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From A Different Standpoint

Intersectionality, standpoint theory, and the role of father-friendly organisations in deconstructing traditional gender roles

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Abstract

Gender is a phenomenon that is socially constructed and performed through repetitive acts fitting into this cultural idea. In terms of Western masculinity, this often still means a lack of display of emotion and a breadwinner role within the family. But attitudes are changing: An increasing amount of men take up leave to care for their young children. This shift has positive consequences for the child, the father, their partner, and the family as a unit, yet organisations are lagging behind when it comes to father-friendly culture and practices. This research looks at the issue from the in this context marginalised standpoint of young men in a heterosexual family unit. Findings show that the men on this particular intersection do feel subjugated and are interested in a shift towards more father-friendly measures within work culture, both formal and informal. Their female partners, in turn, have more options to work on their career.

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Contents

1. Introduction	5
2. Performative masculinity	9
Masculinity and neoliberalism	12
3. Men, childcare, and the organisation	15
Positive consequences of active fatherhood	16
Fatherhood in the organisation	19
The father-friendly organisation	20
4. Methodological framework	22
Study methods	23
Measuring father-friendliness	23
In-depth interviews	25
5. Masculinity and fatherhood: connections and consequences	26
Other obstacles	29
Suggestions for change	30
6. Conclusion	33
Bibliography	36
Appendix	39
General results Father-Friendliness Index	39

1. Introduction

As a student, I found that Gender Studies as an academic field focuses mainly on identities which do not fit the Western normative ideal of white, heterosexual, cisgender men. The lack of focus on dominant groups made me all the more interested in the construction of these identities. How are groups that are considered a majority or dominant influenced by normative ideals? Do they experience any drawbacks? It was with such questions in mind that I looked for a fitting topic for a research project. To narrow it down, I chose to connect my Master in Gender Studies with my Bachelor in Organisational Psychology and decided to look at gender issues in the context of the corporate world. In cooperation with the Dutch non-profit organisation Vader Kennis Centrum (*Father Knowledge Centre*), which highlights the specific problems fathers run into across different contexts, a project came to be concerning a more father-friendly work culture. This project aims to give men the tools to balance work and family life; a subject that, as a young single woman, I have little experience with, but have become increasingly interested in. This research is a basis to sketch an overview of the importance of father-friendliness in the corporate world, and the wishes of fathers regarding it.

The project is part of a larger trend currently seen in The Netherlands. Involved fatherhood has become a subject that is increasingly being discussed and acknowledged as important. Some organisations are voluntarily increasing parental leave policies: for instance, Yonego, an internet marketing organisation, increased paid paternity leave to four weeks in January 2016, as opposed to the statutory policy of two days; media organisation Netflix goes as far as to offer their employees unlimited parental leave during the first year of their parenthood. Projects such as *Papaklas* ('daddy-class') and *Praktijkvader* ('father practice') coach men into getting ready for involved fatherhood. The Dutch government in 2016 is discussing an increase of paternity leave on a national level, albeit still only from two to five days. These examples suggest that father involvement is becoming more visible and more desired. Yet when it comes to statutory leave, The Netherlands is lagging significantly in international comparison, with merely two days of paid leave that can only be taken by the father, compared to an OECD¹ average of eight weeks (as shown in their report 'Where are the fathers', 2016). Family leave in The Netherlands is set up as follows: After the baby's delivery by their partner, both male and female employees have a right to two days of paid, employer-funded leave ('kraamverlof'), to be taken within four weeks of birth or the child's arrival from the hospital. As of 2015, the mother's partner is also entitled to three days of unpaid parental leave (partner

¹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, which promotes policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world. OECD currently includes 35 members, including "many of the world's most advanced countries but also emerging countries like Mexico, Chile and Turkey" (www.oecd.org).

leave) per child born. Additionally, all parents have a right to unpaid parental leave: 26 times the number of working hours per week, per child, to be taken up before the child's eighth birthday. This means that in the case of twins, a parent has the right to double the parental leave. This leave can only be taken up part-time. In comparison, the EU Member State average for statutory paternity leave is 12.5 working days, and the average for parental leave is 86.9 weeks (Janssen, 2015: 13-14).

