-reflective exploration of one's past and one's own personal biography and the idea that one's personal story is of interest to other people, is probably part of a middle-class habitus, at least to a larger extent than a habitus of the less privileged. This raises the question whether everyone can be brought to tell. I was surprised to find that textbooks on qualitative research do not address the question of taciturn informants. It is somehow taken for granted that everyone can be brought to tell and that everyone's experiences can be transformed into a narrative.

In addition to the individual interviews with the sons, I did one test case in which I conducted individual interviews in addition to the couple interview with one of the work-sharing couples. These individual interviews did not add much as compared with the couple interview, rather the opposite; both seemed more restrained than in the couple interview. In this case, one explanation may be that they had already told their common story as well as their individual stories during the couple interview.

Scientific methods are important for the trustworthiness, validity and possible usefulness and generalizability of a study and its results. Appendix C presents a reflection on the study and its results in relation to claims of reliability, validity and generalizability of qualitative research.

## **Research ethical considerations**

### **The longitudinal follow-up study**

The fact that the follow-up study was not part of the research design of the original project poses some research ethical problems. Firstly, the fact that I was able to trace the participants after thirty years represents a deviation from current rules of data handling, according to which the lists with the names that Erik Grønseth kept in his attic, as well as those in the remaining boxes from his office in the cellar of the University (See Appendix A), should have been shredded after the project had been completed. Luckily they were not. Still, the unique opportunity and the possible value of doing a follow-up study after thirty years does not do away with the ethical problems. For the first part of the couple interviews, the problem of consent was solved by Erik Grønseth calling the participants in the pilot study to introduce me and obtain their permission that I contact them for a follow-up interview. Regrettably, Erik Grønseth died soon after the pilot study was completed, and I contacted the remaining informants myself. In doing so, I was encouraged by the experience from the first half of the sample, who had all responded positively, and some had even themselves previously proposed a follow-up study. There was thus reason to believe that the participants to some extent shared an interest in a follow-up study.

All but one responded positively, some very positively and others more reluctantly, claiming that they would have forgotten or apologizing for having returned to a more traditional arrangement. One of the original participants did not want to be interviewed in the follow-up study; in this case the spouse was dead and the remaining spouse was ill. In this case, I



felt like an intruder. This case illustrates the ethical problems of contacting informants after such a long time. In this case, the life situation of the informant had dramatically changed, and my request for an interview about the past might have felt out of place or triggered negative emotions. I did, however, respectfully accept the decision not to participate, and I did not approach this person again. Nor were the descendants of this couple contacted for the intergenerational study, and I think the possible stress that my initial request may have evoked was within the limits of what must be accepted.

### **Anonymity and consent in multi-person case studies**

All families have family myths, taboos and secrets that may be revealed to a researcher in an individual interview under the promise of anonymity, but which are not meant to be revealed to other members of the family and which could be of a sensitive nature if revealed. Even when all family members have given their consent to and have been interviewed within an intergenerational research design there is a problem of how to retain anonymity between family members in the analysis and in the presentation of cases consisting of more than one person who know each other. As soon as the individual cases are clustered into dyads, triads, family or kin groups (or any group of people who know each other) anonymity is renounced among the informants belonging to the same family/group.

In this intergenerational follow-up study the original project was not originally carried out with an intergenerational design in mind. Even if I would try to stick to presumably non-controversial parts of the interviews with the parents, it would be impossible for me to know if topics that might appear uncontroversial to me would be controversial if linked to information about and, subsequently, revealed to the children. Using interview data obtained in a different setting to construct multi-person or family cases, consisting of persons who are related to or know each other, is problematic in terms of research ethics.

I had originally planned for thick descriptions of multi-person, single family cases. I concluded, however, that I could not use the data from the couple interviews to construct detailed intergenerational cases at family level by linking thick descriptions of the parents obtained in the couple interviews with the interviews with individual sons. The only case I analysed in depth as an intergenerational multi-person case at family level, was the case in which I carried out individual interviews with both parents and the son (Bjørnholt, 2009b). In this case all members had been inter-

viewed individually knowing they were participating in an intergenerational study. Even in this case, the ethical question of intra-family confidentiality remains a problem. Due to methodological and analytical considerations, which I have discussed (Bjørnholt, 2009b), and to research ethical considerations, I chose not to rely on such detailed family cases. In the final analysis within the father–son study, the main emphasis is on the sons and I present briefer information of the parents (Bjørnholt, 2010c).

Brannen, Moss and Mooney (2004) in their multi-generational study also draw attention to confidentiality that they claim to be ‘of particular importance in this study’. Their discussion primarily focuses on retaining confidentiality in the research process, and they do not specifically address the topic of intra-family confidentiality in the final presentation of the cases. Brannen et al. apply several analytical approaches in addition to intergenerational family cases, such as cohort, historical period and individual biography, rather than relying entirely on intra-familial, multi-generational cases. By presenting multi-generational cases as slim stories, abstaining from ‘thick descriptions’, Brannen et al. have chosen to reduce the problems of confidentiality between family members in very much the same way as I have done in this study.



## Chapter 6. Analysis

### Analysis of biographical data

The analysis of biographical data may have different foci, and biographical interviews may be read with different thematic emphasis. During my first reading of the couple interviews, I searched for general patterns and themes of particular interest. During this reading, the key role of the men in initiating and implementing the arrangement emerged as a general pattern in the majority of the interviews. The couples often referred to the men's agency, emphasizing that, contrary to what other people assumed, the wife had not been the primary promoter of the arrangement; to the contrary, the men had often initiated and promoted the arrangement. In one case only, both spouses admitted to the wife having 'forced' her husband.

Men's active role in initiating the arrangement as it emerged in the interviews guided the design of the final part of the study, in which I focused primarily on the men. In retrospect, one could hypothesize that the positioning by both men and women of the men as the main promoters could be interpreted in view of Haavind's (1982) theory of relative subordination. In emphasizing men's agency and personal choice, their position as relatively dominant as men in relation to their female partners was not threatened, but rather strengthened by their acting untraditionally. Admitting to having complied with the wife's demands would, by contrast, have positioned them as subordinate, which would have threatened their position as men. A strong emphasis on the men's agency may also to some extent be a research effect; changing men's adaptation to work and care was the unusual element, as well as the main tool of change in the Work-Sharing Couples Project. The focus was subsequently on the men acting untraditionally. These considerations do not reduce nor detract from the work-sharing men's agency; rather, they contribute to situate and contextualize their agency in relation to their positioning in relation to new ideals of masculinity in the 1970s.

I conducted several readings of the interview transcripts, with different thematic as well as analytical foci. The main thematic foci were: couple story, professional biography, retrospective reflection on individual motivations and agency, and intergenerational transmission. In some of the readings, the main emphasis was on biographical facts (life histories); in others evaluative and reflexive parts of the interviews (life stories) were the

main focus. I pursued a similar strategy for the couple interviews and the interviews with sons. The first reading of the interviews with the sons revealed that the sons of these untraditional fathers were predominantly living in what I call neo-traditional work–family arrangements. The subsequent readings revealed differences in the way the men reasoned about their present work–family arrangement and how they saw their current work–family arrangement as compared to their family of origin (Bjørnholt, 2010c).

I chose to use the couple interviews as a source of data on the men’s individual biographies, rather than carrying out additional individual interviews with the fathers, which I had originally envisioned. This choice was a result of the analysis of the couple interviews, which turned out to contain rich data even on the individual biographies. I concluded that the couple context added to the richness of the data rather than being a limitation even for the analysis of the fathers’ personal and professional life courses (Bjørnholt, 2011). Further, the individual test interviews with both parents in one family, did not add anything substantially new to the couple interview. Finally, the ethical considerations discussed above played a role for my choice to use the couple interviews as the main source of data on the fathers.

In the two articles on fathers and sons, I conduct an intergenerational analysis, employing single cases in two different ways. Bjørnholt (2009b) is an in-depth analysis of one case, with the aim to critically explore and discuss the father–son research design of the intergenerational part of the study. For the analysis of the main character, the son, I employed a special method of in-depth analysis, the Listening Guide (Appendix 1: B). Bjørnholt (2010c) is a group level comparison between fathers and sons where I present selected cases as illustrations of different orientations among the sons.

## **Work-sharing fathers and sons**

A brief description of main findings of the follow-up study is needed to facilitate the analysis of the work–family adaptations of fathers and sons. One of the findings from the follow-up study was the long duration of the work-sharing arrangement among the experimental couples—ranging from one and a half to 30 years, with seven years as the mean duration. The men played a key role in initiating work-sharing in their families. When explaining their agency, biographical influences from their families of origin and domestic skills emerged as important factors, while promot-

ing the careers of wives, along with elements of self-interest, emerged as important motivational factors (Bjørnholt, 2009a; 2011). Twelve of 15 couples were still married, and the work-sharing arrangement has been regarded by the majority of participants to have had a positive impact on their marital relation, work/life balance and well being (Bjørnholt, 2009a). The men were also found to have been rather successful professionally, and their experiences as work-sharers and house-husbands were mainly valued and seen as contributing to skills in their workplaces (Bjørnholt, 2010b).

The sons had predominantly positive memories of their childhood, although few remembered their parents' work-sharing, which mostly took place when they were below school age. The work-sharing families adhered to egalitarian and participatory principles and both the parents and the sons reported that the children had to help out with domestic tasks on a regular basis. At the time of the interviews, the sons—themselves the fathers of young children—were all found to live—some comfortably, others somewhat uncomfortably—in neo-traditional work–family adaptations: both partners had paid work, and both were involved in the care of their children. Nevertheless, the men worked slightly more and their wives slightly less, and there was a corresponding gender division of household work. Although the sons were found to be involved fathers, expressed egalitarian attitudes and took an interest in working reduced hours and sharing domestic work, their actual work–family adaptation revealed a lack of intergenerational transmission of the egalitarian work–family arrangements from the parents. The sons explained their work–family arrangement as the outcome of practical considerations and their wives' choice (Bjørnholt 2009b; 2010c).

I will now analyse the work–family adaptations of fathers and sons using the conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 1.

## **Work-sharing fathers in their time**

### **Political appeals in the 1970s**

In the 1970s second-wave feminism, along with other social movements, represented a strong political appeal for redistribution, justice and solidarity. The women's movement triggered a pro-feminist response from groups of men as well as a call for a certain male chivalry; namely, that men, too, should actively make an effort to challenge patriarchy and promote gender equality. The hegemonic masculinity related to the male breadwinner was

challenged by alternative masculinity ideals. In the early 1970s, the male breadwinner model had already come under strain due to theoretical critiques since the 1950s and to political struggles from the 1960s, and also due to changing reality, with the increasing number of women entering the labour market. The time was ripe for the formulation of a new gender contract and alternative masculinity positions, namely the partner-oriented, egalitarian masculinity position identified in the work-sharing men (Bjørnholt, 2011).

The pro-feminist response from men culminated with the immensely popular *Boken om menn* (The book on Men), published in 1976 (Bjørnkly 1976). In this first book on men in Norway the authors took as their starting point, the 'legitimate claims' of the women's movement and the contributors discuss how men too could change, as a response to the feminist challenge. At the same time, parallel to the development of men's movements in other countries (Gronemann 1987; Kimmel 1996; Messner 1997; Hill 2007), there was a masculinist response and men's lobby groups and organizations came to play an increasingly important role in family law reform processes from the mid 1970s, starting with the preparation of the Children's Act that was passed in 1981 (Gundersen 1984). Their agenda was to strengthen men's rights as fathers, drawing on the gender equality discourse as well as on arguments from early Norwegian family research, such as the idea of father absence (Bjørnholt, 2009b).

### **Scientific truth regimes in the 1970s**

The scientific truth regimes related to gender in the 1970s were in transition. They were still heavily influenced by early Norwegian family research in the 1950s and the radical use of sex-role theory in the Nordic countries during the 1960s, which had firmly established a view of gender as socially constructed and changeable, but also implicitly took for granted a harmonious, consensus view of gender relations (Bjørnholt, 2010a; 2012). As in Sweden (Roman, 2008), in Norway too, sex role theory acted as a bridge discourse (Fraser, 1987), influencing politics at the time. Throughout the 1970s sex role theory was challenged, both internationally and in the Nordic countries, by second wave feminism introducing more conflictual concepts of gender power, patriarchy and male suppression. New theories of patriarchy emphasised men's role in structures of oppression and the exploitation of women, but despite the theorising of patriarchy at system level, the 'man question' receded into the background in Norwegian research and theorising of the 1970s when women and wom-

en's lives were at the centre of research interest. The new women's studies were important in the co-construction of welfare state reforms within 'state feminism' (Hernes, 1987), facilitating women's combination of paid work and care.

### **Personal biography of work-sharing fathers**

Among the work-sharing men a higher proportion than was usual at the time had mothers who worked outside the home during their upbringing. Further, they had also disproportionately experienced some kind of childhood loss in terms of the illness or death of a parent. For these and other reasons, the vast majority had acquired substantial skills in domestic work from their family of origin, and many of them identified with their mothers. As adults, in explaining their agency in relation to the work-sharing arrangement, they referred to these childhood experiences, which they seemed to have transformed into an authoritative and caring attitude and way of being (Bjørnholt, 2011).

### **Structures of opportunity**

Men born in the 1940s were young during the period of the shift in the view of gender relations and the democratisation of relations in the workplace that took place during the 1960s and 70s. It was also a period of rapid economic growth, and the expansion of higher education and the growth of the state apparatus opened new career paths for the highly educated as well as for young people with little formal education. In the 1970s women increasingly entered education as well as the labour market. The male dominance in higher education in Norway started to decline during the 1960s, though the share of women in higher education did not reach 50% until 1986 (Statistics Norway, 1994).

As a group, women in the 1970s still had less education than men and tended to be concentrated in the emerging professions of health and care, which also tended to be lower paid than male-dominated occupations. The work-sharing couples also reflected some of the general gender differences in educational levels and occupations. The men had, to a greater extent, higher levels of education that led a larger proportion of them into careers, while the majority of the women had less education and predominantly worked in female-dominated professions. Despite the increase in women's labour market participation, in the 1970s the one-earner family, relying on a male breadwinner earning a 'family wage' was still an option in the parental generation. This was also the case in the work-sharing couples,



although many of them emphasised that the part-time adaptation involved financial constraint and was also part of a wider, anti-consumerist orientation. Part-time work was not a right for working parents, nor were part-time workers' rights institutionalised in the early 1970s. Nevertheless, with increasing numbers of working mothers, part-time work for women had become widely accepted.

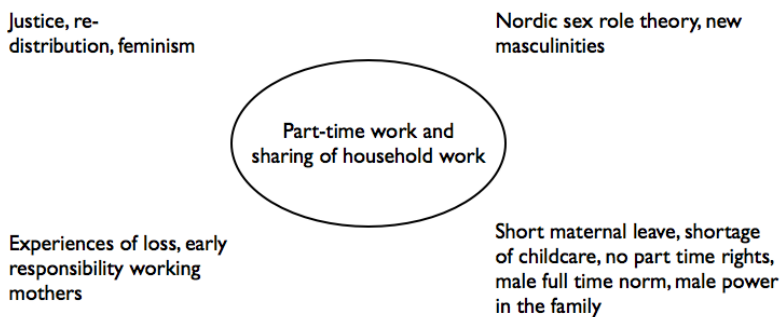
The democratisation of the relations in working life culminated with the Work Environment Act in 1978. The general tendency towards democratisation of working life may have played a role in employer attitudes, which may to some extent may explain why obtaining part-time work was uncomplicated for the work-sharing men, as well as the lack of a negative impact on their careers. On the other hand, welfare state benefits for parents were still scarce: paid maternal leave was short, fathers were not eligible for leave and childcare facilities were also scarce.

### **The relations between discourses, personal biography, structures of opportunity and work–family adaptation of work-sharing fathers**

The work-sharing men established families and had children at the time when second-wave feminism and other social movements challenged previous gender relations. Claims of equality between men and women were raised as part of the political appeal for justice and redistribution, which was manifest at several levels of society: by social movements and new political parties as well as in academia and in the popular culture. The 1970s represented an ideological and political window of opportunity for men who wanted to embrace new masculinity ideals and shape egalitarian relations with their partners, positioning themselves as modern men. In taking the initiative and actively contributing to the work-sharing arrangement, the work-sharing men promoted egalitarian work and care arrangements in their families, drawing on the discourses of redistribution and solidarity, using arguments of justice and also of self-interest. Contemporary social appeals to justice, redistribution and solidarity and the appeals from feminism have served as discursive facilitating structures. Further, the insufficient welfare state benefits for working parents as well as the inadequate structures of opportunity in working life may have served both as a constraint and as an incentive for egalitarian-minded couples to find solutions among themselves. Finally, the double-part-time solution meant living on two half wages, summing up to one full wage, which was still an option for families at that time.

Positioning themselves against the hegemonic male breadwinner ideal of the past, which was already weakened after decades of critiques, and which was abandoned as a model for family policy in the same period, the work-sharing men could draw on strong counter discourses within which they could position themselves as modern and egalitarian-minded men. Finally, in the 1970s, male dominance in the family still persisted as an option and a reality in many families. As argued elsewhere (Bjørnholt, 2011), this may have provided a scope of action for the constructive use of that power by the work-sharing men.

Although contemporary gender appeals and new masculinity positions were important, the biographical factor cannot be overlooked. The work-sharing men stand in contrast to other men in the 1970s who were exposed to the same discourses and who were offered the same possibilities in terms of new masculinity positions available at that time, but most of whom did not change their adaptations to work and care as the work-sharing men did. The most important factor in explaining these men's agency seems to have been the way they had integrated specific, sensitising childhood experiences into a caring and authoritative way of being. Their work–family arrangements in relation to personal biography, contemporary discourses and structures of opportunity are illustrated in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Work-sharing men's work–family adaptation in relation to discourses, personal biography and structures of opportunity.

## **Work-sharing sons in their time**

### **Political appeals in the 2000s**

In the 2000s gender equality has become generally accepted by a majority of the population (Holter et al., 2009). At the same time, interventionist family policies, such as the paternal quota of parental leave, exert a strong ideological and financial pressure on men to take a greater share of the care of their children, also signalling that gender equality has not yet been achieved. In its current version, the vision that both parents should share breadwinning and care equally, has shrunk into a narrow focus on the sharing of parental leave, with an emphasis on the recognition of men as equal carers (Bjørnholt, 2010a; 2012). The fostering of father-care (Hobson, 2002), the child oriented masculinity ideal (Bekkengen, 2002) and the dual earner/dual carer model have become hegemonic in policy-making. As a result, alternative masculinity positions that could serve as the basis of actively contesting and changing gender relations are lacking.

### **Scientific truth regimes in the 2000s**

For the last two decades the focus in academic gender research has been on the performative aspects of gender, differences among women and among men and on the possibilities of destabilising gender categories, rather than on gender structures and differences in power and resources between men and women. In contrast to Sweden, where the sex-role paradigm was replaced by a new paradigm of gender power during the 1990s, in Norway, theories of gender power did not have the same influence and did not reach the same level of acceptance in academia and policy making. In Sweden, Roman (2008) argues that theories of gender power, similarly to the sex role theory in the 1960s and 1970s, came to act as a bridge discourse in political reform processes. In Norway, lacking a new, shared gender paradigm, policy-making came to rely on eclectic use or assemblages of theories and common-sense concepts, among them elements of sex-role theory having become part of everyday language (Bjørnholt 2009b; 2010a; 2014a). The current scientific truth regime in relation to gender equality is perhaps that of gender equality as a consensual concept which is taken for granted, that does not demand any particular endeavour from men, other than using their state-provided paternal rights. Rather the opposite, one may argue, as organised men's interests and men's lobby groups, drawing on the discourse of gender equality, have played and still play a major role in shaping Norwegian family policies (Lødrup,

2006; Annfelt, 2008; Bjørnholt 2009b; 2010). In 1988, the ‘man question’ re-emerged in public debates and policymaking with a governmental commission on men’s role. One of its most important proposals was the paternal quota of parental leave, which was introduced in 1993. In contrast to questions of custody, visiting rights, the level of child support and biological fatherhood, which have been successfully pursued by men’s rights groups since the mid 1970s, the promotion of the male carer was primarily the result of a state feminist initiative.

The current conceptualizations and policies of men and gender equality are contradictory. On one hand, the Norwegian policy of fostering caring masculinities is a much celebrated part of present gender equality policies, nationally as well as internationally. On the other hand, there seems to be a conflation of the struggle for men’s rights and the struggle for gender equality. Arguments of redistribution – the need for men to share the burdens of parenthood – are intertwined or confounded with arguments of recognition of men as equal parents and of fathers’ rights to a more equal share of the pleasures of parenthood. This ambiguity makes it unclear whether men are to *contribute* to gender equality in the family or if men are to be *treated more equally* as parents, assuming that men are being discriminated. These changes correspond to Fraser’s (2000, 2003) diagnosis of the present situation in which she points out that today questions of recognition have replaced the questions of justice and redistribution that dominated 1970s public discourses and policy-making. Elsewhere, I have argued (Bjørnholt, 2010a; 2012), that fathers’ rights organizations from below and state feminist policies from above collude in making father policies the main gender equality policy issue in Norway, both drawing on the gender equality discourse and on ideas from early Norwegian family research such as the idea of father-absence.

Despite the current political interest in men as fathers, and despite Norwegian researchers’ pioneer work on men and men’s role, the ‘man question’ is under-theorised in Norway today. In Sweden, by contrast, critical studies of men and masculinities are thriving, partly by involving Anglophone theories of masculinities, and partly drawing on home bred traditions (Hearn et al., 2012).

### **Personal biography sons of work-sharing men**

In contrast to their fathers, the majority of the sons grew up in relatively egalitarian families with two well-functioning parents. Like their fathers, but for different reasons, they also participated in domestic work from an

early age. They were aware that their parents had been untraditional, and were proud of and identified with their fathers (Bjørnholt, 2010b).

### **Structures of opportunity**

For men born in the 1970s, secondary education had become common for everyone. Further, although unemployment reached higher levels than in the preceding stable growth period, in international comparison unemployment has remained low in Norway, and work opportunities were generally good for the sons' generation, too. In the 2000s, Norwegian women's labour market participation, and particularly that of mothers of young children is among the highest in Europe. Families rely on both partners' paid work and, due to higher costs of living, in particular housing costs, and higher living standard. Few perceive living on one income as an option for families. The 'working mother' model is, however, not uniformly embraced: in Southern Norway – a stronghold of non-clerical Lutheranism – more traditional gender roles prevail (Ellingsen & Lilleaas, 2010).

The labour market has remained gendered, with women predominantly working in the public sector and in caring professions, and the gender pay gap between female-dominated and male-dominated occupations persists. A significant proportion of women (40%) work part-time, but fathers' overtime has been declining over the last twenty years and there is a tendency towards convergence in men's and women's working patterns (Kitterød and Rønsen, 2014). On the other hand, the entitlements of working parents also include the right to shorter and flexible working hours and part-time workers enjoy equal rights with full-time workers in terms of holidays, sickness leave, unemployment benefits and job security. Furthermore, parents of young children have the right to additional unpaid leave or part-time work after parental leave and the right to paid time off with sick children.

At the time the sons were interviewed, in 2007, parents had the right to nine and a half months state-paid parental leave, of which five to six weeks were reserved for the father and six weeks for the mother. The rest of parental leave can be shared. Both the paternal quota and the parental leave have since been expanded. In addition to the paternal quota of parental leave, fathers have the right to two weeks off work at the birth of a child. In addition, childcare facilities have been steadily expanded, and full coverage of childcare facilities for children above one year was reached in

2008. Finally, parents of children below three years who did not use publicly sponsored childcare were eligible for a cash-for-care scheme.

### **The relations between discourses, personal biography, structures of opportunity and work–family adaptation of sons**

It is interesting that the sons ended up in neo-traditional work–family arrangements, considering their personal biography of growing up in egalitarian and untraditional families, the current discourses on men and care, and the relatively lavish structures of opportunity in terms of workers' rights and welfare state benefits when compared with those of their parents. One explanation may be that the sons, as members of the generation to follow an active and strategic generation to which their parents belong, take gender equality for granted both as part of their personal biography and as part of the general discursive shift that has taken place since the 1970s, namely, from gender equality as a challenge and part of a political struggle for justice to gender equality which is taken for granted and something that has been achieved.

The sons explained their work–family arrangement as the outcome of practical considerations and of their wives' personal choice. It is important to point out that this 'choice' is taken within structures in working life, such as the gendered labour market and the gender pay gap, which still favour male breadwinner and female junior partner arrangements, as the debate over preferences in the United Kingdom (UK) and Norway has demonstrated (Crompton and Lyonette, 2006; Halrynjo and Lyng, 2009). On the other hand, gender relations have changed, and male dominance in the family has been weakened. The sons were egalitarian-minded partners and involved fathers, but for the majority their vision of sharing equally did not include the equal sharing of paid work. In this respect their work–family adaptations did not differ from the general picture in Nordic couples today. In referring to the wife's choice rather than seeing an egalitarian work–family arrangement as part of common family responsibility, they are in line with current discourses of individualism and personal choice.

The son's work–family adaptation takes place within the contemporary context of a dual earner model—with both parents engaged in paid work, more of families' total time is spent in paid work, leaving less room of manoeuvre, as well as less time for unpaid work in the family. The average weekly time spent in paid employment of men in Norway is approximately 41.5 hours, while that of women is 35.5 hours. The gendered outcomes

and redistributive injustices over the life-course resulting from the subtly gendered pattern of men working slightly more, and women working slightly less than full time, with women taking slightly more, and men slightly less responsibility for domestic work, are less visible than the clear-cut, gender specialised male breadwinner arrangement of the past. The rationale to actively reallocate paid and unpaid work is less obvious than it was for the parents.

Nevertheless, some of the sons expressed a preference for shorter working hours, and some had, in fact, worked slightly less than full time for short periods, but shorter working hours were often offset by taking on extra assignments or studies (Bjørnholt, 2009b; 2010c; Wetlesen, 2010; 2012). In expressing a preference for reduced hours, which is not realised in practice, they do not differ from their peers (Kitterød, 2007). Their emphasis on domestic work as an important aspect of everyday life as a couple, however, differs from what is found in other studies of Nordic couples (Magnusson, 2008). Maybe the passion for domestic work is part of the heritage that has been passed on from their parental homes?

There was no trace of the most prominent current discourses on men and gender equality in the way the sons talked of their work–family adaptations. None talked of the need for them to be recognised as equal parents, nor of fathering as separate from their obligation towards the family as a whole. In this respect, they reproduce the strong emphasis on the common family perspective from their parental homes. The fact that all but one of the sons interviewed were recruited from families in which the parents were still married and the sons themselves all lived with the mother of their children means that family break-up is not an important part of their personal biography. The lived experience of family stability among the sons, does not support current discourses on the exclusive father–child bond and men’s parental rights, which have to a large extent been shaped in the wake of rising divorce rates. The fact that the sons in this study do not draw on these discourses may be due to their experience of family stability. This situation might change if their life circumstances changes, for instance in the case of divorce.

Today the once radical egalitarian masculinity appeal of the 1970s has become hegemonic, which may be seen as the heritage of the historically transformative parental generation. There are no strong discourses directed at redistributive justice and no evident alternative masculinity positions available that could provide the ground for an active project of change for men. The contemporary egalitarian, hegemonic masculinity

may thus represent a social closure (Edmunds and Turner, 2004) that serves to obscure persisting gender inequalities, thus preventing deliberate action towards change. On the other hand, change may be happening even without a conscious and active positioning and struggle for change, and the reduction in fathers' working hours over the last decade is an indication of on-going change with implications for gender relations.

The work-sharing families provided beneficial environments for their children's upbringing, and both the original project and the follow-up study concluded that the work-sharing arrangement led to a better family life, less stress and greater well being for all family members (Bjørnholt, 2009a). One implication is that the sons were brought up within well-functioning family structures, in contrast to their fathers who, when explaining their agency and untraditional adaptation, referred to experiences of loss or deficit from their families of origin. Other studies, from the UK, of exceptionally egalitarian men have also emphasised the importance of such biographical influences of loss and childhood trauma. David Morgan (1992), drawing on the backgrounds of pioneering 'male feminists' (those men who supported the *suffragette* movement), and Harry Christian (1994), drawing on interviews with declared pro-feminist men, both find that similar experiences were important in the 'making' of pro-feminist men.

If such sensitising experiences are still important for men to become genuinely egalitarian, not only their attitudes, but in practice, the work-sharing men's sons may not be biographically predisposed to act untraditionally to the same extent as their fathers. The sons' work-family arrangements in relation to personal biography, contemporary discourses and structures of opportunity are illustrated in Figure 3.

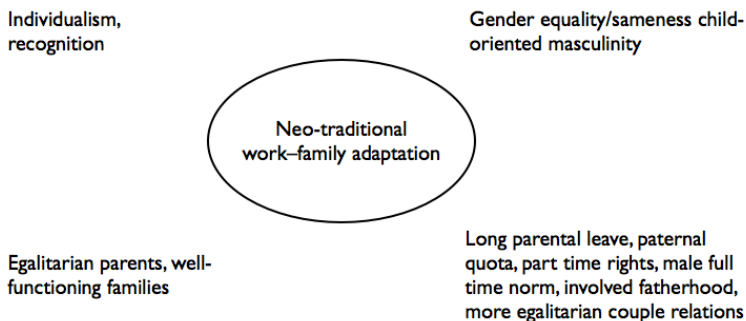


Figure 3. Sons' work-family adaptation in relation to discourses, personal biography and structures of opportunity



The fathers' agency, as well as the lack of intergenerational transmission of an egalitarian work–family arrangement to sons, must be understood in terms of the complex interplay of individual life history and the specific historical contexts including social appeals, political appeals, and the social structures of opportunity in place during upbringing as well as in adulthood. The fathers' agency must also be seen in relation to the political calls and scientific truth regimes of the 1970s, which were available to members of the active generation they belonged to, but cannot be reduced to these; rather, individual biography seems to have been crucial in explaining their agency. The fathers' untraditional adaptation must be understood in view of historical timing, individual biographies and personal agency.

The lack of intergenerational transmission must likewise be understood in relation to the discursive, political and material structures of opportunity within which the sons' work–family adaptation took place, and as part of the dynamics between active and passive generations. The structures available to the son's generation are to a large extent the result of the successful struggles of the active parental generation, and in becoming taken-for-granted structures of opportunity they also represent a kind of social closure. Further, at an individual level the work-sharing parents' work–family adaptation was only one among many other factors in the sons' life history, and not the one that dominated their choice of work–family adaptation, in which contemporary concerns prevailed. Figure 4 summarises the contemporary contexts of fathers and sons, the changes in discourses and structures of opportunity between the 1970s and the 2000s, and differences in personal biography between fathers and sons.

Fathers	Sons
Justice, re-distribution feminism	Individualism, recognition
Experiences of loss, early responsibility, working mothers	Egalitarian parents, well-functioning families
Nordic sex role theory, new masculinities	Gender equality/sameness, child oriented masculinity
Short maternal leave, shortage of childcare, no part time rights, male full time norm, male power in the family	Long parental leave, paternal quota, part time rights, male full time norm, involved fatherhood, egalitarian couple relations
Work sharing	Neo-traditional work/family arrangement
1970s	2000s

Figure 4. Work–family adaptations in two generations in relation to discourses, personal biography and structures of opportunity

### A contemporary perspective on the fathers

The analysis above also invites a reinterpretation of the findings from the analysis of the fathers (Bjørnholt 2009a; 2009b), in view of their life course and current situation. So far I have accepted to a large extent at face value what the men said about their motivations thirty years ago, that they did it to promote their wife’s career and her personal development or, one could say, for love. I have used the concept ‘partner-oriented masculinity’, which was in some cases mixed with self-interest, and I do not see these motivations as necessarily conflicting. So far I have interpreted the work-sharing men’s adaptations and positionings in relation to their 1970s context, which is open to re-interpretation in view of the analysis developed here. The work-sharing arrangement was perceived by the majority of the men to have had a positive impact on their further life course, both on their couple-relations and their careers. It could be that their interpretation in retrospect of their motivations for joining the work-sharing arrangement is positively flavoured by their positive experiences and the lack of negative consequences over the last thirty years. In the time that has passed, the egalitarian masculinity appeal has become hegemonic in Norway; this could also represent a temptation to position themselves in retrospect as early adopters of what is presently the most highly valued masculinity position.

The finding in the follow-up interviews of a tendency to share domestic work less equally, and of men having reached higher professional attainments than their wives, while claiming to have egalitarian relationships also invokes the question of family ideology (Hochschild 1989). When talking in retrospect of a situation in the past, in which they shared more equally, they do so from a current position when many had reverted to a less egalitarian sharing of domestic tasks, and a situation of increased differences between the men's and the women's occupational status and income. Emphasizing their agency to promote an egalitarian family arrangement in the past could be interpreted as a compensation for their current, not quite egalitarian arrangement, which could also lead to an overly positive view of their past, work-sharing arrangement.

Against these more suspicious interpretations, there are two pieces of evidence that strengthen the work-sharing men's credibility. Firstly, what they told about their work-sharing arrangement in the follow-up interviews, is largely confirmed by the findings in the original project, which also found that the men were actively involved in the decision to start work-sharing. Further, in the follow-up interviews, not everyone was unambiguously positive, and two of the men did express feelings of ambivalence and regret. Even the men who expressed such feelings, however, presented their motivations for joining the arrangement in the same way as the others, mainly drawing on 1970s' arguments of justice and redistribution. I conclude that a reinterpretation of motivations in view of the work-sharing men's successful biographies in terms of careers and couple relations, would not necessarily change the conclusion: the promotion of wives' careers was an important motivation of the work-sharing men—a motivation that resonated with the prevailing discourses of justice and gender equality in the 1970s. Further, the fact that, in contrast to most other men in the 1970s, they actually changed their work–family adaptation, I take as a strong argument that their agency in changing the arrangements of work and care cannot be reduced to the positive positioning of self in the present. The contemporary perspective on the findings is illustrated in Figure 5.

<b>Retrospective perspective</b>	<b>Interview context</b>
Justice, redistribution, feminism	Individualism, recognition
Experiences of loss, early responsibility, working mothers	Egalitarian parents, well-functioning families
Nordic sex role theory, new masculinities	Gender equality, sameness, child-oriented masculinity
Short maternal leave, shortage of childcare, no part-time rights, male full time norm, male power in the family	Long parental leave, paternal quota, part time rights, male full time norm, egalitarian couple relations
Work-sharing	Neo-traditional adaptations
1970s	2000s

Positive experience of work-sharing

Figure 5. Work-sharing couples speaking of the 1970s in the 2000s



## Discussion

The aim of this study has been to explore men's arrangements of work and care in two generations and the potential for men to act as agents of change in relation to gender equality in the family, as well as intergenerational transmission in terms of the impact on men's work–family adaptations of arrangements of work and care in their parental home. In this chapter I discuss the findings in view of the research questions:

- What made the work-sharing men become agents of change?
- What were the consequences for the work-sharing men as men, employees, husbands and fathers?
- Has the untraditional adaptation of the fathers been transmitted to sons?
- What are the relations between practices, motivations and contemporary discourses for fathers and sons?

### **What made the work-sharing men become agents of change?**

In explaining how the work-sharing men became agents of change in promoting and implementing the work-sharing arrangement in their families I have emphasized the following factors.

- Personal biography, personality and historical timing
- Promoting wife's career as a main motivation
- Skills in domestic work and sharing of domestic work as investment in the couple relationship
- Leisure as a motivation for some men
- Relation to children a motivation for a few

The analysis of the men's agency in relation to contemporary discourses and structures of opportunity concluded that they were in one sense 'children of their time', and that the ideological challenge of contemporary social movements offered a window of opportunity that facilitated the fathers' agency. Timing was very important. On the other hand, I conclude that what made them act the way they did seems to be their incorporation of specific childhood experiences into a caring and authoritative way of being. This finding, that egalitarian men share some experiences of childhood trauma, is supported by other research, from Morgan's (1992) to

research into men who supported the suffragette movement and studies of pro-feminist/antisexist men, such as Christian (1994) and Olsen (2007).

The work-sharing men's identification with their mothers, and their breaking with the traditional masculinity as represented by their fathers, concurs with Bengtsson's findings in the 1970s sample, in her study of parental identification. From a strong emphasis in the 1950s on identification with the parent of the same sex, Bengtsson concluded that the group of women who were young in the 1970s to a large extent identified with the parent of the opposite sex and that the cohort of men interviewed in the 1980s identified more with their mothers than with their fathers.

The present study expands the understanding of parental identification and motivation that have been addressed in other studies, to include questions of how personal biography and historical and discursive structures of opportunity interact to shape agency in relation to men's adult adaptations to work, family and couple relations.

### **What were the consequences for the work-sharing men as men, employees, husbands and fathers?**

The consequences for the work-sharing men of their participation in the work-sharing arrangement were predominantly positive and may be summarized as follows:

- Lack of workplace obstacles and lack of negative effects on careers
- The work-sharing men in general were successful professionally
- Those who pursued a career had one
- Valuation of caring experience as management skills—resourcing of self, paradox of valuation
- Valuation by wives and children as good husbands and fathers
- Self-confirmation as good men, caring and authoritative masculinity
- A small minority expressed ambivalence and regret

The analysis of the couples' post-work-sharing arrangements and their assessment of the consequences over the life course of the work-sharing arrangement on their couple relationship revealed that the consequences were perceived to have been positive for their couple relations and for the family as a whole. This part of the analysis also concluded that the men were highly valued by their wives as good husbands and fathers. The anal-

ysis of interviews with sons confirmed the positive valuation of the work-sharing men as fathers.

