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## The influence of work characteristics on the degree of togetherness with the partner

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**Abstract:** This study investigates whether work characteristics are related to togetherness with the partner and whether this effect is different for men and women. Two different types of togetherness are examined: indoor leisure and outdoor leisure. For this study the New families Netherlands survey among 2050 married and cohabiting peoples is used. The results show that there is no evidence for the effect of work characteristics on togetherness. When the analyses are done for men and women separately, there is evidence that workhours of the men are positively related with outdoor leisure .

**Key words:** togetherness; outdoor leisure; indoor leisure; work hours, integration, segmentation, NFN.

## Introduction

Free time is an important subject in an adults life, therefore leisure is a widely investigated subject in the social sciences. Researchers have found a positive relationship between leisure activities and well-being and life satisfaction (Kelly, Steinkamp & Kelly, 1987; Riddick, 1985; Riddick & Stewart, 1994). Furthermore, Orthner and Mancini (1990; 1991) contend that joint couple leisure improves the marital satisfaction of a couple.

In a relationship, one can spend their free time alone or with their partner. When a couple spend their free time separately, this can be called ‘a separate lifestyle relationship’. On the other hand, when a couple spend their free time together, it can be labelled as ‘joint lifestyle relationship’. A way how a separate lifestyle relationship and a joint lifestyle relationship can be distinguished is how a couple tend to arrange their day-to-day life. A couple can spend their free time in different ways. That is, a couple can go to a museum, or theme park together, or separately. Whenever a couple spend their time in these types of activities together, they are in a certain way tied to each other.

Next to free time, work is also an important subject in an adults life. Work is an economic, social and psychological ingredient of human life. Or how Watson and Watson(2008) phrased it: “*the carrying out of tasks which enable people to make a living within the social and economic context in which they are located*”. Work is something we do for a living. By being employed and getting a pay check, we try to pay the bills and take care of ourselves and our family. Furthermore, work can provide enjoyment, satisfaction, and a sense of accomplishment, achievement and success (O’Toole & Lawler, 2007). In 2020, the gross employment rate in the Netherlands is 71,1 percent (CBS, 2020). That is, a large amount of the labor force in the Netherlands has a job.

The hours people invest in work, restrict the amount of time they can spend to leisure, either alone or with their partner. This was also found in a study of Glorieux, Minnen and van Tienhoven (2011), where they conclude that non-working couples have more opportunities to spend time together. Moreover, in a time-diary study, Kingston & Nock (1987) contend that working hours is the most decisive factor which influences the time couples can spend together, and especially so for dual-earner couples. They argue that work constrains the amount of free time people have and therefore can spend less time together with their partner.

Due to technology-driven connectedness, work and free time tend to increasingly intertwine rather than exist as separate spheres in this modern age. Because of technological

conveniences, it is easier for people to do work in their personal time. The increased ubiquity of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has increased the number of hours employees are spending on work related tasks, especially the use of mobile devices (Brown & Palvia, 2015). Furthermore, since the introduction of ICTs the expectations of employers have increased, they expect their employees to show greater flexibility, an enhanced productivity and use ICTs at home to conduct work related activities (Brown & Palvia, 2015). Jacobs and Gerson (2001) found that couples find it more problematic to organize shared time than before due to these kind of increasing demands of the labor market.

The main goal of this thesis is to give a better overview of how work characteristics influence the togetherness of couples. Although several researchers have investigated how working hours influence the togetherness of couples (Kalmijn & Bernasco, 2001; Kingston & Nock, 1987), little is known about other work characteristics. Kalmijn and Bernasco (2001) for example, discuss in their article that more specific indicators of work could give more information about the relation between work and a joint lifestyle in a couple. To give a broader overview in the literature how work characteristics influence togetherness among couples the following research question is derived: *What is the influence of work characteristics on the degree of togetherness with the partner?*

Previous research shows that effect of work characteristics on leisure time differs between men and women (Kalmijn & Bernasco, 2001; Mattingly & Bianchi, 2003; Simon, 1995). Whereas earlier research investigated whether work for men and women differed on leisure activities in general, this study will investigate whether the effects of work differs for men and women on the leisure time with the partner. Nock & Kingston (1989) show that more work results in less leisure. However, an increase of an hour in the labor market, does not automatically mean that the leisure time reduces with an hour. That is, when people work more, they might feel less responsible for the chores in and around the house. It is argued that women feel more responsibility for managing family life than men, and that the family needs are prioritized over the leisure time (Simon, 1995). Even when women work, they feel more responsible for housework and child care than men (Bianchi et al. 2000; Hochschild & Machung 2012; Nock & Kingston 1989; Zick & Bryant 1996). Kalmijn & Bernasco (2001) stressed the importance to look at the effects of work characteristics on togetherness differently for gender, therefore the second research question of this thesis will be: *Does the effect of work characteristics on togetherness differ for gender?*