Not only is statutory leave relatively low, The Netherlands also score low on men actually taking up this type of leave. Although the uptake of part-time parental leave by men has doubled in the past decade, this is only an increase from 6 to 11 percent (BNR, 2016). This does, however, suggest that fathers are increasingly interested in taking time off work to spend more time with their child.

It is important to increase these numbers of paternal leave uptake, as it has been shown to have a number of positive consequences across different spheres. The International Labour Conference recognized in 1975 that equality of opportunity and treatment can only be achieved by extending rights to all workers with family responsibilities, women and men. The ILC stated that any change in the traditional role of women should be accompanied by a change in the traditional role of men, which should be reflected in their greater participation in [heterosexual] family life and household duties (11). This theory shows the importance of giving organisations a guide to be more father-friendly and consequently, more equal². Beyond that, "taking leave helps women recover from pregnancy and childbirth, is good for child health, and increases female employment, which in turn reduces the family's poverty risk" (OECD report, 2016). If fathers spend more time at home, positive consequences follow for women and for their children as well, as I will describe further later in this research.

If paternal involvement leads to many positive effects, why is it still relatively low? One explanation is because the government has "expressly opted to leave employers, or the organisations representing employers and employees respectively, scope to extend (or not to extend) the schemes in their discussions on collective employment terms" (Remery, Van Doorne-Huiskes, & Schippers, 459). With employers allowed to decide for themselves whether or not to give employees paid family leave, the result has been that parental leave is most often still unpaid and few employees, specifically men, are willing to take it up. Men often take up holidays or leave accrued in lieu of pay for reasons such as work pressure, employer objections, and anticipated loss of pay (Janssen, 14).

² Equality as a concept is problematized by the notions of 'equality based on sameness' and 'equality based on difference'. Joan W. Scott (1988) argues that "placing [the two] in an antithetical relationship has a double effect. It denies the way in which difference has long figured in political notions of equality and it suggests that sameness is the only ground on which equality can be claimed" (46). It is important to consider the context in which the terms women and men are used. By speaking of equality in this research, I refer to the opportunity for men and women to participate in the work force and/or family life.

The aim of this research is therefore to show the importance of equal distribution of paid and unpaid work to both genders³, and to give organisations in the Netherlands a handhold to become father-friendly. I start by giving a general overview of masculinity in the Western world and in organisational culture to sketch the idealised context of gender roles that bleeds into family life as well as organisational culture. How are masculinities and fatherhood constructed in Western culture? After this, I highlight the importance of fatherhood in the family and the reasons men often do not take up family-friendly policies even if they do have the chance to. I describe in more detail the positive consequences of increased paternal involvement and show what constitutes involved fatherhood and father-friendliness. Finally, I look closer at the opinions of fathers on organisational culture and father-friendliness through a survey and several in-depth interviews. What are men's reasons for the way they balance work and family life, and what obstacles do they encounter in their efforts?

In this research I focus specifically on the standpoint of Dutch men in a traditional, heterosexual family context. Feminist standpoint theory states that all knowledge is socially situated and that the standpoints of the subjugated, of what Donna Haraway calls 'marked bodies'—bodies that are different from the normative ideal—are preferred because they have a double vision: a combination of nearness and remoteness, concern and indifference. The oppressed have fewer interests in ignorance or denial of the critical and interpretive core of all knowledge, and thereby maximize objectivity (Harding, 1991; Haraway, 1988). Sandra Harding argues that "the particular forms of any emotion that women experience as an oppressed, exploited, and dominated gender have a distinctive content that is missing from all those parallel forms in their brothers' emotional life" (122). Identities, however, do not consist of separate aspects, but intersecting categories. The term intersectionality "aims to accentuate how people who fall into a combination of categories frequently lack the rights, protection and privileges enjoyed by (certain) others" (Staunæs and Søndergaard, 2011). It is important in a structural system which favours the categories male, white, affluent, heterosexual, slim, able-bodied, and young, and marginalises those who do not fall into one or more of these categories. Intersectional approaches show the specific and complex interaction between -isms such as (hetero)sexism, racism, and class marginalisation.