The finding that the work-sharing arrangement was beneficial for the couple relation is supported by Norwegian and Swedish research, in which lack of gender equality, abuse and oppression were found to be main reasons for divorce (Wadsby and Svedin, 1993; Moxness 1996; Ahrne and Roman, 1997). Frisco and Williams, 2003), found that wives' perceptions of inequity were negatively associated with marital happiness in a study based on a nationally representative (US) sample of individuals involved in dual-earner marriages, which examined the relationship between perceived fairness of housework division, marital happiness, and divorce. Perceived inequity in the division of household labour was negatively associated with both husbands' and wives' reported marital happiness but was positively associated with the odds of divorce among wives only. The authors propose that perceptions of an unfair division of household labour decreases women's marital quality and makes them more likely to end unsatisfying marriages. Another US study (Schoen, Rogers and Amato 2006) found that wives' (full-time) employment was associated with greater marital stability. Based on a large cross-national European study, Crompton and Lyonette (2005) concluded that women in 'congruent liberal' couples (liberal gender role attitudes and a less traditional division of domestic labour) scored much higher on happiness and life satisfaction than other women. However, men were equally happy in traditional or inconsistent (inconsistent attitudes and behaviour) couples. Crompton and Lyonette also found that both men and women in 'congruent liberal' couples 'reported significantly lower levels of work-life conflict than either 'congruent traditional' or 'inconsistent' respondents' (2005:617). The majority of the participants in the Work-Sharing Couples Project fit well into the 'congruent liberal' category, and the findings from the follow-up study confirm the conclusions in Crompton and Lyonette's study.

My analysis of work-sharing men's professional biographies found a lack of negative consequences on careers, and concluded that the men's work-sharing experiences were predominantly positively valued and often transformed into managing skills in the workplace. Although a small minority expressed feelings of ambivalence and regret, the consequences for the work-sharing men were predominantly positive.

The lack of negative consequences for men from their part-time adaptation, in contrast to the positive consequences on couple and family relations, is counter-intuitive and contrasts with widely held beliefs of strong



workplace obstacles to men's greater involvement in their families and to the reduction of working hours in particular. However, as I discuss at some length in Bjørnholt (2010b), this belief is not well founded, and other empirical research into parents' working arrangements and the responses in the workplace to requests for reduced working hours support the hypothesis that the workplace obstacles may be overrated (Olsen 2007).

One of the contributions of the present study is to document the longitudinal consequences of part-time work and the sharing of domestic work over the life course on family and career. This study thus moves beyond the myopic perspective in many studies of parents' adaptations to work and care that content themselves with snapshots of current arrangements and rely on perceptions and expectations of possible future consequences on careers and couple relations. The longitudinal design allows us to trace how both family life and careers actually turned out over the life course.

### **Has the untraditional adaptation of the fathers been transmitted to sons?**

My analysis of interviews with sons concluded that there had been no intergenerational transmission of the untraditional adaptation to work and care of the work-sharing parents to sons. The main conclusions of the intergenerational part of the study are summarized in the following points:

- No intergenerational transmission of egalitarian work–family arrangements to sons
- The complexity of intergenerational transmission, the need to distinguish between values, family practices and work–family arrangements
- Egalitarian relationships within neo-traditional work–family arrangements or the privatization and feminization of the work–family conflict?
- The possible influence on the sharing of domestic responsibility of structural differences outside the family such as differences in working conditions and pay between men and women.

The lack of intergenerational transmission found among sons of the work-sharing couples was also confirmed by Wetlesen's study of a sample that included both sons and daughters (Wetlesen, 2010; 2012). The lack of intergenerational transmission may seem counterintuitive in view of current policy ambitions and the widely shared hopes of changing gender

relations through the rearrangement of care in children's first year, which have for more than two decades dominated Norwegian family and gender equality policies. The finding is however supported by other research, such as Holter et al. (2009), which found no relation between egalitarian arrangements in the parental home and current work–family arrangements. Although there has been no intergenerational transmission of the work–family arrangement, analysis of sons' interviews revealed that the sons estimated their fathers' attitudes and agency highly, and identified with their fathers' values and ways of being. This finding concurs with Bengtsson's, who in her 1990s sample, found that identification with the parent of the same sex had again become more prominent, in contrast to the 1970s and 1980s samples in which identification with the parent of the opposite sex was more prominent.

Based on the sons' accounts, the work-sharing fathers seem to have been hands-on in matters such as helping with homework and education. Having chosen the same education as their fathers, the sons also came closer to their fathers when they grew older, although in the case explored in Bjørnholt (2009b), the mother was the one who had been hands-on and was also the parent to whom the son felt closer. This finding contrasts with Bengtsson's conclusion of a general decrease in father involvement and a transfer of parental responsibilities to mothers, as well as a decoupling of fathering from masculinity from the 1950s to the 1990s. This difference may be due to major differences between the two studies. While Bengtsson studied random samples of young people belonging to different cohorts, the present study is of a very special sample of egalitarian parents and their offspring. It could be expected that the fathers in these families played a more important role than fathers in general, as the sons' interviews indicate they did.

On the other hand, the interviews with the parents gave a more ambiguous picture, and in Bjørnholt (2009a) I concluded that there was a tendency for mothers to take a larger share of parental responsibility and that equal parenting did not always last. The sons' positive image of their fathers may be due to a paradox of valuation, parallel to the one I identified in the higher valuation of the men's house-father experiences in working life. Due to gendered expectations towards mothers and fathers, mothers' mothering and domestic work may be taken for granted, while fathers' parenting practices are seen and valued to a greater extent. From the sons' perspective, their fathers participated more in the family than other fathers, and they may thus have come to perceive their contribution as par-

ticularly important. Their parents, on the other hand, who started out with an ambition of sharing equally, may have been more aware of the less-than-equal distribution of parental responsibility among themselves.

The study shows how gender socialization and the work–family adaptation of each generation relies on the complex interplay of several factors, in which the passing on of ‘family heritage’, including egalitarian gender relations, from the family of origin, takes place in a non-linear, unpredictable and contradictory way, rather than being simply ‘transmitted’ to the next generation. Further, this study shows how in this process some parts may be taken up and other parts not, and finally, how the blending of different family traditions and contemporary structural and ideological constraints may counteract the passing on of egalitarian adaptations to work and care. Finally, it shows how in this process new paradoxes arise, such as the possible relation between women’s power in the family and the persistence of /return to neo-traditional work–family arrangements, also begging the question of the transformation of and changing meanings of gender equality from the 1970s to the 2000s.

In Bjørnholt (2009b) and (2010c) I discuss another possible paradox: whether the current welfare state opportunities for working parents may contribute to the ‘privatization’ of the work–family conflict in which women’s greater adaptations to caring responsibilities appear as their free choice, reducing the pressure on men to contribute actively to an egalitarian work/family arrangement. This bears some resemblance to the critique by Halrynjo and Lyng (2009), who, based on a study of Norwegian career couples, found that the women reduced their professional expectations to a greater extent after having children. Halrynjo and Lyng found that the long, paid parental leave offered in Norway was one of the factors that led to a reorientation by women away from careers. I would be careful about blaming parental leave alone for the gendered patterns of work and care; in this case a comparative perspective is important. Compared with women in other countries, Norwegian women do, after all, combine high labour market participation rates and high fertility rates, which may at least partly be taken as proof of successful state feminist policies that facilitate mothers’ paid work and working women’s motherhood. I would rather draw attention to my suggestion in Bjørnholt (2010c), that inequality in men’s and women’s working conditions may play a role in the reproduction of gendered patterns of work and care. Although the gendered differences in pay and working conditions are generally acknowledged, the main emphasis has been on explanations that take for granted the origin

of gender inequality in the unequal sharing of care and domestic work in the family, rather than the spillover of labour market inequalities to the family.

Taking the structural differences between men and women in the labour market as the starting point for the theorization of relations between inequality in the family and inequality in the labour market would imply a reversal of the causal chain. Rather than seeing inequality in the family as the major cause of inequality in the labour market, the explanations of gendered patterns of work and care in the family would have to be sought in the labour market. Pursuing this line of reasoning, the persistence of the 'double-full time' norm, the cost of housing and the pressure to consume, the subordination of the family sphere beneath paid work, and women's inferior working conditions, positions and pay in the labour market, may play a greater role in the distribution of family responsibilities and in a woman's 'choice' to prioritize family over paid work than has been acknowledged. In that case, social engineering within the family may not be the most effective means of promoting gender equality.

As a final comment on working life conditions in relation to the lack of intergenerational transmission of an egalitarian work-care arrangement: in Bjørnholt (2010b) and Bjørnholt (2010c), I raised the question of whether it was easier for the fathers to obtain part-time work in the 1970s than it would be for the sons in the 2000s, and I concluded it was probably not. As to whether it has become easier or more difficult for men in general to adapt their work to family responsibilities, the picture is ambiguous; on one hand, welfare state support, such as the paternal quota of parental leave, as well as a general cultural up-rating and a legal strengthening of fatherhood, as well as strong discursive support for father involvement, favour and facilitate fathers' involvement. On the other hand, other developments, such as globalization and the adoption of global management philosophies and working regimes may be at odds with the Norwegian welfare state endeavour to 'force' men gently into caring roles, as has been pointed out by Kvande (2005). Halrynjo and Lyng (2009) and Halrynjo (2010) also point out the strong pressures in working conditions and the limitless time regimes in some professions, leading to gendered adaptations of work and care in dual-earner career couples. Halrynjo concludes that the few men in her study who prioritized care experienced similar problems as the women. Whether experiencing similar problems at one point of time will lead to similar effects on careers for men and women over the life course is an empirical question that would need to be researched in a

longitudinal design. Based on the findings in the follow-up study of the work-sharing men, the longitudinal consequences on career of work–family adaptations of men and women may not be the same.

### **What are the relations between practices, motivations and contemporary discourses for fathers and sons?**

This question has been dealt with in the Analysis part of the dissertation. The points below briefly summarize the conclusions.

- The fathers: the importance of personal biography and the 1970s as an ideological window of opportunity for embracing a modern pro-feminist and radical masculinity position, transcending through personal agency the contemporary male worker norm as well as the lacking workplace and welfare state structures.
- The sons: neo-traditional work–family arrangements despite upbringing in untraditional families, and despite the current ideological hegemony of the dual breadwinner/dual carer model and the strong ideological as well as welfare state support of fathers’ participation in their families.

The fathers’ agency, as well as the lack of intergenerational transmission to sons, must be understood in terms of the complex interplay of individual biography, their specific historical contexts, including social and political appeals and social structures of opportunity during their upbringing as well as in adulthood. The fathers’ agency must be seen in relation to the political calls and scientific truth regimes with regard to gender relations of the 1970s, but cannot be reduced to these; rather individual biography seems to have been crucial in explaining their agency. The sons, despite taking gender equality for granted and despite being supported by structures of opportunity for involved fathering, as well as their experience of growing up in egalitarian families, have not had the same incitement to act untraditionally to shape egalitarian work–family arrangements.

### **Theorizing parenting and gender equality**

What conclusions can be drawn from these findings in relation to the three issues I set out to explore theoretically? How can the findings in this study contribute to the theorizing of the three issues below:

- The relations between child-oriented and gender equality oriented masculinities.
- The relations between equal parenting and equal (heterosexual) relationships.
- The meanings of work and care in the subjects' constructions of masculinity.

Before proceeding to a discussion of the findings and conclusions in relation to the above questions, a reflection on the questions is needed. In view of the theoretical approach and the analysis developed throughout the study and in this dissertation; do these questions address the most important theoretical issues that arise from this study? In retrospect, I think only partly so, as theoretical issues of a more wide-ranging kind emerged in the analysis. Still, I find it useful to pay a last visit to the questions I originally raised, before concluding.

The first question, about child-oriented (Bekkengen, 2002) versus gender-equality-oriented masculinities, I would reformulate to comply better with the theoretical approach of the dissertation. In its original formulation, I came dangerously close to a categorical view of men and masculinities, which is at odds with the more processual use of the concept of multiple masculinity positions on which I have chosen to rely. Rather than contrasting different masculinities, the question may be reformulated to address different positionings of masculinity.

The present study concludes that the couple relation, rather than the father-child relation, was the main focus, both of fathers and of sons, and identified a partner-oriented masculinity position from which the fathers acted to shape egalitarian gender relations in their families. Neither fathers nor sons drew on the child-oriented masculinity position when speaking of arrangements of work and care. This finding indicates that focusing on relations between men and women and the egalitarian/ partner-oriented masculinity position may be more important in changing gender relations than relying predominantly on the individual father-child relation and the child-oriented masculinity position. However, caution is warranted, as the findings may to some extent reflect the focus and design of the original study as well as the follow-up study, both of which focused on the couple's sharing of paid work and domestic work and the couple relation.

The study further concluded that equal parenting did not always last among the parental generation, and that, over the life course, mothers

took on a larger responsibility for children. On the other hand, the parents claimed to have egalitarian couple relationships. It further concluded that the wives in the young generation took a larger share of parental responsibility within the neo-traditional work–family arrangements in the sons’ families. Nevertheless, based on who took the initiative to cohabit/marry, who had the strongest say in matters of reproduction, as well as other decisions such as children’s upbringing, I concluded ((Bjørnholt, 2010c)) that the power relations in the sons’ families seemed to be egalitarian, which invokes the question of whether the sons’ families are examples of egalitarian relations within neo-traditional work–family arrangements. These findings indicate that egalitarian relationships may coexist with gendered patterns of parental responsibility and that equal parenting is not necessarily a prerequisite for an egalitarian couple relationship.

On the other hand, the importance on women’s work–family choices of structural constraint, such as intra-couple differences in working conditions and positions in the labour market, needs to be considered in relation to women’s ‘choice’ to prioritize family over paid work. The importance of structural constraint on the formation of gendered preferences towards work and care has been pointed out by critiques (Crompton & Lyonette 2005; McRay 2003) of Hakim’s preference theory (2000). It is also a question whether gender differences in labour conditions, in pay and in occupational positions, may still represent a basis of power for men in the family; in that case the younger men’s description of their wives as the main architects behind their neo-traditional work–family arrangement might not withstand closer scrutiny.

Both fathers and sons emphasized the importance of caring for their families and the sharing of domestic work and both generations of fathers seemed to have integrated a caring orientation into their construction of masculinity. The fathers’ professional biographies also revealed the importance of paid work and career, and the ambivalence of some of those who had abstained from pursuing careers further illustrates the importance of work in the construction of a positive self-image even for this group of untraditional men. Work also remained important to the majority of the work-sharing men, despite the fact that they had been working part time.

The sons, in contrast, presented their working relations as non-negotiable aspects of their being in the world and they only vaguely referred to the possibility of reducing their working hours. This is puzzling in view of their childhood experience of fathers working part time, and

current structures of opportunity and discourses that strongly support fathers' involvement in the direct care of their children. For both generations of fathers, both work and care appeared to be important. Both fathers and sons may thus be representative of the current tendency for care to have become an integrated part of hegemonic masculinity, while the importance of paid work for constructions of masculinity persists.





## Conclusion

This dissertation took as its starting point the idea of a four-dimensional sociology as proposed by Massey (1993; 1994) and the possibilities of this approach ‘to show the coalescence of place, time, subjectivity and the social’ (McLeod and Thomson, 2009: 9). The objective was to contribute to such a four-dimensional sociology of intergenerational transmission. To what extent is this ambition delivered?

In situating the research project, as well as the research subjects, within the Norwegian discursive and political contexts, as well as within the structures of opportunity offered by the Norwegian welfare state at the two points of time, the dissertation draws attention to time and space as well as to the interrelations between them. Space is here taken to mean the Norwegian nation state as a spatial, discursive and political entity, and as such subject to change over time. Certainly ‘Norway’ in the 1970s was different in many respects from ‘Norway’ in the 2000s, thus illustrating the fleeting boundary and interconnectedness of time and space. The positioning of the research project in time/space as well as the research subjects in their respective time/spaces, attending both to the biographical level as well as to wider social and historical level, offers the possibility of intergenerational comparison between fathers’ and sons’ situated agency.

The study also invokes a reflection on different aspects of time, in addressing research time, biographical time, and historical time (Henderson et al., 2006) and the links between them. Following Brannen’s distinction (2002: 2) the study is focused on *time as in the life course*, in that the follow-up study focuses on the same period in fathers’ and sons’ life courses and, comparing life course time in different times, it involves *time as framed by historical events and historical period*. With regard to Brannen’s third sort of time, *the present time* of the research interview represents a different setting for exploring the work–family adaptation during early child-rearing years of the fathers and the sons. When the fathers were interviewed about their work–family adaptation as fathers of preschool children, 30 years separated the present time of the research interview from the experience they were reflecting on. For the sons, the present time of the interview and their work–family adaptation as fathers of young children coincided as they were reflecting on present practices in the present context of the research interview.

The conceptual framework developed in this dissertation, for the analysis of the work–family adaptation of two generations of men, in relation

to personal biography, contemporary political appeals, scientific truth regimes and structure of opportunity, was found to be useful for a multi-dimensional and dynamic approach to studying intergenerational transmission. I hope to have contributed to theorising longitudinal qualitative research in developing a framework for a four-dimensional approach to intergenerational transmission and social change that takes into account different aspects of the particular time and space, personal biography, discursive and material structures of opportunity, and intergenerational dynamics at family level, as well as at social level.

Can men do it? The findings of the present study indicate that, under specific historical and discursive circumstances, if they have been biographically predisposed to, and decide to, act as agents of change towards gender equality, men certainly can act as agents of change towards gender equality. On the other hand, this rather cautious conclusion indicates that the agency of some men to promote egalitarian relations with their partners may not be sufficient to bring about lasting effects in the next generation.

As the present study has shown, for men who choose to actively promote a more egalitarian pattern with their partners, personal benefits may result, in terms of recognition as good husbands and fathers and a sense of team with their partners. The study also highlights the importance of relations between men and women and the heterosexual couple relation as the locus of change towards gender equality. The possibilities of a 'resourcing of self' in which men's caring and domestic skills may be transformed into management skills at work also represent a potential benefit for men belonging to the 'service class' (Goldthorpe, 1987). The lack of negative effects on the part-time working men's careers indicates that men's scope of action in relation to working life may be greater than is often held to be the case. Further, the high(er) valuation of men's care and domestic skills may reproduce the in-equal exchange of love and recognition within the heterosexual couple relationship as well as male privileges in working life.

The sons' 'neo-traditional' work-family arrangements indicate continuity rather than change in men's work-family adaptation, which also illustrates that the Work-Sharing Couples Project failed in its ambition to promote change, at a societal level, the arrangements of work and care towards a work-sharing model. Although the recent trend of fathers' shorter working hours may indicate a further step towards larger convergence in men's and women's working patterns, gendered arrangements of work and care persist. On the basis of this study we should ask: how to

understand the 'neo-traditional' adaptations of many contemporary families? Is the equal sharing of every task a prerequisite for and the only measure of gender equality? Or are the 'neo-traditional' couples 'equal enough', with egalitarian couple relationships despite their slightly gendered arrangements of work and care? If so, in the pursuit of gender justice, the economic consequences over the life course of gendered arrangements of paid work and care remain as a challenge for today's egalitarian minded men as well as for society at large.



## The five articles

(Summary of findings and interpretations Table 3 Appendix I)

**Article 1. Norwegian Work-Sharing Couples Project 30 years later. Revisiting an experimental research project for gender equality in the family**  
*Published 2009 in Equal Opportunities International, 28(4) 304-323.*

This article outlines the background as well as methodological and epistemological aspects of the follow-up study and the perceived effects at couple level thirty years later of the Work-Sharing Couples Project. In this paper the variation in work-sharing and post-work-sharing trajectories over the life course is explored, mainly focusing on the impact of the work-sharing arrangement on the couples' relations, their work/life balance and well being, which were the core objectives of the original project.

Revisiting the original project produced new insights into the radical use of sex-role theory in early Norwegian family sociology as an instrument of changing gender relations. The high level of participation in the follow-up study and the long duration of the arrangement for the participants in the work-sharing experiment were among the important and unexpected results that qualify for a heightened level of expectation as to the effects of the experiment on the participants' lives.

A high proportion of the couples were still married, and the work-sharing arrangement has been regarded by the majority of participants to have had a positive impact on their marital relation, work/life balance and well being. The positive effect on gender equality and marital relations were related to the husbands' egalitarian attitudes and agency, more than to the duration of the arrangement. This finding suggests that gender equality in the family is not the mechanical outcome of arrangements of work and care and that men's motivation, attitudes and agency are important.

### *Main findings of Article 1*

- The duration of the arrangement (mean 7 years, 1.5 years the shortest)
- The high proportion still married (12 out of 15 couples)
- The work-sharing arrangement was considered by participants to have had a beneficial effect on their common lives as couples and on their lives as families

- Equal parenting did not always last
- Men's key role
- Men's egalitarian attitudes and partner-oriented motivation were important for gender-equal outcome
- No causal effect from the arrangement to gender-equal family relations

## **Article 2. How Men became the Local Agents of Change towards Gender Equality**

*Published 2011 in Journal of Gender Studies, 20(1) 3–18.*

The men played a key role in initiating and implementing the work-sharing arrangement in their families. This article focuses on how the men explained in retrospect how they came to take the initiative and join the work-sharing arrangement. Biographical influences from their families of origin emerged as important factors, to which they often referred to explain why it had been easy or even natural for them to initiate egalitarian patterns of work and care in their families. Their mothers had been working outside the home to a larger extent than in other families (for instance, compared with their wives' more traditional families). A majority of the men had experienced some kind of loss or malfunctioning of a parent due to illness, death or other causes, and a majority of the work-sharing men had acquired skills in domestic work at home. Both husbands and wives saw the husbands' domestic skills as important. I also conclude that what could be called personality was important, as the work-sharing men acted in a caring and authoritative way and were able to deflect any negative reactions to their work–family-adaptation. The relation to wife and the fostering of her career and personal growth emerged as a main theme among the motivating factors in the men's accounts. Relation to children was also a motivating factor for some and so was leisure. Leisure was a male-only theme; none of the women mentioned leisure as a motivation for the work-sharing arrangement.

This paper further elaborates on the motivations and agency of the work-sharing men and discusses the implications of the work-sharing men being rather special, both in relation to generalization from studies of small samples (of special men) and in relation to the relevance of the findings for policy-making.

### *Main findings of Article 2*

- The key role of the work-sharing men in initiation and implementing the arrangement
- The importance the men attributed to personal biography and skills in domestic work in explaining their agency
- The promotion of wives' careers as an independent motivation
- Common parental perspective most frequent
- Leisure a motivation for some men

### **Article 3. Part-time Work and the Career and Life Choices of the Men from the Work-Sharing Couples Study**

*Published 2010 in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, 29(6) 573–592.*

This paper deals with the work-sharing men's part-time adaptations and the implications their part-time working had on their careers. Contrary to common belief, obtaining part-time working hours was not difficult, and working part-time was rather uncomplicated for the men. Given the long duration of the work-sharing arrangement negative career effects could be expected. However, the work-sharing men were found to have been rather successful professionally. The majority were highly educated, and had the careers that could be expected from their educational level. Their experiences as work-sharers were mainly valued positively as adding to managing skills, and their experiences as house-husbands were mainly valued rather than being punished in their workplaces. For those men who had management positions (slightly above half of the men), the work-sharing experience was valued as contributing to managing skills. For those who did not have a managing career, this was a result of personal choice and other priorities, such as leisure, rather than the negative outcome of working part time.

These findings are counterintuitive to the beliefs that are commonly held at present, that obtaining part-time work should be more difficult for men, and that men should be punished more severely than women for working part time and caring for their families. For the work-sharing couples, the opposite seemed to be true; the women reported more problems in obtaining and working part-time than the men and only men reported having been valued positively due to their house-husband experience. The article discusses these results and the higher valuation of men's untraditional work/family adaptations and their house-husband experiences in



relation to class and gender, and based on the way their house-husband experience contributed to a 'resourcing of self' in relation to literature on class and gender. I conclude that such gendered paradoxes of valuation may counteract the effects on gender equality of men and women sharing breadwinning and care more equally, while at the same time pointing out that men, due to privileges of both class and gender, may be in a better position to promote change in working life. The article thus challenges the current image of men as the victims of working life and men's work/family adaptation as the outcome primarily of structural constraint. Both the analysis of the work-sharing men's careers and a critical reading of the relevant literature points to men's scope of action and the importance of men's agency. The article finally draws attention to the question of whether it was easier for men to reduce their working time in the 1970s than it would be today, and concludes that it was probably not, but that men's present scope of action in balancing work and family is an empirical question that needs further research.

### *Main findings of Article 3*

- Lack of workplace obstacles for the men
- Lack of negative career effects
- Professionally successful men
- Valuation of house-husband experience as managing skills

### **Article 4. Fathers and sons – gender socialization and intergenerational transmission revisited**

*Published 2009 in NORMA–Nordic Journal for Masculinity Studies, 4 (1) 83-102.*

This article addresses theoretical and methodological challenges in studying gender socialization and intergenerational transmission employing a dyadic, father–son approach.

The background of the article was firstly the findings in the analysis of the fathers, which provided little or no support for a model of father–son transmission, as the work-sharing men did not refer to their own fathers as 'role models'. Further a theoretical concern is raised, as the father–son design bears the imprint of theories of gender socialization, which are increasingly deemed scientifically obsolete. Finally, the father–son research design raises particular methodological and research ethical challenges. On the background of these concerns, a single father–son case was explored,

concluding that the analytical gain of the dyadic father–son design was limited and a more contextual approach is called for. Based on this case, the mother emerged as important, both for the father and for the son. The article also concludes that not only families but also extrafamilial context is important.

The theoretical ambition of this article was to discuss the theoretical background of a dyadic, same-sex research design that I had chosen for the father–son study and which is still very common in the design of studies of intergenerational transmission and gender socialization. It can be argued that the theories that I criticize in this article have long been abandoned among theorists of socialization as well as in developmental psychology, and I agree with this critique. On the other hand, as I argue in the article, these ideas are very much part of common-sense ideas of socialization and are often also reflected in research designs, such as my own, and I felt a need to confront these ideas, which were implicit in my research design, with my material.

Another important concern that led me to reflect on this was a research ethical concern related to studying families and how to deal with questions of consent and anonymity in multi-person case studies. Due to the limitations of the article format, I had to leave the research ethical discussion out of the article, to concentrate on theoretical and methodological issues. Some of these research ethical questions are discussed in the method section of this dissertation.

#### *Main findings of Article 4*

- Neither father nor son modelled themselves upon their fathers
- The importance of mothers and important others
- The dyadic father–son design was of limited analytical gain
- The intra-family design was inadequate to account for gender socialization

**Article 5. Like Father, Like Son? The Transmission of Values, Family Practices and Work–Family Adaptations to Sons of Work-Sharing Men**  
*Published 2010 in *Fathering: A Journal of Theory, Research and Practice about Men as Fathers*, 8(3), 276–299.*

The ambition of this paper was to discuss the impact of fathers actively participating in the daily care of their families and the transmission to the next generation of an egalitarian work–family arrangement in terms of

equal sharing of breadwinning and household work. The paper explores the accounts of the sons of work-sharing men of growing up in the work-sharing families and their current work–family adaptations in search of evidence for intergenerational transmission.

The sons of these untraditional parents were, at the time of the interview, found to live in or opt for what could be seen as neo-traditional work–family arrangements. They themselves were working (slightly) more and their wives (slightly) less outside the home, their wives were doing (slightly) more and the men (slightly) less domestic work and childcare. The ways the adult sons dealt emotionally with their current work–family adaptation, however, differed. While some seemed to be at peace with their actual work–family adaptation, others expressed feelings of ambiguity, and pointed out the gap between their current, rather traditional, work–family adaptation and their own egalitarian attitudes and family ideals, with reference to their own family of origin. From these differences in attitudes towards their current work–family adaptation, I distinguish between a *comfortably neo-traditional* and an *uncomfortably neo-traditional* pattern, and in this article I chose two of the sons, ‘Anders’ and ‘Knut’, to illustrate these two patterns.

Analysis of my interviews with the sons indicates that egalitarian family patterns established in one generation do not necessarily transfer to the next generation. The paper illustrates the non-mechanical and situated character of intergenerational transmission and the need to distinguish between different aspects of family heritage, such as cultural values, relations and work–family arrangements. The sons’ cases also illustrate how work–family adaptation takes place within gendered constraints and preferences, such as wives’ poorer working conditions and wages, gendered patterns of devotion to work and family, and current structures of opportunity, invoking the question of the structural causes of gender inequality. I further raise the question of how to interpret the neo-traditional adaptations of work and family among the work-sharing men’s sons and the meanings of the lack of intergenerational transmission of the work-sharing families’ work–family adaptations and other aspects of couple and family life, such as power. The partners and wives of the work-sharing men’s sons seemed to have a strong say in family matters, and I ask whether we are witnessing egalitarian relationships within neo-traditional arrangements of work and care.

### *Main findings of Article 5*

- No intergenerational transmission of work–family arrangements
- Neo-traditional work–family adaptations of sons
- Differences in son’s attitudes towards present work–family arrangement
- Differences in working conditions and job satisfaction between husbands and wives
- Strong wives—egalitarian relationships?



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# APPENDIX I

## A. Prehistory of the study

The present work is to a large extent the result of coincidence and luck. I first came across one of the work-sharing men during a study of organizational change in a Norwegian state agency in 2002, while working at the Work Research Institute. He told me he had participated, along with his wife, in Erik Grønseth's Work-Sharing Couples Project in the 1970s. I did not know anything about the project at that time, but discovering, a couple of years later, that this man's wife became one of the directors of the organization after re-organization, I started wondering about the project in which they had participated: Had it been as beneficial for the other wives? Would it be possible to trace the other couples? Erik Grønseth, who was then retired and who turned out to live in my neighbourhood, was delighted that someone had finally taken an interest in the project after thirty years, and immediately brought down from his attic a box and some plastic bags with the remnants of the material from the original project. Among these was a list with the names of eight of the original 16 participants; the rest, he thought, was lost. With this list, we obtained funding of a small pilot study from the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs. Erik Grønseth himself traced the participants and called them to ask permission that I contact them for an interview, and I carried out the interviews in 2005.

Erik Grønseth strongly emphasized the role of Ola Rokkones, the former director of the Norwegian Family Council, and pointed out the fact that Rokkones was the one who initiated the Work-Sharing Couples Project, and we all met in Halvorsen's Conditori in Oslo in 2004. Grønseth's partner, who had herself interviewed some of the work-sharing couples for her (*mellomfag*) thesis was also present. It was a cordial meeting; the two men had not met for twenty-five years. In the autumn of 2005, shortly after I had completed the report on the pilot project to the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs (Bjørnholt 2005), Erik Grønseth died, one month after turning eighty.

The interviews turned out to be very interesting, and I found it hard to accept that it should be impossible to find the rest of the participants. In a moment of inspiration, I asked to consult the archives at the Department of Sociology and Human Geography at the University of Oslo. There are no formal archives in which research material is kept, but I was admitted

to the cellar. There, lined up on the shelves, were boxes with the names on them of the founding fathers of Norwegian sociology, and among them, several boxes labelled Erik Grønseth. I soon detected a box labelled DAT, which was the short name of the work-sharing project, and the first thing I found was a handwritten list with fifteen names and a document that included the handwritten results of a telephone update on the participants' work and care arrangements that had been conducted in 1980, five years after the project ended. The results of the 1980 update are included in Article 1 in this dissertation.

The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, however, rejected my application for funding for a full-scale follow-up study of the remaining couples and the now adult children. Two research proposals with grant applications to the Research Council of Norway, which aimed at a broad follow-up study of the couples and their descendants, to be published in a monograph, also failed, and I eventually conducted the interviews with the remaining participants at my own expense.

In spring 2006 I had a short-term affiliation at the University of Oslo Department of Sociology and Human Geography in order to plan a study of intergenerational transmission, which was to include some of the children from the Work-Sharing Couples study, to be led by Professor Tone Schou Wetlesen. I then formulated a new grant proposal, together with Wetlesen, to the Research Council of Norway. This time we were successful, and obtained a two-year research grant from the FRISAM programme of the Research Council of Norway for the project 'Work-Sharing Couples – men in change and intergenerational transmission', in which I was responsible for the subproject on fathers and sons which is the basis of this dissertation. Tone Schou Wetlesen carried out the other sub-study in which young adults from the Work-Sharing Couples study were compared with young adults from families in which both parents worked full time (Wetlesen 2010; 2012).

David Morgan, whom I had met at a workshop in which I presented the work-sharing project, was willing to be a partner in the project. So was Linda Haas, whose correspondence with Erik Grønseth from the 1970s was among the contents of the plastic bags from Grønseth's attic. They have both been enthusiastic and supportive throughout the project and have commented on the drafts of three of the articles included in the dissertation.

Whenever I have presented the follow-up study to other Norwegian family researchers, many have expressed strong enthusiasm that I had

been able to retrieve this part of the ‘family silver’ of Norwegian family research. I feel both humble and grateful to have had the opportunity to take up this heritage. At the same time I am aware that the present work does not do full justice to the original project nor to the rich material of the follow-up study.

To some extent the shortcomings are the result of the adaptations I chose to make in the effort to obtain funding. After the negative outcome of the first grant applications, I paid more attention to current fads and fashion and to the details of grant proposal requirements of the Research Council of Norway. Subsequently, the study was divided into two more specialized sub-studies, the focus was narrowed towards intergenerational transmission and my sub-study towards men in particular. Finally, the results were published in articles in international, refereed journals, which are strongly favoured over monographs in the present Norwegian funding regime. So far, my study has resulted in ten articles, five of which are part of this dissertation, and in addition, my colleague Tone Schou Wetlesen has published two articles from her sub-study of young adults. Together, we may have contributed to drawing attention to this inventive solution to the on-going struggle of working parents, trying to find a balance.

## **B. The Listening Guide**

The Listening Guide was originally developed by Brown, Gilligan and colleagues (1992) and has been further extended and modified by several other researchers, among them Doucet (2006). The Listening Guide is a step-by-step analysis, which combines a strong reflexivity and subjectivity, while also focusing on narratives and storytelling. It relies on several readings of the interview transcript, ‘each time listening in a different way’ (Brown 1998:33), and is best used in the context of an interpretative group.

(1) The first reading entails a subjective, reader-response strategy. (2) The second reading traces the central protagonist or the ‘I’ in the story. This may entail condensing sentences beginning with ‘I’ into an ‘I-poem’. (3) The third reading follows the narrative or central storyline of the interview. (4) The fourth and subsequent readings expand the analysis from the research subjects to their social relationships.

Our group consisted of myself, my colleague Tone Schou Wetlesen, and two Master’s degree students who carried out their own studies. Each brought one interview transcript to be analysed in the group. We employed the Listening Guide as presented by Doucet (2006). In this methods



workshop I chose to analyse the interview with the son in the one-family case that I explored in Bjørnholt (2009b).

(1) During the first, reader-response reading of the interview, I became aware of how my own experiences of growing up in a rural family with parents with low formal education, the importance of grandparents in my own upbringing, as well as the strong and supportive presence of my own mother in all life phases, even today, as well as my own experience as a class traveller, made me easily identify with this research subject. On the other hand, there were other aspects in his story that I did not recognize or identify with. The discussions and the different, subjective responses to the same case by other members of the reading group, some of whom shared my working-class background and some of whom had a different background, made me aware of my own specific situatedness in relation to this particular research subject, and helped me create an analytic distance between my own reactions and the research subject.

(2) As part of the second reading, the analysis of the protagonist, the subjective 'I' in this interview, I extracted the I-poem below from the interview transcript.

### I-poem, 'Gunnar'

grew up in (Small Town)

fine time

busy

to the grandmother

early at daybreak

I was there a lot

took me to the airport

to watch planes

went into the army after high school

was tired of school

got a job at the Post

but finished high school

In the army a language I understood  
was in Lebanon  
saved money  
flew seaplane in summer  
then tank driving instructor

a career peak

from bush-flying up North  
at the limit all the time  
to where I am now  
captain in (Civil Airline)  
fly safely from A to B  
I do not see that as problematic

We met in Neighbouring Town  
moved in together soon  
I felt time was ready  
(for children)  
thought that is something I want  
She read books  
I didn't open one  
I just jumped into it

Have worked reduced  
see the benefit of her staying more home  
I can accept staying away for eight days  
talk with her (daughter) on the telephone

When the mother is not here  
(it is) I  
that take that mother-role  
I am a little more permissive  
cannot stand that wailing

I do a lot of laundry, vacuum a lot  
wood and garbage  
all those things  
I think I take a lot  
I do a lot  
that others do not do  
garbage and laundry  
I take a lot

The second reading of the interview, including the above 'I-poem', powerfully demonstrated how this man combined traditional masculine virtues and self-confidence and a boyish adventurousness with a common parental perspective and a caring orientation as I describe in Bjørnholt (2009b).

The condensed form of the poem brings out topics of importance for the subject, in this interview, the strong presence of military machinery on one hand and of domestic work on the other, create a vivid image of a man who integrates traditionally masculine interests with a strong family orientation and a domestic focus. The I-poem further strongly conveys his positioning of self as an authoritative agent in his own life, as well as a certain amount of heroism.

Several topics of importance emerge in the I-poem, such as early childhood memories that reoccur in other parts of the interview, and form part of his explanations of his life course, such as the childhood exposure to aeroplanes and his choice of career. Other memories, like the early and busy mornings of his own childhood, against which he positions himself in emphasizing later in the interview how he tries to give his daughter slow and quiet 'Sunday' mornings with tea and breakfast every day. In the section on school and 'coming home' to the military, class comes into focus.

In his account of mothering and the sharing of parental responsibilities gendered patterns arise, which are further elaborated on in the interview.

(3) The third reading entailed both the story of becoming the man he had become, his career story, as well as the story of building and doing family. (4) The fourth reading mapped social relationships, both in his own upbringing and in his current work–family situation, showing the importance of factors outside the family, such as kin, institutions and peers. The fourth reading forms the background of the conclusion I draw in Bjørnholt (2009b), that the design of studies of socialization and upbringing should encompass the broader societal contexts, rather than focusing narrowly on parent-child dyads and intra-family dynamics. (5) We did not do a fifth reading, but this dissertation broadens the analysis of fathers and sons to include contemporary ideologies and social structures of opportunity.

The Listening Guide analysis opened up new interpretative repertoires and new perspectives and gave a deep insight into the single cases; it provided an important background for the in-depth analysis of the case explored in Bjørnholt (2009b) as well as for my interpretation of the whole material. The step by step analysis in the ‘Listening Guide’ method, from the subjective towards the social, has been important in developing the theoretical perspective which I employ in the analysis below, where I take the analysis one step further by including contemporary discourses and structures of opportunity by employing a discourse-analytical, historical/contextual approach which situates the fathers and the sons in relation to their respective contemporary social, discursive and material contexts.