This thesis is relevant, because multiple researchers have stressed the importance of spousal leisure regarding marital quality (e.g. Holman & Jacquart, 1988; Orthner, 1975; Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). Furthermore, spending time with your partner draw spouses together (Amato, Booth, Johnson, & Rogers, 2007; Booth, Johnson, White, & Edwards, 1985, 1986; Crawford, Houts, Huston, & George, 2002; Gager & Sanchez, 2003; White, 1983; Zuo, 1992), which helps to maintain the marriage (Hill, 1988).

In order to find an answer to the research questions, multiple regression analysis will be conducted. The data that will be used is data gathered from the first wave of the New Families in the Netherlands survey (NFN; Poortman, Van der Lippe & Boele-Woelki, 2014), gathered by Utrecht University in collaboration with Statistics Netherlands (CBS). The target group which will be investigated consists out of married or cohabiting couples who have at least one child.

### **Theoretical framework**

The question why certain couples spent more leisure time with each other than other couples could be explained by the costs and benefits couples experience in organizing their free time (Hill, 1988; Kalmijn & Bernasco, 2001). One of the foremost reasons why couples spend time together lies in the pleasure they derive from spending time together (Kalmijn & Bernasco, 2001). How much pleasure couples derive from spending time together depends on numerous things, such as the length of the relationship, how much similarities the couple have, and value orientations of the couple. However, even when a couple wants to engage in activities together, certain costs can prevent a couple to do so. It can be argued that the costs couples can experience depend on time constraints (Kingston & Nock, 1987; Kalmijn & Bernasco, 2001; Van der Lippe & Peters, 2007).

How much time people have for their partner depends on many things. That is, people need time to sleep, to take care of the children, to do household chores, but the foremost reason that constrains the time people can spend with their partner, are working hours (Kingston & Nock, 1987). Even though couples like to spend time with each other, and try hard to make time for each other (Kingston & Nock, 1987; Kalmijn & Bernasco, 2001; Van der Lippe & Peters, 2007), working hours seem to constrain the amount of leisure time a couples has. Several authors argue that it is difficult for couples to organize shared time due to increasing demands of the labor market (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2001; Jacobs & Gerson, 2001). This seems plausible, since the amount of time someone spends at work, cannot be spend with the partner.

Looking at the time constrains people experience because of work, the following

hypothesis is derived:

*H1: People who work longer hours have less togetherness with their partner.*

Another work characteristic which can influence the time a couple spend together is taking work to home. Nowadays, many employees make use of mobile technology. This technology results in employees who are more accessible for the employer. That means employee's are reachable at anytime, anywhere. People who make use of these technologies may work longer hours. Whereas a house traditionally is seen as a place to spend time with your family, it becomes an extension of the workplace, since a big amount of work is done in ones' residence (Towers, Duxbury, Higgins & Thomas, 2006). Furthermore, technologies that facilitate work outside the office often act as an agent to legitimize work extension at home (Duxbury, Higgins & Mills, 1992). The use of technologies give employees the opportunity to work at home in their free time, which might result in less together time with their partner.

The rise of mobile technologies makes it easier for people to integrate work spheres into their private life. People have certain boundaries (e.g. physical, temporal and behavioral), which serve to structure and demarcate the various roles they maintain in different domains. Boundary theory suggests that people have different ways in the extent to which their various roles are integrated or segmented across domains (e.g. work, family) (Nippert-Eng, 1996). That is, some individuals create boundaries around their work and their personal life to make sure that these domains remain separate from one another (*segmentation*). On the other hand, people who have a high role of *integration* across domains, have no distinction between what belongs to work or home.