³ Judith Butler states that bodies are cultivated "into discrete sexes with 'natural' appearances and 'natural' heterosexual dispositions" (524), that is to say, to fit into what is seen as natural (and, in that sense, 'normal') one has to look and act in a specific way that fits their biological sex. Gender is a performance, but these performances have to fit into the cultural norm. Although there is more to gender than the binary opposition of this cultivation, for this research I focus on cisgender men and women in heterosexual family units in order to look at specific gender inequalities in paid work and care work alike.

However, this discourse has a tendency to reduce and fix identities and categories and ignores the negative influences normative ideals may have on privileged groups. It creates what Dorte Staunæs and Dorte Søndergaard call a minority perspective (52). Such a perspective looks mainly at marginalised groups, and reduces reflexivity in relation to the majority and silences how the majority is constituted. Such a particular power-critical concept, Staunæs and Søndergaard state, makes it possible to create an identity politics⁴ in which the focus of research and the political concern and loyalty are reserved for the minoritised. Therefore, this research focuses on the standpoint of people in the intersection between two majoritised groups: heterosexual, cisgender men. How do traditional gender roles influence them? It is important not to ignore a privileged standpoint in writing about gender politics, because it may heavily influence ideas on gender roles as well as being influenced by them. In this research, the focus lies on fatherhood and work culture. Paid parental leave shows clear signs of gender inequality and traditional ideas on gender roles in the Netherlands: mothers have a right to sixteen weeks of paid leave, whereas fathers only have the right to five days. The context of parenthood is one where an often privileged group of people (heterosexual men) experience marginalising practices—which in turn influence less privileged groups (heterosexual women) when it comes to career opportunities. I sketch an overview of the construction of masculinity and the importance of fatherhood by using existing literature to set out a theoretical framework and connecting this with gender studies concepts such as standpoint theory. I then use a mixed methods analysis of quantitative and qualitative data to show what fathers in traditional family units see as important to a father-friendly organisation. By the end of the research I will show the importance of looking, from a critical gender perspective, at privileged groups in order to make changes that may benefit both them as well as marginalized groups, and answer the question, how can father-friendly organisations help deconstruct traditional gender roles? This deconstruction is important, as I show that men spending time with their family is important to the child's development and overall family happiness, and in turn leads to women not being limited to caring for the child and give them more opportunity to participate in the work force if wished for. I hope to give organisations a handhold to facilitate a desired balance between work and family for men and subsequently, more equal opportunities for women in order to help facilitate a deconstruction of traditional, female-carer/male-breadwinner gender roles.

⁴ Liz Bondi describes identity politics in the context of an intersectional approach as being “about deconstructing and reconstructing (necessarily multiple) identities in order to resist and undermine dominant mythologies that serve to sustain particular systems of power relations” (94). By redefining and asserting identity, dominant groups can be challenged and the subordinate can be organised: through identity politics, they can resist their position as ‘Other’.

2. Performative masculinity

“One is not born, but rather, *becomes* a woman.” This is a well-known statement by Simone de Beauvoir from her influential book *The Second Sex* (1949), and it summarizes the idea which Judith Butler built her theory about gender performance around (1988). This theory combines the phenomenological theory of acts, which states that social agents constitute social reality through mundane ways such as language, gesture, and all manner of symbolic social sign, with the social construction of gender as opposed to the biological construct of sex. Gender is not, says Butler, a stable identity or a locus of agency from which acts proceed, but rather the other way round: gender is an identity instituted through a “stylized repetition of acts” (519). These acts are performed by the body and become public, a cycle through which cultural gender performance is repeated and also, through punishment and reward, controlled. Not only do these acts constitute the identity of the person performing them; they constitute this identity as an object of belief. The continuous and public repetition of certain acts become a gender exactly through their repetition: this is what a specific gender has to look and act like. One is not born a woman, but becomes a woman through performing acts that are associated with femininity: through performing those acts which line up with one’s biological sex.⁵ In this chapter I sketch an overview of the construction of masculinity and fatherhood in Western culture in order to provide a context to which organisations must work to develop a more father-friendly work environment, and to show why men face problems achieving the work/family balance they desire.