### **C. Reliability, validity and generalizability**

In this section I will briefly reflect on the trustworthiness, validity and possible usefulness of the study and its results. How do the study and its results comply with claims of reliability, validity and generalizability of qualitative research?

#### **Reliability**

Reliability is concerned with the consistency and trustworthiness of scientific findings; it is often treated in relation to the issue of replicability: whether different researchers will discover the same phenomenon and generate the same concepts in actual and similar situations. Replicability

has been a contested issue in qualitative research, and for the qualitative research interview a claim of direct replicability is seen as neither possible nor relevant (Fog 2005). Nevertheless, all scientific ways of knowing – qualitative research included – strive for authentic results, and reliability in qualitative research can be strengthened in multiple ways: by transparency and reflexivity of the research process, such as who are the informants, the social setting of the study, who is the researcher herself, and of the analytical concepts used as well as of the methods employed in the sampling, data collection and analysis. Further, being careful to distinguish between descriptions and interpretations will allow other researchers and users of the research to agree or disagree with the interpretations. Other means of strengthening reliability are the use of multiple researchers or confirmation from other researchers, as well as the use of technical methods of data reproduction, for instance, audio or video recording, rather than relying for instance on the researcher's notes alone. To avoid systematic errors and bias, and to enhance the study's trustworthiness, the use of multiple methods, multiple data sources, and/or multiple researchers, or 'triangulation' is recommended (Mathison 1988; Patton 1980). 'Triangulation is supposed to support a finding by showing that independent measures of it agree with it or, at least, don't contradict it' (Miles & Huberman 1984:235).

There is no magic in triangulation. The evaluator using different methods to investigate the same program should not expect that the findings generated by those different methods will automatically come together to produce some nicely integrated whole. (Patton 1980:330).

The point of triangulation, according to Patton, 'is to study and understand when and why there are differences' (Patton 1980:331). The present study involves several aspects of a triangulation, such as data from two different studies of the same informants carried out at different points of time, as well as data from two different groups of informants – parents and adult children respectively. Part of the interviews and part of the analysis further involved additional researchers, and, finally, as discussed in Bjørnholt (2009a), the data obtained in the biographical interviews, when analysed with different foci, may be seen as multiple kinds of data, the combination of which may also represent a kind of triangulation.

The results of the follow-up study to a large extent did support the findings in the original Work-Sharing Couples Study, such as the beneficial effect of the work-sharing arrangement on the couple relation; in the follow-up study, this finding was supported both by what the informants said in the retrospective interviews about the consequences on their further life course as a couple, and by the low divorce rate in the sample. There were also divergences, however, such as the lower share of men referring to a lack of job satisfaction as a motivation for work-sharing in the follow-up study as compared with the original study. I discuss this finding in relation to the fact that the men's careers had turned out rather well (Bjørnholt (2011)). The findings in the interviews with the parents and those with the sons' mainly support each other too; although there are some differences, such as the finding from the interviews with parents, that mothers seemed to have taken a larger parental responsibility over the life course, which contrasts with the strong emphasis on their fathers' contribution by the sons. I explain this divergence (in Bjørnholt, 2010c) as differences in perspective by the parents and sons, and by a possible paradox of valuation, whereby sons valued their fathers' contribution more highly, in line with gendered expectations towards parents.

## **Validity**

To what extent are the results valid? Kvale and Brinkman (2009) argue that validation, rather than being a separate step in the research process, should 'permeate all stages from the first thematization to the final reporting' (241). Validation of qualitative interviews addresses the scientific craftsmanship during the conceptualization, planning, interviewing, transcription analysis and interpretation of findings, and requires the researcher to question: Have I investigated what I think I have investigated? (Kvale 1989: 74). Results in qualitative research mainly take the form of 'thick descriptions' and the development of models of understanding, the development of which takes place in the confrontation of empirical data with theory and vice versa – to a greater or lesser extent in line with Glaser and Strauss' grounded theory (1967) or, according to Kvale and Brinkman (2009:252), 'To validate is to theorize'. In addition to internal validity through the research process, Kvale and Brinkman (2009) discuss communicative and pragmatic validity. Communicative validity is about the social construction of validity (Mishler 1990). 'Valid knowledge claims are established in a discourse through which the results of a study come to be

viewed as sufficiently trustworthy for other investigators to rely upon in their work' (Kvale & Brinkman 2009:254). Pragmatic validation takes as its starting point that the social sciences are themselves social practices that inevitably influence the actors and the realities they are concerned with (Taylor 1985), and that validity in the social sciences means usefulness in improving the practices under consideration. I would see pragmatic validation as the extent to which the research is taken up in and becomes part of bridge discourses for the co-production of policies (Jasanoff, 2004) between academia and the political field, as was the case for sex-roles theory in the Nordic countries in the 1960s,-1970s (Roman, 2008).

For the present study, the details of the research process, the interviews and analysis, are accounted for in the articles as well as in the methods and analysis sections of this dissertation. I have also provided thick descriptions of the research process and the conditions of production of the research, as well as of the findings, which hopefully suffice for others to agree or disagree with the interpretations as well as the models of understanding that I have developed. Whether the present work will attain communicative and pragmatic validation – whether it will influence future research into men, masculinities and gender equality, or policymaking – I am unsure. One problem I find has been inadequately discussed in relation to communicative and pragmatic validation is the difficulty of communicating and gaining acceptance in the scientific peer community, as well as in the general public and among policymakers, of results and interpretations that are contrary to the generally accepted models of understanding and hegemonic discourses.

The extent to which theories and research are taken up and become part of bridge discourses in the co-production of policies between academia and policy-makers, depend on many factors. Among them may be the strength and influence of academia and of single academics, in society at large, the access to and the receptiveness in the political field of new ideas, and, not least personal relationships, likes and dislikes. In line with the Foucaultian frame I have employed, it has to be taken into account that knowledge, far from being established by reason alone, is closely intertwined with the operations of power. As a consequence, knowledge claims that challenge established truths within existing knowledge regimes are not always successful. I would, therefore, emphasize internal validity and reliability more highly than communicative and pragmatic validation, as a lack of recognition or lack of impact of the research may be due to other factors than the quality and originality of the research.

The original Work-Sharing Couples Project was perceived as idealistic and unrealistic by its contemporaries, which relied on many factors. It was at odds with the mainstream thinking and the growth logic of the time, as well as challenging the dominant counter discourses of the feminist movement at the time (Bjørnholt, 2010a; 2012). Further, Grønseth's controversial reputation as a sexual libertarian in the 1950s and 1960s probably also limited his influence on Norwegian family policies, even though, by the 1970s, his once controversial views had become mainstream (Holter and Ve Henriksen, 1975). It remains to be seen whether the follow-up study will fare better.

### **Generalizability**

Generalization from qualitative research mainly takes the form of analytical generalization rather than the postulation of representativeness (Kvale & Brinkman 2009). Analytical generalization, according to Kvale and Brinkman (2009:262), 'involves a reasoned judgement about the extent to which the findings of one study can be used as a guide to what might occur in another situation'. Analytical generalization relies on thick descriptions that allow the comparison of similarities and differences between units and events. While it is the recipient who decides whether the results are useful in relation to a new situation, it is the sender/researcher's responsibility to provide enough and relevant information to make such generalization possible. The generation and presentation of thick descriptions involve an awareness of the meaning-making processes of which the results will become part, and the communication of knowledge from qualitative research is a question of the reach and receptiveness of the potential audience (Andenæs 2001).

To clarify what the results are, and to argue for their trustworthiness, and finally to make presentations that take into consideration the existing discourses in the field, will increase the chances that the state-of-the-art descriptions as well as of the models of understanding are seen as relevant – and can be generalized (Andenæs 2001:318, my translation).



**Table 2. Overview of data and sample**

Project	Funding	Method	Sample	Data
<b>Work-Sharing Couples Project 1969–75</b>	(The Norwegian Family Council*)	-Action research -Questionnaires (Couple interviews with one-third)	16 couples	-Questionnaire data -Couple interview transcripts
<b>Work-Sharing Couples 30 years later. Pilot 2005</b>	Ministry of Children and Family Affairs	-Retrospective, biographical couple interviews -Retrospective, biographical individual interviews with divorcees - Informal group interview with key informants	11 couples 3 divorced women 2 divorced men (14 of the original couples) 3 key informants	-Couple interview transcripts. -Individual interview transcripts/ summaries. -Published material from the original Work-Sharing Couples project
<b>Men as change agents – work-sharing fathers and their sons. One of two sub-projects in: Work-sharing couples – men in change and intergenerational transmission. 2007-2008</b>	-Research Council of Norway. (Department of Sociology and Human Geography, University of Oslo)	-Couple interviews fathers -Individual interviews sons -Additional individual interviews one couple - Individual interviews with key informants	14 couples 7 sons 3 key informants (Former student, civil servant, Per Olav Tiller)	- Couple interview transcripts -Individual interview transcripts -Key informants interview tape

**Table 3. Summary of findings and interpretations**

Article	Major findings	Interpretation
Work-sharing couples 30 years later	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Long duration of arrangement</li> <li>- High proportion still married</li> <li>- Positive effect on couple relation and well being</li> <li>- Equal parenthood did not always last</li> <li>- Men's key role</li> <li>- Men's partner-oriented motivation important for gender equal outcome</li> <li>- No direct causal effect from the arrangement to gender equal family relations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Combined effects of working less and actively pursuing egalitarian arrangements of work and care</li> <li>- Partner-oriented masculinity</li> </ul>
Men as agents of change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Men to a large extent took the initiative and were actively involved in initiating the work-sharing arrangement</li> <li>- Personal biography and skills in domestic work as main explanatory factors</li> <li>- Promoting wife's career and the couple relation the main motivation</li> <li>- Common parental perspective</li> <li>- Leisure and children motivations for some men</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Men's motivations and agency</li> <li>- Authoritative and caring</li> <li>- Family perspective</li> <li>- Common parental perspective</li> <li>- Special men</li> <li>- The constructive use of male power?</li> </ul>
Men, part-time and career	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of workplace obstacles for the men</li> <li>- Lack of negative career effects</li> <li>- Professionally successful men</li> <li>- Valuation of housefather experience as managing skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Men's scope of action</li> <li>- Paradox of valuation</li> <li>- The combined privileges of class and gender</li> <li>- Transferability of skills, resourcing of self</li> </ul>
Gender socialization revisited	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Neither fathers nor sons modelled upon their fathers</li> <li>- The dyadic father-son design of limited analytical gain</li> <li>- The importance of mothers and important others</li> <li>- The intra-family design inadequate to account for gender socialization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dyadic designs analytically inadequate and relying on outdated theories of socialization</li> <li>- Intra-family perspective inadequate</li> <li>- A social and historically situated approach is needed</li> </ul>

Like father, like son?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No intergenerational transmission of work–family arrangements</li> <li>- Identification, transfer of culture and values</li> <li>- Neo-traditional work/family adaptations of sons</li> <li>- Differences in sons' attitudes towards present work–family arrangement</li> <li>- Strong wives</li> <li>- Husband/wife differences in working conditions and job satisfaction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The comfortably and the uncomfortably neo-traditional work–family adaptation</li> <li>- Egalitarian relations within neo-traditional work–family arrangements?</li> <li>- Complexity of intergenerational transmission</li> <li>- Structural causes of gender inequality</li> </ul>
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# Appendix II

## Interview guides

Intevjuguide par: de opprinnelige deltakerene i prosjektet Ektefelle delt arbeidstid 30 år senere

Hvordan kom de med i DAT – hvem tok initiativet?

Hvor og hvor lenge jobbet mannen og kona deltid og hvordan har de delt på forsørgeransvar / yrkesaktivitet siden DAT?

Hvordan har karrierene utviklet seg – har de nådd sine karrieremål?

Har noen av dem opplevd problemer med jobb og karriere som følge av deltid?

Inntekt og pensjon.

Har de (særlig hun) hatt nytte av den andres deltid og innsats i hus og omsorgsarbeid i forhold til egen karriere?

Har han støttet henne i sin yrkeskarriere

Har hun opplevd at han støttet henne i sin yrkeskarriere?

Og omvendt

Er den enes karriere blitt prioritert

Karrierevalg som fikk konsekvenser for familien, flytting, lederstillinger mm

Hvor mange barn fikk de i alt? (det tredje barnet?)

Hvordan delte de under DAT og hvordan utviklet deling av hus- og omsorgsarbeid seg etter DAT og fram til i dag

Fortsatte som i DAT

Mot likere deling

Mot større skjevdeling

Hvem har hatt hovedansvaret for barneomsorgen, alt i alt?

Da barnet var lite

Når barnet ble større

Hvordan er relasjonen til barnet i dag –står de nærmere en av foreldrene enn den andre?

Hvem ivaretar kontakten mest i dag?

Hvem tar på seg omsorgsoppgaver for eventuelle barnebarn?

Annen praktisk hjelp overfor voksne barn.

Hvem har gjort mest av hva når det gjelder husarbeid:

Matlaging

Daglige innkjøp

Rengjøring

Vask og stell av klær

Vedlikehold av hjem

Vedlikehold av bil

Forberede sosialt samvær, ferier og reiser

Hvordan deler de på husarbeidet i dag?

Er de tilfreds med dagens ordning?

Har han fått ros for at han jobbet deltid og delte hus- og omsorgsarbeid?  
(Av utenforstående/av partner)

Har hun fått ros for at hun jobbet og delte forsørgerbyrden? (Av utenforstående, av partner)

Hvordan vurderer paret deltakelsen i DAT-prosjektet

Hva har DAT betydd for deres videre liv sammen?

Endret deres arbeidsdeling og forholdet dem imellom seg under DAT?

Konflikter før, under og etter DAT?

Hva har betydd mest, den faktiske delingen eller det at de ble fulgt opp av forskere som spurte om arbeidsdelingen?

Hvordan ser de på forholdet seg imellom?

Kjærlighet og trivsel i parforholdet

Styrkeforholdet dem imellom

Hva har DAT betydd for parrelasjonen?

Helse og slitasje

Hvordan har helsa vært?

Har DAT hatt innvirkning på hvor friske henholdsvis mann og kone har holdt seg?

Barn:

Yrkesvalg

Familiesituasjon i dag

Har det å vokse opp i en DAT-famiie påvirket barna?

Kontakt til barna for evt senere oppfølging?

Er de selv villige til eventuell videre oppfølging i form av individuelle intervjuer/spørreskjema

## **Intervjuguide for DAT-prosjekt: Voksne barn: Oppveksterfaringer og generasjonsoverføring**

0-7 år

Kan du fortelle fra den tiden dine foreldre delte på å være hjemme med deg/ dere barn og gå på jobb, hvordan du husker at det var og hvordan du opplevde det?

(Boligforhold, omgivelser, søsken, lekekamerater. Dagene da mor var hjemme og da far var det. Aktiviteter og gjøremål. Omstillingen ved at det ikke var den samme som var der hele tiden).

Var det noe som du opplevde som særlig positivt ved ordningen?

Var det noe som du opplevde som skuffende eller vanskelig?

Kan du beskrive forholdet du hadde til din mor på denne tiden?

Kan du beskrive forholdet du hadde til din far på denne tiden?

Var det noen forskjell på forhold til mor og far – hva det gjorde sammen, hva dere snakket om? (Tilknytning og fortrolighet)

Hadde du en venn/venner som betydde mye for deg?

Hva slags pass/tilsyn hadde vennen/vennene på dagtid?

Kan du fortelle litt om barneoppdragelsen som dine foreldre praktiserte under oppveksten – hva det var de la vekt på?  
(Mors praksis. Fars praksis. Likhet og forskjell)

**Overgang til barnehage/park. Hvordan opplevde du det å begynne/gå i bh/park?**

*Skolealder*

**Kan du beskrive situasjonen hjemme etter at du begynte på skolen – hvem som var hjemme etter skoletid, hva du gjorde og hvem du var sammen med.**

Hvordan syntes du det var når mor gikk på jobb og far var hjemme og omvendt?

Hvordan delte foreldrene dine på husarbeidet, opplevde du at de hadde hver sine oppgaver eller gjorde begge alt?

Opplevde du at begge gjorde like mye?

Deltok du selv i husarbeid – i så fall på egenhånd /etter instruks fra eller sammen med mor/far eller begge? Hvordan syntes du det var? Hvem lærte du mest av?

Opplevde du at du kunne betro deg til foreldrene dine når noe var vanskelig?

Var det forskjell på mor og far, eller kunne du gå til begge med alt?

**Kan du huske om foreldrene dine snakket noe særlig om jobbene sine hjemme eller fortalte dere barn om hva de gjorde på jobb?**

Hendte det at dere var med på foreldrenes arbeidsplass?

Hadde du noen tanker om mors jobb – hva den besto i og om det var noe som du kunne tenke deg å gjøre når du ble voksen?

Hadde du noen tanker om fars jobb – hva den besto i og om det var noe som du kunne tenke deg å gjøre når du ble voksen?

**Hvordan opplevde du barneskolen faglig og sosialt?**

**Deltok du i noen organiserte fritidsaktiviteter? Oppfølging fra foreldre/mor/far?**

Hadde du skolekamerater/venninner som du var mye sammen med?  
(Hvor de holdt til og hva de lekte /gjorde etter skoletid)

Hva slags tilsynsordninger hadde vennene dine?

Skjedde det noen forandring i ordningen hjemme hos deg mens du gikk i barneskolen?

Kan du fortelle litt om hvordan forandringen artet seg og hvordan du opplevde det?

Hvordan ble situasjonen hjemme hos dere etter at en eller begge dine foreldre (eventuelt) gikk over i fulltids- stillinger?

Hadde du noen tanker eller oppfatninger om at foreldrene dine hadde en annen måte å fordele arbeidet på enn foreldre flest på den tiden?



(Var det greit eller vanskelig, eventuelt hvordan)

**Arbeidsdelingens betydning for familieøkonomien fra barnet/barnas ståsted.**

*Ungdomsskole*

**Situasjonen hjemme.** Deltakelse i familien, plikter hjemme

Forhold til foreldre, praktisk og relasjonelt.

**Situasjonen på skolen faglig og sosialt.**

**Fritidsinteresser.**

**Utdanning**

**Utdanningsvalg.**

Bakgrunn for utdanningsvalg, videregående skole/linje eller annen grunnutdanning. Yrkesutdanning. Høyere utdanning.

Forbilder for utdanningsvalg. Foreldres betydning. Andre personer av betydning for utdanningsvalg.

*Voksen livsfase*

Flytte hjemmefra: Når og hvor. Hvordan var det?

Utdanningssituasjon

**Parforhold og familiedannelse:** (Single: Ønsker/forventninger til parforhold og familiedannelse) (i parforhold:) Hvordan traff dere hverandre og hvorfor ble det akkurat dere?

Hvordan ser du på fordelingen av oppgavene i hjemmet? Egen og partners innsats og ansvarstaking i

-barneomsorg

-husarbeid

-kontakt med slekt og venner

-klesvask

- Helhetlig ansvar og planlegging

**Barn, antall og evt ønsker om fler. Partners ønske om (antall) barn.**

**Barneomsorg: Ønsker/forventninger : egne og partners.**

Hvis barn, hvilken omsorgsordning praktiseres?

Deling av permisjonstid, hvor lenge i familieomsorg.

Barnehage annen omsorgsordning utenfor familie.

Hvordan opplever du barnets omsorgsarrangement?

Hvordan fungerer ordningen for barnet?

Var du og partner enige om hvordan dere skulle innrette dere i permisjonstiden og etterpå?

Tanker om det selv å være far/mor og mer generelt; hva kan far bidra med, hva mor - forskjeller/likheter

Fordeling av ansvar for oppgaver hjemme, barneomsorg og forsørgelse. Føler du et større. ansvar som forsørger/omsorgsperson eller opplever du at dere deler likt på forsørger- og omsorgsansvaret?

**Hvor viktig er likestilling i parforholdet for deg?**

Hva forbinder du med likestilling?

Hva skal til for å få det til?

Opplever du at du lever i et likestilt parforhold?

Maktforholdet i parrelasjonen (hvem har det endelige ord i viktige spørsmål? Opplevelse av likeverd med partner, hvem tilpasser seg mest og oftest?)

**Arbeidssituasjon:** Hva arbeidet består i. Arbeidstid/arbeidstidsorganisering. Eventuell overtid/ innsats utover normalarbeidsdagen.

Ønsker om arbeidstid i småbarnsfasen. Ønsker om arbeidstid når barna er i skolealder.

Forventninger/ønsker om karriere.

**Partners arbeid og arbeidstid.** Hvordan ser du på partners arbeid, karriere og arbeidstid?

**Tanker om arbeid- familie- liv balanse.** Hvordan prioriterer du selv mellom arbeid og familie i praksis (eventuelt samsvar/diskrepans mellom egne ønsker- i så fall hvorfor?)

**Fritid, engasjement utenom arbeid og familie.** Venner, kompisar, organisasjoner, politisk

**Økonomiske rammebetingelser: Inntekt individuelt og på husholdsbasis.** Studielån og boliglån. Inntjeningsbehov på husholdsbasis. Ønsker og forventninger til materiell standard: Bolig, dagligliv og fritid/ferier. Kjøp av tjenester. Forbruk og miljø.

Økonomiens betydning for valg av arbeidstid og barneomsorg.

Er du stort sett fornøyd med livet i dag eller er det noe du gjerne skulle endret på?

**Foreldres praksis med hensyn til arbeidsdeling og karriere som positiv eller negativ modell.**

Relasjon til foreldrene i dag.

På hvilken måte har erfaringer fra oppvekstfamilien preget egen identitet, kjønnsidentitet, forholdet til partner og til egne barn og jobbidentitet?

Hva har erfaringene fra oppveksthjemmet betydd for deg som person?

Hva har erfaringene fra oppveksthjemmet betydd for deg som mann/kvinne?

Hva har erfaringene fra oppveksthjemmet betydd for deg som partner?

Hva har erfaringene fra oppveksthjemmet betydd for deg som far/mor?

Hva har erfaringene fra oppveksthjemmet betydd for ditt forhold til jobb/arbeidsliv?

Vil det å jobbe deltid og skifte på å være hjemme, slik dine foreldre gjorde være aktuelt for deg selv og din familie? Eventuelt hvorfor ikke?

Har du/dere venner bekjente som kan være aktuelle kandidater til kontrastgruppen – de som vokste opp i to inntektsfamilier som ikke praktiserte ektefelledelt arbeidstid?

## Letters to participants

Margunn Bjørnholt

Institutt for sosiologi og samfunnsgeografi, Universitetet i Oslo  
c/o NOVA, Munthes gt. 22  
tel 22541368

### Oppfølgingsstudie av forsøksprosjektet 'Ektefelledelt arbeidstid'. Delstudie om menn, arbeid og familie

Som barn av foreldre som deltok i forsøksprosjektet 'Ektefelledelt arbeidstid' (DAT) på 1970-tallet, tar vi kontakt for å spørre deg om du kunne tenke deg å delta i en sosiologisk studie som innbefatter barnegenerasjonens erfaringer og holdninger. Studien inngår som ledd i oppfølgingsundersøkelsen av DAT-ekteparene som Margunn Bjørnholt startet for ca to år siden, der deltakerne bidro med de nødvendige opplysninger for å kontakte neste generasjon.

Oppfølgingsstudien vil bestå av to delstudier, én med fokus på fedre og sønner som gjennomføres av Margunn Bjørnholt har som mål å belyse menns rolle i forhold til arbeid og familie, blant annet gjennom å undersøke sønnenes erfaringer med foreldrenes arbeid-/ omsorgsarrangement i forhold til egne tilpasninger, erfaringer og refleksjoner om arbeid og familie. Den andre delstudien, som gjennomføres av Tone Schou Wetlesen, har fokus på DAT-barnas erfaringer med og holdninger til barneomsorg både under oppveksten og i senere år. Schou Wetlesens studie har som mål å belyse oppveksterfaringer i familier som praktiserte ektefelledelt arbeidstid sammenholdt med oppveksterfaringer i familier der begge foreldre var yrkesaktive på full tid eller tilnærmet full tid. De to delstudiene inngår i et mer omfattende prosjekt som handler om å klargjøre vilkårene for likestilling så vel som for arbeid/liv balanse. Vi håper å kunne gi et bidrag av relevans for utformingen av de kommende tiårs familie- og arbeidslivspolitik, og i denne sammenheng er din medvirkning av avgjørende betydning. Prosjektet er i sin helhet finansiert av Norges Forskningsråd og utføres ved Institutt for sosiologi og samfunnsgeografi ved Universitetet i Oslo.

Jeg inviterer deg til delta i en intervju samtale og vil kontakte deg pr telefon innen utgangen av februar. Samtalen vil vare ca. en til to timer og foregå på et tidspunkt og på et sted som passer for deg. Som forsker har jeg taushetsplikt og den informasjon du gir vil bli anonymisert. Din medvirkning er naturligvis frivillig, og du kan når som helst trekke deg fra prosjektet dersom du skulle ønske det. Du kan nå meg på telefon

67159003, 99558926 eller e-post: g.m.bjornholt@sosiologi.uio.no dersom du ønsker nærmere opplysninger eller for å melde fra om du ønsker å delta.

Med vennlig hilsen

Margunn Bjørnholt

Margunn Bjørnholt  
Institutt for sosiologi og samfunnsgeografi, Universitetet i Oslo  
c/o NOVA, Munthes gt. 22  
tel 22541368  
Oslo, den 04.05.2007

Kjære deltakere i prosjektet Ektefelleledt arbeidstid

Her følger en liten oppdatering om hva som har skjedd siden jeg intervjuet dere i 2005/2006. Noen av dere vil ha fått med seg at barna deres har blitt kontaktet for intervjuer. Dette inngår i en videreføring av prosjektet som består av to delstudier, én med fokus på fedre og sønner som gjennomføres av Margunn Bjørnholt har som mål å belyse menns rolle i forhold til arbeid og familie, blant annet gjennom å undersøke sønnenes erfaringer med foreldrenes arbeid-/ omsorgsarrangement i forhold til egne tilpassninger, erfaringer og refleksjoner om arbeid og familie. Den andre delstudien gjennomføres av professor Tone Schou Wetlesen, og har fokus på DAT-barnas erfaringer med og holdninger til barneomsorg, både under oppveksten og i senere år. Schou Wetlesens studie har som mål å belyse oppveksterfaringer i familier som praktiserte ektefelleledt arbeidstid sammenholdt med oppveksterfaringer i familier der begge foreldre var yrkesaktive på full tid eller tilnærmet full tid. De to delstudiene inngår i et mer omfattende prosjekt som handler om å klargjøre vilkårene for likestilling så vel som for arbeid/liv balanse. Vi håper å kunne gi et bidrag av relevans for utformingen av de kommende tiårs familie-og arbeidslivspolitik, og i denne sammenheng er din medvirkning av avgjørende betydning. Prosjektet er i sin helhet finansiert av Norges Forskningsråd og utføres ved Institutt for sosiologi og samfunnsgeografi ved Universitetet i Oslo. Tone Schou Wetlesen er prosjektleder.

Publiseringen fra prosjektet kommer i hovedsak bestå i tidsskrifts-artikler, og vi vil informere dere når de planlagte artiklene er publisert.

Om dere har spørsmål eller supplerende opplysninger, ta gjerne kontakt. Spesielt er vi ute etter å rekruttere DAT-barn som har fått barn etter at dere ble intervjuet og som ikke har blitt kontaktet for intervju. Jeg vil muligens også kontakte noen av dere for supplerende, individuelle intervjuer.

Med vennlig hilsen

Margunn Bjørnholt

## Skandinavisk sammendrag

Denne avhandlingen handler om menn og endring, generasjonsoverføring, historisk endring og handling. Avhandlingen bygger på en longitudinell studie av to generasjoner menn, der fedrene deltok i et eksperimentelt forskningsprosjekt, Ektefelledelt arbeidstid, der målet var å fremme et mer likestilt arbeids- og familieliv i Norge på 1970-tallet. Det opprinnelige prosjektet ble gjennomført av sosiologen Erik Grønseth ved Universitetet i Oslo, på oppdrag fra direktør Ola Rokkones i Norges familieråd. Prosjektet var bygget på at begge ektefeller jobbet deltid og delte på å passe barn og stelle hjemme.

I sammendraget i denne avhandlingen gjennomføres en flerdimensjonal analyse av de to generasjonene menns arbeid-familie-tilpasning: De utradisjonelle fedrene som jobbet deltid og stelte hjemme på 1970-tallet og et utvalg av voksne sønner som er i samme livsfase på 2000-tallet som fedrene var den gang, og som på intervjutidspunktet befant seg i det jeg omtaler som neo-tradisjonelle arbeid-familietilpasninger. I sammendraget, som utgjør første del av avhandlingen, diskuteres de to generasjonene ulike arbeid-familietilpasninger som situert handling i lys av ulike sider ved tid og rom, personlig livshistorie, diskursive og materielle mulighets-strukturer og dynamikk mellom generasjonene på familienivå og samfunnsnivå. Gjennom den flerdimensjonale analysen i sammendraget av arbeid-familietilpasninger i to generasjoner av menn, gir avhandlingen et teoretiserende bidrag til studiet av menn, endring og likestilling, og til studiet av sosial endring generelt gjennom utviklingen av en konseptuell ramme som binder sammen mikro-nivå med makro-nivå. En kortere versjon av sammendraget er publisert i Bjørnholt (2014). Deler av sammendraget inngår eller videreutvikles i andre artikler: Bjørnholt (2010a; 2012) utvider den historiske bakgrunnen for prosjektet Ektefelledelt arbeidstid, og går i større detalj på analysen av prosjektet i lys av familie- og likestillingspolitikken. Bjørnholt og Farstad (2012) inneholder deler av metodekapittelet i dette sammendraget, og gir en videre utdypning av parintervjuet som metode, og Bjørnholt (2014a) analyserer ulike teoretiseringer av kjærlighet i norsk familieforskning, fra Erik Grønseth på 1950-tallet og til i dag. Ved å ta opp kjærlighet, som må ses som Grønseths grunntema i det meste av hans forskning, er artikkelen en teoretisk videreføring og utdypning av denne avhandlingen.

I de fem artiklene som inngår i avhandlingen, og som utgjør avhandlingens andre del, legges det empiriske materialet frem. Bjørnholt (2009a)



presenterer konsekvensene for parforholdet og familien av de opprinnelige deltakernes arbeidsdelingsarrangement, og konkluderer med at deltakerne vurderte at “ektefelleddelt arbeidstid” hadde vært gunstig for dem som par og for familien som helhet. Dette ble bestyrket av at flertallet fortsatt var gift. Den første artikkelen konkluderer også med at mennene spilte en aktiv rolle og i betydelig grad var initiativtakere og pådrivere. Bjørnholt (2011) analyserer mennenes motivasjoner for å ta initiativ som “endringsagenter” i egen familie, og konkluderer med at egen oppvekst og forhold i oppvekstfamilien, en autoritativ væremåte og de mulighetene som åpnet seg gjennom nye maskulinitetsidealer på 1970-tallet, var viktige. Det å fremme partners karriere og egenutvikling fremsto som en viktig motivasjon, og jeg identifiserer en “partnerorientert maskulinitet”, som for noen var blandet med egeninteresse, for eksempel et ønske om at ektefellen skulle forbli attraktiv. Bjørnholt (2010b) analyserer konsekvensene for karrieren av mennenes deltidsarbeid og erfaring som “husfedre”, og konkluderer med at det for flertallet ikke var noen negativ karriere-effekt. Heller tvert om; mennene gjorde karriere, og for en del ble erfaringen fra prosjektet sett og verdsatt i arbeidslivet som lederkompetanse. Bjørnholt (2009b) analyserer ett enkelt case med sikte på generasjonsoverføring mellom far og sønn, og konkluderer med at far-sønn-designet gir begrenset innsikt i generasjonsoverføring. Bjørnholt (2010c) gir en bredere, mer kontekstuell analyse av fedre og sønner og finner at fedrenes utradisjonelle arbeid-familiearrangement ikke ble overført til neste generasjon. Sønnene ble på intervju tidspunktet funnet å ha innrettet seg i det jeg omtaler som neo-tradisjonelle arbeid-familiearrangementer. I denne artikkelen analyseres sønnenes arbeid-familie-arrangement i større detalj, og jeg identifiserer to mønstre: de komfortable neo-tradisjonelle og de ukomfortable neo-tradisjonelle. Analysen viser at det er flere faktorer enn egen oppvekstfamilie som avgjør hvordan neste generasjon innretter seg, herunder arbeidslivet og partners ønsker og oppveksterfaringer.

## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> Sons who had established their own families with children below school age, living with the mother of the children. Only five of the sons fully met these criteria, but two others were included, one from a family where the father worked part time for the rest of his professional life. The son was single without children. In addition one son from one of the three divorced families, who had been raised by his father after his parents split up, who himself had a daughter in school age and lived with the mother of his child.

<sup>ii</sup> I use the concept “neo-traditional.” Thereby I mean a pattern that differs both from a traditional, male breadwinner model, as well as from a fully egalitarian dual earner model. The “neo-traditional” model is modern in that breadwinning and care are shared, but it is also traditional in that there is a gendered division of the main responsibilities for breadwinning and care. The concept was introduced by Poloma and Garland (1971) in a study of dual-earner couples. Although the concept neo-traditional is distinct from ‘traditional’, I am not quite comfortable with the concept. Even with the prefix ‘neo’, it still contains the term traditional, and can be criticized for operating with a dichotomy between traditional and modern, and the moralism that goes with it. Nevertheless, I have not been able to find a better and more neutral term, which captures the particular adaptations of the sons in this study.

<sup>iii</sup> The full history of the Norwegian Family Council remains to be fully documented.

<sup>iv</sup> The interviews with the sons were to be part of both subprojects, mine on fathers and sons, and Wetlesen’s on young adults.

<sup>v</sup> The Norwegian Family Council, which was publicly funded, initiated and was an active partner in the project, and contributed to recruiting participants, dissemination of results and promotion of the work-sharing model. I have no further details of the funding of the original Work-Sharing Couples Project.



**ARTICLE I**



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# Norwegian work-sharing couples project 30 years later

## Revisiting an experimental research project for gender equality in the family

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### Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to outline the background as well as methodological and epistemological aspects to, and the effects of, a follow-up study 30 years later of the work-sharing couples project, which is a Norwegian, experimental research project in the early 1970s. The aim of the project is to promote gender equality and a better work/life balance in families. In this paper the variation in work-sharing and post work-sharing trajectories over the life-course is explored, mainly focusing on the impact of the work-sharing arrangement on the couples' relations, their work/life balance and the well-being of participants, the core objectives of the original project.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The original project has a small scale, interventionist design based on couples working part-time and sharing childcare and housework; effects on family life and gender equality are documented by questionnaires and time diaries. In the follow-up study, retrospective life-course couple interviews with the original participants are used.

**Findings** – Revisiting the original project produced new insights into, the subversive and radical use of sex-role theory in early Norwegian family sociology as an instrument of changing gender relations. In the follow-up study, the high level of participation and the long duration of the arrangement would seem to qualify for a heightened level of expectation as to the effects of the experiment on the participants' lives. A high proportion of the couples are still married, and the work-sharing arrangement has been regarded by the majority of participants to have had a positive impact on their marital relation, work/life balance and well-being.

**Practical implications** – Insights gained from revisiting this project may prove fruitful when confronting contemporary dilemmas of work/life balance, as well as demographic and environmental challenges.

**Originality/value** – The original project is unique internationally owing to its theoretically subversive, interventionist design and reformatory ambition. The longitudinal follow-up of the experiment is also unique in family research, and of great value for researchers into gender equality and the family.

**Keywords** Norway, Gender, Family roles, Equal opportunities, Dual-career couples

**Paper type** Research paper



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The author is indebted to Erik Grønseth, who was highly enthusiastic about the follow-up study, which would not have been possible without his help and cooperation. In addition to providing what could still be found of his original material, he personally tracked down and made initial contact with the first half of the sample before he died in autumn 2005. The author would also like to thank Linda Haas for her enthusiastic support of the follow-up study and for providing valuable comments on the draft article and Lise Kjølørød and Arne Mastekaasa, who, commenting on an earlier draft, suggested a stronger focus on the background and methodological aspects of the follow-up study, which lay the ground for the paper's present shape and focus. Kari Stefansen and Tone Schou Wetlesen have commented on several versions of the paper.

The reconciliation of family and work has been a major focus for several decades within family research. The issue is highly gendered in that it is often assumed that the woman in dual-earner families bears the responsibility for working out viable solutions. Today, declining birth rates in most European countries adds to the awareness of the need for new and untraditional solutions to combining paid work and the family. Since the early 1990s, there has been renewed consideration of men's contributions to unpaid work at home (Hochschild, 1997; Moen, 2003; Williams, 2000; Haas and Hwang, 2000).

Men's participation in childcare and housework is more and more often pointed out as a key to gender equality and work/family/balance/integration/reconciliation/articulation (Fraser, 1994; Ellingsæter and Leira, 2004). However, any movement in this direction has so far been slow. In the Nordic countries, mothers of young children participate more in paid work, and in Norway and some of the other Nordic countries fathers participate more in childcare than in other countries, mainly due to a special period of paternity leave assigned to men. However, the general picture of breadwinning and care adaptations remains remarkably stable. State feminist reforms have eased women's lives, but the demands and expectations made of workers to be basically unencumbered by care perpetuate a male provider norm. Fathers of small children still work the longest hours, while mothers largely work part-time and shoulder the main responsibility for care and unpaid work at home (Vaage, 2002; Kitterød, 2005; Pettersen, 2004; Kjelstad, 2006). Women have reduced the time they spend on housework, while men's time spent on housework has slightly increased, but not by nearly as much as the women's reduction (Vaage, 2002). The inequality in domestic work which persists has drawn renewed interest, and Gornick (2000, p. 128) states that

... there is considerable agreement that unpaid work is the next frontier; thus, policy development aimed at altering gender inequalities in unpaid work may constitute the next wave of "woman-friendly" welfare state development.