Several researchers suggest that boundaries can be characterized by *permeability* and *flexibility* (Ashforth, Kreiner & Fugate, 2000; Clark, 2000; Hall & Richter, 1988). A boundary is permeable when one is physically located in the role's domain, but psychologically, or behaviorally involved in another role (Ashforth et al., 2000). An example of a person who has a high permeable work to nonwork boundary is an individual who is answering his or her work mails while he or she is at the zoo with his or her partner. In contrast, someone who has a low work to nonwork permeability, would answer the email during workhours. A boundary is *flexible* if one domain could be relaxed to meet the demands of the other domain (Ashforth et al., 2000; Clarck, 2000; Hall & Richter, 1988). In other words, a work boundary is flexible if an individual perceives that he or she could leave an activity with the partner for a work matter.

As abovementioned, permeability and flexibility are important characteristics of individuals who segment or integrate their work and personal life. The strategies people use to manage their work and personal life domain boundaries (i.e. flexibility and permeability) create

a *segmentation-integration continuum* (Nippert-Eng, 1996). *Segmentation* exists once an individual has low *flexibility* to leave one domain (e.g. family) to attend the other one (e.g. work) and when an individual has low permeability of the domain boundaries. That is, an individual at this end of the continuum, would not interrupt family time to attend to work matters. On the other hand, in *integration* there is a high amount of flexibility and permeability. At this end of the continuum, an individual would more likely bring work home or leave a family event to attend work matters. That could result in less togetherness with the partner, where for a person who integrated his work and family life it is more likely that he or she would spend his or her free time thinking to work or actually calling co-workers. Regarding the boundary theory, the following hypothesis is derived:

*H2: The more people integrate their work and private life, the less togetherness they will experience with their partner.*

Research suggests that paid work in the labor market on leisure time is different for women compared to men (Bittman & Wajcman, 2000; Kalmijn & Bernasco, 2001; Mattingly & Bianchi, 2003). This is related to that women are encouraged to put their family's leisure needs above their own (Shaw, 1997). A substantial amount of literature on paid and domestic time use of spouses, show that there are major differences in their time use (Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer, & Robinson, 2000; Bianchi, Robinson & Milkie, 2007; Coltrane, 2000; Shelton & John, 1996). That is, women spend more time on house work and men spend more time on paid work outside the house. However, trend studies shows that women spend more time on the labor market, and that men spend more time on housework and childcare, but in lesser extent (Bianchi et al., 2006; Coltrane, 2000; Gershuny & Robinson, 1988). Due to the differences in division in housework among men and women, they experience leisure differently (Voorpostel, van der Lippe & Gershuny, 2010). For example, mothers find it harder to perceive leisure as enjoyable, because they have the role of a family caretaker. On the other hand do fathers experiences leisure as time for diversion and self-expression (Larson, Gillman & Richards, 1997). To elaborate this: suppose in a relationship, the wife has a job where she works 32 hours per week and the husband as a 32 work-week as well. After their shift they go to the playground with their 8-year old daughter. The wife could experience this as child care, where she has to watch over her daughter and not as leisure, whereas the husband could experience it as leisure, because he is playing with his daughter and having fun. In other words, both the wife and the husband have the same amount of working hours and are doing the same activity, but the wife is

experiencing it differently than the husband. Therefore the following hypothesis is derived:  
*H3: Long workhours result in less togetherness with the partner, especially for women.*

## **Methods**

### *Data*

In this thesis, I will use data from the first wave sample of the survey New Families in the Netherlands (NFN; Poortman, van der Lippe & Boele-Woelki, 2014). The Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) took five random samples out of five different population groups. The main sample consists of (1) divorced parents in 2010 and (2) cohabiting parents who broke up in 2010. The control groups are (3) married parents, (4) cohabiting parents and (5) parents who are divorced before 2010. All respondents are parents of children younger than 18 years. In this research the third and fourth sample will be used, so married (N = 1389) and cohabiting parents (N = 784, so total N = 2173). The respondents of the questionnaire were approached by NFN between 2012 and 2014 via mail which contained information about the study and an invitation to participate in an online survey about parenthood in divorced and intact families which is carried out by Utrecht University in collaboration with CBS.

One of the aims of NFN was to collect data by a multi-actor approach (i.e., both partners were approached to fill in the survey). Because there is a plausible chance that not both partners would participate, the questionnaire includes questions where the respondents had to provide information about their partner (proxy reports).

Both parents from a household were approached to participate in the survey, however not everyone responded. On the household level, which is the total number of households with either one or both partners that participated in the survey, the response rate was 56% (N = 1338). On the person level (i.e. people's individual response), the response rate was 45% (N = 2173). Due to missing values on certain variables which will be used in the analyses, in this thesis 2037 respondents will be investigated.