If woman is something one becomes rather than simply is, and gender is constructed through performative acts, it follows that man as an identity is also a social construct. In this chapter I look at masculinities—because there is no one singular definition of what masculinity is, but rather it is a complicated plurality that, as I will show in this chapter, works on the intersection with several other identity characteristics. Liedeke Plate, in her chapter ‘Mannelijkheid als strijdtoneel’ (‘Masculinity as battleground’, 2015), for instance describes hegemonic masculinity as “the at a specific moment culturally idealized form of masculinity—not always the same everywhere” (166). Not only is hegemonic masculinity then only one particular way of expressing one’s (masculine) gender identity, it also differs culturally and throughout time. Raewyn Connell summarizes this by stating that masculinity is relational: it is a place within a structure of relationships, a way of dealing with that

⁵ The idea of ‘becoming’ one’s gender is important in the distinction of gender (cultural) and sex (biological), which do not necessarily always line up. Although gender is more complicated than binary terms such as masculine/feminine suggest, this research focuses on cisgender men and the specific problems they face as a result of gender hegemony.

space, and the effects of that place and the way of dealing with it on an individual and cultural level (1995; in Plate, 169).

Most important in discussing masculinity is to determine what constitutes as hegemonic masculinity at that time and space. Not only is this the culturally idealised model of masculinity, and thus the most desirable, it is also supported by social practices and institutions, such as paid work, housework, care work, violence, and sexuality (Plate, 170). Connell & Messerschmidt (2005) similarly describe an understanding of hegemonic masculinity in the 'power relations research' that emerged in the 1980s as a pattern of practice to be able to keep patriarchal dominance over women; an ascendancy that was achieved by culture, institutions, and persuasion, and that did not necessarily mean violence but could indeed be supported by force. This means hegemonic masculinity is not only important in coming to an understanding how the construct of 'man' works, but also in understanding the culture that supports it. Due to the diversity of masculine gender expression and the location of this research, I focus here on what masculinities mean in the contemporary Western world. In 1969, Patricia Sexton stated that

[To be male] means, obviously, holding male values and following male behaviour norms. Male norms stress values such as courage, inner direction, certain forms of aggression, autonomy, mastery, technological skill, group solidarity, adventure, and a considerable amount of toughness in mind and body. *The Feminized Male* (in Carrigan, Connell, & Lee (1985: 562))

These 'male norms and values' describe the hegemonic masculinity in that time and space: they are what it means to be male, and thus have to be performed as acts in order to attain the status of 'man'. But this brings with it certain problems.

In the 1970s, much of the literature on masculinity⁶ concerned the restrictions, disadvantages, and general penalties of being a man (Carrigan, Connell, & Lee, 564), but remained close to the idea of Sexton's 'masculine traditional values' (566). Although Carrigan and his colleagues published this paper several decades ago, these ideas on masculinity still play an important role in white, Western culture. Connell (2014) gives as one example how media, for instance, contains specific gender arrangements and meanings, replays familiar narratives of masculinity and femininity, and is overwhelmingly heteronormative, as seen in the way pornography portrays women as objects of

⁶ For a bibliography of literature on masculinity in the 1970s, see Grady, K. E., R. Brannon, and J. H. Pleck. "The male sex role: An annotated bibliography." *Rockville, MD: US Department of Health, Education and Welfare* (1979).

desire and consumption for men. The idea of normative gender thus intersects with, among other things, the category of sexuality: hegemonic masculinity (and femininity) are heterosexual.