The dual-earner/dual-carer model (Crompton, 1999; Deutsch, 1999; Gornick and Meyers, 2003) and the universalization of care (Fraser, 1994) are seen as the best attempts to attain gender equality, and Gornick and Meyers (95-99) describe in some detail a dual-earner/dual-carer model as a *thought experiment*. This article revisits a dual-earner/dual-carer experiment which was carried out as an action research project in the 1970s. The aim of the article is to explore the background of the work-sharing experiment and its contemporary reception, as well as discuss the rationale for and methodological aspects of a follow-up study thirty years later. The follow-up study aimed at exploring as many as of the questions above as possible through a broad, life-course approach, in an attempt to reveal the couple's shared life story as well as the individual stories of husbands and wives. In this article, the duration of the arrangement will be presented as an important finding as well as a starting point for further analysis; the paper further explores the impact of the work-sharing arrangement on the couples' relations, their work/life balance and the well-being of participants.

### **The work-sharing couples project**

The work-sharing couples project was carried out at the University of Oslo by Erik Grønseth, the late sociologist, at the request of the Norwegian Family Council and its leader Ola Rokones. The aim of the project was to promote gender equality and a better

quality of life for families by redistributing the couples' paid and unpaid work. This was based on both spouses having part-time jobs. The study drew a great deal of publicity from the Norwegian and international media and family scholars (Haas, 2006). Thirty years later, the couples were revisited for a follow-up study.

The theoretical background of the work-sharing project can be traced back to the critical and radical research into sex roles and social structure that Norwegian family researchers began in the 1950s. The researchers emphasized that sex roles were socially constructed, and the critical use and interpretation of sex role theory is said to have been a Norwegian specialty (Leira, 2000, p. 126) and was a contrast to its more conservative American counterpart. The work of Norwegian family researchers influenced the work of a new generation of American family researchers, and Linda Haas used Harriet Holter's book *Sex Roles and Social Structure* (Holter, 1970) as a framework for her doctoral thesis (Holter, 1977). She was also influenced by Grønseth and visited him. In the 1950s, Grønseth (1956) criticized the Parsonian concept of the nuclear-family system for being based on complementary gender roles which were functional for society as well as for the family. Grønseth (1970) pointed out the "dysfunctionality of the husband-provider role" as a source of male domination and female subordination in intimate relationships, as well as the inequality between the sexes in society at large (Grønseth, 1970, 1966/1972), and argued that a wife's personal and economic independence from her husband, as well as men's participation in the daily life of their families, and the mutual sharing of life-worlds by husband and wife, were crucial to marital felicity. Here he was drawing on the work of the Norwegian pioneer Bonnevie (1932) who argued that the gainful employment of married women was necessary for the survival and development of the couple's relation and that women's increased responsibility for breadwinning would have to be met by men taking part more in the unpaid work in the household. Grønseth was also heavily influenced by Wilhelm Reich, who saw oppression in personal and sexual relations as part of the oppression within capitalism.

#### **An action research project**

The original work-sharing project was designed to be an action research project; the aim was to promote change in the care and breadwinning arrangements of the families participating. After a period of the families practising the new arrangements, effects were examined along several dimensions within the family, including extra-familial activities such as participating in voluntary organizations or in the local community. The focus on family life reflects the emphasis placed by Grønseth and Rokones on families as important and vital parts of people's lives, which linked personal well-being, gender equality and citizenship.

A total of 16 couples were recruited in the period 1971-1975 for the experiment. They had to meet the following criteria to qualify for participation: a cohabitating, heterosexual couple with at least one child below school age (seven) and both gainfully employed in part-time jobs for 16-28 h/week. The spouses could work at the same or at different workplaces and could combine their working hours in any way they saw fit (Grønseth, 1975a, p. 209).

The work-sharing couples were mainly middle class and academics at different levels. Approximately a quarter of the participants held lower, clerical positions that could be characterized as working-class jobs. The middle-class profile of the sample was criticized at the time. Today, however, middle-class samples are often chosen when studying work/family issues because the problem of combining two careers and the

family is particularly prominent in middle-class, career-oriented couples. Women with higher education work full-time to a much greater extent than women with less education, and ideologies of gender equality and ideas about equal sharing are more explicit in middle-class couples. Skilbrei (2003) found that working-class women often opposed gender equality, advocating a more traditional family model. Nevertheless, the value of paid as contrasted to unpaid work and the issue of gender equality are not only of relevance to middle-class men and women who share an ideal of gender equality. When retiring, divorcing (or splitting up in the case of unmarried cohabiters), traditionally oriented women who have “chosen” to specialize in care and household work for their families will also face the financial costs of the gendered sharing of paid and unpaid work.

### **The aims, methods and results of the original project**

Expectations as to the effects on the families were high. Relations were expected to change as the wife became more independent and felt more equal to her husband economically, occupationally and in family matters. This would lead to more equal power relations between the spouses, one assumed. The husband’s well-being was expected to increase as he would gain more surplus energy for his wife and children. The husband’s greater participation in household work was expected to have an effect on the wife’s scope of action, both as a wife and worker. This, it was predicted, would have an effect on the next generation. Children who grew up in these more equal families were expected to develop more flexible gender identities. Furthermore, the work-sharing arrangement was expected to reduce the social isolation of modern nuclear families, as the work-sharing scheme would leave more time for extra-familial activities. Even environmental benefits would evolve from the reduction of unnecessary consumption in work-sharing families.

A combined approach was chosen. Each spouse was given a 29-page questionnaire covering a range of topics, such as one’s childhood and situation prior to the experiment, one’s motivation for and experiences of the work-sharing pattern, as well as the current sharing of housework and care. In addition, one third of the couples were interviewed.

The work-sharing arrangement was deemed to be a success, leading to an “unusual extent of equality between the sexes” (Grønseth, 1975b, p. 219). Almost all the participants thought the work-sharing arrangement had led to improved emotional relations with their spouse: some stated that their sex life had improved. Most of them also reported having attained more equal power relations. The families experienced less stress, and a majority reported better relations with the children.

There was, however, a gendered pattern in the sharing of household tasks, and childcare and cooking were more equally shared than other household work (Grue, 1978), a finding that corresponds to recent research (Vaage, 2002; Brandth and Kvande, 2003).

Recent research also seems to confirm the basic hypotheses of the work-sharing couples project: that a reduction in the hours of work of fathers and an increase in the earning power of mothers are important elements for a more equal sharing of household work. On the basis of a large representative study of Norwegian parents, Pettersen (2004) drew a similar conclusion.

### **Follow-up study**

Why conduct a follow-up study 30 years later? A longitudinal follow-up study was not part of the original project design, and the idea came after the author of this paper had



met one of the participants during another research project and contacted Erik Grønseth. He happened to have the names of half of the participants, and the Norwegian Ministry of Children and Family Affairs funded a pilot study (Bjørnholt, 2005). Later, the remaining couples were identified and interviews were completed by 2006. A total of 15 of the original 16 couples were traced. Of the 15 couples, 14 consented to be interviewed. In the last case, the husband was dead and the wife did not want to participate. Twelve couples were still married and interviewed together: the divorced couples were interviewed separately, but in one case only the wife was interviewed, as the ex-husband was unavailable.

The original project offers a unique opportunity for longitudinal family research.

In addition to its historical value and unique character, the project appeared fresh and appealing. Even though it had been carried out thirty years ago, it dealt with some of the most important questions in family research and policy discussions today, which has been the main reason to conduct a follow-up study.

Ethically, participants should have given their consent to be contacted for a follow-up study at the time of the original project. Due to the current rules and procedures for confidentiality in research, it is less likely that researchers in the future will have the same good fortune and opportunities to conduct a longitudinal follow-up study unplanned from the outset.

Erik Grønseth himself was quite aware of the ethical aspects of contacting the participants for a follow-up study, and he took responsibility for tracing, as well as establishing contact and introducing me as the person responsible for the follow-up study to the first half of the participants. Regretfully, Grønseth died in the autumn of 2005, so I contacted the remaining couples. The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs expressed some reluctance to fund the study, and doubted whether the couples would be willing to participate.

The participants not only consented to being interviewed, but quite a few expressed enthusiasm about the public authorities' being interested in their experiences, which they felt were still highly relevant to contemporary work/family discourse. One of the work-sharing men had only a couple of years earlier tried (unsuccessfully) to get the Gender Equality Commissioner interested in the project. Others did not have the work-sharing experience quite so fresh in their minds and some doubted whether they would be able to contribute much. As it turned out, everyone seemed to remember it well. The high response rate in the follow-up study reflects almost completely the original research universe. Their willingness to participate after such a long time demonstrates the importance the informants accorded the work-sharing experiment.

### **What can we learn?**

Revisiting the project three decades later poses methodological as well as analytical and theoretical challenges, while offering opportunities for learning on more levels.

Revisiting the original project in its historical context adds a time dimension to our present understanding of work, family and gender equality. It also provides an opportunity to step back for a fresh view of the thirty years of primarily state feminist welfare development that has resulted in the current structure of opportunities and thinking, but also to the inevitable closure of windows of opportunity as well as of mind that will result from the implementation of policies.

The work-sharing project aimed at different solutions than the ones that were chosen, thus providing the opportunity for *contrafactual reflection* on our present and recent history of work/family policies. A revisit provides an opportunity to explore the

myopia, social constructedness and historical embeddedness of the present and to question current discourses of work-family and gender equality in research and policymaking.

The crucial issues addressed in the project were far ahead of their time, such as the link between working time and time to care, and the emphasis on involving fathers, topics that have increasingly become the subject of debates, research and policymaking since the early 1990s.

Men's working arrangements have also recently become an important focus of research and policy discussions in Europe, including the EU projects, "Work Changes Gender" (Puchert *et al.*, 2005) and the project "Fostering Caring Masculinities" (Langvasbråten and Teigen, 2006).

Working time preferences and practices are another topic on the current research agenda. Kitterød (2007) draws attention to the fact that many parents express a preference for shorter working hours, but that they do not necessarily reduce their working time, even though they feel they both want to and have the opportunity to (Kitterød, 2007). Though a large proportion of the population was positive to the work-sharing model in the 1970s (Glefjell, 1984), apart from the few experimental couples, work-sharing was not taken up by others. This makes the experiences of the work-sharing couples, who did in fact reduce their working hours, sociologically unique.

However, due to the time that has passed and social change, the project and its results will not be directly applicable to the present unless they are presented and interpreted in their historical contexts and reinterpreted in relation to the present to establish their relevance today. In a pre-state feminist era, parental leave was short and care facilities were far scarcer than today, working part-time was less common – even for women – and part-time workers lacked many of the rights they have in Norway today. Furthermore, the mentality and what people took for granted differed from today. At that time, the male breadwinner model was still accorded hegemonic status even though women were increasingly taking on paid work. Today, the dual-earner model has gained ideological hegemony while in practice women still shoulder the main responsibility for domestic work and child-care and, due to a persisting gender pay gap, women largely remain junior partners in breadwinning (NOU, 2008).

The follow-up study gives access to the original participants' life stories over a considerable part of their lifespan. During the project, the participants were in an early phase of family life, as well as in their careers. The original project was only able to capture short-term effects, since it was by and large terminated by 1975. Revisiting the participants after 30 years allows outcomes to be checked, even though it would be wrong to attribute the situation and status of the participants today solely to the work-sharing arrangement.

The revisit documents how the participants' lives turned out and provides stories reflecting the meaning they attribute in their lives to the work-sharing experience: as couples, individuals, parents and providers.

### **Design and method of follow-up study**

The follow-up study was based on life-course interviews with couples. Choosing to use couple interviews was mainly made for pragmatic reasons, as time and funding were scarce. However, this seemed to be a good starting point, since their lives as couples were an important part of the interview.

Interviewing couples has advantages and limitations: for example, couples may keep to an official narrative, which has been agreed upon beforehand – of their life

together to avoid past and current topics that might trigger conflict. However, recent research has concluded that conflicts will be more openly stated when both partners are present than when they are interviewed separately (Syltevik, 2000; Valentine, 1999). Doucet (2006), based on a study including both individual and couple interviews, also concluded that couple interviews provided the most interesting data. The couple interview provides an insight into the pair's joint contributions to their lives as couples (Martinsson, 1997). When presenting themselves and their shared story as a couple, inter-couple dynamics can be triggered. During the interviews of the work-sharing couples, moments occurred when one spouse took over the questioning, thus allowing the interviewer to take a back seat and listen to the highly relevant discussions between the two. Their turn-taking and communication with each other nuanced the picture of them as a couple. In addition, there were more mundane considerations, such as efficiency in terms of time and money – interviewing couples allowed data to be collected about the couple and the individuals in one interview.

The follow-up study was designed to provide retrospective data by way of life-course couple interviews, while the original study used a questionnaire, supplemented by couple interviews from only a part of the sample.

Retrospective narratives grant one access to the informant's own life story as told to and interpreted by the narrator. According to the epistemological and methodological shift from subjects to narratives in life-course theory and research, the data will comprise the *stories*, rather than the pure *experiences*. This approach needs to be sensitive to "the social process of telling stories", as well as to "the social role that stories play" and "the wider political and social frameworks within which stories are told and heard" (Plummer, 1995, pp. 15-18). Stories cannot be taken as direct representations of the experiences they convey. The informants may tend to defend the choices they once made and may exaggerate the positive or undercommunicate any negative aspects. Telling stories in an interview setting has the advantage of opening up reflective space. I found that the participants eagerly explored and discussed their own experiences, the meanings and implications, rather than dishing up a rehearsed success story. This observation has also been made by other researchers (Danielsen, 2006, p. 68; Martinsson, 1997, p. 206). As the interviews unfolded, the participants seemed to feel quite free and some negative aspects of the work-sharing arrangement also emerged, such as financial matters.

Interview data on life-courses contain a combination of at least three types of qualitatively different data. First, on the couple level, there are empirical facts, like present marital status and the number of children. Other empirical data will stem from the individual level, such as occupational status and health. Second, the interview data will contain retrospective narratives on both couple and individual levels revealing the way in which the work-sharing experiment was experienced. Further, there is data of a reflexive character – the participants' reflections as couples and individuals on the meaning of the work-sharing arrangement in all aspects of the life-course. In addition, observational data may emerge in the interview situation.

Combining descriptive and evaluative elements is usual in most qualitative interviews, but combining the retrospective and couple design, and including both the couple level and the individual level in one interview, pose methodological and analytical challenges.

The conscious use of the different kinds of data collected in the couple interview may, however, bring about considerable analytical gains as the data can be used for several purposes. The simplest use is to extract and analyze separate elements from

the whole sample, which will be presented in this article. In addition the couple interviews will contain several, qualitatively different sets of data that can be combined to obtain a certain level of methodological triangulation.

### **Results from the follow-up study**

The follow-up study has generated rich material and findings about couple, individual and intergenerational levels which may be analyzed from different angles and with different focuses. In other papers I explore the work-sharing men, their motivation and agency in initiating the work-sharing arrangement (Bjørnholt, forthcoming a), effects on careers (Bjørnholt, forthcoming b) and intergenerational transmission (Bjørnholt, 2009c). In this paper I concentrate on the couple level.

### **The duration of work-sharing arrangement**

For the project initiators, the work-sharing arrangement was (to a certain extent) imagined as a permanent way of life. A brief, informal telephone follow-up in 1980 (unpublished notes) concluded that slightly over half of the couples had returned to more traditional arrangements involving the woman working part-time, studying or staying home as a housewife. The follow-up study 30 years later helped one gain a fuller picture of the couples' further work-family arrangements, if and why they had stopped work-sharing, their post work-sharing adaptations, and the way in which the duration of the work-sharing arrangement is related to the perceived impact on family life, career and health.

The work-sharing experiment was unique in a Norwegian and international context: there is thus not much research to draw upon for comparison with the exception of some studies of "role sharing couples" (Haas, 1977; Russell, 1979). Russell's study included families who shared care-giving in the second half of the 1970s, but in this project, the time parents spent on care, and not their time spent on paid employment, was the selection criterion. In some of the families fathers worked part-time, but the study also included families in which the father was the main caregiver due to his being unemployed; for several reasons the project is not directly comparable to the work-sharing project. But Russell's study is still of particular interest due to its research design, which in contrast to most other qualitative research into families also included a follow-up study. As there is a lack of other more directly comparable studies, the results from Russell's follow-up study may indicate what to expect from a follow-up study of the work-sharing couples.

According to Russell (1982, p. 162): "The 2-year-follow-up brought a sobering reality back to the project". In the follow-up study he found that a large majority (approximately 75 per cent) had reverted to a traditional family pattern, with the husband as the main breadwinner. He also found that the number of families who had maintained the untraditional lifestyle was "too small for any meaningful conclusions to be drawn" (p. 163). That most participants had reverted to a traditional lifestyle surprised the researchers, due to the strong commitment to the shared care-giving arrangements that the couples had initially expressed.

The brief follow-up of the work-sharing couples five years later, in 1980, also revealed that slightly over half had reverted to a more traditional pattern. Based on the scarce research available, expectations should thus not be high as to the duration of the work-sharing arrangement. The duration of the arrangement has been chosen as a starting point for the analysis of the follow-up study.

The majority of the work-sharing couples maintained their untraditional arrangement for much longer: some continually, while others practised work-sharing with other arrangements in between, such as returning to work-sharing when they had a second or third child. Table I shows how the various time ranges were distributed between the couples.

The median duration of the work-sharing arrangement was seven years, ranging between one-and-a-half and 30 years, with seven years as the most frequent duration. Two-thirds continued work-sharing for longer than six years and a large majority – 12 out of 14 – continued with it for three years or more. For the majority of the participants, the work-sharing arrangement was a temporary adaptation, and one or both of the parents returned to full-time work either when the men (mostly) were offered career opportunities, when the couple was given a place at kindergarten, when children started going to school or due to a combination of these factors. Nevertheless, as a temporary adaptation, the duration of the arrangement was remarkably long, and two thirds of the work-sharers kept at it for six years or more.

The long duration of the work-sharing arrangement is an unexpected, important and interesting result, which would seem to justify a heightened level of expectation as to the effects of the work-sharing experiment on the participants' lives as couples, individuals, and parents.

The follow-up study 30 years later modifies the more traditional pattern observed in 1980 and illustrates the strength of a longitudinal design covering a longer time-span. Work patterns varied over the life-course, especially for the women. Some, like many women of their generation, took breaks from work to study. While most of the men had finished studying before starting work-sharing, the women tended to acquire their final level of education later, often after the work-sharing period. The return to a housewife adaptation, observed in some couples in 1980, was not permanent in any of the families and there was a tendency to strengthen the pattern of equal sharing over time as the women all returned to paid work. There was, however, a tendency for women to continue working part-time and for men to work full time, but there were also men who stayed in part-time adaptations – some of whom had wives who returned to working full-time. Three examples illustrate the variation in the duration and different trajectories of work-sharing.

**Work-sharing trajectories and post work-sharing arrangements**

*Short-term work-sharers*

Of the work-sharing couples, Vera and Frank practised work-sharing for the shortest period. Frank is a lawyer and worked for the state administration; his wife, Vera, is a special needs teacher and worked at the time for the child and youth psychiatric service. They gained their first experience of systematically sharing domestic work while living in a shared house with another couple, and Frank played an active role in retaining the equal sharing of housework when he and his wife formed a nuclear family and had children. They had three children in three years, the last one adopted,

	1.5 years	2-4 years	6-7.5 years	11.5-14 years	30 years
One couple		Four couples	Five couples	Three couples	One couple

**Note:** n = 14

**Table I.**  
Total duration of work-sharing arrangement

and started work-sharing partly because at that time no parental leave was granted for adopted children.

During the work-sharing arrangement, they both had 50 per cent jobs, working and staying home with the children every other day. He had no difficulty finding a part-time job; after having worked part-time for one and a half years he was offered a managerial position and started working full-time again.

Vera, on the other hand, found it increasingly difficult to combine work and care. She urged her husband to take the full-time position he had been offered because she was finding it hard to combine work and children, mostly due to a lack of adaptation for her working part-time from her employer. She felt obliged to quit work and became a full-time housewife for two years.

I think we were quite successful at home, but it was very poorly arranged at work, even though I was working in a profession to do with children and care. This is still the impression stuck in my mind, how poorly arranged it was [ . . . ] I was also pressured to resign. [ . . . ] There was no adaptation from my employer so you could spend some time with your children. This is what I found the hardest, not relations at home and what was between us (Vera).

When the couple reflect upon why they did not keep to the arrangement for longer, it becomes clear that neither the managerial position which Frank was offered, nor the workplace obstacles that Vera experienced is the whole explanation. They state that in their eyes the arrangement was very good for a limited time, but that they had never planned to make it permanent.

After two years as a housewife, Vera found a new job, and was offered day-care as a part of her job package. She started working full-time and has had full-time positions ever since; both Vera and Frank have been rather successful professionally, and both have had managerial positions. After her period as a housewife, it took some time and effort for Vera to restore a more egalitarian pattern of sharing housework. Today the couple think they share the everyday domestic chores to an unusually high degree, even though a gendered pattern persists in that she bears more responsibility for some of the typical female tasks such as making sure the home looks nice and occasional tasks such as washing the curtains: his areas are more traditionally masculine tasks such as seeing to the car. Today, they also have a cleaner. They felt they shared childcare equally, but there was a gendered pattern in that he did more outdoor activities with the kids. Today, their adult children are very independent and are not in very regular contact despite their relationship being good. Even though they think they are equally close to their children, she thinks that she could more easily sense if something was amiss with them.

Frank and Vera are representative of the work-sharing couples in several ways; they both have higher education and, like many of the other couples in the project, they had initiated work-sharing independently of the project. Frank, like many of the work-sharing men, had been active in initiating work-sharing (see Bjørnholt, forthcoming a), and like the majority of the work-sharing men, Frank was rather successful professionally (see Bjørnholt, forthcoming b). However, that both of them returned to full-time work was not seen in most of the other couples, as there was a tendency for women to have less straightforward careers, taking breaks to study and working part-time longer than the men.

#### *Long-term work-sharers*

Ann and Robert maintained the work-sharing arrangement for 12 years. They had studied together and are both civil engineers. When they had children, Ann was

prepared to stay at home, but Robert found that she was discontent as a stay-at-home mother with the second child; he also expected her to use her education. To join the work-sharing arrangement, Robert had quit his former job at a consultancy and found a job at her workplace at a state agency so he could work part-time. Though some eyebrows were raised when he – a man – wanted to work part-time, he did not encounter any real obstacles. The couple split the weeks between them, working two or three days each. Robert wanted a third child, and Ann found that their equally sharing childcare and domestic work was an important factor in her decision to have a third child.

After nine years of work-sharing 50-50, they increased their work proportions from 50 to 60 per cent, and a couple of years later to 80 per cent. Ann's impression was that by choosing to work part-time, she had more or less renounced the chance of having a career, but in fact she was offered a managerial position during her period of part-time work; she rose swiftly through the ranks and has had several top managerial positions since. After one year in a part-time managerial position, she returned to working full-time, while he continued in an 80 per cent job share for another six years, even though he was actually working full-time, paid on an hourly basis. Robert is a senior researcher and his feelings about not having carved out a "traditional" career are ambiguous. As his wife's career took off, he came to accept that there would not be room for two careers in the same family at the same state agency. He has enjoyed his work very much and has not taken any serious steps to find a managerial position himself; however, he is somewhat ambiguous about his wife's better career as well as her much higher income.

They have maintained an egalitarian pattern of sharing domestic work, and both agree that he is better at and does most of the housework – except for washing clothes, which is still her domain. He also maintains their external relations, inviting guests and sending Christmas cards, which women usually do in most families.

During the work-sharing period, they shared care-giving quite equally. According to Ann, "It was quite special for a period; they did not bother if they said mother or father, as long as it was one of us". But when the children reached adolescence this changed; Ann became their closest confidant, while Robert became very involved in his work, as well as other activities. The children are now in their thirties. Even though she has a very demanding position as a top manager and travels a great deal, she is still the one who "drops everything to meet the children at a café if there is something". Reflecting on this, Ann says: "You are very busy, maybe your children feel they should not bother you". She also points to a difference in the attention she and Robert give the children: "I am perhaps [...] more interested in what the children are doing". Robert agrees that he became less available and less involved in the children as they grew older. But both husband and wife have good relations with the kids: if the son needs a cake recipe, he calls his father, not his mother.

Ann and Robert are representative in terms of education of the majority of the work-sharing couples: they had also started work-sharing independently of the project, and it was Robert's initiative to promote a more egalitarian pattern. Like more than half of the work-sharing couples, they had three children. The work-sharing couples' overall fertility rate of 2.33 was average for women born in the 1940s and 1950s, but in this couple, the importance of the father bearing responsibility for his share of the housework *vis-à-vis* the decision to have another child was made explicit. All the men had the number of children they wanted to, but four of the women would have had a third or a fourth child.



This couple's current level of the sharing of domestic work and their reversed career pattern are, however, special as many of the work-sharing couples admitted to having reverted to a somewhat more traditional gendered pattern. In this couple the tendency for the mother's involvement to outlast that of the father was most explicit, but this was a tendency throughout the work-sharing group, i.e. that the work-sharing mothers reported being closest to the adult children as well as the grandchildren today.

#### *Permanent work-sharers*

The third couple to exemplify the project, Ola and Kari, stayed in the work-sharing arrangement longer than all the other couples for most of their professional lives. They had both been trained in the same occupation, a female-dominated caring profession, and over their long work-sharing career they sometimes shared the same job and at other times had different part-time jobs for different employers. At one of the jobs which they shared, they wanted to share the work 50-50, but were not allowed to do so: the employer wanted them to share it 70-30, with Ola working the lion's share. They stayed in this position for five years, and Kari regrets the effect her lower share has had on her pension. Over their life-course, Ola was usually responsible for a greater proportion of the work than Kari despite the fact that Ola strongly disliked his work, and that working less and having more leisure time were part of his motivation for joining the work-sharing arrangement: he worked part-time most of the time until falling ill in his early 50s: he was then given early retirement.

He admitted to being the dominant one in the relationship, and part of his motivation for work-sharing was that she would gain independence from him in financial matters. Ola regrets that he remained in a job he disliked and that he did not change vocation. His wife enjoyed her job and for the last five years she has had a fulfilling managerial position, before taking early retirement at 62. Having both worked part-time for such a long time, they will both have reduced pensions, and they regret they did not think about this before.

They do, however, both agree that working part-time gave them more opportunity for leisure and outdoor pursuits, which led to a less stressful family life. Ola's father died of the same illness from which Ola came to suffer, a hereditary condition whose onset is exacerbated by irregular working hours and night shifts: Ola's part-time work may in fact have saved his life: although he developed the same illness at the same age, he did not die of it as his father did.

Despite his untraditional vocation, sharing domestic work was not high on Ola's agenda, and he did little housework, even though he did his share on his days off at home. Today Kari is mainly responsible for most of the domestic work. Neither was he particularly involved in the upbringing of their two sons when they were small, but he was involved in their leisure activities as they grew up, and he has followed the same pattern with the grandchildren. In their parenting style, Kari and Ola emphasized independence, but they also think they were strict. Although they both express that they are not very close to their adult sons, Kari feels she has the closer connection.

Ola and Kari have medium-term education and worked in a non-academic profession. They started work-sharing after having heard of the project. Ola is one of the truly less career-oriented men among the work-sharing men, and for him working less and having more leisure time were important aspects of his motivation to work part-time. Leisure was stated as a major motivational factor for some, and an additional factor for a considerable proportion of the men. In this couple, in contrast to the majority, sharing domestic work was not a main issue, and their current pattern



was rather traditional. Ola's reflections on the potential health benefits from working part-time is broached in many of the interviews, although from a different angle, as the majority of the work-sharing couples were of good health.

The three couples represent three different patterns; one egalitarian, dual-earner pattern, a reversed pattern and a traditional pattern. I have not presented an example of another frequent pattern which is that of the man returning to full-time work and the wife staying in part-time positions, sometimes with breaks from work to study. An example of a post work-sharing adaptation with the husband working full-time and the wife working part-time is explored in detail in Bjørnholt (2009c).

### **Impact on marital relations and well-being**

One of the main objectives and expectations of the original project was that the work-sharing arrangement would lead to better marital relations as well as better relations between all members of the family. The original study concluded that this was indeed the case, and one of the interesting findings from the follow-up study is the emphasis on the couple's relationship which the men stressed in retrospect as part of their motivation for participating in the work-sharing arrangement (see Bjørnholt, forthcoming a).

The importance of this as well as the impact of this on the couple's relationship are supported by empirical evidence which indicates that the work-sharing arrangement did indeed have a positive impact on the couple's relation. The number of couples still married is high; 12 out of 15 couples, or 80 per cent were still married and three couples were divorced. This is better than could be expected (with the important qualification that this is a small and non-representative sample). The majority of the work-sharing couples married in the latter part of the 1960s and the early 1970s. For comparison, in the 1965 marital cohort 25.8 per cent were divorced 30 years later (in 1995) and of those who married in 1974, 26.3 per cent were divorced 21 years later (Mamelund *et al.*, 1997).

The positive effect of men sharing more equally unpaid work in the home and the importance of shared life worlds was a topic which was broached in many of the interviews; one of the men expressed his view as follows:

It's very fundamental that both have a responsibility at home [...] this creates a basis for shared experiences and a shared understanding which make living together much simpler.

Another important indication of the positive effect on marital relations is the women's great appreciation of the positive effect on marital relations is the women's great appreciation of the work-sharing men's contribution at home: the men were often praised as good husbands and fathers by the wives. One of the women recalls that she felt quite good about leaving for work after having stayed at home as a housewife for several years. Being able to hand responsibility for the home to her husband, and knowing that he could tackle it, added positively to their marital relations. According to Ann:

He was rather a very constructive partner, taking his share of the work. You absolutely were! You knew what taking care of two kids was all about [*to her husband*].

In another publication I discuss a possible "paradox of valuation" related to the way in which the men were highly appreciated both by wives and employers (Bjørnholt, forthcoming b). The other aspect to the arrangement, that of women working outside the home was, however, also an important side to the project. As one of the women reflects:

*Wife:* I think I also became more attractive to you

*Husband:* Yes, you did, I like independent women with a will of their own, and having a job is part of that.

*Wife:* I also became more self-confident and that had an impact on our relationship.

*Husband:* And I became less confident when you went out to work and met other men, this adds a little to the relationship.

In conclusion, men's house husbandry and wives' paid work seem to have contributed to mutual understanding and shared life-worlds, as well as increased mutual attractiveness. When the couples talked about the work-sharing arrangement, the relations as a couple emerge as the main focus and the main arena of change among the work-sharing couples. The tendency for motherhood to outlast fatherhood in terms of emotional closeness and direct involvement with the now adult children, however, reveals a gendered pattern in parental involvement over the life-course even among these egalitarian couples.

### **Work/life balance**

An important aspect to the work-sharing arrangement was to promote a better work/life balance, and a less stressful family life was expected to have a beneficial effect on all family relations as well as on individual well-being and health. Stress reduction and better relations were reported in the original project, and the follow-up interviews confirm this finding. The work-sharing couples are in general content that they were able to give their children calm, less stressful childhoods and provide a good atmosphere for the children's upbringing and they underline that this was a very good solution for themselves; some make comparisons with the stressful lives of young parents today. At the same time, they are at pains not to boast or give advice to others.

A possible link between working less and health was also broached such as the comment below:

One winter there was this terrible flu, but we all stayed healthy, [we wondered] whether this had to do with our calmer lifestyle and the lack of stress for us and the children.

Others think that the fact that they worked part-time during their busiest years as parents of small children has even been beneficial for their current health status, and make comparisons with colleagues or friends who have been working full-time and are now sick and tired.

### *The divorced couples*

Although the majority remained married, three couples were divorced. All the women and two of the men agreed to be interviewed. The couples that divorced stayed in the work-sharing arrangement for between 3 and 13.5 years. In two of the couples, both spouses had the same high level of education in a health profession and in one couple both had little formal education. In all the couples that divorced, the husband and wife shared the same position. For the two men, leisure was expressed as part of their motivation to work less.

When explaining why they divorced, in two of the couples both the husbands and wives pointed out serious marital and interpersonal problems; by the third couple, no particular reason was stated. No-one referred to the work-sharing arrangement as a reason for divorce, but one of the men thought the arrangement might have made his wife more aware of the problems between them. Neither did the men refer to having felt threatened in their breadwinning role by the wife working, nor to feeling unmanly by working part-time and assuming traditional female tasks. They all claimed to have shared household work equally, and spoke positively of the time they had spent on the

work-sharing arrangement, apart from one of the women who felt that she had shouldered a disproportionate share of housework and breadwinning. None of the women mentioned violence or abuse by the husband, which has been found by other research to be important causes of divorce (Moxnes, 1996). The finding fits well with recent research on the causes of divorce, which concludes that, as a consequence of the normalization of divorce, serious reasons for divorce, such as violence, have become less common, and relational problems, as well as problems related to work and housework, have become more important (De Graaf and Kalmin, 2006). The work-sharing couples were pioneers in adopting an egalitarian pattern of breadwinning and care at a time when this was unusual, and it is reasonable to expect they were modern even in other respects.

### **Discussion**

With the exception of the negative effects of working part-time long-term on pensions, the work-sharing arrangement has been overwhelmingly positively appreciated by the participants in retrospect. The arrangement seems to have had a positive impact on marital relations, work/life balance and gender equality, but a further discussion of cause and effect is warranted.

Many of the work-sharing couples started work-sharing independently of the project as a solution to their own challenges posed by balancing work and family as first generation dual-earners. Consequently, the actual work-sharing arrangements in the participating families were only partly a result of the work-sharing project, but, once included, the project probably influenced the actual arrangements and sharpened the focus on particular issues, such as the sharing of domestic work.

The majority of participants appreciated in retrospect the learning effect, their shared life worlds and mutual understanding, which they saw as a result of the work-sharing arrangement. But whether this effect stems from the arrangement or from underlying values is difficult to say. The duration of the arrangement does not seem to have played an important role in the impact on marital relations, nor in the persistence of egalitarian patterns over the life-course, which indicates that the perceived effects may not derive simply from the arrangement itself. On the other hand, it would be wrong to attribute the effects to values alone, as, in the work-sharing project, they were strongly interlinked. In contrast to other men who may have shared the general idea of a modern, radical and profeminist masculinity in the 1970s, the work-sharing men, by actually reducing their working hours, making space for their partner's careers, and taking upon themselves the responsibility as house-husbands, convincingly demonstrated their egalitarian values.

The impact of the arrangement seems to some extent to be linked to the way the reasons the men stated for joining the arrangement. The work-sharing men's personal motivation and agency, based on egalitarian values and a willingness to shape a more egalitarian family, seem to be important for the persistence of egalitarian patterns, while leisure and/or a lack of interest in work as a major motivation were less related to good marital relations and egalitarian patterns over the life-course.

### **Conclusion**

The work-sharing project radically addressed the gendered division of paid and unpaid work and the project design itself represents an interesting approach to the gendered division of labour, through its orchestration of the synchronized movement of women into paid work and men into the home. Revisiting the project and the original

participants provided a unique opportunity to study the long-term impact of the more equal sharing of paid and unpaid work, and the findings illustrate the value of longitudinal research.

The number of couples still married, as well as the informants' own views concerning the positive impact on their couple relations, family life and well-being, indicate that the work-sharing arrangement has had an important impact on family life and couple relations. Further, a better work/life balance and working less during the period of child-rearing may have had a positive health effect.

However, as the examples of couples still married, as well as the divorced couples, illustrate, there is no simple and direct relation between the duration of the work-sharing arrangement, marital relations and the persistence of egalitarian patterns over the life-course. Based on the work-sharing case, the reduction of working hours alone does not necessarily lead to better marital relations or to more egalitarian patterns in the family.

More important in shaping and retaining egalitarian patterns seem to be the combined agency and caring attitude of the husband and his active willingness to share childcare and domestic work, promote joint egalitarian values and a focus on the family and the couple relationship as a joint responsibility.

On the other hand, reduced working hours seem to have had a positive impact on work-family balance, levels of stress and the participants' health, which occurred largely independently of the effects on couple relations and the persistence of egalitarian patterns.

Finally the follow-up study elucidates the interrelation between egalitarian patterns of work and care and fertility.

These results are of relevance to current debates, research and policymaking with respect to the work/life balance issue, gender equality, the persisting gendered sharing of paid and unpaid work and the still largely unresolved question of how to promote men's greater participation in unpaid work at home.

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**ARTICLE II**



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### How men became the local agents of change towards gender equality

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The Work-Sharing Couples Study was an action research project conducted in the early 1970s to reconcile work, family and gender equality in families. Its design involved both spouses working part-time and sharing childcare and housework. This article is based on a follow-up study of the original couples 30 years later. The men played a key role in initiating work-sharing in their families and how the men became agents of change is the topic of the article. Biographical influences from their families of origin and domestic skills, facilitated by the contemporary concept of a modern, profeminist masculinity, were important background factors, and promoting the careers of wives emerged as an important motivational factor. Their authoritative agency in promoting more egalitarian patterns of work and care in their own families also invokes the question of a constructive use of male power. This could give rise to a further discussion of power and masculinity and men as agents of change towards gender equality.

**Keywords:** men; part-time; masculinity; power; work/family reconciliation; gender equality

#### Introduction

The aim of this article is to discuss men's motivations for, and agency in, achieving gender equality and a better work/family balance, based on a longitudinal, qualitative follow-up study of Norwegian couples who worked part-time and shared the responsibility for housework and childcare in the early 1970s. A thematic analysis of the men's backgrounds and motivations is conducted to answer the following research question: what made the work-sharing men take the step to work part-time and change priorities in their lives? Answering this question will add to our understanding of why, and under what circumstances, men become agents of change, which will in turn add to the ongoing discussion of change and innovation and/or stability in men's adaptations to work and family. The term 'traditional' here is used to refer to a situation where the woman of a heterosexual partnership performs the bulk of the domestic work and childcare and the man performs the bulk of paid work outside of the home.

The work-sharing men were found to play an essential role in initiating as well as implementing the work-sharing arrangement, which is the reason for focusing particularly on the men. This study finds that biographical background, domestic skills and the will to

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promote their partner's development, were the main factors explaining these men's desire to shape more egalitarian partnerships. It is also acknowledged that the women in these relationships chose these particular men as partners but this is not pursued in the research here.

Research into men as fathers has increasingly addressed fathers' work/family and workplace adaptations (Haas and Hwang 2000, Hobson 2002, Cooper 2002, Bekkengen 2002, Morgan *et al.* 2005, Kvande 2005, Puchert *et al.* 2005, Pringle *et al.* 2006, Holter 2007), and some (Holter 2007) claim that family-driven innovation of men's work/family practices is going on, in particular in the Nordic countries.