Considering how well the respondents represent the Dutch population, men (especially those with young children), young people, people from non western descent and people on welfare are being underrepresented.

### *Operationalization*

## **Dependent variables**

To describe the amount of togetherness with the partner, five items that represent two types of leisure activities are used, namely (a) outdoor leisure, and (b) indoor leisure. An overview of

the descriptive statistics of the dependents, independents and control variables can be found in Table 1.

*Outdoor leisure* is the first type of togetherness which will be used as a dependent. To construct this variable the respondents were asked to fill in eight questions about how often the respondent participates in certain activities with their partner. First all items were recoded so they range from 1 (never together with my partner) to 5 (always together with my partner). Subsequently a factor analysis with orthogonal rotation was done, which resulted in a scale with four items. After the factor analysis four items were eliminated (i.e. playing team sport, doing individual sport, going to a hobby club, and watching television), due to their low factor loadings. The items which are used for outdoor leisure are: “going out (e.g. to a restaurant, café, or parties)”, “doing cultural activities (e.g., going to the theatre, concert or museum)”, “visiting an event like a theme park or zoo”, “Taking a trip into nature”. The four items of outdoor leisure showed a good reliability ( $\alpha = .842$ ). After the reliability analysis outdoor leisure was computed by taking the mean of the four items, with the condition that the respondent had at least two non missing's on the four items.

*Indoor leisure* is measured by one item. The respondents were asked how often they had time for their partner at home, like cooking together, or talking intensively. The participants were asked explicitly not to count watching television in this ‘together time’. After recoding the item ranges from 1 (never) to 7 (various times per week).

### **Independent variables**

*Actual work hours of the respondent.* The first independent variable is the amount of hours the respondent actual works on weekly basis. The respondents were asked how many hours they actually work. In this study actual workhours is used instead of contractual hours, since it gives a better overview of how many hours the respondent dedicates to work. To make sure the unemployed people are in the analysis as well, the unemployed people are coded as 0 in the work hours. When the respondents indicate they work more than 80 hours, it was coded as 80, therefore the range of work hours range from 0 to 80.

*Combining work and private life.* To measure the respondent's preference regarding home-work segmentation in order to distinguish segmenters (people who prefer to keep work and home separate) and integrators (people who like to integrate family and work) a four item-scale by Kreiner (2006) was used. The items are: “I don't like to think about work while I'm at home”, “I prefer to keep work life at home”, “I don't like work issues creeping into my home life” and “I like to be able to leave work behind when I go home”. The items were rated along



a 7-point scale ranging after recoding from 1 (Totally agree) to 7 (Totally disagree). To make sure unemployed people are in the analyses, they are coded as 1, because they cannot integrate work and private life since they are unemployed. The items were averaged, with higher scores indicating higher levels of integration of family and work. The reliability of the items are good ( $\alpha = .899$ ).

### **Control variables**

*Demographic and family variables.* The demographic variables which were controlled in all models are *gender of the respondent*, *age of the respondent* and *education*. The family characteristic that was controlled in all analysis is the *number of children*. *Gender of the respondent* was computed as a dummy variable whereas (0) was coded as male and (1) is coded as female, thus male is the reference category. *Age of the respondents* will be treated as an interval variable, where the respondent's age ranges from 25 to 67. *Education of the respondent* is measured in a 10-point scale: (1) 'incomplete elementary' (2) 'elementary school', (3) 'lower vocational', (4) 'lower general secondary', (5) 'medium general secondary', (6) 'upper general secondary', (7) 'intermediate vocational' (8) 'higher vocational' (9) 'university' and (10) 'post-graduate'.

*Number of children* will be divided in three categories: (1) one child (2) two children (3) three or more children. In the analysis two children will be used as reference category.

*Actual work hours of the partner* is the last control variable which will be used in the analyses. In this variable the respondent indicates the amount of hours their partner actual works in a week. To make sure the unemployed partners are in the analysis as well, the unemployed partners are coded as 0. When the respondents indicate that their partner works more than 80 hours, it was coded as 80, therefore actual work hours of the partner range from 0 to 80.