Western hegemonic masculinity thus puts value in heteronormativity, rationality, and toughness—limiting the range of acceptable emotional expression. It cannot be ignored that this narrow window of idealized gender expression has consequences. Connell & Messerschmidt (2005) highlight two main problems that arise from this kind of idealization. For one, the pursuit of hegemonic masculinity leads to particular patterns of aggression. Hegemonic masculinity is only one position in a range of masculine gender expressions—it is not normal in the statistical sense, but it is normative, which means men are required to position themselves in relation to this ideal. From these positions of powerlessness men attempt to appropriate the hegemonic position, which can lead to dangerous and unhealthy behaviour both for the men themselves, for the women and children around them who become victims of their aggression and violence, and for the world and environment as a whole—engaging in wars and violent conflict, among other things (Plate, 173). Other ways Connell & Messerschmidt describe which hegemonic masculinity damages men are both mentally and physically. As expressing emotion—other than perhaps aggression—falls outside the boundaries of hegemonic masculinity, it becomes a likely option to internalize feelings instead. These problems show clearly how the Western hegemonic ideal of masculinity fits into Butler's theory as being an unattainable symbol—a performative social ideal—more than a naturally enacted expression of gender or an inherent biological trait.

The intersection of social identity categories plays an important role in this. According to Connell (1995; in Plate, 169), hegemonic masculinity as well as the relational structures of dominance/subordination, complicity, and marginalisation/authorisation, determine relations between (groups of) men. Connell gives the examples of heterosexual and homosexual men who take up the positions of dominant and subordinate, respectively, and black men, who are marginalised in current Western society. It follows that homosexual black men, then, experience a marginalising process influenced by more than one identity category by existing on an intersection of identity categories that fall outside the normative ideal. This means that within masculine hegemony, there are still hierarchical structures that are largely constructed through the intersections of gender, sexuality, and race. This is important to the existence of different masculinities that exist in relation to the cultural ideal, rather than masculinity as a singular subject. Connell concludes that different masculinities are not manifestations of free will or life style—not gender expressions necessarily chosen by their subject—but *enforced*. Hegemonic masculinity is not only difficult to attain, it is heteronormative, racialized, and cisgendered.

Such specific gender norms have consequences across different contexts, not in the least in family life for the practice of fatherhood. “Most accounts of hegemonic masculinity do include such ‘positive’ actions as bringing home a wage, sustaining a sexual relationship, and being a father,” Connell and Messerschmidt state. But within hegemonic masculinity, what does fatherhood mean? When it comes to traditional gender roles, fathers used to be seen as one-dimensional patriarchs or breadwinners (Duyvendak & Stavenuyter, 2004). However, Dutch research was carried out showing the changes in the motivation for parenthood over time: Namely, that increasingly men choose fatherhood for emotional and affective reasons (Jacobs, 1995; Jacobs, 1998; Knijn, 1997; in Duyvendak & Stavenuyter, 2004: 17). Fathers wish to see their children grow up and want to give them love and affection, rather than be an emotionally distant provider—motives that were traditionally seen as female (*ibid.*). Ideas on fatherhood are changing, as seen by such things as the increase of fatherhood coaches; the modern father is active and emotionally involved. However, as I show in the following section, corporate culture does not yet concede to such a change.

Masculinity and neoliberalism

The current age is one of neoliberalism: there is an agenda of economic and social transformation under the sign of the free market that has come to dominate global politics. The goal of neoliberalism is to create new markets where they did not exist before, and to widen those markets that do already exist (Bradly & Luxton, 2010; in Connell, 2014). While hegemonic masculinity is supported by institutions, the neoliberalist climate influences these same institutions. Connell adds that corporations operating in global markets “typically have a marked, though complex, gender division of labour in their workforces, and a strongly masculinized management culture” (7). Before looking closely at fatherhood and the organisation in the next section, I highlight the importance of hegemonic masculinity in the context of organisational culture.