There is, however, no clear indication that men are changing their adaptation to work as a result of caring responsibilities (Puchert *et al.* 2005), with the possible exception of Sweden, where recent developments may indicate a change in this direction (Haas *et al.* 2006). Gambles *et al.* (2006), in a comparative study of seven countries ranging from India to Norway, found the tensions of work, family and gender equality to be much the same in Norway as worldwide.

On the background of the current research (as well as in policy-making) on men, family and gender equality, it is of interest to study men who have changed priorities in their own lives and acted as local agents of change towards gender equality.

### ***Men who changed their work/family priorities***

The Work-Sharing Couples Study was carried out in Norway between 1969 and 1975 at the Institute of Sociology, University of Oslo. The project was led by Professor Erik Grønseth<sup>1</sup> on the initiative of the Norwegian Family Council and its leader, Ola Rokkones. Thirty years later the participating couples were interviewed in a follow-up study. The original project was an action research project to promote gender equality in families, and was based on both spouses working part-time and sharing childcare and household work. This study made contact with four large production companies and provided a total of 40 jobs to be shared by a husband and wife. Due to the lack of response from working-class participants, the study recruited participants through media publicity and snowball sampling. This resulted in 16, mainly middle-class couples being selected for the study. Some of these couples started work-sharing as a result of the project but, as revealed by the follow-up study here, some had already begun work-sharing and were then recruited to the project. As the title of the main report<sup>2</sup> (Grønseth 1975a) indicates, changing the way men related to work was one of the main strategies for achieving gender equality. The effects of the arrangement on sharing domestic work and childcare were a major focus for the project.

The participants in the work-sharing project consisted of couples in different occupations, most of them middle-class academics, but three held lower clerical positions. A quarter of the couples shared the same job, but the majority had different part-time jobs for different employers and arranged work and care in different ways: they worked every second day, every second week or shared the week between them. They worked part-time at their own expense, and received no financial compensation. Part-time work was combined with shift-parenting and the one who stayed at home was usually fully responsible for running the house on his/her days.

The original study found that such a work/family arrangement did correspond to the sharing of domestic work and childcare. Moreover, the participants recorded high levels of gender equality, better marital relations (including sexual relations), less stress and more equal power relations between the spouses (Grønseth 1975a); but childcare was more

equally shared than housework and a gendered division of household tasks persisted in many families (Grue 1978).

### Methodology

The original project used detailed questionnaires at the point of inclusion and when the project was ended as its main method of data collection, supplemented by interviews with the couples (referred to here as ‘couple interviews’) with one-third of the participants. The published reports (Grønseth 1975a, 1975b, 1975c, Grue 1978), based largely on the questionnaires, are the main sources of our knowledge about the original project.

This follow-up study is based on couple interviews with 14 of the original couples, 11 of which were still married. Two of the divorced men and three women were interviewed separately. This paper is based on the couple interviews with the couples that were still married, which have been transcribed and analysed both as couple life-stories and individually, with a particular focus on the men’s narratives. In other papers I present other aspects and findings from the follow-up study, such as more detail on the background and methodological and epistemological aspects of the follow-up study, and the couples’ common life trajectories as well as those of the divorced couples (Bjørnholt 2009a), father–son intergenerational transmission (Bjørnholt 2009b, 2010b) and the work-sharing men’s professional biographies and careers (Bjørnholt 2010a). In this paper the emphasis is on another aspect of individual biographies; how do the work-sharing men explain, and reflect in retrospect on, their active role in initiating and implementing a more equitable pattern of work and care in their families and what motivated their decisions.

The question of which kinds of data biographical interviews represent has increasingly come into focus. I take a pragmatic view, mindful of the gap between the story told and the life lived (Wengraf 2001) and I take a critical realist position (Hollway and Jefferson 2000), acknowledging that biographical interviews do not give direct access to lived experience. On the other hand, I disagree with the extreme constructivist position that tends to deny any reality beyond the narrative or text (such as Derrida’s view that ‘there is nothing outside the text’ [1976, p. 158]). In this paper I treat the biographies and retrospective reflections that emerged in the interviews as good enough data on informants’ life courses, including childhood experiences and past motivations.

Recently, the advantages of the couple interview over the individual interview in studies of couples have been increasingly acknowledged (Valentine 1999, Syltevik 2000, Doucet 2006<sup>3</sup>, Magnusson 2006). The couple interview provides an insight into the couple’s life as a couple (Martinsson 1997). Further, those who argue that couple interviews are superior to individual interviews of couples find that partners tend to be more loyal and that less criticism appears in the individual than in the couple interviews. In the present follow-up study I found that the couple interviews produced very rich data and that intra-couple dynamics also contributed to useful individual life stories.

The use of couple interviews as a source of data on the individual life course needs some consideration. Bjørnholt (2010a) deals with individual professional biographies and careers which were extracted from the couple interviews. The present paper, in addressing the men’s (and their wives’) reflections in retrospect on the men’s past agency and motivations, deals with data of a less tangible, more personal and potentially sensitive kind. It is legitimate to ask how the couple interview situation may have influenced the ways in which the men (and women) spoke of the men as agents of change and their past motivations. It is acknowledged that the origin of the data in this particular setting may represent a limitation but I do not feel that this renders the information invalid.

With the decline of naïve realism, it is generally acknowledged that the qualitative research interview represents a specific situation in which data are co-produced in the interaction of the interviewer and the interviewee within more or less agreed-upon cultural scripts, such as the personal biography. In this case the couple context cannot easily be shed.

Claiming the superiority of the individual research interview takes for granted an individualist view of self; one could argue with Mead (1934) that the self is inherently relational and that the biography which is produced in a real-life context involving significant others from the informant's life world may be as 'true' as the one produced in an individual research interview.

Finally, retrospective interviews invoke the question of the ways in which we deal with cumulative processes over time. Becker (1960) introduced the notion of commitment as a process through which an individual feels obliged to take a particular line of action to such an extent that any reversal becomes increasingly psychologically costly. The work-sharing couples continued their part-time arrangement for a substantial period of time, which is an argument for presenting a more positive view in retrospect. On the other hand, the participants spoke quite freely and some negative aspects did arise during the interviews, particularly concerning financial considerations, and the participant who expressed the most negative views (see Ola below) was the one whose experience of the arrangement was the longest.

## **Results**

### *Special men*

The work-sharing men were clearly 'children of their time'. A commitment to gender equality as part of contemporary modern masculinity, as well as political radicalism (Andersson *et al.* 1997), including pro-feminism (Bengtsson 2001, 2007) and anti-materialism, were ideologies shared by several social movements at the time. But the work-sharing men differed from their contemporaries – and even from the average man today – on one decisive point: in contrast to other men, who may have shared their ideological convictions, the work-sharing men did in fact implement changes in their own lives.

The men took the initiative in half the cases, and an additional quarter saw it as a joint initiative. The majority of the men were thus actively involved in initiating the work-sharing arrangement.

### *The present study and perspectives on childhood loss*

To explain why they acted against the grain, the men interviewed for the follow-up study often pointed to childhood experiences. They shared some biographical influences from their families of origin: for a considerable proportion of the men one of the parents had been ill (six) or they had experienced the early death of a parent (three) (Grønseth 1975a, p. 73). In addition, their mothers had taken on paid work to a greater extent than most women at the time, and the work-sharing men regularly had to be responsible for housework from an early age. In the follow-up interviews, the men still referred to these childhood experiences as an important explanatory factor as to why they found it easy and natural to participate in, and even initiate, the work-sharing arrangement.

Not everyone referred to childhood experiences: Roger, who had also lost his father at the age of 10, did not mention any increase in domestic duties: rather than childhood

experiences, he emphasized, as the main explanation for his stance on work and gender equality, important life experiences as a young adult, including those he gained during the Second World War.

Other researchers into gender equality in the family have also drawn attention to the importance of childhood loss as part of men's biographies (Deutsch 1999). In an analysis of the backgrounds of pioneering 'male feminists' (those men who supported the suffragette movement), Morgan (1992) drew attention to biographical influences very much like those of the work-sharing men here, such as childhood experiences of loss, alienation and grief, and the influence of a woman – either the mother or other women – but also the influence of social networks, radical movements and the concept of chivalry. All these factors are present in the work-sharing men. The concept of chivalry, men having to contribute actively to gender equality, was part of a pro-feminist, modern masculinity in the 1970s.

### *The present study and perspectives on strong, working mothers*

Many of the men interviewed for the follow-up study expressed their admiration for their strong, working mothers who shouldered both paid work and full responsibility at home. John was the youngest of five children, and his mother had a clerical job in addition to running a farm, and commuted to her job in town every day. He went to school nearby, and from the age of 12 it was his duty to cook dinner for the family. He also greatly admired his mother:

My mother more or less did everything, even though she had the cows and worked at an office, (she) ran the house with five children and commuted a long distance to work. It was inhumanly hard work. It was a rather traditional pattern, my father never became a house-father.

Some referred to particularly close relationships with their mothers, such as Robert, who was an only child and strongly attached to his mother. He recalls how he, as a small boy, resented leaving his mother to go to the playground. When he was about 10, his mother fell ill and was bed-ridden for several years; he had to take over responsibility for several tasks at home, while his father continued working long hours.

The work-sharing men seem to have become sensitized to a woman's world, sometimes by taking over in the absence of a parent or by carrying out traditionally female tasks in their families of origin. Their mothers were engaged in paid work to a larger extent than was common at the time. Their fathers, on the other hand, were mostly traditional in their approach to domestic life, even though there were two examples of less traditional fathers: one who had been a ship's cook and did the cooking on Sundays; another did feminine things such as sewing and mending clothes, but these were exceptions.

This emphasis on the relationship to the mother in the development of a caring masculinity (and the absence of fathers as 'role models') corresponds to other research into men who are innovative in gender equality and care. In a Nordic study, Ekenstam (2007) found that egalitarian and caring men often established their own caring practices in contrast to their own fathers (this was also reported by Holter and Aarseth [1993]) and that the relationships with their mothers were key. Christian's (1994) study of contemporary anti-sexist men found that mothers, and the influences of feminist women, were important but the small minority in his sample who had had nurturing fathers also reported being influenced by their fathers.

Gupta (2006) found that maternal employment was important to men's performance of housework as adults, which is explained by maternal employment creating a broader repertoire of masculine behaviour.



*The present study and perspectives on domestic skills*

As a result of the special circumstances in their families of origin, a majority of the work-sharing men entered the couple relationship with above average housework skills. Even those who came from intact families had participated in household tasks to a greater extent than most boys at the time, like Per, who was one of four boys in a family of five siblings. They lived on a farm, and had many guests in the summertime; their father travelled a lot, and all the children were expected to participate in household work, such as cooking and dishwashing.

When reflecting on the work-sharing arrangement in the follow-up study interviews, the work-sharing men emphasized housework and were in general still proud of their skills. Some even boasted of their skills, saying things like: 'I am good at cleaning'; 'I am a better cook'.

Both husbands and wives saw the domestic skills that the men brought to the relationship from their families of origin as of great importance for the work-sharing arrangement, as well as for their relationships as a couple. Interestingly, however, the early experience with housework which a majority of the men emphasized in the follow-up interviews, was not reported in the original study where none claimed to be 'used to housework' (Grønseth 1975a, p. 73).

In spite of the importance attributed to men's housework skills, the original study showed a persistent, gendered division of household tasks (Grue 1978). This pattern had not changed; rather, the follow-up study revealed that a gendered sharing of household tasks had since been strengthened. This was explained as a development towards a more flexible and efficient organization of household work and can be illustrated by one man who changed two car tyres and announced that now he had changed his, she would have to change hers, a story the husband and wife both laughed at today. Only one man assumed responsibility for washing and ironing clothes, and only one woman changed the car tyres; but even though the actual sharing of tasks remained gendered, the husbands' knowledge of, and participation in, the unpaid work at home were seen as important to their perception of the family as a joint project.

The emphasis on domestic work is an interesting contrast to today, when women have reduced their time spent on housework, but men have not filled in to the same extent (Vaage 2002). Brandth and Kvande (2003, p. 167) call housework an 'incomplete democratic project'.

A couple of the men, however, disagreed with the strong focus on housework in the project, and saw other factors, such as getting closer to children or promoting wives' careers, as more important. They seemed to agree that they should take their turn as house-husbands so that their wives could go out to work, but they disagreed with the principle of sharing each task in the home equally.

The persistent and even strengthened gendered sharing of household tasks even within these egalitarian couples may be interpreted in different ways. On the one hand the strengthening of sharing of tasks may be understood in terms of family myths (Hochschild and Machung 1989) – the couples are sharing unequally but still claim they are equal. On the other hand this also touches upon another discussion of how to understand and measure gender equality: is the equal sharing of every task, and the equal representation of men and women in every sphere, the only aim of, and an adequate measure of, gender equality?

The development towards a less egalitarian sharing of household work may also be seen as an example of how structural inequalities outside the family, such as the labour market, influence everyday struggles for equality. From the outset the majority of the

work-sharing men had higher educational attainment than the women. There was also a gendered pattern in that the women to a greater extent tended to be in health and caring professions. As presented in more detail in Bjørnholt (2010a), the men appear to have been rather successful professionally. During the work-sharing arrangement most were still in an early phase of their career, but the men to a greater extent embarked on full-time careers as managers after the work-sharing arrangement, whereas the women to a greater extent took time off work for further studies, continued to work part-time or even stayed at home as housewives. The fact that more of the men pursued full-time management careers meant that their work demanded more of their attention and also that they earned more than their partners. A recent Norwegian survey on gender equality (Holter *et al.* 2009) found that income difference was the most important factor in explaining inequality in the family. Even if the work-sharing couples shared an ideology of equality, it is not unreasonable to assume that the differences in careers and incomes also contributed to the development of a more unequal division of domestic work (see Bjørnholt [2009b] for a case that illustrates this dilemma).

The 1970s was a decade of experimentation which saw a change in gender relations that paved the way for new gendered identities and practices and reshaped heterosexual relationships and the family. An important credo of the women's movement at the time was the claim that the personal is political; concurrently justice and redistribution were a common focus of several social movements.

For the work-sharing couples, the active promotion of gender equality was a legitimate framework for the couples' arrangements around work and care. They talked proudly of domestic work as the subject of open discussion and negotiation, which in some families took place in formalized meetings. An egalitarian distribution of domestic work can be said to have been part of their wider relationship for both the work-sharing men and the women.

This is a contrast to today; in a recent study of Nordic couples, Magnusson (2008) found that gender equality and arguments of justice and power were uniformly delegitimized, and that discussions of gender equality were seen as threatening to love and relationships and were therefore avoided.

One explanation of this shift is offered by Fraser (2000), who points out that struggles for justice and redistribution, which were so important in the 1970s, have largely been substituted by struggles for recognition and identity politics. The way the work-sharing couples speak of their past and present sharing of household work illustrates how everyday practices take place within, and are legitimized by, past as well as contemporary discourses. When speaking enthusiastically about sharing domestic work in the past they speak, as it were, within the discourse of redistribution of the 1970s. When they use arguments that normalize a more traditional sharing of tasks today they can be seen to draw implicitly on contemporary discourses in which redistribution is no longer a topic for negotiation.

#### *The present study and perspectives on self-confidence and caring*

The men seemed confident they could work part-time for a period and then return to full-time work, which often resulted in them later being offered managerial positions. None of the men were surprised to be offered such jobs despite having worked part-time. Neither did they feel embarrassed by neighbours or family members who sometimes had negative attitudes or expressed astonishment and thought that the men might be imperilling their careers or that they were unmanly.

Per demonstrates an authoritative and caring attitude in his recollection of how decisions were made after the arrival of their first child just as he was graduating as a civil

engineer. Per's wife already had two children when they were married, including a son who was perceived as having a particular need for a father, and Per's concern for his stepson was part of his considerations. When they heard about the work-sharing project, Per took the initiative, and they were both offered part-time jobs at the same firm where they worked for four years. This innovative solution was the subject of some local gossip, but Per states that he was not worried at all, and his attitude illustrates a combination of authoritative control over the situation, guided by a caring attitude and self-confidence.

John took the initiative for himself and his wife, Karen to share jobs with another couple, David and Rita, who were colleagues at the same workplace. Karen had been looking forward to having some peace and quiet at home when the children were older and less demanding, but her husband was eager that she get back to work before it became too difficult, and Karen accepted John's initiative reluctantly. In John and Karen's case, we could argue that John's insistence she return to work demonstrated a (caring) attitude on the verge of paternalism. In the follow-up study it was found that John's brother had been outraged after seeing John ironing tea towels on a television programme about the work-sharing couples, but John states that he laughed, seeing his brother, 10 years his senior, as hopelessly old-fashioned.

According to his wife, Roger was pitied when arriving at the playground with the children and when hanging up clothes on the washing line. The neighbours, discovering he was not a widower, but that there was in fact a (much younger) wife, assumed she had forced him into this. Many of the wives were blamed for forcing their husbands into the work-sharing arrangement, while the men were mostly praised, particularly by women, and to a great extent they were also rewarded at work (Bjørnholt 2010a).

Roger pointed out that self-confidence was important to his success:

I think that for a man, it implies a confidence (...) I felt I had experienced so much before (...) that the opinions of neighbours and family did not matter. I am totally independent of what they think.

Most of the work-sharing men appeared consistently self-confident, caring and authoritative, but Ola gives a more ambivalent response. He had chosen a vocation in a female-dominated, caring profession and a less traditional work/life adaptation, but he strongly disliked his work. Working less and having more leisure time were part of his motivation for joining the work-sharing arrangement and he continued to work part-time until falling ill and taking early retirement. Despite his vocation, he appeared otherwise rather traditional in his ideology; he was the dominant one in the couple relationship and did little housework but he was also confident and did not care what others thought of him. In retrospect, however, he regretted not having changed vocation, and in spite of his confidence in relation to others, he expressed self-contempt for having stayed in a job he disliked.

The work-sharing men seemed to possess an inner strength and an alternative philosophical approach to the world, which effectively deflected any negative responses of others to their life choices. This also touches upon the question of power; in being authoritative and self-confident, the work-sharing men were in command of their lives and, in taking the initiative to work-share, they had power. Can we understand the work-sharing men as constructively using their power to initiate change and thus dismantle the source of that power? In a critique of the studies of Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity, Moller (2007, p. 266) discusses the 'tendency to occlude those techniques and tactics of masculine power that do not quite make sense as dominating or oppressive: to see power as *only* domination'. Pease (2000) also explores, theoretically as well as empirically, men's possible contribution to changing gender relations from a position of power.

*Motivational factors**The present study and perspectives on fostering wives' personal and professional growth*

The relationship with their wives emerged as the main motivation for many of the men. Some were quite explicit about the importance of fostering their wives' personal and professional growth, and used arguments of equality and fairness, though these were often mixed with self-interest. David's case is an example. For him it was important that marriage and children should not 'prevent his wife having a career'; but his wife working outside the home also added to his self-esteem. David was an active member of a union, and he admitted that promoting his wife's career was part of his self-image of being a modern and radical man.

Roger is an example of man who actively abstained from male privileges to shape more democratic and equal relations with his wife and children, and illustrates the desire to break with the model of male dominance in the family. The family lived a simple life, having neither car nor holiday cabin, both of which are highly valued objects of prestige in Norway. This was not only due to financial constraints, but was a choice based on their anti-materialist values. However, they did eventually buy a boat, a wooden sailboat with two sets of oars. Commenting on this, Roger said:

There is low prestige in such a boat. It's not exactly a show-off boat. But the point was that when you watched on the fjord, the daddies always sat and steered and there were typical 'daddies boats' everywhere, but with this boat the children had to take part in the rowing and take part in general, and the whole family took part. So we broke down this authority relationship that there often is on boats; that the father sits there and dominates everything. I think it is very important as an illustration of more equality in the family. (...) I had seen so many families where the father was extremely dominating.

Roger also illustrated a pragmatic attitude; he was much older than his wife, and wanted her to be able to take care of herself and the children if she were widowed. Arguments of self-interest played a role too; Roger enjoyed being with his children and his leisure time (he often went hiking or skiing during the day when the children were at playgroup). He also wanted his wife to be an intellectually attractive partner with whom he could have professional discussions, and supported her in her decision to study and finally become a social scientist like him. He was quite pleased about working part-time for the rest of his professional life while his wife had a full-time job, and it did not bother him that she had become the main breadwinner.

Robert also supported his wife's career, but expressed some ambivalence, and even regret, about her having a career while he did not. Robert and Vera are both civil engineers. They studied together and she was the first woman on a highly male-dominated study programme. When they had children, she stayed at home for about a year with each child, and started to work part-time. She had made no plans for combining children and a career and was prepared to stay at home to take care of the children but it appears she formed this view before she had realized how much time and effort it took. However, Robert discovered that she was unhappy and missed work. He also believed that it was self-evident that she should work and unfair that she, who had the same education, should not have the same opportunities to pursue a career. Commenting on her reflections about staying at home, he said:

When you had attended (NN technical university) as we had (...) you were in a way singled out to become a leader or have another high position in society (...). Staying home, being a housewife, that would be weird.

Robert quit his job at a private consultancy to work part-time and started working at his wife's place of work (at a state agency). She has made a career as a top manager, while he has not, and his lack of career was a source of some regret that he returned to several times during the interview.

The beneficial effect on the relationship of the wives' careers and personal development emerged as an important motivational factor. Rita recalls she felt quite good about leaving for work and handing over responsibility for the home to her husband.

Rita: I think I also became more attractive to you.

David: Yes, you did, I like independent women with a will of their own, and having a job is part of that.

Rita: I also became more self-confident and that had an impact on our relationship.

David: And I became less confident when you went out to work and met other men, this adds a little to the relationship

This quote also illustrates how promoting wives' growth became part of caring for the relationship; such attitudes were shared by other men, like Per who was worried that the differences in educational levels between him and his wife could become a strain on their marital relations and he encouraged his wife to get further education.

Despite arguing and acting from a different position than the other men, Ola's is a position of interest here. He admitted to being the dominant one in the relationship, arguing that his wife needed to earn her own money to gain some independence from him and reduce conflicts about spending money. Ola's case illustrates that men can promote gender equality for different reasons.

Relationships with wives and the men's desire to promote their wives' careers and independence emerged as stronger motivations for work-sharing than the relationships with children. In the original study, the marital relationship in general, and consideration of the wife's career and personal development in particular, also emerged as important motivational factors (Grønseth 1975a, pp. 101, 105), but the interpretation of which motivational factors were most important differs somewhat from the conclusions in the follow-up-study; in the original report negative job-related factors as well as the father-child relationships were seen as the main motivational factors for the men.

Differences in motivational factors between the original report and the follow-up study may be due to life-course changes, which may influence the interpretation and emphasis of motivational factors in retrospect. During the original study, the couples were experiencing their busiest years as parents of young children, and children were at the centre of their lives. Today, the children are grown up and have left the parental home, but the couple relationship remains and has probably gained increased importance. This may colour in retrospect the interpretation of the motivational factors for the work-sharing arrangement.

In the original study lack of job satisfaction emerged as a motivational factor for more of the men than it did in the follow-up study (Grønseth 1975a, p. 113). This may be due to a tendency to present a more positive view in retrospect, or it might indicate that the lack of job satisfaction was temporary: as the work-sharing men were in general quite successful occupationally (Bjørnholt 2010a).

Men's relationships with their wives were found to be of great importance for gender equality in the family by Haas (1977). Hvistendahl (1987)<sup>4</sup> found that men who participated more actively in the family saw their wives as the same kind of people with the same needs as themselves, while men who participated less in household work tended to see their wives as qualitatively different beings. The work-sharing men illustrate that

egalitarian values and agency originated in biographical experiences and were part of the men's general ways of being in the world.

The emphasis that the work-sharing men put on promoting wives' careers and personal development can, to some extent, be seen as part of a 1970s chivalry, serving as a conceptual framework for facilitating change. Being a modern, radical man included a pro-feminist stance, and it was also taken for granted that gender equality demanded something from men. In contrast, Haas and Hwang (2000, p. 141) point out that (in Sweden):

Up until now, efforts to bring about gender equality have not required men to relinquish anything; the focus has been on what men have to gain by sharing breadwinning and care.

In recent years, men's relationships with their wives/female partners have received relatively little consideration in discussions of men's work/life priorities and participation in domestic work. Recent Nordic studies of men and social innovation (Holter *et al.* 2007, Ekenstam 2007) draw attention to the importance of support for democratic values and equality of opportunity, as well as relationships with partners being given high value, by men, as key to egalitarian values being sustained. In particular, according to Ekenstam, Norwegian men emphasize that their partners should have the same opportunities as them. These values seem to have been shared by the work-sharing men.

#### *The present study and perspectives on relationships with children as a motivational factor*

Today, men's relationships with their children are seen as the main tool for changing men's attitudes to work, family and gender equality, and it is often taken for granted that men's greater interest in children and the emergence of a more child-oriented masculinity represent a step towards gender equality. Although being an involved father has increasingly become part of Nordic hegemonic masculinity, the relation between child-oriented masculinity and gender equality is being questioned (Bekkengen 2002). Several studies have found that men seem more eager to share the joys of parenthood than the duties of domestic work (Brandth and Kvande 2003, Gatrell 2007). Among the work-sharing men, the main emphasis was on their relationships with their wives, rather than those with their children, but the relationships with their children were also broached in the interviews. Looking after the children themselves was mentioned by the men in some of the interviews as a motivational factor, such as Robert, who referred to his own strong attachment as a child to his mother and objected to the idea of 'handing the child over to strangers'. In the original report, half the work-sharing couples mentioned looking after the children themselves as motivation for the arrangement (Grønseth 1975a, p. 95). Pragmatic considerations such as a lack of childcare facilities and negative experiences with childminders were, however, important as backdrops to the decision. Frank shared with his wife the view that children were best cared for at home as well as the view that he should be involved. Their ideas about childcare were also related to their interest in collective living (exemplified by a period in which they shared meals, domestic work and childcare with another couple) in contrast to traditional childcare.

Frank: We wanted to have contact with the children, both of us. It was perhaps me that (...). I thought it was sad about fathers who just fell into the role and did not have as strong contact with their children as the mothers. We (also) thought it a little crazy that others should take care of the kids. It was unnatural for us to not consider ourselves the best ones to have contact with and take part in the lives of our kids.

The quote above also illustrates how many of the work-sharing men saw their own fathering as part of a joint, parental responsibility. It is noteworthy that the men mostly

talked of childcare as a joint family responsibility and did not refer to an exclusive father/child bond; they seemed to view themselves as parents rather than as fathers in particular. The work-sharing men's common parental perspective is supported by other studies of fathers' parental identities, which find that fathers largely construct their parental identity as relatively more co-parental than mothers, and more often use the parental 'we' rather than a solo parental voice (Stueve and Pleck 2001). Lareau (2002) discussed fathers' use of a common parental subject as a methodological problem, blurring the fact that mothers did most of the parenting and making fathers appear more involved than they actually were. Lareau remarks that this made fathers less reliable as a source of knowledge about children's everyday lives. The work-sharing couples here however shared childcare more equally, and the fathers' joint parenting perspective cannot be seen as part of a cover-up for a lack of involvement.

Only one of the men, John, used an individualist argument for involving himself in the care of his children; he argued that it was important for him to have the same influence on the children's upbringing as his wife.

Getting more involved as a father was not an important motivation for everyone. David for instance, seems to have been less actively involved with his children, and his prime focus appears to have been on promoting his wife's paid work. He was very involved in union work during his part-time period and less involved as a father.

How the men talked about children differed from the way they talked about housework. None of the men boasted of their merits as fathers or indicated they had been better parents than their wives, while many were proud and even boasted of their housework skills. This is interesting, as the original study as well as the follow-up study revealed that housework was less equally shared than childcare. Perhaps we can hypothesize that practice speaks for itself, while compensatory rhetoric may develop when practice is thin.

#### *The present study and perspectives on leisure as a motivational factor*

Increased leisure time was a separate motivation for many of the men, who often spoke of outdoor and sporting activities during their free time when the children were at the playground. Sometimes the women broached the topic of leisure from a different angle, pointing out how the men had expected to be able to pursue hobbies on their days at home.

In various forms, leisure time emerged as an important motivation for the men, while this was not mentioned by any of the women as a factor in choosing to work part-time in the first place, despite the fact that for the majority of the work-sharing couples, sports and outdoor activities were part of joint family interests and activities.

McMahon (1999) suggests that leisure takes priority for many men. The uneven emphasis on leisure and the gendered sharing of household work may illustrate that the men were in positions of privilege and that there was a certain imbalance, even in these equality-oriented couples.

#### **Conclusion**

In this article I have presented the work-sharing men's motivations and explanations for how they came to work part-time and change priorities in their child-rearing life phase.

The work-sharing men shared ideals of a modern masculinity that included an active stance on gender equality in the family, abstaining from some male privileges, promoting their wives' careers and helping the women develop their potential. To a great extent, they



combined self-confidence with an open-minded and constructive approach to life. But why they, in contrast to most other modern men in the 1970s, took the step from idea to action, is probably due to biographical influences that sensitized them to women and the world of women, which equipped them with above-average domestic skills. While contemporary ideas of gender equality and perceptions of a modern masculinity served as a conceptual framework for change, biographical influences, personality and existent domestic skill were critical to the work-sharing men acting as agents of change in their own lives and families.

Like many other studies of men in the family, 'new fathers' or changing masculinities, the Work-Sharing Couples Study is a small, qualitative study of rather special men (as illustrated by their backgrounds and motivations) so caution is called for before appointing them to the vanguard of change.

One conclusion is that change is hard to achieve and only occurs in men who have experienced childhood family loss. This makes the prospect of promoting change through policies rather bleak.

However, not all the work-sharing men had suffered childhood loss, which allows for some more optimistic conclusions as well. Some of the men had acquired skills in domestic work without the loss or illness of a parent, and we might hypothesize that it is not the loss itself but the skills that are important and that there are other routes through which to acquire domestic skills as well as a familiarity with traditionally female domains. This allows room for reformatory action in which families and schools could play an important role in giving boys better training in household work as preparation for assuming a greater share of domestic responsibilities in later life.

Another important lesson is the importance of mothers and the mother/son relationship as a basis for transferring skills as well as values. The work-sharing men developed caring masculinities and practices in spite of having had traditional fathers, and emphasized their relationship to, and admiration of, their mothers rather than having their fathers as 'role models'.

A further lesson can be drawn from the importance that the work-sharing men attributed to the relationship with their partners and to promoting her career and personal development. This highlights the couple's relationship as the basis for change and gender equality in the family as an adult, intra-couple project.

The finding that for a small number of the men in this study leisure and broadening their life experience or minimizing the time spent in paid work were prominent motivations is interesting in the context of this experiment, which was ostensibly about promoting gender equality. It links to current discussions of work/life balance and illustrates that the relationship between work/life balance, family-friendly policies and gender equality are not necessarily straightforward.

The work-sharing men demonstrate the importance of men's agency and responsibility for achieving the kind of family and life they want to have. Their authoritative conduct in shaping more egalitarian patterns of work and care may inspire further research into, and the theorizing of, power and masculinity and men as the agents of change towards gender equality.

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### Notes

1. Erik Grønseth was rather enthusiastic about the follow-up study. He provided the material from the original study, as well as actively aiding the new study: he traced and contacted the first half of the participants before he died in the autumn of 2005.
2. *Også mannen på deltid i arbeidslivet*: 'The man who works part-time too' (author's translation).
3. With the qualification that Doucet used a special interview technique, called the household portrait.
4. I am indebted to Agnes Andenæs for drawing my attention to Hvistendahl's Master's thesis.

### Notes on contributor

Margunn Bjørnholt is a researcher at the Department of Sociology and Human Geography, University of Oslo, where she is currently engaged in a research project on work, family and gender equality. She has also conducted research and published reports and articles on organizational change, flexible work, cultural industry, parenting, work and gender equality as a researcher at the Telemark Research Institute and the Work Research Institute.

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**ARTICLE III**





# Part-time work and the career and life choices of the men from the work-sharing couples study

Career and  
life choices

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This article outlines the longitudinal consequences for men who participated in the work-sharing couples study which was a Norwegian, experimental research project in the early 1970s. The aim of the original project was to promote gender equality and a better work/life balance in families; the design involved both spouses working part-time and sharing childcare and housework. This paper aims to present the results of a longitudinal follow-up study of the participants in the work-sharing couples study. In this paper the work-sharing men's part-time adaptations and the impact of the work-sharing arrangement on their careers is the main focus.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The original project had a small scale, interventionist design based on couples working part-time and sharing childcare and housework; effects were documented by questionnaires and time diaries. In the follow-up study 30 years later, retrospective life-course couple interviews with the original participants were used. The current paper is based on an analysis of the couple interviews with a particular focus on the men's careers.

**Findings** – Obtaining part-time work was not difficult, and working part-time was mostly uncomplicated for the men. Neither did their working part time for a substantial amount of time have negative career effects, and they were rather successful professionally. Their experiences as work sharers were mainly positively valued at their workplaces as adding to managerial skills. For those who did not have a managerial career, this was due to personal choice rather than any negative effect of working part-time.

**Practical implications** – Changing men's adaptations to work and care is high on the agenda in family research as well as in policy making and the findings from this study contributes to new knowledge which is of interest in research as well as policy making.

**Originality/value** – The original project was unique internationally, and so is the longitudinal follow-up of this experiment. The work-sharing men's part-time adaptations and the longitudinal impact on their careers provide new and contra-intuitive insights into the question of men, work and family.

**Keywords** Gender, Part time workers, Norway, Quality of life, Equal opportunities, Family life

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

In this article, part-time work for men is discussed as part of a small scale reciprocal work- and care-sharing programme in Norway in the early 1970s that was designed to promote gender equality in the family and an improved work/family balance. The

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ARTICLE III



article is based on a longitudinal, qualitative follow-up study of the original couples who participated in the project.

This article will explore the experiences of the men who worked part-time in the early 1970s, at a time when part-time work was still unusual and men doing so was even more seldom: how were they received at their workplaces, and which workplace obstacles did they encounter? How did their careers turn out? What were the repercussions on their careers of their working part-time?

The tensions between paid work and family life have become a major focus of research and the subject of policy discussions in Europe, and involving men in the family has become an important part of gender equality policies. Norway has played a pioneering role in this respect, first with the Work-Sharing Couples Project (WSP) in the early 1970s, and, 20 years later, as the first country to introduce a paternal quota of parental leave, both of which attracted great interest internationally. As a relatively advanced country in relation to gender equality, ranked first on the UN Gender Related Development Index, Norway is often regarded internationally as a model as well as a test field for gender equality. Of particular interest is the fact that even in Norway, in spite of fairly short working hours, relatively lavish benefits for working parents and the active use of policies to promote gender equality, gendered patterns of paid and unpaid work persist and tensions between work, family and gender equality are much the same as worldwide. A recent study based on a survey of gender equality concluded that the world of work is lagging behind in the development of gender equality in Norway (Holter *et al.*, 2009). An international study of seven countries, ranging from India to Norway (Gambles *et al.*, 2006), concluded that the preeminence of paid work over family life, the invasiveness of the former into the latter and the gendered tensions involved in reconciling work and care constitute a global trend.

The general picture is thus one of a persisting gendered division of paid and unpaid work (see Vaage, 2002; Platenga and Remery, 2005; Pringle *et al.*, 2006) and responsibility for childcare and the running of the home is still borne mainly by women (Kitterød, 2005; Pettersen, 2004), even though sharing equally is the culturally dominant ideal in the Nordic countries (Magnusson, 2006) and Europe (Puchert *et al.*, 2005). Despite considerable variations between and within countries, and despite a greater proportion of couples sharing equally in Norway than in many other countries, Crompton and Lyonette (2007) concluded in a comparative study of seven European countries that the most frequent solution to women's increased share of paid work was a double shift for women.

The persisting, gendered division between household and care work has led to a renewed focus among researchers and policymakers in recent years on the need for men to contribute more to the daily running and management of their families. Research into men as fathers has increasingly also addressed fathers' work/family adaptations and adaptations at the workplace (Haas and Hwang, 2000, 2007; Hobson, 2002; Cooper, 2002; Bekkengen, 2002; Morgan *et al.*, 2005; Kvande, 2005). The question of men, work and care is the subject of the EU research programmes, work changes gender (Puchert *et al.*, 2005) and fostering caring masculinities (FOCUS) (Langvasbråten and Teigen, 2006).

Part-time work for men has recently (re)emerged as one possible solution to the problems of work/family reconciliation, and men in Norway work part-time to a greater extent than in most other European (EU and EFTA-) countries; 13 per cent of Norwegian men, as compared to 7 per cent of European men work part-time (Eurostat, 2005)[1]. Working part-time is, however, still mainly a female adaptation, and the share

of part-time workers among Norwegian women is 44 per cent. In a recent Nordic study of men, gender equality and social innovation (Holter, 2007b), part-time work for men emerges as “a frontier area in the interviews. It is something that many fathers want, but few of them manage to realize” (Holter, 2007b, p. 258).

In spite of a doubling of part-time work among men in Western countries since the early 1990s, the number of men who work part-time is still low (Puchert *et al.*, 2005). Neither is the rise in men working part-time a result of men’s greater day-to-day involvement in their families. The European research project work changes gender, to the researchers’ slight surprise (Halrynjo and Holter, 2005, p. 106), found no strong link between less paid work and the amount of domestic work put in. Men who work part-time do so mainly due to reasons other than family obligations, such as being students, taking early retirement, adapting to illness (Hakim, 2000) or preparing for their next career (Puchert *et al.*, 2005). Men in general seem not to consider part-time an option to reconcile paid work and family obligations (Sheridan, 2004).

Cooper (2002) describes how a total commitment to work is taken for granted by both traditional fathers and “superdads”, who represent different levels of childcare involvement, but not different levels of work involvement. Sweden may represent a promising development, as more than half of Swedish fathers reported having adjusted their working hours to spend more time with their children (Haas and Hwang, 2000; Haas *et al.*, 2006).