### *Analytical strategy*

To answer the research question, multiple linear regression analyses will be conducted to analyse whether work characteristics have an effect on togetherness or not. In the first model for both dependent variables only the effect of the work characteristics will be analysed. Subsequently, in the second model, the control variables are added. The control variables are: gender, age, education, number for children and work hours of the partner. In the third model the interaction term of gender and work hours will be added, to test if the workhours of men is different than the work hours of women. To give a better overview how work characteristics on togetherness differ for gender, a regression analysis will be conducted for men and women

separately.

Before the results from the regression analyses were interpreted, the variables were tested for multicollinearity, to make sure the predictors do not correlate too highly. Since the VIF of the variables are all lower than 3 and none of the tolerance values exceed 1, multicollinearity among the variables is not expected.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the dependent, independent and control variables

	Total (N=2050)				Men (N=903)				Women (N=1147)			
	Min	Max	Mean	Sd	Min	Max	Mean	Sd	Min	Max	Mean	sd
<b>Togetherness</b>												
<i>Outdoor leisure</i>	1	5	3.44	.95	1	5	3.59	.98	1.25	5	3.32	.92
<i>Indoor leisure</i>	1	7	6.01	1.33	1	7	6.12	1.29	1	7	5.92	1.35
<b>Work characteristics</b>												
<i>Workhours</i>	0	60	30.07	16.06	0	60	40.57	13.29	0	60	21.79	12.90
<i>Combining work and private life</i>	1	7	2.80	1.58	1	7	3.10	1.62	1	7	2.56	1.52
<i>Gender (ref = male)</i>	0	1	.56									
<b>Control variables</b>												
<i>Work hours partner</i>	0	60	32.39	16.23	0	60	21.64	13.42	0	60	40.86	12.91
<i>Education</i>	1	10	6.79	1.95	1	10	6.73	2.02	1	10	6.82	1.89
<i>One child</i>	0	1	.21		0	1	.20		0	1	.22	
<i>Two children</i>	0	1	.56		0	1	.57		0	1	.55	
<i>Three or more children</i>	0	1	.23		0	1	.23		0	1	.23	
<i>Age respondent</i>	25	67	43.18	6.29	27	67	44.64	6.46	25	58	42.04	5.90

## Results

### *Work characteristics on outdoor leisure*

The results shown in the first model of Table 2, indicate that both work characteristics have a significant effect on outdoor leisure. Workhours have a positive effect on outdoor leisure ( $b=.005$ ,  $t=3.827$ ,  $p<.001$ ), which means that longer workhours of the respondent will result in more outdoor leisure time together with the partner. Additionally, people who have a more integrated work and family life, have less outdoor leisure with their partner ( $b=-.034$ ,  $t=-2.323$ ,

p=.020).

However, in the second model, where the control variables have been added, both work characteristics become insignificant. This means that hypothesis 1 (*long workhours result in less togetherness with the partner*) and hypothesis 2 (*H2: People who have more integrated work and private life have less togetherness with the partner*) with regard to outdoor leisure have to be rejected. Although there is no evidence that there is a direct effect of work characteristics on outdoor leisure, two control variables are significant predictors for outdoor leisure. First, being a female is a negative predictor for outdoor leisure with the partner ( $b=-.271, t=-4.428, p<.001$ ), suggesting that women have less outdoor leisure time with their partner than men. Second, education is a negative predictor for outdoor leisure with the partner as well ( $b=-.041, t=-3.650, p<.001$ ), which means that higher educated people have less outdoor leisure with their partner than low educated people. The other control variables (i.e. workhours of the partner, number of children and age of the respondent) have no significant effect on outdoor leisure.

#### *Work characteristics on indoor leisure*

The results of work characteristics on indoor leisure are displayed in Table 2. The first model, where only the work characteristics are predictors for indoor leisure with the partner, has no significant predictors on indoor leisure. That is, both the working hours of the respondent and combining work and private life have no effect on indoor leisure with the partner. These effects remains insignificant after controlling for other variables. Because both work characteristics show no effect on indoor leisure with the partner, hypothesis 1 (*long workhours result in less togetherness with the partner*) and hypothesis 2 (*H2: People who integrate their work and private life have less togetherness with the partner*) with regard to indoor leisure have to be rejected.

In spite of the fact that there is no evidence for a direct effect of the investigated work characteristics on indoor leisure, gender and education are significant predictors for indoor leisure (Model 2, Table 2). That is, women experience less indoor leisure time together with their partner than men ( $b=-.210, t=-2.471, p=.014$ ). Additionally, people who are high educated experience less indoor leisure with their partner than people who have a lower education ( $b=-.060, t=-3.781, p<.001$ ).