According to David Collinson & Jeff Hearn (1996), it was in the 1980s especially that masculine, abrasive, and highly autocratic management styles came to be valued and celebrated. These styles were seen as the most important means to success in the corporate world, and could be found as well in conventional managerial—frequently gendered and (hetero)sexualised—language and sports metaphors. This shows the way the intersection between gender and sexuality can be implicitly used to marginalise groups who do not fall in this specific combination of categories. Management positions were meant for men, and only if they fit into a specific, heterosexual, type of masculinity. Linda Haas & Philip Hwang, in their work on gender and organisational culture (2007), similarly connect traditional male values with the values that dominate organisations, summing up these values as rational communication and decision making, impersonality, hierarchical bureaucracy, analytical thinking, and toughness and aggressiveness; values that are similar to those Patricia

Sexton highlighted and linked to hegemonic masculinity in the late sixties. They also note that values that are traditionally associated with femininity and family life, such as emotion, flexibility, praise, and positive feedback, have historically been suppressed in organisational culture.

However, Collinson & Hearn too highlight the plurality of masculinities, rather than claiming these masculine values and gendered language are ones that all men homogeneously hold. They name not only identity markers such as age, sexuality or nationality as categories that intersect with gender, but also such things as occupation, career, and paternal status. That is to say, the category of 'male' cannot be described with a single definition, but consists of a diverse range of people and many different identity categories. This plurality shows the importance of an intersectional approach to literature about masculinity. The term intersectionality as a methodological concept was introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) in a paper called 'Demarginalising the intersection' to describe black female experience as separate from, rather than the sum of, black and female experience. The intersection of these categories creates a particular manner of subordination that differs from that of black men and white women (140). The concept shows the importance of looking at a combination of identity categories and how these shape someone's location. Yet in literature on topics such as managerial power, such a heterogeneity of the category 'male' is often not taken into account, meaning that these analyses go out from a singular white, heterosexual, cisgender—in other words, normative, hegemonic—masculinity. If to be male means to hold specific, normative masculine values, as Sexton (1969) claimed (in Carrigan et al., 1985), then to hold a masculine position within an organisation is to enact these values. Indeed, Haas & Hwang claim that it is masculine hegemony in organisations that has helped to institutionalise norms that are culturally associated with men and masculinity because the culture and practice of organisations are based on traditional masculine norms. Men are presumed to be suitable for power, and this leads to men rising to the top of organisational hierarchies, a practice which keeps these norms in place (2007: 56). However, none of the aforementioned literature looks into how this particular type of masculinity exists on the intersection of cisgender, heterosexual men. It assumes hegemonic masculinity to be one generalised characteristic that should be sought after by all men, regardless of any other identity categories they might fall into. Although the concept of intersectionality was initially introduced to look at identities which fall into more than one subordinated group at the same time, it can also be found useful in other contexts, as I will show further on in this research.

The above definition of managerial masculinities is important to keep in mind, because as Connell says, are embedded in the routines of organisational daily life, in the work of management, and in the ideologies of the corporate world (2010: 1). In line with Butler's theory on performative gender, these specific types of masculinities thus exist the way they do because they are performed within

organisations each day, and have become systems of belief—ideologies—that constitute such identities. In lining up with traditionally masculine values and hegemonic masculinity, this means as well that managerial masculinities are career-oriented rather than family-oriented. Similarly, if managerial masculinities are within the corporation as hegemonic masculinity is in society generally, this is the type of masculinity that all other (male) employees would strive for. However, more recently, several organisations have broken out of this hegemony—for instance, by offering longer paid leave to young fathers—and men are increasingly interested in care work. This seems to fit with Connell & Messerschmidt's claim that recently, there has been a softening of the imagery of masculinity; indeed, that masculinities are subject to change (837). This goes as well for managerial masculinities, which may change with economic circumstances, with changing technologies, and in response to challenges of women (Connell, 2010: 1)—and, increasingly, challenges from men themselves. In the following chapter, I look into the importance of current challenges and changes to masculine ideals, and what this means for corporate life.