When asked, fathers say they want to spend more time with their families and participate more actively in parenting and household work (Puchert, 2005). However, accepting these expressed preferences at face value as preparedness to change behaviour may be jumping to conclusions. Kitterød (2007), using survey data from Statistics Norway, discusses the paradox that parents of young children express a preference for shorter working hours, and a substantial proportion of the parents who want to work less also think they would be able to get a reduction in working hours, but in spite of this combination of preference expressed and opportunity perceived, they do not reduce their working hours. Kitterød concludes that an expression of preference is not a good predictor of behaviour.

Several explanations have been proposed to explain why men do not change their priorities concerning paid work and care. One explanation is the persistence of the male breadwinner norm as an important part of Western masculinities, and a deeply embedded, masculine moral order (Lamont, 2000). The interpretation of commitment to work as commitment to family needs further discussion. Dermott (2006), in a large study of British households, found that despite the fact that fathers as a group work longer hours than non-fathers, the significance of fatherhood in relation to hours of paid work disappears when other factors are taken into account.

Another explanation for men’s strong commitment to work is the male worker norm, which sees workers as unencumbered by other responsibilities and free to devote all their time, focus, energy and loyalty to work (Acker, 1998; Halford *et al.*, 1997). Despite the widely accepted idea of involved fatherhood in the Nordic countries (Brandth and Kvande, 2003; Bekkengen, 2002), and in other European countries, the “daddy-track” lacks institutional support in working life (Puchert *et al.*, 2005; Larsen-Asp and Rusnes, 2006; Holter, 2007b). Haas and Hwang (2000, 2007) and Bäck-Wicklund and Plantin (2007) found that managers showed little interest in effecting such policies. Hochschild (1997) found that using family-friendly policies was hindered by an organizational culture of long working hours. Processes of globalization and the development of global business masculinities linked to a total commitment to work and



limitless time regimes enhance a male worker norm (Connell, 1998, 2000, 2001; Collinson and Hearn, 2005). Kvande (2005) discusses how the development of the global business masculinity is at odds with the Norwegian welfare state's efforts to link men to care through the paternal quota of parental leave.

The strong emphasis on external factors, such as an adherence to social norms, a lack of opportunities, obstacles at the workplace or a lack of institutional support for the "daddy-track" is an interesting contrast to the strong emphasis on agency in feminist theory and in current conceptualizations of childhood and children. While women and children are generally seen as competent agents, even in the worst of circumstances, men as fathers tend to be constructed as victims, even though they may occupy privileged and well paid positions of power. The present image of the working father makes one's thoughts turn to Wrong's (1961) "oversocialized conception of man", and is overdue for a corresponding critique.

Critical researchers into men and masculinities argue that men and fathers have to be made responsible, by naming fathers as men (Hearn, 2002) and men as men (Collinson and Hearn, 2001; Hearn and Pringle, 2006). As fathers and men they are often in positions of power and privilege in the family[2], as well as in organizations. Bekkengen (2002) points out the combined effect of structural inequalities between men and women at the workplace and the family as the main reasons for the gendered division of paid and unpaid work. As employees, men are subordinate at the workplace, while, as men, they are superior in the family. The combination of relative powerlessness as employees and relative power as men in the family is a favourable bargaining situation for men, while women are subordinates both at the workplace and within the family.

Rather than looking for reasons mainly outside of men themselves, and relying entirely on a model of male powerlessness in relation to a greedy working life, it is important to ask of what possible benefit current work/family arrangements are for men. Work is not only a necessary evil, but is also of intrinsic value to men and the workplace is an important arena for male-identity formation (see Alvesson, 1998; Cooper, 2002; Solbrække, 2005), as well as for the reproduction of gendered power relations (Collinson and Hearn, 2001). As Hochschild (1997) has shown, work can also be a relief and an acceptable reason to escape the strains of family life. Others point to the development of a new, male ethic of work based on a romantic discourse of creativity and personal growth (Alvesson, 1998; Solbrække, 2005) – which boils down to the need to put in many hours at work (Højgaard, 1997).

McMahon (1999) argues that men's interest in and gains from the existing gender arrangement are the main reason why men have not responded to women moving into working life and have not taken more responsibility for the unpaid work at home.

In spite of controversy about the explanations for men's lack of adaptations to work and care, there is general agreement that men's relations to work remain a major challenge to the pursuit of gender equality, and to the need for men to allocate their time differently between paid and unpaid work so they can be more actively involved in care for their families. Working part-time is often the solution for women to combine work and care, and men also working part-time might be part of a dual earner/dual carer model.

Part-time work has, however, been documented to be negative or even "detrimental" to careers (Crompton and Birkelund, 2000; Crompton, 2002). The negative effects are not restricted to low-skilled, part-time jobs; part-time professionals also face occupational downgrading and fewer opportunities for training, promotion and communication (Dick and Hyde, 2006).

The status of part-time work differs between countries and working part-time work may not have as negative effects on careers in Norway as it does in many other countries. This may be due to special features of the Norwegian labour market, which is based on a long history of successful industrial democracy and the promotion of democratic and egalitarian relations as a means to increase efficiency and productivity in Norway. Norwegian industrial democracy started as a joint initiative in the early 1960s between the main employer's organization Norsk arbeidsgiverforening (NAF) and the main worker's organization Landsorganisasjonen (LO): the initiative was led by Norwegian social scientists in collaboration with researchers from the Tavistock Institute, London (see Emery and Thorsrud, 1964; Emery *et al.*, 1976). It culminated in the Working Environment Act passed in 1979, which prescribed industrial democracy by law. Today, the tradition of cooperation and workplace democracy is being challenged by the globalization of companies in the private sector and the introduction of reforms based on the New Public Management concept in the public sector. Kvande (2005) describes how working in transnational organizations represents much harsher conditions for work/family reconciliation for Norwegian fathers: such organizations make hitherto unknown demands for limitless time and effort to be put in.

Another reason why part-time work in general may not be as negative in Norway as in other countries is the active use in the public sector of part-time work. This allowed women to combine paid work and motherhood by unburdening women of care responsibilities and offering part-time work in the growing public care sector, the outcome of which has become known as the "woman-friendly welfare state" (Hernes, 1987).

Due to the gendered labour market and the fact that very few men work part-time to adapt to family and care responsibilities, there is little evidence about men working part-time on the same terms and for the same reasons as women.

The argument that working part-time should be worse for men, is quite common, but is not well founded. Holter (2007a, p. 429), for instance, claims that "studies show that the penalties for leaving the full-time path may be even greater for men than for women", referring to Stevens *et al.* (2004). The Stevens study, based on a British survey, found that 56 per cent of the men and 45 per cent of the women feared there would be negative effects on their careers if they reduced their working hours. Negative career effects were thus expected rather than experienced; the study clearly provides no evidence that men are penalized more harshly for working part-time.

To move beyond speculation based merely on beliefs and perceptions, there is a need for national empirical research into the actual, longitudinal effects on careers of part-time work for men in different contexts. In the next section of this article the experiences and longitudinal effects on the careers of a group of men who worked part-time in the early 1970s will be explored.

### **Men who changed their work/family priorities**

Efforts to promote more equal and democratic relations in working life during the 1960s and 1970s had a counterpart in sociologist Erik Grønseth's life-long preoccupation with more equal and democratic relations in the family. And parallel to the use of action research as a method to promote more equal relations in working life, the WSP was launched as an action research project aiming at more equal relations in families. The project was carried out at the Institute of Sociology at the University of Oslo between 1969 and 1975, and led by Professor Erik Grønseth in close cooperation with the Norwegian Family Council and its head, Ola Rokkones. The project was based on both

spouses working part-time[3] and sharing childcare and household work. Thirty years later 14 of the original 16 couples were interviewed in a follow-up study.

In orchestrating a reciprocal change and reallocating paid and unpaid work between men and women, as well as linking the private relationships between men and women in the family to a change in working life and society, the project anticipated present discussions of work/life balance and gender equality. Gambles *et al.* (2006) emphasize reciprocal change between men and women as an important part of solving the tensions between work, family and gender equality, arguing that "it is important to explore the interactions and reciprocity between men- women- relationships and other parts of life at individual, systemic and societal level" (p. 83).

The participants in WSP were 16 couples in different occupations, most of them middle-class academics, while some had lower clerical positions and some worked for private consultancies, thus representing a variety of middle-class positions. The original idea was for the couples to share the same job, and four different production companies were persuaded to provide 40, shared, blue-collar jobs. But due to a lack of response from working-class participants, participants were instead recruited through the media and snowballing techniques, resulting in a mainly middle-class sample, one-fourth of whom shared the same job, but the majority had different part-time jobs for different employers.

The lack of blue-collar, working-class participants was criticized at the time, although today, some of the lower clerical positions would probably have been coded as working class. In orchestrating the equal sharing by men and women of breadwinning and care, the WSP pursued a strategy of gender equality, which increasingly has come to be seen as mainly fitting with a (white) middle-class family ideal (Mirza, 1997; Skilbrei, 2003). Against this background, the lack of working-class response as well as the predominantly middle-class sample were to be expected. These were men who shared the ideals of gender equality based on the equal sharing of breadwinning and care, and the ones who could be expected to pursue corresponding strategies for the reconciliation of work and family.

The couples shared work and care in different ways: working every second day, every second week or sharing the week between them. Part-time work was combined with shift parenting and the one who stayed at home was usually fully responsible for the running of the house on his/her days.

The effect of the arrangement on sharing domestic work and childcare was one of the project's prime focuses, which was found to be a success. The participating families experienced less stress and better marital relations, and an extraordinary level of gender equality was reported within the participating couples (Grønseth, 1975b). These beneficial effects on family life were to a large extent confirmed in the follow-up study (Bjørnholt, 2009a, b) 30 years later. In the follow-up study, the active role of the men in initiating and implementing the work-sharing arrangement emerged as an important theme.

### **Methodology and data**

The longitudinal follow-up study employs an embedded design, that is, multiple levels of analysis within the same study (Yin, 1984). The data consist of semi-structured, qualitative interviews, which were taped and transcribed, with couples who participated in the work-sharing couples experiment during the early 1970s. The interviews had a biographical design with particular regard to interviewees' reflections in retrospect on their participation in the work-sharing experiment and covered both

the interviewees' common lives as couples, and the individual life course of each spouse, with a particular focus on professional biography.

Biographical interviews may be analysed in several ways, and at different levels. In other papers, the interviews are analysed at the couple level (Bjørholt, 2009a), from an intergenerational perspective (Bjørholt, 2009b), and with a focus on the personal biographies and motivations of the work-sharing men (Bjørholt, forthcoming).

Bruner (1986) makes an analytical distinction between three aspects of biographical interviews: the objective, empirical aspect of the life course, the subjective experience and life as told in a narrative form. In this paper, the main emphasis is on the empirical aspect of the life course. Further, I have restricted the analysis to one aspect of the men's biographies – their professional biography – drawing on the individual, professional biographies from the individual section of the couple interviews, and, in some cases, additionally, workplace – and career-relevant information that arose in other contexts during the couple interviews.

Analysis, however, does not start with the reading of the interview transcripts. When planning the follow-up study, I wanted to collect specific biographical data on several aspects of the work-sharing couples' life course, including their careers and during the interviews, and I aimed to cover certain points that had emerged as important in the research literature, such as work-place obstacles and potential negative effects of part-time work. I asked about how they obtained part-time work, possible workplace obstacles, their experiences of working part-time during the work-sharing period, any reactions at the workplace to their working part-time, their actual careers and the positions they obtained over their life courses, and the possible impacts of their part-time work on their careers.

During the analysis, I conducted several readings of the interview transcripts. My first, cross-case reading of the interview transcripts searched for main patterns in career trajectories. During the next reading, I searched for variation within the broad categories that I had first identified, such as those who had managerial careers (one half) and those who did not (the other half). Within these categories, I identified different patterns and different ways of reasoning. The analytic structure was constructed on the basis of these variations and I have ordered the presentation of the cases into a structure of main categories and sub-groups, in order to display both general trends as well as some of the variation in the material.

The main focus is on the men, and the analysis draws on the whole sample of men. In addition, I present a small sample of women's experiences, which is strategically selected to highlight differences between the work-sharing women as compared with the work-sharing men, as well as differences within couples and intra-couple dynamics in career choices and outcomes.

### **Obtaining part-time work**

As (mostly) young parents, the majority of the work-sharing men were at an early stage of their careers, some of them starting their first job, and some changing jobs to be able to work part-time. As newcomers, their bargaining power was not that great. On the other hand, as highly educated academics in an expanding labour market, they were attractive employees, probably affording some room for negotiation. Most of the men obtained part-time arrangements without great difficulty[4], even though some employers were surprised and some of the men had to bargain to be permitted to work part-time. Employer attitudes ranged from seeing work-sharing men as particularly attractive employees or good for company image building to different degrees of reluctant

acceptance. For the majority, however, obtaining part-time was uncomplicated, and none faced serious obstacles at the workplace. Employer reactions varied from strongly positive to reluctant acceptance as the examples below illustrate.

*Work-sharing men as attractive employees*

Arne finished reading economics shortly before the birth of the couple's first child and stayed at home with his wife for the first few months, and then applied for an advertised, part-time job as a statistician. The response was quite positive.

I think they found this motivation (wanting to work part-time to share childcare with his wife) quite interesting. Oddly enough, I got the job without even having an interview.

When he later changed job, he continued to work part-time, gradually increasing his work share from the original 50 per cent, through a period of working 60 per cent, ending up at 80 per cent before starting working full-time after six years of different part-time arrangements for two different employers. He recalls no problem obtaining part-time conditions in his second job, when he was working in the financial department of the social services of a large town. As a female-dominated sector, part-time work and parental leave were normal, and he thinks that "a man asking for it, was in a way only positive".

*Company image building*

Per was graduating as an economist when his first child was born. He took the initiative to find part-time jobs for himself and his wife and they were both employed at the same shipping firm, she as a clerk and he as an economist. They were offered part-time jobs by the employer following publicity in the newspapers about the project and their looking for part-time jobs. According to Per and his wife, their rather conservative employer considered them good publicity for the company – it would appear to be a modern, flexible organization – and they stayed in their part-time jobs at the same employer for four years.

*Reluctant acceptance*

Robert is a civil engineer and quit his job at a consultancy to start working at his wife's place of work at a state agency to be able to work part-time. There were some discussions when he – a man – wanted to work part-time. But their managers supported them, and he was granted permission. They split the weeks between them, working alternately two and three days each, sharing the same office, but not the same job. They continued working part-time for 12 years, gradually increasing their work share from the original 50 to 80 per cent.

*From reluctant acceptance to company image building*

Two couples, John and Karen and David and Rita, all working for the same branch of another state agency, cooperated to share jobs. It had become increasingly usual for women at the agency to share jobs and work part-time when they had children, but no-one had ever heard of men working part-time when John and David applied to share John's job – which involved teaching internal training programmes. In contrast to the majority of work-sharing men, they were not academics, but they had been working at the agency for a long time.

One argument against John and David sharing John's job was the more skilled character of the job, compared to the women's shared job. Due to gendered career paths

in the agency, men were trained for administrative and managerial positions, while women remained mainly in more mundane jobs. This was also the reason they could not share jobs as husband and wife, but rather chose to cooperate as couples, so that the two men could share one job and their wives another.

Their wives, Karen and Rita, had no problem sharing a job, but the men had to apply to the top management before they were allowed to work part-time. After they had been given permission, however, the agency used the work-sharing couples to promote the agency as a modern, flexible and attractive workplace. Later, two more couples at the same agency also started work sharing, which is the only example of a direct spread effect from the project.

### **Working part-time**

After they had started work sharing, the arrangement ran smoothly for all the men, and none of them had to give up working part-time due to difficulties at the workplace, even though a few had to endure some disdain or mockery from employers or colleagues. In contrast, one of the women had to give up her job to stay at home as a housewife for two years, due to a lack of adaptation to her wishing to work part-time at her workplace. The examples below illustrate the common experience of the men of being valued at the workplace due to the work-sharing experience, as well as examples of negative reactions at the workplace, which were mentioned by a small minority of the men. The contrasting experiences of the women are illustrated by one couple.

#### *The husband: earning goodwill through part-time work*

Frank is a lawyer and worked for the state administration. Frank's wish to work part-time was welcomed by his employer due to a special situation at his workplace: one person there did not function well in the job, and Frank suggested to his manager that this job be shared between him and this person. This also involved him quitting a full-time, permanent position for a part-time deputyship, which did not go unacknowledged and was appreciated by his employer.

#### *The wife: forced to resign*

Frank's wife, Vera, is a special needs teacher and worked at the time within paediatric and youth psychiatry. During the work-sharing arrangement they both had 50 per cent jobs, working every second day. In contrast to her husband, Vera faced growing problems combining care and work. When her husband was offered a full-time manager's position, she urged him to accept it, because she found it hard to combine work and children, mostly due to the lack of accommodation and adjustment to her working part-time from her employer. She felt obliged to quit and became a full-time housewife for two years. As well as pointing out obstacles at the workplace as the main problem, she is also implicitly criticizing the focus on sharing domestic work, and intra-familial and couple relations in the project.

I think we were quite successful at home, but it was very poorly arranged at work, even though I was working in a job to do with children and care. This impression is still stuck in my mind, how poorly arranged it was [..] I was also forced to resign.

#### *Negative reactions at the workplace*

A couple of the men experienced negative reactions at their place of work. Sigurd was selling technical equipment in a private business and his colleagues complained they

never knew when he would be there. He worked on regular days, and maintained it should not be difficult to keep track of his work rhythm.

Roger worked as a social scientist in an administrative position, and felt his working part-time was unpopular at his workplace:

*Roger:* You must note down that it was unpopular at my workplace. I had not only done this, I had also taken half a year's unpaid leave from my work place (before having children). That was not good!

*Interviewer:* No?

*Roger:* It reveals you are not ambitious and (don't) want to move up in the world.

*Interviewer:* Yes?

*Roger:* Yes, so I was a little frowned upon by people, as I have told you, my career was at a standstill for 27 years as a senior official. But I think many men would find it difficult to take such a choice because of the terror you will be exposed to. You will be harassed at the workplace.

*Interviewer:* This was your experience?

*Roger:* Well, to a certain extent, but I was not on good terms with my colleagues. I had a different background, I thought they were, to put it a little flippantly, "clever schoolgirls", people who had been sitting at university and had never experienced anything, I thought.

*Interviewer:* No?

*Roger:* But I had experienced many things. There was some distance between us. Actually, I only became friendly with one of these colleagues.

In Roger's case the negative reactions at the workplace were not only due to him working part-time to take care of children, but were a part of a number of complex relations to colleagues. But challenging the male, worker norm and his perceived lack of ambition was certainly part of this picture. Even though Roger felt his colleagues' disdain, he did not have any problem with the managers at his workplace and he was allowed to work part-time as he wished to for the rest of his professional life.

#### *Lack of obstacles*

The lack of obstacles at the workplace to men's part-time work challenges the idea of there being great(er) difficulties for men to ask for and obtain part-time work, and is in accordance with other recent research (Ekenstam, 2007; Gislason, 2007; Bekkengen, 2002), which found neither workplace obstacles nor negative reactions to men taking parental leave or their carrying out domestic work. Gislason also points out that Icelandic fathers on parental leave received quite a lot of praise. Olsen (2007) found that both men and women felt they could not speak their minds at the workplace before the conflict between work and family forced them to do so, but when they eventually broached the topic, it was no problem for their workplaces and they were allowed to work less, but they had to take the initiative themselves to broach the topic of work/family reconciliation.

#### **Career and work**

The work-sharing couples continued their untraditional arrangement for a substantial amount of time, ranging between 1.5 and 30 years, with seven years as the mean and most frequent duration. Contrary to what might have been expected, working

part-time for such a long time has not been an obstacle to forming a career. Rather, half of the men obtained managerial positions, mostly shortly after or while still working part-time, and the man being offered a managerial position was a frequent reason for quitting the work-sharing arrangement.

The men who became managers, however, all stopped working part-time after assuming a managerial position, while one of the women who held a top managerial position at a large, male-dominated state agency continued working part-time in an 80 per cent job share for her first year as a top-level manager.

Eight of the men and four of the women obtained managerial positions. The men were managers within state, county or municipal units, with one exception – a man who was the manager of a small, private business. Among the non-managers there were two dentists, one of whom had a PhD, a social scientist in an administrative position, a civil engineer working as a senior consultant, a university professor of science and a musician. Overall, measured by general standards of success, the work-sharing men appear to be quite successful professionally.

Below I present examples of the men who pursued careers and the men who abstained from career and how they reflect on the impact of the work-sharing experience on their further professional life course.

#### *Part-time and career*

For the men who pursued a career, the work-sharing experience was valued positively rather than negatively by employers. John was offered a leading position after three years of work sharing and has never had any negative feedback about his working part-time. He thought his experience as a housefather[5] had made him more empathetic and a better leader, particularly during a recent major downscaling process. He also felt this experience had been acknowledged as a qualification: "My experience as a housefather and of childcare is in fact a qualification, instead of being a professional idiot. I have had comments about that". Statements like this were common.

Frank helped solve a difficult situation at his workplace by stepping in for another person who did not perform well. His period of working part-time allowed him to prove himself to be a constructive and responsible employee and a very capable person and did not have any negative repercussions on his career: rather, the opposite was true and he was offered a leading position after 1.5 years in the part-time arrangement.

After working part-time for four years, Per and his family had two periods abroad for a Norwegian development aid organization. He has worked full-time since and carved out a career as a high-ranking manager in public administration. The fact that he had worked part-time has not been a direct obstacle to his career. However, he did have one negative experience when he did not get a job because of his previous period of part-time work. He later learned that his working part-time had been interpreted by the employer as political radicalism, which made him unattractive to the employer. Even though several of the work-sharing men certainly were radical politically, no-one else experienced working part-time or their radicalism being a hindrance to forming a career. But even though Per experienced this once, he later did get a career as a manager.

#### *Valuing caring men*

The men who pursued a career got one, regardless of how long they continued working part-time. The lack of negative effects on career and the positive evaluation of the men's part-time adaptations are contra-intuitive to the widely presumed difficulties for



men working part-time and prioritizing family obligations. Haas and Hwang (2000) also found examples that fathers' use of parental leave was seen as positive for some men and valued by some employers as something that added to personal growth and to the development of new skills.

In the work-sharing follow-up study, only men referred to their experiences of fathering and of being house husbands as skills recognized in relation to their careers. No woman gained any recognition at the workplace for her skills as a housewife or carer. David, for instance, found that his experience as a housefather was positively valued by the couple's joint employer, while Rita, his wife, said "I think they have acknowledged that I have a big capacity for work, but no one has related that to the experience of my having been a housewife". This touches upon a "paradox of valuation" (Williams, 1995; Bekkengen, 2002); men being in privileged positions as men, and thus with the power to transform experiences into skills.

#### *Abstaining from career*

Some of the men abstained from having a career. Leisure and other life values were important motivations for the men, and choosing not to go in for a career seemed to be the result of deeper sets of values and personal choices, rather than the result of family obligations or working part-time. In the group that abstained from career there was more variation than in the group that pursued a career, which will be illustrated by the examples below.

*Leisure and other life values.* Roger continued to work part-time for the rest of his occupational life, while his wife studied more and made an academic career. As described above, he felt his colleagues disapproved of his adaptations of working life. But he was also quite explicit that he did not want to become a leader:

*Roger:* I had experienced many things, intellectually and during the war (...) and I was not very interested in advancing to become head of the office at my workplace. Rather, I wanted to spend time with the children and experience other things and cultivate my curiosity and sense of wonder. (A manager's job was) totally un-interesting. So it was not difficult for me to work part-time.

*Interviewer:* Did you see working part-time as irreconcilable with becoming head of the office?

*Roger:* No, it was uninteresting, totally uninteresting. I had a job I enjoyed and an arrangement that involved me working three days a week. I had an arrangement I was very satisfied with and I continued to work three days a week after the children had grown up. I had adapted to this kind of life.

While Roger, earlier in the interview, had linked his lack of career to his working part-time, in the excerpt above his lack of career emerges as the result more of a personal, value-based choice, than as a punishment for part-time work. We must also bear in mind that for a social scientist, advancing into an administrative position may not be more attractive than staying closer to one's discipline.

*Personal change and changing priorities.* Gunnar was quite absorbed in his highly theoretical work as a university professor of science. His was one of the few couples in which the wife clearly was the main initiator and actually persuaded her husband to share work. She also forced (both husband and wife used this word) him to participate in several consciousness-raising groups, including a men's group with which he until recently had maintained close contact. As a result of this, he changed as a person, becoming more interested in people and giving greater priority to lecturing and

student contact, at some expense to his scientific career. In retrospect, he was grateful for having had a much richer life than he otherwise would have had. But he also recognized the costs in terms of a less high-flying scientific career. The change in direction in Gunnar's career was the result of processes of personal change and changed interest, rather than a negative effect of working part-time.

*The discontent(s).* A minority of the men were discontent with their jobs, and this was part of their motivation to work less, while none of the women mentioned this as a motive. In the original study, this was reported as a motive for one-third of the men, while only two, Roger and Ola, mentioned this in the follow-up interview: and as Roger was not discontent with his work, but rather with his colleagues, only one remains who was clearly discontent with his work.

Ola was working in a traditionally female, caring occupation, and had positions as a manager at homes for the elderly, that he had to some extent shared with his wife who had the same professional background, but he had returned to shopfloor work in a hospital. They moved and changed jobs several times and sometimes shared the same job, usually opting to halve the job. In one of their workplaces, they were forced to split the job 70-30 per cent between them, rather than halving it, which was what they wanted, Ola being expected to take the larger share, which both Ola and his wife regretted. He disliked his work and regretted that he had not changed vocation. She lost pension rights after remaining in such a low job-share for five years.

Recently he had to accept early retirement after falling ill, which was a hard blow to his self-esteem, and he would have preferred to continue working, even though he did not like the work. But his last employer was not willing to offer him suitable work after his illness and Ola saw the lack of adaptation to his illness as a result of his previous working arrangements; having worked part-time in addition to changing workplaces and employers several times. In Ola's case part-time work in combination with frequent job-changes contributed to his negative experiences.

*Ambivalence and regret.* In one of the couples, the husband's lack of career was a topic of ambivalence and regret on his part. Ann and Robert are civil engineers and worked for the same state agency after Robert had quit his former job at a consultancy to facilitate their both working part-time. Ann has held several top managerial positions, while Robert did not go in for a career and his lack of career was a source of ambivalence and regret that he returned to several times during the interview. This was partly due to the fact that there was no room for two top leaders from the same family at the same agency. But he also enjoyed his work and his colleagues, as well as the freedom he had as a highly valued professional.

Nevertheless, he was ambiguous about not having lived up to the expectations of him, a once brilliant student, and also about the fact that Ann's income was almost twice his own. He has taken upon himself leadership roles and tasks in organizations outside work. In this case, Robert's choice not to have a managerial career appeared to be the indirect outcome of several, intertwining factors; but having worked part-time was not among them.

*The best of both worlds?* Robert's wife, Ann, never experienced any problem with her working part-time, and unlike the men who went into managerial positions, she continued working 80 per cent part-time during her first year as a manager. She felt she was getting the best of both worlds; as one of the first women to graduate in a prestigious, male-dominated, technical profession, she was the equal of the men in the organization. At the same time she could draw on the organization's general acceptance for female employees reducing their work hours without losing out in terms of her

career. On the other hand, unlike the work-sharing men who obtained managerial positions, her experience as a housewife was not regarded as adding to her management skills; in addition, her occupational and financial achievements roused in her husband feelings of ambivalence.

### Discussion

In this article I have tried to answer the following questions: how did the work-sharing men obtain part-time work and what were the repercussions, if any, for them as employees and on their careers? Obtaining part-time work was not difficult and employers were generally positive, even though the work-sharing men were seen as untraditional. Neither did they suffer any negative career effects. Those who pursued careers succeeded, and half of the men obtained managerial positions. Their experiences as housefathers were in fact valued by employers as adding to their skills rather than being seen as negative in relation to careers. Those who did not pursue careers opted out by personal choice, rather than as a negative effect from working part-time or from prioritizing their families.

The picture for the men as a group was more positive than for the women, some of whom experienced on-the-job obstacles, and unlike the men, the women's experiences as housewives were not regarded by their employers as adding to their work or management skills.

How to explain these findings and what are their possible implications? The work-sharing men's relatively privileged class position in terms of formal education and occupation may have played a role in their being able to obtain part-time work at the workplace. For the majority, obtaining part-time work was rather uncomplicated. In contrast, the two non-academics who wanted to share jobs had to await a formal decision taken at the top level of their organization. Once approved, however, the consequences on their careers were as positive for these men as for the others.

In Goldthorpe/Erikson-Goldthorpe's class scheme (Goldthorpe *et al.*, 1980; Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992), the main distinction is that between employees involved in a service relationship with their employer and those whose employment relationships are essentially regulated by a labour contract. Belonging mainly to "service-class occupations", the work-sharing men's high levels of expertise and autonomy may have reduced the cost of part-time employment, and consenting to their working part-time may have been part of the employer's strategies for building trust and commitment.

Taking a culturalist view of class, drawing on Bourdieu's different capital forms, cultural capital could also be important for how part-time is seen and valued. Within the background of a high level of cultural capital, the untraditional work/family adaptation may be interpreted positively, signalling strength of character, an interesting personality and being in control of self as well as of the environment. In line with this argument, the valuation of the work-sharing men's house-father experience as managing skills may be understood in terms of a "resourcing of self" (Skeggs, 2004), in which resources in one field may be converted into value in other fields.

The results of this study also indicate that the disadvantages of part-timework are more to do with gender than with hours of work. This conclusion needs some further discussion. Gender in this context has a class dimension, as the work-sharing men had, at the project's outset, higher formal educational levels as well as higher occupational positions, that is, they did to a larger extent belong to the "service class" and had higher cultural capital than the women.

Consequently, the men had greater access to class-related structures of privilege and were in a better bargaining position vis-à-vis their employers than the majority of the

women. This is likely to have positively influenced their room for manoeuvre at the workplace. The woman who made it to the top of a male-dominated organization while still working part-time experienced no negative effects. Rather she felt she was getting the best of both worlds, competing on equal terms with the men, while enjoying a woman's privilege to work reduced hours. On the other hand, unlike the men who obtained managerial positions, her experiences as a housewife were not valued as adding to her management skills. This suggests that what appears as gender is to some extent about class, but that gender cannot be reduced to class, as this study also suggests that what men do tends to be valued more highly than what women do.

One implication of these findings is that, due to the combined privileges of class and gender, men may be at an advantage when attempting to obtain the kind of working arrangements they want and to work reduced hours without risking losing out in terms of their careers. Men, subsequently, may have a key role in negotiating the boundaries of work and family and in acting as agents of change towards a better reconciliation of work and family and more egalitarian patterns of breadwinning and care. A change of practices in this direction may, on the other hand, not necessarily immediately lead to gender equality in working life, as gendered hierarchies of privilege and the paradox of valuation may moderate the effect on gender equality.

What are the social and political implications of these findings? The findings challenge current perceptions of men, work and care which tend to focus on men's powerlessness in working life, and men as victims of the demands of work.

Current conditions at work are often held to be more demanding, and in many occupations within the high-skilled "service class" total commitment to work is expected by employers as well as internalized as part of professional dedication by employees. On the other hand, there is also strong ideological support for involved fatherhood in most countries, and in Norway, as well as in most other Nordic countries, policies and welfare rights support fathers' caring, such as the paternal quota of parental leave and the possibility to share parental leave. In addition, fathers' rights have been strengthened in several ways in Norway as well as in most other Western countries. This further enhances men's opportunities and agency in shaping their work/family arrangements.

Men working part-time in the 1970s probably challenged to a much greater extent contemporary masculinities as well as norms of working life than fathers who today choose to reduce their working hours to take care of their children. Fathers in the early 1970s had neither the ideological nor the financial support to get involved in the care of their children that has increasingly been made available to Norwegian men since the 1990s. Nevertheless, the work-sharing men managed to work part-time, to prioritize care and other aspects of life for a substantial period of time, and this did not prevent them having a career; their working part-time and their experiences as househusbands and fathers were positively rather than negatively valued in relation to careers. This is an interesting reminder of men's responsibility, agency and scope of action in relation to work and in shaping gender equality in their families that forcefully challenges the present image of male powerlessness, with three important qualifications: firstly, in Bjønholt (forthcoming) I point out that the work-sharing men were rather special men, and warn against generalizing from such a small and highly selected sample to make assumptions of future change or to appoint them as vanguards of change. The positive response to their part-time in the workplace, as well as elsewhere, and the lack of negative consequences, however, are worthy of attention, regardless of the particularities of the work-sharing men themselves.

Caution is also warranted as the work-sharing men were mostly at an early stage of their careers when having children and working part-time, and those who pursued careers all stopped working part-time when they accepted managerial positions. Today, parenthood is often postponed and parents are older than in the 1970s, which implies they have reached higher career levels when they have children. The higher age and occupational levels of parents of young children might make it more difficult to work part-time today than it was for the work-sharing couples, in spite of the stronger ideological and financial support for caring fathers today. Globalization and new public management reforms add to the difficulties of combining work and career.

Finally, the work-sharing couples' careers illustrate that most of them are/were employed in the public sector. This may be one reason why working part-time was not an obstacle to careers. On the other hand, neither for those who worked for private firms, there is evidence of real obstacles nor of negative effects from their working part-time.

The fact that the work-sharing men were rather exceptional, both in the 1970s and compared to men today, is interesting in a discussion of change, or more precisely the lack of change in men's relations to work and their work/family adaptations over the last 30 years. Why is it that men's relations to work and the male-worker norm have proved so persistent despite the great changes in women's participation in the labour market and the increase over recent decades in expectations of (and policies supporting) involved fatherhood?

Rather than treating as empirical facts perceived or feared workplace obstacles, men's practices should, at least to some extent, be seen as the outcome of priorities and studied as such. This would imply focusing on men's actual work/family adaptations and their empirical effects, and on the collective formations of men's practices, ideologies and masculinities in preferred masculine spaces such as the workplace.

#### Notes

1. The average part-time work week in Norway was 20h, and the average for EU and EFTA countries was 19 h a week (Lohne, 2005).
2. The concept of male power in the family is challenged by Nordic researchers into men and masculinities (see Holter *et al.*, 2007), while couple and family researchers still tend to see gendered power relations as important.
3. None of the spouses was to work less than 16h a week and none more than 28h (Grønseth, 1975a, p. 9).
4. Working part time was one of the main inclusion criteria for participation in the study. There were also seven additional couples who were interested, but who did not start work sharing, but the original project does not account for why they dropped out. These couples could not be traced for the follow-up study.
5. They often referred to themselves as housefathers – a male reformulation of the Norwegian word for housewife, *husmor*, which means house mother.

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**ARTICLE IV**



Margunn Bjørnholt

## Fathers and Sons – Gender Socialization and Intergenerational Transmission Revisited

### Abstract

This article, which employs a dyadic father-son approach, addresses the methodological and theoretical challenges involved in studying gender socialization and intergenerational transmission. The article is part of a longitudinal follow-up study of the Work-Sharing Couples Project, a small, experimental action research project for gender equality in the family in Norway during the first part of the 1970s; the project was designed to promote gender equality and a better work/life balance in families and was based on both spouses working part-time and sharing breadwinning, childcare and housework. The follow-up study was conducted by interviewing the original couples in 2005–2006. A sample of the sons of the work-sharing couples has also been interviewed as part of an ongoing follow-up study of intergenerational transmission. The background of the article consists of the findings so far relating to the fathers in the study: these findings provide little or no support for a model of father/son transmission; the work-sharing men did not refer to their own fathers as “role models”. Further, the father-son research design poses certain methodological, theoretical and ethical challenges which should be considered and weighed up against the possible analytical gains of this approach. Against the background of these concerns, a single father-son case is explored based on a couple interview with the parents and individual interviews with both the parents and the son. Based on analyzing this case, methodological and theoretical implications for the study of intergenerational transmission, boys’ socialization and the origin of masculinity/(ies) are discussed.

### Keywords

Gender socialization, intergenerational transmission, father-son, masculinity, gender equality

# Fathers and Sons – Gender Socialization and Intergenerational Transmission Revisited

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## Introduction

What are the consequences for children whose fathers play an active role in the daily care of their families? This question has been the subject of considerable theorizing and hypothesizing, and the idea of obtaining a lasting change in gender relations through interventions in families' patterns of work and care, notably through promoting fathers' participation in childcare, has become increasingly important in current family policy in the Nordic countries. A related concern has been the lack of fathers and male 'role models' for boys, which has been the subject of worry and concern among family researchers, professionals and politicians for almost a century (see Kimmel 1996/2006). Despite these high levels of hypothesizing and policy-making, which more or less take for granted that gender socialization is the result of specific gendered patterns and relations within the family, there are few empirical studies of intergenerational transmission of egalitarian family patterns.

This study is based on an in-depth analysis of a single case, chosen from a longitudinal follow-up study of a Norwegian experimental research project aimed at promoting gender equality in the family during the early 1970s. In order to address the methodological and theoretical challenges involved in studying gender socialisation and intergenerational transmission I shall employ a dyadic father-son approach. This discussion is particularly useful in explaining the power and limitations of a father-son design for such studies.

The article starts with a methodological section, and then I will briefly present the Work-Sharing Couples Project and the longitudinal follow-up study of the original participants thirty years later, in 2005–2006. In the next section I present the theoretical background of the original project and related approaches to studying gender socialization and in particular studying boys. In the second half of the paper I use an in-depth case study to explore the usefulness and explanatory power, as well as the limitations, of the father-son design.

## Methodology

The main source of knowledge about the original project is the published material from the study, mainly based on detailed questionnaires. The follow-up study was carried out in 2005 and 2006;<sup>1</sup> 15 of the original 16 couples were traced, and 14 consented to be interviewed, eleven of whom were still married and who were interviewed together. Three of the couples were divorced; in two cases both ex-spouses were interviewed separately, while in the third case only the wife responded and was interviewed. A sample of sons who had themselves established families, had had children and who were cohabitating with the mother of their children (7) was interviewed in 2007 as part of an ongoing study of intergenerational transmission.<sup>2</sup> This article draws on data from one of the couple interviews and the son in this family; in addition, individual interviews with both parents were conducted in 2007.