### *Interactions on outdoor leisure*

The third model of Table 2, suggests that workhours on outdoor leisure is significantly different for men and women ( $b=-.010$ ,  $t=-3.060$ ,  $p=.002$ ). To give a better overview how gender is interacted, in Table 3 a regression is done for men and women separately. The results of this table indicate that workhours for men have a positive significant effect on outdoor leisure with the partner ( $b=.006$ ,  $t=2.313$ ,  $p=.021$ ), where the effect of workhours for women have an insignificant negative effect on outdoor leisure with the partner ( $b=-.001$ ,  $t=-.279$ ,  $p=.781$ ). This means that for men, long workhours result in more outdoor leisure with the partner, whereas for women, long workhours have no effect on outdoor leisure with the partner. Thus, the effect of workhours on outdoor leisure is different for men and women and this difference is significant.

Looking at the hypothesis, it was expected that longer workhours would result in less togetherness with the partner, especially when women work longer hours. The results indicate that long workhours of men leads to more outdoor leisure with the partner, and that work hours for women on outdoor leisure with the partner is neutral. This means that work hours do not result in less togetherness with the partner, but it does suggest that women who work longer hours have less outdoor leisure with the partner than men.

### *Interactions on indoor leisure*

The results in the third model of Table 2, indicate that the effect of workhours on indoor leisure is insignificant and that there is no difference for the effect of workhours on indoor leisure for men and women. Therefore the third hypothesis (*Long workhours result in less togetherness with the partner, especially for women.*) considering indoors leisure is rejected. Looking at Table 3, where the indoor leisure is analyzed for men and women separately, the work hours for both men and women have an insignificant negative effect on indoor leisure.

Table 2: Multiple regression analyses on togetherness (N=2050)

		Outdoor leisure			Indoor leisure		
		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
		B	B	B	B	B	B
Work characteristics	<i>Work hours</i>	.006*** (.00)	.002 (.00)	.007** (.00)	.001 (.00)	-.002 (.00)	-.003 (.00)
	<i>Combining work and private life</i>	-.034* (.02)	-.015 (.02)	-.014 (.02)	-.031 (.02)	-.007 (.02)	-.007 (.02)
Gender (ref = men)			-.271*** (.06)	.043 (.12)		-.210* (.09)	-.228 (.17)
Workhours partner			.001 (.00)	.001 (.00)		-.002 (.00)	-.002 (.00)
Education			-.044*** (.01)	-.040*** (.01)		-.060*** (.08)	-.060*** (.08)
Number of children (ref = 2 children)	<i>One child</i>		.028 (.05)	.034 (.05)		.163* (.08)	.162* (.08)
	<i>Three or more children</i>		-.030 (.05)	-.038 (.05)		.062 (.07)	.062 (.07)
Age respondent			-.006 (.00)	-.006 (.00)		.002 (.00)	.002 (.00)
Female * workhours				-.010** (.00)			.001 (.01)
(constant)		3.346***	4.124***	3.847***	6.049***	6.520***	6.536***
R <sup>2</sup>		.009	.031	.036	.000	.020	.020
ΔR <sup>2</sup>		.009***	.022***	.004**	.000	.019***	.000

Notes: \*\*\* P<,001 \*\* P<,01 \* P<,05  
Standard errors are shown in parentheses

Table 3: regression analysis on togetherness separated by gender

		Outdoor leisure		Indoor leisure	
		Men (N=903)	Women (N=1147)	Male (N=903)	Female (N=1147)
		b	b	b	b
Work characteristics	<i>Work hours</i>	.006* (.00)	-.001 (.00)	-.002 (.00)	-.003 (.00)
	<i>Combining work and private life</i>	.003 (.02)	-.033 (.02)	-.002 (.03)	-.008 (.03)
Workhours partner		-.004 (.00)	.004 (.00)	.000 (.00)	-.003 (.00)
Education		-.025 (.02)	-.053** (.02)	-.075** (.02)	-.046* (.02)
Amount of children (ref = 2 children)	<i>One child</i>	.031 (.09)	.045 (.07)	.263* (.11)	.087 (.10)
	<i>Three or more children</i>	-.094 (.08)	.000 (.07)	.109 (.11)	.029 (.10)
Age respondent		-.002 (.01)	-.008 (.01)	.004 (.01)	.000 (.01)
(constant)		3.686***	3.974***	6.463***	6.380***
R <sup>2</sup>		.026	.015	.025	.009