The interviews with the parents and son are retrospective life-course interviews; they start with the informants' childhoods and follow their life courses to the present day, covering their present life situation, and inviting them to self-reflect on the possible impact of the family of origin on their socialization and work/family adaptations. What kinds of facts do such qualitative interviews generate? Recently there has been a growing awareness of the need to distinguish between the story told and the experience of the informant (Wengraf 2001). The focus has increasingly been on the subjective, narrative and interpretative aspects of experience, whilst the realist approach has fallen somewhat out of favour. Manoeuvring between the two research traditions of realism and interpretivism, I take a pragmatic view; on one hand I acknowledge that the way in which the informants recount their life-course stories is the result of the informants' active shaping of identities and constructions of self and that their stories derive their meaning from linguistic and discursive circumscriptions and historical experiences. Following Brannen et al. (2004, 6) and Nielsen and Rudberg (2006, 53–54), I combine the two approaches and treat the interview data as sufficiently reliable biographical evidence rather than focusing mainly on the subjective aspects and on possible discrepancies between the story told and the life lived. The interviews were semistructured, and an interview guide with relatively open questions was employed to encourage informants to tell their stories in their own words.

## The Work-Sharing Couples Project

The Work-Sharing Couples Project was an experimental research project in Norway during the first part of the 1970s. The project was initiated by and carried out at the behest of the leader of the Norwegian Family Council,<sup>3</sup> and led by the late sociologist Erik Grønseth. The project was designed to promote gender equality and a better work/life balance in families and was based on both spouses working part-time and sharing childcare and

housework. 16 couples were recruited to the project based on the following criteria: a co-habiting couple with at least one child below school age (seven years old), with both husband and wife gainfully employed in part-time jobs for 16–28 hours per week; normal work hours at the time were 40 hours a week. Men working part-time was highly unusual in the early 1970s, and still is. The time the couples spent pursuing the arrangement ranged between one and a half and thirty years, with seven years as the mean (Bjørnholt 2009).

In addition to orchestrating the synchronous movement of women into the labour market and men into the home, the Work-Sharing Couples Project's broad, reformatory ambition included bringing about a change in the next generation.

Thirty years later, one of the findings from the follow-up study was the active role of the work-sharing men in initiating and implementing the work-sharing arrangement (Bjørnholt forthcoming). This was the main reason for focusing on the men and for conducting a sub-study about the work-sharing men and their sons.

## Studying intergenerational transmission

Studying intergenerational transmission by following intra-familial, same-sex lineage is rather common; Nielsen and Rudberg (2006), for instance, present three generations of women without discussing the theoretical and methodological implications or the possible limitations of this design. Brannen et al. (2004) combine a broad, historically informed biographical analysis in their study of a small sample of four-generational families but their contextual approach is not fully reflected in the analysis, in which they study same-sex chains within each family. Interestingly, as the chapter on fathers unfolds, the focus is mainly on fatherhood in different families and different historical generations, including sons-in-law, rather than on transmission from specific fathers to sons.

Brannen et al. identify different patterns of change and continuity, part of which has to do with biography and part with the broader context. Some respondents reproduce patterns from their families of origin, while others are seen as “repairers” who try to avoid repeating the negative experiences from their own up-bringing.

## The work-sharing men lacked paternal “role-models”

My interest in the father-son research design arose while analyzing the backgrounds of the work-sharing men (Bjørnholt forthcoming); few of these untraditional men had themselves had fathers who deviated from the traditional male breadwinner role. Their fathers were not their “role-models” – to use the term of that time. When explaining how they came to promote egalitarian patterns of breadwinning and care in their own families, the work-sharing men referred to experiences from their families of origin; but the in-

fluence of their fathers was negligible. Rather, the work-sharing men shared other important biographical influences: their mothers were employed outside the home to a greater extent than was usual at the time, a majority had experienced the loss or illness of a parent, and they had had to assume responsibility for domestic work from an early age. The findings, that gender-equality minded men seem to share certain biographical experiences from their families of origin and that they mostly do not model themselves on their fathers, are supported by other research into feminist or gender-equality oriented men (see Morgan 1993, Holter and Aarseth 1993, Ekenstam 2007, Aarseth 2007).

The fact that the work-sharing fathers developed their gender-equal orientations and practices in contrast to, rather than as a transmission of their own fathers' practices, represents a dilemma. With regard to choosing a father-son design in the study of the sons; focusing on fathers and sons as the main research unit takes for granted a model of gender socialization that is not supported by the fathers' own biographies.

### Sex-role theory and father absence revisited

The theoretical background of the Work-Sharing Couples Project was the inventive and subversive use of Parsons' sex-role theory by the first generation of Norwegian family researchers, in particular Grønseth (1956, 1970) and Holter (1970). Contrary to Parsons, who regarded the gendered sharing of breadwinning and care in the post-war nuclear family as ideal to serve the needs of individuals and society, Norwegian family researchers focused on roles in a more socially constructive way (Ellingsæter 2000). Holter, Tiller and Brun-Gulbrandsen contributed to Dahlström's now legendary *Kvinnors liv och arbete* (1962), which laid the ground for the Norwegian and Swedish research into gender relations for the next two decades.

Tiller (1958, 1962) and Brun-Gulbrandsen (1958, 1958a) were also influenced by psychological ideas of gender socialization which were expressed in the growing concern among psychologists about the socialization of boys. Revisiting a Swedish study of gender socialization carried out in 1959 (Marke and Nyman 1963), Bengtson (2001) concludes that this study, which was typical of its time, was infatuated with a strong fear of feminization.

A fear of feminization and the need for male identification or "role-models" were part of the theoretical background and inspiration when, in the 1950s, studies were initiated in Norway by Tiller and Grønseth<sup>4</sup> to study socialization in different family settings. The families of Norwegian sailors were chosen to represent families with absent fathers. The studies focused in particular on boys, and the researchers concluded that personality traits such as compensatory masculinity and the development of feminine traits were more frequent in the sons of absent fathers than in boys from families in which fathers were present. The negative effects on boys' socialization of the father's absence were soon



established as a scientific truth and laid the ground for considerable worrying on behalf of boys in female-dominated families and institutions.

In a self-critical, retrospective article,<sup>5</sup> Tiller (1985) revisited his own studies of the families of sailors and argued that they had erroneously been taken as proof of the negative effects of father absence. Tiller partly blames the media for warping the results, but also admits that they as researchers were limited in their view by their strong theoretical and ideological convictions. He concludes that they largely found what they were looking for due to not looking for anything else. In a self-critical passage, he recalls the uncomfortable meeting several years later with some of the research subjects who felt they had unjustly been stigmatized as producers of problem children and tearaways.

According to Tiller, the results as such were not wrong; a substantial (statistically significant) part of the boys from the families of sailors did develop certain personality traits such as a compensatory masculinity or feminine traits compared to boys from families in which the father was present. In retrospect, however, Tiller criticizes the fact that they as researchers took for granted that the presence of certain personality traits in boys would have particular negative effects on their future development. Tiller points out that context is crucial. These boys were sons of sailors and officers at sea, growing up in highly respected and mostly well off families, living in well-functioning neighbourhoods in small coastal villages. Personality traits that might have had negative effects in a totally different context did not have any negative effect on boys growing up in a beneficial environment such as that of the families of Norwegian sailors.

The Work-Sharing Project was inspired by ideas that differed from traditional psycho-analytical ideas of gender socialization. Instead of fearing the loss of traditional masculinity, Grønseth (1970) criticized the male breadwinner model for limiting men's human capacities, and he advocated the expansion of both male and female repertoires to develop both men's and women's full capacities as human beings. In his argumentation, the influence is heard both of the feminist pioneer Margarete Bonnevie (1932), and of his great source of inspiration, Wilhelm Reich.<sup>6</sup>

Grønseth turned Parsons' role model theory upside down; rather than a need for a traditional father who served as a model of traditional masculinity for boys, he argued that children needed close relations to parents of both sexes and that more equally sharing parents would provide a more beneficial environment for children's development than traditional families. This argumentation anticipates the feminist object relations theory, which was later developed by Chodorow and Dinnerstein (below).

## The reproduction of mothering and the reinvention of the need for fathers

The idea of the negative effect of exclusively female mothering and the corresponding positive effect of fathers on the socialization of children was taken up, or rather reinvented, by the feminist object-relations theorists Chodorow (1978) and Dinnerstein (1976). Their argument was based on the assumption that children identify with the parent of the same sex; according to this theory, girls who are mothered by women will develop relational selves based on identification with the mother at the cost of their autonomy. Boys will have to separate from their mothers in order to become men and thereby develop autonomous selves at the cost of their relational and emotional capacity. If fathers were also primary caregivers, both boys and girls would develop more balanced and less gendered selves in which autonomy and relational capacities would be equally present in both sexes.

Chodorow has been criticized for overemphasizing infantile attachment to the mother and under-emphasizing social and ideological structures and the multiplicity of social practices that separate boys and girls, and for blaming mothers for reproducing the gender system (Segal 1987, Kellner 1989, Rutherford 1992, Brittan 1989, Pease 2000).

Feminist object relations theory has been widely used within masculinity literature. McMahon (1993) is among the critiques of the “psychologization of sexual politics in the masculinity literature”. In the works of Farrell (1993), Blankenhorn (1995) and Popenoe (1988 and 1996), the critique of the male breadwinner role and of father absence, found an aggressive antifeminist and masculinist expression.

Both sex-role theory, traditional psycho-analytic object relations theory, its feminist reinterpretation as well as its masculinist inversion assume that children mainly or even exclusively identify with and learn from the parent of the same sex; from this the idea follows the need for parents of both sexes, as well as the idea of a negative impact on boys’ socialization of mother-care and the idea of the essential need for fathers and male “role-models”.

These ideas have been challenged by a growing body of feminist research into mothering; such as Silverstein and Raschbaum (1994) and Caron (1995), who criticize the negative view of the mother and son bond and argue for strengthening, rather than weakening, the mother and son bond as an important strategy for boys’ socialization into (good) men. Silverstein and Raschbaum argue that mothers were erroneously persuaded to retreat from boys to let them grow into men; in this way, Silverstein and Raschbaum argue, boys are bereaved of their primary care person, confidant and ally.

The idea that boys will have to distance themselves from their mothers to develop a proper, male gender identity is increasingly contested (see Pollack 1998, Dooley and Fedele 2001 and O’Reilly 2001). So is the idea that children only identify with and learn pa-

renting from the parent of the same sex. Rather the opposite seems to be the case; research into involved fathers finds that they, like the work-sharing men, mostly develop their caring practices in spite of and as a contrast to their own distant and traditional fathers (Ekenstam 2007, Holter and Aarseth 1993). Masciadrelli, Pleck and Stueve found that “highly involved fathers were less likely than other fathers to describe their own fathers as role models of any sort, to either imitate or compensate for” (2006, 30). Research into lesbian mothering also challenges the hegemony of the hetero-sexual family as the only and best environment for child development (Patterson 1992).

### In search of father-son transmission

Using one case, I shall now explore intergenerational transmission and gender socialization. The case is fairly representative of the work-sharing couples. The father’s experiences from his family of origin, his agency in initiating the work-sharing arrangement, his career and his views of domestic work and breadwinning were common among the work-sharing men. This couple practised work-sharing for three years, which is in the lower half of the work-sharing couples, but still double the couple who maintained the arrangement for the shortest time. The son’s work/life adaptation is representative of the other sons, who were generally found to live in or opt for what could be regarded as neo-traditional work/care arrangements.

I shall begin by analyzing the father’s and the son’s narratives to search for intergenerational transmission between the father in my study and his father, and between the son in my study and his father. After summing up the advantages and limitation of this approach in explaining how father and son, respectively, became the men they did and chose the kind of work/family adaptation they did, I will discuss the mothers’ importance for understanding intergenerational transmission. Then I will gradually widen the scope towards a more contextual approach.

### The father

John, born in the second half of the 1940s, grew up as the youngest of five siblings on a small farm. His father took over the family farm, but according to John, he never became a farmer. John thinks the family was probably worse off than they might normally have been due to his father’s unlucky investments in farm machinery. He also thinks that his own moderation and enthusiasm for using resources, such as picking and preserving wild berries, are due to experiencing scarcity during childhood.

When explaining why he promoted an untraditional family model in his own family in taking the initiative to work-share, John does not refer to his father. According to John, “It was a rather traditional pattern, my father never became a househusband”.

John started working at a young age for a state agency, at which he gradually climbed the ladder from administrative to managerial positions, and at which he met his wife, who was working at the same agency. John took the initiative to start work-sharing and the couple pursued the arrangement for three years, working and staying at home every second week. John was criticized by his brother for doing female tasks which the brother found unmanly, but due to differences in standards of housework, John did not, however, do as much housework as his wife.

John was offered a promotion after three years of work-sharing and returned to full-time employment while his wife continued working part-time. He admits that after the work-sharing project, his wife did the lion's share of domestic work; however, he often did the cooking at weekends and took a great interest in the garden. His motivation for work-sharing was mixed: he wanted his wife to return to work; but he also wanted to work less and have a say in the children's upbringing.

## The son

Gunnar is the eldest of John's two sons. His parents started work-sharing when he was five, and for three years they both worked part-time and shared housework and the child-care for him and his younger brother. The children had to clean their rooms and participate in the weekend cleaning of the house, and his father was the one who administrated the children's domestic duties; especially outdoors.

At college, Gunnar was uncomfortable with the "vagueness" of the school system and preferred having fun, but did nevertheless finish school and later pursued a military career. He now works as a pilot for a commercial airline. He enjoys action and adventure and has participated in United Nations' operations abroad; he also greatly enjoyed the order and hierarchy of the military system, and doing his duty, which is currently "flying responsibly" as a commercial pilot.

He lives in a consensual union and has a two-year old daughter. Together with his partner, he works week-long shifts, she as a stewardess and he as a pilot. Due to his work schedule he stays away from home for periods of eight days in a row, while his partner is away for five days. They coordinate their work schedules so that at least one of them is at home. A flexible kindergarten, at which they book time according to their work schedules, and occasional help from grandparents are part of their adaptation to their long work-shifts.

He expresses great admiration for his partner as a mother and thinks that he cannot fully compensate for the mother. Accepting the strength of the mother/child bond Gunnar does, however, want to be part of his daughter's life, and he has carried out certain adaptations to his family situation, such as reducing the large amount of freelance work he used to have; he has reduced his regular workload to 80 per cent in the last six months.

However, overall he still works a lot and probably considerably more than 100 per cent when his freelance work is included.

Planning for the future, he thinks his partner will be the one to reduce her work hours more permanently when they have another child. This is partly due to his view of the different parental roles of mothers and fathers:

I can see that father has a role and mother has a role, but I can see that the role of the mother is more important for the child than the father's role. So I can see the advantage of her being at home more rather than me.

He also takes into account that his partner feels less comfortable than him about being away from home for several days. He himself is quite happy with his eight-day shifts. Finally, he thinks he enjoys his work more than his partner due to differences in job content and working conditions at the two different airlines for which they work.

Due to his work schedule, Gunnar stays at home for seven days and is then solely responsible for three to four days. The couple share domestic work and childcare, and he thinks he does more housework than other men, such as washing clothes, vacuuming and taking out the rubbish. She usually does the cooking when they are both at home and she also does more of the cleaning; he estimates they share housework 40/60. He attributes his household skills partly to what he learnt at home, but also to the military.

If we adhere strictly to the father-son design, there are some similarities between the practices of father and son, such as sharing paid work and care and doing parental shifts. Like his father, he works longer hours than his partner, and they plan a future work/family arrangement involving her working reduced hours. Finally, like his father, he also expresses admiration for both his mother and partner.

Compared to his father, however, Gunnar seems to perform a broader repertoire of household tasks, such as taking responsibility for washing clothes, which is still among the most gendered of household tasks in Norway (Klepp 2006), while leaving most of the cooking to his wife – this contrasts with his father and with current trends: cooking is one of the tasks which is shared more equally today (Vaage 2002). Gunnar and his partner also seem to share more equal standards of household work, while Gunnar's father had a lower standard of housekeeping than his wife. In his view of parenting, however, Gunnar more explicitly expresses a view of mothers as more important than fathers, and emphasizes difference, which his father did not.

There are also other differences; Gunnar finds their current sharing of household work fair as he earns more and thus contributes more to the family finances. This contrasts with his father, who was rather annoyed when I asked if he felt he was the main breadwinner; he insisted that the unpaid work at home was of equal value, which is interesting in view of the substantial difference which probably did exist in earnings between

him and his wife due to his working full-time in a managerial position while she worked in a part-time, shop-floor job.

The father-son analysis thus reveals elements of similarity between father and son, but also of differences. One important question is whether the similarities may be interpreted as evidence of father-son transmission. The father-son analysis leaves unexplained important aspects of the father's as well as the son's actual life-courses, values, identities, adaptations and constructions of masculinity, and I shall now explore what happens if mothers are added to the analysis.

## Adding mothers – filling out the picture

### *The father and his mother*

John's mother had a clerical job in addition to running the farm with her husband and commuted to work in town everyday. From the age of twelve it was his duty to cook dinner for the family. He greatly admired his mother:

My mother more or less did everything, even though she had the cows and worked at an office, (she) ran the house with five children and commuted a long way to work. It was inhumanly hard work.

Similar to the way in which he spoke highly of his mother, he praised his wife as a strong and hard-working woman.

John's mother working outside the home and his own household duties seem to be important factors in John's socialization, his view of women and gender relations and his adult work/family adaptation.

### *The mother*

Karen, John's wife, who is also Gunnar's mother was the only child of a lower middle-class family, and her mother was a housewife, and Karen never had to participate in domestic work.

Karen started working when she was seventeen years old. Although she had wanted to go to college, her mother advised her to start working since she would in any case get married and have children. During the interview for her job she was asked if this job was what she really wanted: "I said yes, but looked down at the floor and felt like I was lying. I have never enjoyed my job even though my colleagues were nice and it was ok socially".

Karen and John married and had two children while in their early twenties, and Karen stayed home with each of them for a year. When the children grew older, she wanted to stay home longer; John however, was eager for her to return to work, persuaded her to

start working part-time and took the initiative to start work-sharing by applying for part-time work himself. She continued working part-time after her husband returned to full-time work after three years of work-sharing.

She had hoped to be able to get an education when the children grew older but never got that far. She has, however, enjoyed the slower pace of life and the leisure time she has had due to her part-time adaptation, and she is rather active in sports and leisurely activities and in their local community.

### *The son and his mother*

After the work-sharing period Gunnar's parents returned to a more traditional arrangement. According to Gunnar, "my mother did most (of the household work), but he probably did more than other (old) men"<sup>7</sup>.

When Gunnar grew tired of school, his mother became rather cross, finally giving him an ultimatum; if he did not straighten himself out, he could start working; he chose to finish school. In this situation the mother was hands-on, and her own experience of not getting an education was probably a motivational factor.

Karen does not think that she was any closer to the children than her husband and believes her husband to be a very good father and grandfather. Gunnar, however, felt closer to his mother. Speaking of the work-sharing period, he recalls:

Of course there's a difference coming home to mum and dad, and my dad is a really good one, but if you're feeling sad, you can see that it's from your mum you seek comfort and I can see that here too, I can't compensate for her mum if something sad is happening (...) it's struck me, it's just not possible, even though I...when I'm alone it's like: 'daddy, daddy mine', but if she's feeling a bit sad like and we're both here then she goes to her mum. That's probably the safest thing on earth.

In this quote, Gunnar directly links his own relationship with his mother to the relationship between his partner and their daughter. Just as he felt his mother was the one to do the comforting, he now accepts that his daughter is closer to her mother.

So how did adding mothers affect the analysis? In John's case, adding his mother is vital to understand how he became the untraditional man he did. For the son, Gunnar, his relation to his mother is important too; she is the one to whom he felt close, and he directly links his own experience of his mother and the way in which he perceives his partner as a mother. During his own life-course, his mother also directly intervened to help him get an education.

But there are still elements in both John's and Gunnar's biographies and personal development which cannot be explained by adding the mother/son dyad to the father/son

dyad. How for instance did John develop his strongly held values of taking care of and not wasting natural resources which have developed into a strong environmental awareness? How did Gunnar decide to become a pilot and develop his masculinity, combining traditional masculine virtues such as action and adventure, military order and discipline and traditional masculine interests such as machines and airplanes on the one hand, with his caring attitude and practices towards his partner and daughter on the other? To answer these questions, I will add the family level.

### *The family level*

From the child's perspective, parents will largely be perceived as a common unit. John mostly referred to his parents in the plural, except when he talked about his mother being very hardworking and admirable or when he mentioned his father's lack of farming skills.

Gunnar also mostly talked about his parents in the plural, even though he cited examples of differences between them. He did not mention his father in particular as a model of identification; but neither did he distance himself from him. In Brannen et al.'s (2004) terminology, he is a "reproducer", while his father is a "repairer" who actively tried to construct a family that differed from his family of origin.

Similarly, parents do not only foster individual relations with their children, and men in particular often speak in a shared parental voice (Stueve and Pleck 2001). This was true of the work-sharing men (Bjørnholt forthcoming) and both the father, John, and the son, Gunnar, spoke of raising children as a joint responsibility. Although John said he wanted to influence the children together with his wife, he rejected the idea of differences between his own and his wife's parenting styles and tended to speak in a shared parental voice. His son, however, emphasized to a greater extent the special mother/child bond, but when talking of everyday practices he also spoke in a joint parental voice: "we were worried that she was too small" (referring to his daughter's first months at kindergarten).

Adding the family level helps fill out the picture. In John's home, financial constraints profoundly shaped his values. Gunnar's military career becomes easier to explain against the background of a parental home in which duty and order reigned. Yet there are still elements left unexplained.

Gunnar also speaks highly of his grandparents. When he was small, he was looked after by his grandparents and they took trips to the nearby airport. He also had an uncle who was a pilot. Even though he does not see his choice of career as a direct effect of these influences, he thinks they might have been important. In his teens, peer relations, fun and parties were important, and he still flaunts a boyish playfulness and adventurousness when speaking of his work.

None of the approaches – the dyadic father/son approach, the triadic father/mother/son approach, the narrow or the extended family approach, or a broader network approach



ach – fully account for John’s and Gunnar’s constructions of masculinity or work/life adaptations.

## Beyond the family

In addition to the direct influences of parents, peers, other people and institutions, there is also a general social and historical context. John was born after the Second World War. During his childhood, life on a small farm was still extremely hard work and material goods were scarce, but he came of age at a time when economic growth and the expansion of the public sector and infrastructure of the welfare state opened new possibilities and career prospects for young men with little formal education. Like many of his peers he married young, and had children while still in a junior position.

In the early 1970s men were not expected to be directly involved in housework or in childcare, but social movements such as the women’s and environmental movements, as well as political radicalism, provided ideological support for men who wanted to embrace a “modern” masculinity.

Gunnar grew up in the 1970s and 80s. Despite his parents working part time he does not report any personal experiences of scarcity. Whereas college was still an option only for the few when his parents were young, for Gunnar’s generation secondary education had become common. His feeling that college was too vague may be part of the general discomfort of the class traveller. When Gunnar entered the labour market, state agencies such as the one at which his parents worked had been restructured and downsized and they were less attractive to young, aspiring people. Another part of the public sector, however, the military forces, still offered career opportunities for young men who had not opted for an academic career. Like many others of his own generation, Gunnar was older than his parents had been, had extensive work experience and had reached what he thinks was a peak in his career before having children.

When Gunnar was a child, parental leave was short, childcare facilities were scarce, and mothers often stopped working to stay home with the children. He was looked after by his mother, his grandparents and finally by his parents in parental shifts. When Gunnar himself became a father, parental leave was one year, fathers had their own daddy quota and a kindergarten had become part of most parents’ care arrangements (Gulbrandsen 2007).

The existence of kindergartens and other welfare benefits for parents has changed the context of parents’ negotiations of care and work, and it can be argued that work/life choices have been privatized and reduced to a question of personal choice and taste, blurring the gendered character of adaptations to work and family. Gunnar’s partner’s desire to work less, he thinks, results from personal choice rather than from a necessity to fill the need for everyday care for their child. Further, the male breadwinner model has been

replaced by a dual-earner model and women no longer face the option of staying home as housewives for a prolonged period.

Over the last thirty years, a general modernization of masculinity has taken place, which has opened a broader repertoire for men's conduct and changed the expectations held towards men as fathers and partners. While his father was criticized for doing female tasks, it is expected today that men share childcare and housework. Gunnar illustrates this expansion of the male repertoire by combining elements of traditional masculinity with a caring orientation and broad housework skills. His work/life adaptation demonstrates, however, that the current image of an involved father and good partner seems to be compatible with a neo-traditional arrangement of work and care at couple level.

On the other hand, while his father can be seen to have exercised a certain paternalism in persuading his wife to work, Gunnar referred to his wife's own choice, which may be due to the erosion since the 1970s of male power in the family.

## Discussion and conclusions

What conclusions can be drawn from this case study? First, it has been demonstrated that the analytical gains of the dyadic father/son approach are limited, with the qualification that only one single case was explored. Adding mothers helped, but did not provide an exhaustive picture. Adding the family level – a broader circle of kin, peers and institutions and other historical and contextual factors such as the expansion of and change in the welfare state – were important to explain how both father and son became the men they did, as well as their adaptations of work and care.

Is this new, one could ask? It is true that social scientists rarely keep to a purely dyadic design in analyzing intergenerational transmission, but mostly draw attention to important (m)others and the wider context. On the other hand, research designs built on dyads or chains of parents and children of the same sex are rather common, and there has been little discussion of the theoretical assumptions, implications and possible limitations of such a research design and its theoretical embeddedness.

In this article I have used an experimental analysis to disentangle the different elements involved in the socialization of one boy into a man. From the limited gains of the dyadic father/son analysis, I would draw the conclusion that there is a need to reconsider the status of context when studying intergenerational transmission. Rather than using context as a mere point of departure or a background for a dyadic approach, there is a need to pay attention to context in the design of studies of intergenerational transmission.

The father/son design bears the imprint of theories of gender socialization which are increasingly deemed scientifically obsolete but which are still widely used in other disciplines, the media and in politics. The lack of evidence for father/son transmission, in combination with the strong popularity of concepts from the role-model/object relations

toolbox, such as the dangers of father absence and the idea of an essential need for fathers, call for particular caution in the choice of fathers and sons as a research unit so as not to perpetuate and further naturalize popular concepts rather than produce scientifically valid knowledge.

The father/son design implies the risk of implicitly taking for granted, rather than exploring, the importance of the father/son relation in gender socialization and intergenerational transmission; this comes dangerously close to a tautology and constructing a false dyad which exaggerates the importance of the bilateral bonds between individual parents and children and of same sex relations in particular. Drawing on this case, as well as on the research literature, the dyadic, same-sex approach is not warranted in the study of intergenerational transmission from father to son.

What are the theoretical implications of these findings? The limited analytical gains from the dyadic father/son approach may have implications for the study of socialization and intergenerational transmission, in particular for studying the development of boys into men and the origins of masculinity/ masculinities. Mothers emerged as important for both father and son; it is tempting to paraphrase Reay (2005) and ask if mothers have a greater part to play in doing not only “the dirty work of class”, but also of gender. It emerged, however, that a wider circle of kin, as well as peers and not least institutions, such as the military, were important in Gunnar’s account of how he grew of age and became the man he is today.

I would also ask whether gender socialization and the reproduction of masculinity – and femininity too – should be studied primarily as the result of intrafamilial, intergenerational transmission.

I would suggest seeing gender socialization as the outcome of more complex interrelations and interactions in which fathers, mothers, families and institutions are important, but in which the influence of society in a more general sense, in terms of cultural beliefs, images and expressions, as well as peer relations and peer communities, is also important. This is not to say that families do not matter; families are certainly vital for children’s development and well-being, as well as for the intergenerational transmission of culture and the development of gendered and class-adequate selves, identities and habituses (Bourdieu 1990), as well as learning specific skills, but not in a simple, unilateral way. Rather than taking for granted that gender socialization takes place along narrow, fixed and gendered paths in the family as well as in society, families should rather be seen as nodes in a complex web of society and culture, and we should study how the socialization of boys into men and girls into women actually takes place at the intersection of parents of both sexes, families, institutions and society at large.

An intriguing question which can be raised on the basis of this case study is how much participation of fathers is needed for an intergenerational change of gendered patterns of work and care to take place. Gunnar’s parents shared paid work and care equally for

three years, which is in the lower half among the work-sharing couples, but which is a rather long time compared to the current focus on sharing parental leave which amounts to only some months during the child's first year. In view of the high expectations which underpin current daddy policies regarding the lasting effects on gender relations, the lack of effect on the work and care patterns of the son of parents who were sharing work and care equally for three years is thought-provoking.

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## Notes

- 1 The study was carried out by the author and partly funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Children and Family Affairs.
- 2 The study is being carried out at the Department of Sociology and Human Geography at the University of Oslo and is funded by the Research Council of Norway.
- 3 The Norwegian Family Council was established and led by Ola Rokones, and was state funded from 1969–79.
- 4 Grønseth studied sailors' wives and the effect of husbands' long work-related absences from home.
- 5 I am indebted to Kari Stefansen for drawing my attention to this paper and to Agnes Andenæs for the full reference.
- 6 Reich criticized the bourgeois negative view of sexuality, leading to the impediment of natural life forces and to fascism and suppression, and advocated sexual freedom, gender equality, contraception and abortion rights. After fleeing from Nazi Germany, Wilhelm Reich stayed in Norway between 1934 and 1939 and had a lasting influence on the Norwegian psycho-therapeutic field and on the sociologist Erik Grønseth, who was surrounded by prominent Reichians. His brother Rolf Grønseth was active in the development of Norwegian Reichian psycho-analysis. Reich's student Nic Waal, the founder of Nic Waal's institute for child psychiatry, was Grønseth's colleague at the Institute of Social Science (ISS). Grønseth's wife and colleague

at ISS, Bjørg Grønseth, specialized in (Reichian) character analysis as a psychologist at Nic Waal's institute.

- 7 He uses the Norwegian word *gubbe*, meaning 'old man', which has a slightly negative connotation, and used to refer to a young man it can even be an insult, but in Gunnar's dialect it may also be used more neutrally and mean just 'man'.

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**ARTICLE V**





## LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON? THE TRANSMISSION OF VALUES, FAMILY PRACTICES, AND WORK-FAMILY ADAPTATIONS TO SONS OF WORK-SHARING MEN

*This article explores egalitarian patterns of work and household responsibility as transferred from one generation to the next using a father-son approach. The fathers participated in an experimental study, referred to as the Work-Sharing Couples study, in Norway, during the first part of the 1970s. In this study, both spouses worked part-time and shared household and childcare responsibility equally. An analysis of the interviews done with the sons indicates that egalitarian patterns that are established in one generation do not necessarily transfer to the next generation. The sons, who are today themselves the fathers of young children, were found to live in “neo-traditional” work-family arrangements, although, to a large extent, they identified with their fathers and expressed egalitarian attitudes. These findings challenge the assumption that greater participation by men in childrearing in children’s early years will have a lasting effect on future gender relations.*

**Keywords:** fathers and sons, work-family balance, intergenerational transmission, gender equality

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Over the last few decades there has been a strong research interest in fathering as part of men’s lives and as a tool in changing gender relations. In popular discourse and in policymaking, the topic of fathers and sons in particular and the role of men in the socialization of boys are high on the agenda. One of the implicit assumptions in this area

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is that greater participation by men in the daily care of their families will have a lasting effect on future gender relations; the egalitarian family patterns, once obtained, will be transferred to the next generation. This article presents the results of a longitudinal follow-up study of the sons of parents who participated in a Norwegian experimental research project, initiated by the founder and leader of the Norwegian Family Council, Ola Rokkones and led by the Norwegian sociologist Erik Grønseth. This project examined gender equality in the family in the 1970s and was referred to as the Work-Sharing Couples project. In this study, both parents worked part-time<sup>1</sup> and shared domestic work and care (Grønseth, 1975a, b, & c).

Today, the sons are themselves the fathers of young children. This follow-up study explores the young men's experiences growing up in the families of the work-sharing experiment and their current work-family adaptations, or arrangements, with the goal of investigating the extent of intergenerational transmission.

The article starts with a discussion of relevant literature, and then presents the Work-Sharing Couples study, and finally, the design and method for this follow-up study of the original participants and their children thirty years later. The findings are presented through two cases, and followed by a discussion.

A large and growing body of research and theory on fathering has provided new insights and new and more fine-grained conceptualizations of fatherhood, father involvement and fathering practices (Doucet, 2006, Featherstone, 2009, Lamb, 2010). Nevertheless, according to Devault, Milcent, Ouellet, Laurin, Jauron, and Lacharite (2008), with respect to paternal involvement, the individual history of fathers has received relatively little attention. Some studies support the hypothesis that fathers are more likely to be involved if they had a positive relationship with their own fathers in childhood, while other studies support the hypothesis that involvement is greater among fathers who compensate by being more present in the lives of their children than were their own fathers.

Following the introduction of a paternal quota of parental leave in some of the Nordic countries, men's use of parental leave has been a major focus in research and policy-making (Bekkengen, 2002; Brandth & Kvande, 2003; Haas & Hwang, 2009; Lammi-Taskula, 2006; O'Brien & Moss, 2010). Less attention has been paid to men's general adjustments to work and care as part of their fathering practices (but see Dermott, 2008), and there are few longitudinal, life course and intergenerational studies. Brannen and colleagues, however, analyze fathering in a life course perspective and across four generations (Brannen, Moss, & Mooney, 2004; Brannen & Nilsen, 2006),

<sup>1</sup> In the 1970s, as women entered the labor market in increasing numbers, part time became an option for many women, while for men, part time was highly unusual. In 2008, 43 per cent of women and 13 per cent of men worked part-time (Statistics Norway, 2009), a high share, compared to other OECD-countries (Lohne, 2005). However, patterns of work and care remain gendered. Men work part-time to a lesser extent and for different reasons than women, and fathers still tend to work more than full time (Kitterød & Kjeldstad, 2006). Full time work was 40 hours a week in the 1970s. Today it is 37.5 hours a week.

focusing in particular on the work-care adaptations of fathers within a wider family and societal context.

Studies of families with highly involved fathers in the 1980s, found a number of positive effects in terms of child developmental outcomes. Lamb (2010) points out that these findings should not be taken as proof of a simple, direct effect of father “presence” in the family, as was often previously assumed, in contrast to a corresponding idea of the negative effects of father “absence.” They may rather be understood as the outcome of several factors. Among them are positive intra-familial and couple dynamics due to the fact that these were families that actively strived to obtain an egalitarian family pattern, and father involvement was seen as important by both mothers and fathers. Along with many of the other contributions in the fifth edition of *The Role of the Father in Child Development* (Lamb, 2010), Lamb’s own contribution reflects a general shift toward more relational and holistic perspectives within contemporary research on fathering.

Drawing on Belsky’s (1984) ecological parenting model, Devault et al. (2008) have developed a parenting model based on the following dimensions: individual history, co-parental history, and professional history. In their study of young fathers, they found that the quality of the relationship with their own mothers as well as support from their children’s mother seemed to have an impact on father involvement.

Owing to recent developments in the theory and research on the sociology of childhood as well as in developmental psychology, traditional theories of socialization have been replaced by the interpersonal paradigm. The interpersonal paradigm emphasizes the relational, interactive, and reciprocal relations between the generations (Bråten, 2007; Sommer, 2003). These changes in perspective are reflected in family studies in which the focus has shifted from seeing the family as a simple unit of socialization, toward studying family practices and intimate relations (Gabb, 2008; Jamieson, 1998; Morgan, 1996). Studies of familial relationships have shifted from focusing primarily on dyadic parent-child relations toward perceiving and studying families as dynamic, holistic groups (Sommer, 2008). There is a renewed interest in connecting the micro-processes within families to the macro-level outcomes; studies of specific mothering and fathering practices have proved important for grasping how some aspects of the micro-dynamics of family life contribute to the reproduction of class (Reay, 2005).

Case studies of multigenerational families, intergenerational relations and the micro-processes involved in intergenerational transmission have provided invaluable insights, empirical as well as theoretical, into core social processes, such as social stratification, social change, and mobility. They have also added to the old discussion of the relations between structure and agency (Bertaux & Bertaux-Wiame, 1997; Büchner & Brake, 2006; Krahl & Büchner, 2006). A major focus of these studies, which draw on Bourdieu’s (1990) concept of habitus and Giddens’s (1984) theory of structuration, is how to reconcile structure and agency, macro and micro, and how ethnographic detail may contribute to the big picture. Their analyses demonstrate the nonlinear, reciprocal, and relational character of intergenerational transmission and the importance of the active acquisition of specific elements of the family heritage and its subsequent transforma-

tion and appropriation by each generation. The appropriation and reformulation of family heritage in each generation involves adjustments to personal characteristics, likes and dislikes, and changes in the social structure.

Bertaux and Bertaux-Wiame (1997) illustrate this multifaceted process in an analysis of the slow upward mobility in the lineage of craftsmen of five generations. Krah and Büchner (2006) analyze the intergenerational transmission and transformation of religious practices into cultural and academic capital over three generations. These in-depth, one-case analyses demonstrate how micro-level studies may illuminate macro-level processes such as social change over time and social mobility.

#### THE WORK-SHARING COUPLES STUDY

This paper is based on a longitudinal follow-up study of the original couples who participated in an experimental research project, the Work-Sharing Couples project in the early 1970s, and their now adult sons. The project design was based on both spouses working part-time and sharing child-care and domestic work; the aim of the arrangement was to promote more egalitarian family relations and a more fulfilling family life.<sup>2</sup> Alteration of men's approach to work and family was the key tool of change in the original project. In the follow-up study, the men were also found to have had a key role in initiating and implementing the arrangement in their families (Bjørnholt, 2009a, 2011).

The original project aimed not only at promoting more equal relations within the participating couples; it was also expected that these more egalitarian family patterns would be passed on to the children who were brought up in these families. This may seem naïve in retrospect; on the other hand, the idea of producing lasting effects on gender relations by interventions in the family still underpins policies and welfare state reforms. The concept is exemplified by Norwegian fathers' quota of parental leave, introduced in 1993, as a non-transferable part of paid parental leave reserved for fathers (Brandth & Kvande, 2003).

The work-sharing couples belong to birth cohorts of the 1940s. Bengtsson (2001) points out that this generation was the one to express most clearly the profound changes in gender relations and gender subjectivities that took place in the post-World War II period. According to Bengtsson (2001):

The experiences of young people who were born in the 1970s may be interpreted as a first manifestation of how a sample of parents of the 1940s generation realized these changes with respect to gender and gender relations, and how these changes have been taken up by their children. (p. 195; translation MB)

<sup>2</sup>The father-son study is part of a follow-up study of the work-sharing couples with particular focus on intergenerational transmission, which was carried out at the University of Oslo 2007/2008 and funded by the Research Council of Norway.

As an experimental group in which egalitarian gender relations were actively pursued, the work-sharing couples represent a particularly interesting case for studying the intergenerational transmission of the changes in gender relations that took place in this generation. The experiences of children growing up in these model families are of particular interest for studying how, and to what extent, these changes in gender relations have been experienced, and how they have been passed on to, and taken up by, the next generation.

In this article I will explore how, and to what extent, the egalitarian family practices of the work-sharing couples have been passed on to their adult sons and appropriated as part of the family heritage.

#### DESIGN AND METHOD

A follow-up study of the work-sharing parents was done during 2005 and 2006, and fourteen of the original sixteen work-sharing couples were interviewed. Table 1 provides an overview of the past and current studies involved. The couple interviews with the work-sharing parents covered topics concerning individual as well as couple biographies, and the biography of each of the work-sharing fathers was obtained through analysis of couple interviews. Methodological and epistemological issues relating to the use of life-course interviews and couple interviews are presented and discussed in further detail in Bjørnholt (2009a). For the father-son study, seven sons were interviewed in 2007. The criteria for selection from the adult sons of the original work-sharing parents were that first, his parents had remained married (11 of the 14 couples interviewed);<sup>3</sup> second, he had formed his own family and had children below school

<sup>3</sup> The majority of the work-sharing couples, twelve of the fifteen couples that were traced, had remained married (Bjørnholt 2009a). In the fifteenth couple, the husband was dead and the widow did not want to participate in the follow-up interview, but brief information was obtained when she was contacted.

Table 1  
*Overview of Data and Sample*

Project	Design and method	Sample
Work-Sharing Couples project	Action research study Mainly questionnaires	16 couples
Work-Sharing Couples 30 years later 2005-2006	Longitudinal follow-up study Retrospective, biographical couple interviews	14 couples (15 traced)
Men as change agents work-sharing fathers and their sons 2007-2008	Intergenerational follow-up study Fathers' biographies constructed from analysis of couple interviews Individual interviews sons	14 fathers 7 sons (5 included in this analysis)

age; and finally, he was cohabiting with the mother of his children. Five of the seven sons who were interviewed met all these criteria, and these interviews provide the primary data sources for this paper.

For the group of five sons, the sons' age during their parents' work-sharing period ranged from three months to seven years. The duration of their parents' work-sharing

Table 2

*Sons' Age at Inclusion and Duration of Parents' Work-Sharing Arrangement*

Measure	Knut	Anders	Gunnar <sup>a</sup>	Ole	Nils <sup>b</sup>
Son's age at inclusion (years)	0 <sup>c</sup>	0	5	0/7 <sup>d</sup>	3
Duration of work-sharing (years)	4	2(6) <sup>e</sup>	3	3	1.5

<sup>a</sup> This case is not presented separately in this paper, but an in-depth analysis of this case is provided in Bjørnholt (2009b). "Gunnar" shares many commonalities with "Knut," the "comfortable neo-traditional" case presented in this paper.

<sup>b</sup> All names are fictitious. In contrast to the first three, the last two, "Ole" and "Nils" are not presented separately, neither in this nor in other papers, but they are part of the data from which the two cases presented in this paper are drawn.

<sup>c</sup> The parents who started work-sharing during the child's first year started between the age of three months (after maternity leave) and one year; sometimes the leave was extended with holiday or unpaid leave, and they did not always remember the exact age of the child at the time they entered the arrangement.

<sup>d</sup> The parents were work-sharing for two years, starting when he was an infant. When he had a third sibling in 1981, the parents returned to work-sharing for one year.

<sup>e</sup> Anders' parents worked part-time and cared for him and his older brother at home for two years, one year before and one year during Anders' first year but both continued to work reduced hours for four years after Anders started in kindergarten at the age of one year. Taking the duration of the fathers' part-time work as a measure, the duration of their work-sharing period was six years.

arrangement ranged between one and a half and six years, which is in the lower half compared to the group of work-sharing parents as a whole, which ranged from one and a half to thirty years, and in which seven years was the average duration (Bjørnholt 2009a). Table 2 provides an overview of this information for each son interviewed.

A thematic content analysis of taped and transcribed interviews was adopted within a conceptual framework inspired by Devault et al. (2008), but modified and extended to fit this study (see Figure 1). My analysis is similar to Devault et al.'s with respect to the emphasis on individual history, relationship to partner, and the relation to paid work for fathering. It differs in that my conceptualization of professional history and couple history are both part of individual history, while at the same time closer to, and part of

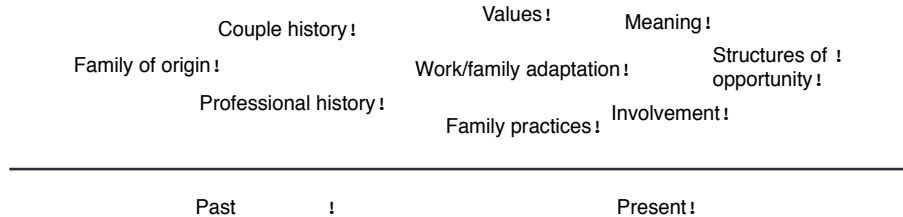


Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

the present. Searching in particular for intergenerational transmission from family of origin I further identify values, family practices, and work-family adaptations, rather than focusing on fathering in isolation. In addition to aspects of meaning and personal involvement, I take into account contemporary structures that offer opportunities for parenting and for fathering in particular. In the time that has passed since the sons' upbringing, the Norwegian welfare state has developed to provide a very different context for work and care than the one faced by their parents. In particular they now provide extensive rights to paid parental leave, including a father's quota, and generally available, publicly sponsored child-care facilities. In the 1970s there was three months maternity leave, and childcare facilities were scarce or lacking. At the time of the interviews with the sons, parental leave was 54 weeks at 80 percent wage compensation, or 44 weeks at 100 percent, up to a ceiling of approximately EUR 50,500, or fifty thousand, five hundred euro. The father's quota was 5 weeks. Both parental leave and the father's quota have since been further extended. In order to discuss how egalitarian work-family arrangements in families of origin are passed on to the next generation, these changes in the structures of opportunity for parenting must be taken into consideration.

### *Sons of Work-Sharing Men*

The arrangements for work and for care of the home and children in the work-sharing couples' families revolved around the equal sharing of paid and unpaid work, with a strong emphasis on the sharing of domestic work. The work-family arrangements of the sons deviated from the radical work-sharing model of their parents. At the time of the interview, the sons of these nontraditional parents were found to be living in or opting for what could be seen as "neo-traditional"<sup>4</sup> work-family arrangements; they were

<sup>4</sup> I use the concept "neo-traditional." Thereby I mean a pattern that differs both from a traditional, male breadwinner model, as well as from a fully egalitarian dual earner model. The "neo-traditional" model is modern in that breadwinning and care are shared, but it is also tradi-



working slightly more and their wives slightly less outside the home, and their wives were doing slightly more and the men slightly less domestic work and childcare.

However, the adult sons dealt emotionally with their current work-family adaptation in different ways. While some seemed to be at peace with their actual work-family adaptation, others expressed feelings of conflict. They pointed out the gap between their current, rather traditional, work-family adaptation and their own egalitarian attitudes and family ideals, with reference to their own family of origin. From these differences in attitudes toward their current work-family adaptation, I distinguish between a “comfortable neo-traditional” pattern and an “uncomfortable neo-traditional” pattern, and I have chosen “Knut” and “Anders” to illustrate these two patterns.

#### THE “COMFORTABLE NEO-TRADITIONAL” ADAPTATION: KNUT

##### *Family of Origin*

Knut’s parents participated in work-sharing for four years. Like the majority of the work-sharing men, Knut’s father had from an early age been socialized in terms of helping out at home, and he took the initiative to start work-sharing. His explanation for choosing this nontraditional adaptation is twofold: he partly felt that the children needed him to contribute actively, and he wanted his wife to have a job and a career. He also wished to avoid perceived potential relational difficulties because of different educational levels; he is highly educated, but his wife did not have much formal education. During the work-sharing project they were found to be among the most equally sharing couples, a fact the father referred to during the follow-up interview. After the work-sharing period, he worked full-time and like the majority of work-sharing men he was successful professionally and held management positions. Knut’s mother took further education in a health/caring profession and alternated between part-time work and staying home during two periods when they lived abroad. In these periods they had servants who did the housework and she was highly engaged in extra-familial activities, such as music. Today she runs her own business as a self-employed consultant in the field of health care services. Her husband actively promoted and supported her education, and in the interview said he was very proud of her achievements.

After the work-sharing period, Knut’s mother had more responsibility for domestic work, and there was some conflict over this because the father was working long hours. In the interview with the parents, they claimed to have an egalitarian pattern of sharing of domestic work today. He cooks more and even boasted of his skills in domestic work, and they both agreed that she dislikes domestic work and is not as good at cooking. They both had a positive evaluation of the work-sharing experience, which they thought had contributed to a sense of partnership. He also thought it was impor-

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tional in that there is a gendered division of the main responsibilities for breadwinning and care. The concept was introduced by Poloma and Garland (1971) in a study of dual-earner couples.



tant for the children's development that he took an active part in their upbringing, especially for one of Knut's siblings, who at that time needed particular attention.

Knut is the youngest of three children. He was four years old when his parents stopped work-sharing, and does not remember this period of his life; he rather remembers that his mother was a stay-at-home housewife during the two periods they were abroad. He recalls that he participated in domestic work from an early age, and that they had routines for the sharing of duties in his parental home. When they had returned home the second time in his early teens, and both parents returned to work, he had to cook and clean regularly and was paid for this. It was mostly his father who checked to see if he had done his homework, but did not do so very meticulously. He has good relations with both parents, but thinks his mother was, and still is, more approachable if there is something he needs. As a child he felt his mother was emotionally closer to him:

But it is something special with mother. And probably the chance of getting comfort was greater with her, and a little more understanding. But I was not afraid to put the same requests to my father.

Today this has changed:

Now it has perhaps turned the other way round that I speak more with my father than with my mother. The fact is that we have both [...] (I have) followed in his footprints, to see it that way, so professionally we are closer than (I am) with my mother. [...] But I don't have any problems with my mother at all.

The fact that he chose the same education as his father Knut presents as the result of an independent choice, based on an assessment of his strengths at school, rather than as a process of modeling himself on his father.

### *Professional History*

Knut has studied economics. He has been working in the same insurance company, within which he has moved sideways and has held different positions, since he graduated. He enjoys his work, with the exception that he thinks working in an office all day does not provide enough exercise and physical challenges.

### *Couple History*

Knut met his wife, Mari, at a friend's party; she was the one who took the initiative to start a relationship, and later on to cohabit. She also proposed to him; which she did publicly during a show on a boat-trip. Jokingly he said that in this setting, surrounded by hundreds of animated women, who were dancing during the song in which she proposed to him, he did not have much choice other than to say yes or walk the plank. He felt comfortable with her taking the initiative, though, and says he knew relatively early on that they were a good match.

When it turned out that they could not have children of their own, his wife was the first to suggest adoption, while he was more reluctant, and would rather have tried other possibilities, but he did consent to adopt.

### *Work-Family Adaptation*

When they finally had their one-year-old adopted daughter, he says his wife was determined to have a large share of parental leave, which he found convenient. For the first two months, he stayed at home as well, combining holiday and parental leave. After two months at home, he felt ready to get back to work. This he partly explains with reference to their job situation; he had recently moved to another department and he thought it was easier for her to take leave.

Owing to their daughter's perceived special need for attachment, they prioritized staying home together in the beginning, and restricted contact with grandparents and other relations in order to smooth the adjustment for the child and to be present together so that she could get to know them and attach to them as her parents. They also decided to take care of her all by themselves in the first period, not leaving any caring task to others.

We combined leave with holiday in order to stay at home, both of us, during the first months, in order to facilitate attachment, that she should understand that these two people, they are my mummy and daddy and you will not get rid of them. So we were very careful that we were the ones to feed, to lift her up, we were the ones to comfort and the ones to change nappies and do intimate care, and the others in the wider family would have to accept this.

In this extract, he reveals a caring attitude and speaks in a common parental voice, much how his father spoke in retrospect of his reasons for joining the work-sharing project. While the father took the radical step to work part-time for as long as four years in order to realize the kind of family he wanted, the son's adaptation, combining holiday and parental leave to stay home together with his wife for two months, was of a more temporary kind.

At the time of the interview his wife was staying home on parental leave, and she took a greater responsibility for the housework. He expected to take a larger share later on, when he was to stay home with the child for a couple of months when his wife returned to work. Before they had a child they shared domestic work more equally, even if there seems to have been a gendered pattern in the sharing of indoor and outdoor tasks, as illustrated in this extract:

Maybe she took a larger share, but if so, this was because I was busy with maintenance tasks outside. Neither of us has ever sat on the sofa and put our feet up while the other applied the vacuum-cleaner.

He draws a parallel with his family of origin, recalling that his parents shared cooking, his father doing fifty percent or more. However, the rest of the domestic work was his mother's duty, even though she did not like it, and he draws a parallel with conflicts over domestic work in his parental home and his own family:

She (Knut's mother) showed with her body language that ironing, for instance, was not among her favorite tasks. One should of course distribute tasks, this is also similar to what we are into, I will not say that we struggle with (it), but these are problems that arise between us as well. And in this respect it is, I would not say sensible, but perhaps more expedient that the man takes the out-of doors things [...] and, of course, there are likes and dislikes.

What has been transmitted here is not the egalitarian arrangement that the parents had during their four years of work-sharing, in which they were sharing very equally, but their more traditional arrangement in the following years, in which his father took on management positions and his mother alternately stayed home as a housewife and worked part-time, taking a greater share of domestic work. This model was not seen as ideal, by the parents, who had actively striven to share equally by participating in the work-sharing project.

The son did not see the model as ideal either, and in the interview excerpt above makes the connection between conflicts over domestic work in his parental home and in his own family. The slight discomfort he reveals does not, however, emerge as an important source of distress; he rather refers to this as a (somewhat deplorable, but normal) matter of fact. This is perhaps an illustration of how elements of the family heritage, some of which do not belong to the most celebrated and admired parts of family culture, are transmitted more or less unconsciously as givens.

According to Knut, his wife's job is not an easy one, and he thinks she takes too many of her troubles home with her. At the same time he thinks it is important for them individually and as a couple that she works:

We generally agree that she ought to get another job. I think she should have a job, this is good for both, to be in a job and to get other impulses than those you get at home, to put it that way, I think this is important. [...] But, as Mari herself said the other day, should it be 100 percent, 80 percent or 50 percent, or if we both should reduce a bit, who knows?

Although he vaguely refers to the possibility of both working less than full-time, a more traditional adaptation seems to be the one that he considers more seriously:

If we could afford it, I think we would [...] that Mari would have worked reduced hours, somewhere between 50 and 80 per cent, I guess. And we would have kept our daughter in kindergarten, but maybe not the days when Mari stayed home [...] at the moment, I think I would have stayed in a 100 per cent position, but I think this would have opened up the possibilities to reduce it (his job share) as well,

which would have been fine. But it requires that one has the financial ability to do so.

The last remark is important, as the financial situation in this family is rather strained owing to special circumstances related to their housing arrangement, so there is not much chance of a substantial reduction of working time.

### *Values and Family Practices*

Knut emphasizes the transmission of values and family practices from his parental home:

I think about gender equality and (about) participating and contributing actively at home. [...] it is a little strange for me to talk about it at all, because all through my upbringing it has been a norm that everyone contributes [...] and like this it is here with us today as well. We both contribute and even our daughter who is only two years old, if she finds some litter on the floor, she has learnt to pick it up and put it into the dustbin, this is maybe to push it a little, but still. [...]

He emphasizes the importance in particular of his father's attitude and way of being more than the fact that his parents shared breadwinning and care.

I have got a good deal with me thanks to that situation (in my parental home) [...] I am not quite sure whether I should attribute it to the fact that my parents both stayed home either. I think it also has much to do with the attitude and way of being of my father, he was a little ahead of most men at that time, I believe.

### *Summary: Knut*

Knut may be seen to have reproduced the pattern of work and care which resembles the one he remembers from his parents after their work-sharing period. He seems to opt for a similar, "neo-traditional" arrangement, with his wife in a part-time job and himself working full-time, although vaguely referring to the possibility of both working part-time. He seems to be at ease with a future in such a "neo-traditional" arrangement.

He also seems to have reproduced the participatory family culture from his family of origin, and emphasizes the importance of everyone, not only parents but also children, participating in the work in the home. He appreciated the way he himself was made to participate in domestic work as a child and he also enjoys seeing that his little daughter has internalized the norm of participation in the home.

He also seems to have reproduced the egalitarian and caring values of his father. Like his father he speaks in a common parental voice, with the common family well-being in mind. His wife has had less education than he, and like his father, he cares about his wife's career and well-being and for the couple's relationship. He wants her

to have a job, but he does not emphasize the need to share paid work equally, or the need for him to take an equal part in everyday care of the child. He has chosen the same education as his father, but he presents this as an individual choice, based on his own strengths and interests, and does not attribute this to modeling himself on his father. As a child, he was closer to his mother, but as an adult he speaks more with his father owing to their common professional interest. He attributes his own egalitarian values to his father's attitude and way of being more than to his parents' work-sharing arrangement.

His professional history is one of stability, and he enjoys his work. His couple history reveals that his wife seems to have taken many of the important initiatives and decisions related to them as a couple; in this matter his family differs from his parents, where the father seemed to be the one who took more of the initiatives.

He is an involved father and dedicated to egalitarian values and to sharing domestic work equally, but there is a gendered pattern of task-sharing, which he defends with naturalizing arguments, such as its effectiveness. At the meaning-making level, he further defends their current arrangement, partly with his wife's wish to take most of the parental leave, and his own job position, having just started in a new department. In talking of their future arrangements he refers to her wish to work less, and the poor quality or difficulties in her current job. Welfare benefits, such as parental leave and kindergarten appear as structures of opportunity that facilitate the work-family adaptation they have chosen.

#### THE "UNCOMFORTABLE NEO-TRADITIONAL" ADAPTATION: ANDERS

##### *Family of Origin*

Anders's parents were work-sharing for two years. His father took the initiative to start work-sharing. According to the mother, Anders's father was very well brought up with respect to equality; although he had been raised in a traditional home, with a stay-at-home mother, he was one of the few work-sharing men who had a father who carried out traditionally female tasks, such as sewing. His parents treated him and his sister in the same manner and he had to participate in domestic work from an early age.

After the work-sharing period, Anders' father continued to work slightly reduced hours for four years before he returned to working full-time and has held senior management positions in one of Norway's biggest towns. Anders' mother pursued further education and has also worked full-time or slightly reduced hours, at 80 percent, since the work-sharing study. At the time of the interview, she was a manager in a local municipal unit.

Anders's parents claim to have an egalitarian relationship and claim that the power relations between them are equal. With respect to decisions about home decoration and purchases of home equipment or art, however, she decides and he concurs. On the other hand, Anders' mother would have preferred to have a third child, but his father did not want to and she accepted this. They still claim to share domestic work, although less

rigidly today, and say they no longer need to change two car tires each. However, their sharing of tasks is still egalitarian; he has always been the one who mended clothes and did the washing, which is still unusual among Norwegian men.

Anders is the younger of two brothers. Anders was one year old when his parents stopped work-sharing and he started in kindergarten. He remembers that his parents shared domestic work quite equally, as they cleaned one floor each, shared the washing of clothes, and took turns making dinner. When they grew older, he and his brother also had tasks in the house; they were gradually given more responsibility for domestic work, for which they were paid. Anders' parents established a family council, wherein they met to discuss such matters and to make agreements over domestic work. They even had a protocol whereby decisions on prices and tasks were written down. Anders enjoyed taking part in domestic work, particularly when he grew older.

Anders identifies with his father and has chosen a similar education: "I resemble my father very much, really, in practical things, and in ways of thinking and the like, (I am) quite different from my mother." His identification with his father is to a large extent based on their participating in shared activities from when Anders was a child:

My father is very practical, and has always been very handy, and is outside and fixes things the whole time; so we were allowed to participate from when we were small, play electricians and plumbers and carpenters and so on, and of course that creates bonds, and this is something I have brought with me.

### *Professional History*

Anders started to work very early, in particular when he was still in school. He played in the school brass band and from the early age of twelve or thirteen, he took paid jobs as a music tutor. At eighteen, he started to work at a gas station in the evenings and as a summer job, but he enjoyed the work and stayed there for several years. He was given the responsibility for running the station, promoted to shop manager and continued to work at 80 percent of full-time, while studying part-time (50 percent). Anders now holds a bachelor's degree in business administration. He has further advanced into a management position in central administration at the firm that owns the gas station where he first began. At times, he has been working many hours; he estimates that his work time has been as high as 140 percent. Today he does not work as much, but he still works more than 100 percent, and he estimates that it may be 110 percent. His ideal is to work less, at perhaps 80 percent, but he does not think this is feasible in his current position.

### *Couple History*

Anders and his wife had been married for several years before they decided to have children. The decision to have three children was his wife's preference. He would have preferred two, as in his family of origin, but he says his wife came from a family with three children and she wanted to have three, so he acquiesced.

*Work-Family Adaptation*

With the first child, Anders worked a lot and did not have much parental leave. With the second, he was studying, and stayed home together with his wife for several months. The youngest child is still a baby, and Anders wants to be an involved father. With the last child, his wife was not eligible for paid parental leave because she had been in college. However, he had been working, and was eligible for paid leave on the condition that she returns to full-time work or full-time study, according to Norway's rules for parental leave.

Faced with this choice, they decided to forgo paid leave, have her to stay home on unpaid leave, and manage to live on his income alone.

We discussed it at length, and really wanted it; at the same time, I felt it was difficult vis-à-vis my employer and she did not want to start working or to study full-time, and I understand that. So then it turned out the way it did.

Anders finds it difficult to find a good work-family balance, and several times returned to a discussion of the contrasts of the rewards of fatherhood versus its more difficult side, as stated here:

I think it is fun with children, and to be a father, but it is tiring, it really is. And with the job I have now, it is very, very challenging, because now I am in a position where in general I work more than normal [...] I am not comfortable with that really, but we have chosen to do it that way.

He was then asked what he thought of his current work-family adaptation, wherein he is the main breadwinner, while his wife takes the larger responsibility for the children.

I had not envisioned it that way at all. I was very against it! I did not want to do it like this; at the same time it was the most reasonable thing to do given that I earn twice her income; that way I earn twice her wages in my time at work, and we get more money per (hour), but of course, I also work more than she would have done, 100 percent. But I want us to share paid work and to share domestic work, but I am also content the way we live now, I think it works well. But it is difficult that we have such different daily lives.

He was asked if that was because she now does most of the housework. Since he was working so much, had she become more of a housewife?

Yes, she does the majority of the housework. We share vacuuming and cleaning and the like, but she is the one in charge. She washes all the clothes, I share in hanging them to dry and I tidy up the kitchen and the like, but she buys the chil-

dren's clothes and has in a way the main responsibility for them, brings them to kindergarten and picks them up the most. And she cooks most of the time.

His wife had been brought up in a more traditional family, and it is this more traditional pattern that is reproduced in their family.

We are rather different [...] we are a very classical couple in relation to gender sharing; I am very practical and take care of financial matters, while she cares very much about detail and interiors and such things. So we are really, as I see it, a rather old-fashioned couple I nearly said, in relation to gender roles, very traditional.

When asked how he felt about that situation, he replied,

For me it is a bit strange, or different from what I first thought, but I think it works very well, I think we have kind of shared things among us and it works well. But there are of course challenges with this kind of arrangement, it is. [...] We have extremely different daily lives. When I come home and have had a lot of experiences, and she, at least nowadays, has been stuck at home [...] and I come home and am tired, and we are very different then, when we meet at home [...] it's a little challenging.

I feel that I could have worked less and been more with the children. I don't like this part so well. I would also prefer that we shared the tasks at home more equally, at times I feel that I do not participate enough in the work at home, even if this is a choice we have made, to live like this. But I get a bad conscience that I do not do more housework. And I was brought up taking part in domestic work, so I feel it is my job too. So the way we have chosen to arrange it among ourselves conflicts with the way I was brought up.

### *Values and Family Practices*

Anders emphasizes the egalitarian values learned in his parents' home, and expresses discomfort concerning their current, more traditional work-family arrangement. Although their work-family arrangement is rather traditional, Anders actively contributes to domestic work and sharing tasks, such as vacuuming, cleaning, hanging clothes to dry, and tidying up the kitchen. At the same time he recognizes that she is the one in charge and that she does the larger share.

Anders' wife seems to have had a strong influence on their family practices in several ways. She is an active Christian and he is an atheist, but he accepts that she is giving the children a Christian upbringing, although he conveys to his children that he does not believe in God, and he thinks the children will be able to choose for themselves when they become adults.

He admits that their different approaches to life are sometimes challenging, but on the other hand, he feels that he and his wife share important life values on a human level. The way he deals with these differences illustrates his caring attitude and dedi-



cation to the common good of the family. For example, even though he does not share her Christian faith, the whole family participates in a Christian family choir. He mentions that, "It's a bit of a challenge to take part in that choir, but it is good for the family, so I will have to endure it, I nearly said."

Although he is uncomfortable with the traditional arrangement, experiences attacks of conscience for not sharing more equally, and worries about the differences in everyday experiences and the environment that result from this pattern, he argues that their current arrangement is the most sensible and even the most natural. He further argues that this pattern fits them best and hints at a possible natural gender order, which he sees expressed even in the two older children, the boy preferring traditionally boys' toys and blue, and the girl traditionally girls' toys and pink, even if he and his wife have tried not to promote such gendered tastes.

There are, however, also topics of potential conflict between him and his wife, one of which is about standards of clothing. They share anti-consumerist values and are happy to use secondhand clothes for the children, but he thinks his wife has a higher standard of what constitutes acceptable clothing than he does. They also disagree over the use of kindergarten; his wife wants the children to have short days in kindergarten, while he thinks they might stay longer. If he is to pick them up and he is running late, his wife may intervene and pick them up earlier. He thinks that in this way she tires herself out, but he thinks she has herself to blame, as it is her choice. He thinks that when he is to stay home on parental leave with the youngest child, he will let the older children stay longer in kindergarten.

#### *Summary: Anders*

Anders has internalized egalitarian values with regards to sharing the responsibility for domestic work, and for supporting the family financially, as learned from his parental home. However, in his own family, he lives somewhat uncomfortably in a more traditional arrangement. This model more closely mirrors the values of his wife's family of origin. He is rather ambiguous about this: on the one hand, he would have preferred a more egalitarian arrangement and feels that they ought to share both domestic and paid work more equally. On the other hand, he claims their current arrangement works well, and he does not seem to want to press hard to change their arrangements to a more egalitarian pattern.

Anders identifies with his father, who he feels he resembles, and with whom he has common interests, both from his childhood and professionally. He has chosen an education very like that of his father, and, like Knut, he explains this as an individual choice rather than assuming he modeled himself on his father. When talking of his identification with his father, Anders emphasizes the sharing of traditionally masculine interests and activities, and he does not, like Knut, refer to his father's nontraditional attitudes or the egalitarian pattern of domestic work in his family of origin.

Unlike his own father and also unlike Knut, who predominantly spoke of parenting in a common parental voice, Anders speaks more explicitly of his own experience of being a father and the conflicts between fatherhood and his job. He also emphasizes to

a greater extent the differences in views between himself and his wife on childcare matters. On the other hand, his wife has had the last say as to the number of children and the decisions on childcare. Although he is himself an atheist, he accepts his wife's religious upbringing of the children, and his wife's religious orientation also influences their common family practices.

At the meaning-making level, he explains their current arrangement partly with his wife's wish to stay home on parental leave and partly with the difficulties that would ensue in order to reduce his own working hours, as well as the benefit for the whole family of his higher wages. His professional history is one of stability; he followed his interests to a career in management and seems to enjoy his work.

For Anders' family, the way that the parental leave benefits in Norway are structured was not compatible with their work-family preferences. Therefore, they decided to forgo paid parental leave rather than having him take the leave for which he was eligible and her having to return to full-time work or study. In this case structures of opportunity did not support their "neo-traditional" work-family adaptation, which they chose to prioritize at their own cost. Kindergarten was part of their work-family adaptation, but the use of kindergarten was a topic of conflict between Anders and his wife.

#### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to explore how adult sons' individual history, and in particular, the egalitarian work-family arrangements of these men's parents in early childhood, have influenced their adaptations to work and care responsibilities when they themselves became fathers. This section will examine how important this particular element of individual history was in relation to other factors that influenced the sons' work-family adaptations, such as relations to work, couple relations, and contemporary structures of opportunity. In this paper, two cases from a sample of five sons who met all inclusion criteria, have been presented at length, illustrating two different orientations found in the total sample.

The total sample is small and the fact that only two cases from the original sample are presented may be seen as a limitation. On the other hand, the in-depth presentation of two cases, rather than a more cursory presentation of all cases is also a strength, allowing to reveal some of the complexity of intergenerational transmission in each of the cases. Regardless of the number of cases presented from such a small sample, findings should be seen as suggestive and not definitive.

At the time of these interviews, the sons of the nontraditional work-sharing fathers were found to live in, or plan for, what appear to be entirely "neo-traditional" work-family arrangements. With regards to the logistical arrangements, there has been no intergenerational transmission at a behavioural level from parents to sons of the egalitarian work-family adaptations. When explaining their current work-family arrangements, the sons mainly drew on pragmatic here-and-now arguments, in which their own work situation and their wives' preferences were the most important factors.

However, family heritage has not necessarily been rejected by the sons. The sons spoke highly of their parents, and of their fathers in particular, as pioneers in changing

the gender order and identified with their fathers' values and ways of being. To a large extent, gender equality was internalized as a part of the family culture that was taken for granted in their families of origin. When the topic was raised in the interview, the response was often that it was strange to talk about something that they took for granted to such an extent.

In addition to egalitarian values, another aspect of the family heritage that has arguably been passed to the sons, consists of family practices that actively foster a sense of duty and the participation of every family member in domestic work. All but one of the sons spoke of their own participation in domestic work in childhood, and emphasized the importance of domestic work. Reay (2005) describes the meticulous work involved in cultural capital being passed on from one generation to the next. While most studies of such micro-processes find that mothers do this work to an overwhelming extent, from the sons' interviews it seems that the work-sharing fathers too, played an important part in the intra-familial work aimed at the intergenerational transmission of cultural capital and domestic skills, but also of more traditionally masculine skills such as maintenance and other out-door-skills.

The sons' interviews reveal that some elements of the work-sharing couples' family heritage, notably egalitarian values and participatory family practices, have been appropriated by the sons, while the egalitarian work-family adaptation of the parents has not been reproduced. This corresponds to Berteaux and Berteaux-Wiame's (1997) and Krah and Büchner's (2006) conclusions of processes of intergenerational transmission as selective, partial and uncertain, relying on the active appropriation and transformation of the process to fit the individual dispositions and social context of the next generation.

In the time that has passed since the work-sharing project, egalitarian values have come to be shared by a majority of Norwegian men (Holter, Svare, & Egeland, 2009). On the other hand, men's relations to work have remained remarkably stable. The women rather than the men have changed their working arrangements to adapt to parenting. This pattern is consistent with trends in Norway as well as internationally, where women still adapt their working arrangements upon becoming mothers to a greater extent than do men on becoming fathers (Lewis, Brannen, & Nilsen, 2009).

In the interviews, the sons' relations to work and their perceptions of their own work relations and that of their wives, emerged as important in explaining their work-family arrangements. The men's relations to work were stable, they spoke positively of their work, and they indicated a high degree of job satisfaction. Their jobs also seemed to be well-paid, and their working arrangements were, to a large extent, presented as non-negotiable. Their wives' careers and work relations, on the contrary, were presented by the men as less stable, less satisfactory and more poorly paid, and the wives' choice or wish to work less was partly explained by the men as a result of these negative job factors. These differences may reflect structural inequalities in pay, position, and working conditions between men and women in the labor market, which invokes the question of the material basis of gender inequality. Men have been found to have greater flexibility in their jobs (Lohne, 2006), which may make it easier to combine full-

time work and caring responsibilities, while less flexibility in female-dominated professions may lead to women deciding to reduce their working hours to cope with caring responsibilities.

On the other hand, the sons also referred to their wives' own choices as a strong determinant in the choice of work-family arrangements, invoking the question of different "schemes of devotion" toward work and family (Blair-Loy, 2003). The interplay of structural factors such as the gender pay gap and job quality, on one hand, and women's greater adaptation to care responsibilities, on the other hand, needs to be further explored.

The sons presented their working hours as largely nonnegotiable. This contrasts with the relative ease with which their fathers obtained part-time work and the lack of negative consequences for their careers (Bjørnholt, 2010). From the analysis of fathers' professional biographies and other empirical studies of parent's work-family adaptations, Bjørnholt (2010) concludes that workplace obstacles to men's adaptations to care may be overrated. The sons of the work-sharing men, holding egalitarian attitudes while living in "neo-traditional" work-family care arrangements, were exemplary of the contemporary mainstream in which even egalitarian-minded couples often ultimately choose traditional patterns (Wiesmann, Boeije, van Doorne-Huiskes, & van Duik, 2008). The sons do not stand out as special in relation to their contemporaries as did their fathers.

The "uncomfortable neo-traditional" adaptation represents an interesting case: Anders would have preferred to reproduce the pattern from his family of origin, but adapted to the pattern of his wife's family of origin. This adaptation illustrates the uncertain process of intergenerational transmission. Even if there is an heir who identifies with and is willing to adopt a certain aspect of the family culture, the actual transmission of that aspect relies not only on the values of one family, but also on the blending of and competition between traditions that take place in both families.

Over the last thirty years, gender relations have changed profoundly. Despite their more traditional work-family arrangements at the time of the interview and their more traditional expectations of future work-family arrangements as compared with their parents, one should be wary of claiming that the work-sharing couples' sons were less egalitarian than their fathers.

In this respect, too, the "uncomfortable neo-traditional" adaptation represents a particularly interesting case. On the one hand, Anders was ambivalent about the gap between his preferred egalitarian family model and their current traditional work-family arrangement; on the other hand, their arrangement corresponded to his wife's preferred family model, and thus allowed her to reproduce the values of her family of origin. How should we interpret this from a gender equality perspective?

The work-sharing men's sons seem to have chosen strong partners, who in several ways were seen by the sons as the ones who have taken the initiative and strongly influenced their common family lives. In one respect the power relations in the sons' families seemed to be more egalitarian than in their families of origin: while the work-sharing women did not have all the children they wanted (Bjørnholt, 2009a), their

daughters-in-law seem to have had the final say in reproductive matters, such as the number of children and whether to adopt.

These findings beg the question: are we witnessing egalitarian personal relations within “neo-traditional” adaptations? Should such “neo-traditional” arrangements be seen as less egalitarian than the equal sharing of breadwinning and care that was the ideal in the parental generation and which has today gained hegemonic status in Norwegian policy-making? In this respect, the modernization of informal care is important (Pfau-Effinger, 2005). Today, Norwegian women’s relations to the labor market are stable, and adaptations to childbirth and care are of a temporary kind. The relatively lavish parental leave system and subsidized childcare facilities have facilitated the combination of work and care since the 1970s, as have changes in the labor market.

Although a large proportion of Norwegian women, approximately 40 percent, work at jobs classified as part-time, the actual share, with respect to time, of the jobs worked is relatively high (Kitterød & Rønsen, 2010). Owing to collective agreements and a general acceptance of part-time work, working part-time in Norway does not carry the negative implications of less job security, lower job quality, and lack of social rights that it does in many other countries. Norway has also had low unemployment rates, and the extensive welfare state represents stable job opportunities for women in female-dominated professions. Working slightly reduced hours, as many Norwegian women do, thus does not represent a danger of marginalization in relation to the labor market as it does in other countries. Nevertheless, Norway still has a gendered labor market, in which women have lower status than men, both in terms of pay and working conditions.

Even though men, and in particular fathers of young children, work the longest hours, working hours in Norway are low in comparison with many other countries, and fathers of young children have reduced their working hours over the last two decades (Kitterød & Kjeldstad 2003). This could be interpreted as a cohort effect of the gender revolution in the 1970s parental generation. Despite these positive developments, however, the tendency for women to work part-time and for men to work full-time or more has gendered consequences over the life course.

Norwegian family policies are aimed at promoting fathers’ leavestaking, but Anders’ case illustrates the limits of structures of opportunity in shaping work-family arrangements. In this case the family abstained from paid parental leave rather than adapt to the structures available to them, as they were not compatible with the wife’s wish to stay home with the child. Structures of opportunity, such as longer parental leave and childcare facilities, have also changed the context for couple’s negotiations on work and care; women’s greater adaptations to family obligations are privatized, and the gendered frames and consequences of such choices are blurred. Anders and his wife’s differing views on kindergarten may illustrate this privatization. He thought that his wife became exhausted because she preferred the children to have short days in kindergarten; at the same time he added that she had herself to blame, since this was her choice. The question of how long the children should be in kindergarten did not seem to be addressed in open negotiations, but rather depended on the individual parent’s personal choice.

This again may be seen as part of a general change in the discursive climate, in which questions of redistribution and justice are rarely addressed as a part of couples' negotiations on work and care, as found in a recent study on contemporary Nordic couples (Magnusson, 2008). There are also emotional consequences for living in the gap between gender-equal ideologies but unequal practices (Bø, 2008).

The findings in this study challenge the idea that greater gender equality and participation in a family in early childhood will have a lasting effect on a son's future family. The findings of this study further indicate that contemporary concerns, among them intra-couple interaction, and the interrelation of structures of opportunity for work and care, are more important to explain work-family adaptations than are egalitarian arrangements in family of origin.

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