Notes: \*\*\* P<,001 \*\* P<,01 \* P<,05  
Standard errors are shown in parentheses

## Conclusion and discussion

Family researchers have argued that togetherness in a relationship is positively related with the quality of the relation (Amato, et al., 2007; Booth, et al., 1985, 1986; Crawford et al., 2002; Gager & Sanchez, 2003; White, 1983; Zuo, 1992). Where togetherness seem to be an important factor to the quality of the relationship, this study tried to investigate how work characteristics are related with the togetherness in a couple.

In the literature it is argued that due to time constraints couples can spend less with each other (Kalmijn & Bernasco, 2001; Van der Lippe & Peters, 2007), and that especially work hours constrains the time people can spend with their partner (Kingston & Nock, 1987). In contrast with the findings of Kingston & Nock (1987), in this study work hours in general is not related with the amount of togetherness of a couple. A possible explanation for this, is that people want to spend their reduced leisure time with their partner. This is also found in earlier

research on synchronization of working hours. These studies indicate that couples make an effort to reserve time for leisure at the same time (Hallberg, 2003; Hamermesh, 1998, 2000). In conclusion, this study indicates that considering work hours, people prefer to spend their free time with their partner, hence work hours do not reduce the amount of together time in a relationship.

It was expected that following the boundary theory (Nippert-Eng, 1996), people who have integrated their work and family rather than look at it separately, would have less togetherness with their partner. However, this study shows that there is no evidence that people who integrate their work and private life is related with togetherness. It is possible that people who are integrating their work and private life, like answering an e-mail of a co-worker on the phone during a romantic dinner with the partner, still sees the romantic dinner as together time. However, from the partner's perspective this could be different. It is possible that he or she is not experiencing the dinner as together time. Therefore it might be useful for further research to investigate if the partner's perspective of integrating work and private life is related to the togetherness of a couple.

It is argued that the relation between work and togetherness is different for men and women (Kalmijn & Bernasco, 2001). This thesis supports this idea, since work hours result in more outdoor leisure with the partner for men, but is neutral for women. A possible explanation for this, is that men and women have a different perception of togetherness (Voorpostel, van der Lippe & Gershuny, 2010). Furthermore the findings in this study is in line with the paper of Larson et al. (1997), in which they argued that fathers experience family leisure as time of diversion and self-expression. Where work hours on outdoor leisure is different for men and women, work hours on indoor leisure is neutral for both men and women. This gives an indication that the relation between work and togetherness is indeed different for the amount of togetherness in a couple, however not for all types of togetherness.

There are also some flaws in the analyses. First, the explained variance of the models are relatively low. This has been observed in previous analyses on togetherness as well (e.g. Rogers & Amato, 1997; Kalmijn & Bernasco, 2001). This could possibly be prevented by using a time-diary study, where the analyses explain more of the variance (see Kingston & Nock, 1987). Furthermore using a time diary would give more accurate results compared to questionnaires (Robinson, 2002). This is especially so when respondents have to estimate their work hours. Robinson & Gershuny (1994) have found that respondents estimate their work significantly higher than the hours that are reported in the time diary. This gap was especially high for respondents who work long hours.

Furthermore in this study, indoor and outdoor leisure were used to cover togetherness,

however there are more aspects of togetherness. Like visiting friends and family together, going on a holiday and spend actual together time (i.e. be together without children). Kalmijn & Bernasco (2001) for example, covered social activities and entertainment next to indoor and outdoor leisure and found that work hours of women result in more togetherness with the partner considering indoor leisure and social activities, but that it is neutral for entertainment and outdoor leisure. Additionally, in this thesis, two work characteristics are used, where more work characteristics seem to be related with togetherness. Wight, Raley and Bianchi (2008) found in their time-diary study that parent's who work non-standard hours spend their free time to childcare at the expense of their leisure time with the spouse. In future research it is interesting to look at couples who have non-overlapping work schedules, to get a broader overview how work characteristics and togetherness are related.

Despite several caveats, this thesis gives an overview of how several work characteristics are related with togetherness. Moreover, this study shows that it is important to look at the differences between men and women, to get a better overview how work characteristics and togetherness in a couple are related.



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