3. Men, childcare, and the organisation

Sandra Harding in her work on feminist standpoint epistemology (1991) mentions the assertion of feminist standpoint theory that “material life” both structures and sets limits on human understanding, that is, what we can know (1991: 120). This means that a person’s objectivity is shaped by their location. Oppressed and exploited groups experience emotions that those in dominant groups do not (ibid. 122). In feminist standpoint theory, “the standpoints of the subjugated are preferred because in principle they are least likely to allow denial of the critical and interpretive core of all knowledge” (Haraway, 584). However, Harding’s definition, which uses gender as its main example, implies that what constitutes as ‘the subjugated’ is a fixed category (in this case, women). When it comes to labour, she writes, “starting our research from women’s activities in these [traditional] gender divisions of labour enables us to understand how and why social and cultural phenomena have taken the forms in which they appear to us” (131). By social and cultural phenomena, Harding means the connection of men to paid labour, and the connection of women to raising children, the latter which she sees as being invisible to those who are not involved in it. But how does this go together with men’s current increase in interest in care work?

Staunæs and Søndergaard press that it must be looked at who is cast as the subjugated—the marginalised Other—at a specific point in time and space, and how, in specific contexts, the dominant may momentarily become the subjugated Other (52). An intersectional approach may be useful in this process. Although the term is usually used in the context of political science and juridical decisions on civil rights for marginalised groups, Staunæs and Søndergaard state that dominant and dominated positions are not set positions which can always be assumed to be the same, but are part of ongoing minoritising and majoritising processes. Intersectionality aims at accentuating how people who fall into a particular category combined with specific other categories frequently lack the rights, protection, and privileges enjoyed by (certain) others (46-47), but, like standpoint theory, often presumes set social categories rather than considering the specific moment in time and space. The combination of categories that I look at in this research is the intersection of heterosexual, cisgender males. Research on parenthood has often focused on women and motherhood. Men are often seen as first and foremost the breadwinner of the family, whereas the mother is seen as the primary carer; research that indicated an important role of fathers in child rearing was often seen as an exception (Tavecchio, 2015). But recent developments such as organisations voluntarily increasing paternity leave and the rise of fatherhood coaches suggest a wish for change. In this chapter, I set out a theoretical framework that shows the positive consequences of active fatherhood in traditional family units and the need for father-friendly organisations, as well as the reasons why women are often still more present in the family space.

Positive consequences of active fatherhood

According to Michael Wells and Anna Sarkadi, fathers have taken on increasingly more duties and responsibilities when it comes to raising their children than previous generations of fathers (25). This statement is backed up by statistics from the Dutch CBS (Central Statistics Centre), which were released in August 2016 and showed an increase of fathers taking up parental leave in the past decade—from 6 to 11% percent (BNR, 2016). As literature has shown that father involvement is important to the child's development in many areas, an equality policy such as Sweden's—which allows parents to split 480 days of parental leave between them, with two months exclusively reserved for each parent (Penning & Van der Woude, 2012)—is beneficial not only to the parents, but not in the least to the child. A vast literature shows that a positive relationship with the father during the early years contributes to the child's social, emotional, behavioural, linguistic, and educational development (Wells & Sarkadi, 2012; Dumont & Paquette, 2013; Tavecchio, 2015; McWayne, Downer, Campo & Harris, 2013; see also Tavecchio & Bos, 2011; Allen & Daly, 2007). For instance, the way fathers play with their children has been related to the children's socio-emotional development, by stimulating an active, competitive, autonomous, and curious attitude, which leads to a better social status among their peers and appears to protect the child from separation anxiety and fear of new things (Tavecchio, 20). When children are understimulated by their fathers during play, they have a higher chance of being less confident and neglected more by their peers. Children who are overstimulated, on the other hand, are more likely to have externalized behavioural problems and to be rejected by their peers (Dumont & Paquette, 432). Additionally, fathers may uniquely contribute to children's self-regulatory behaviour and language development by using more complex, challenging language with young children when interacting with them and reading to them, which could serve as a medium both for language development and for learning about the communicative demands of a classroom environment (McWayne et al., 899; Duursma, in Tavecchio, 21). These contributions go beyond what the child would learn solely from the relationship with the mother. Indeed, as Warshak states, "Each relationship makes some unique and some overlapping contributions to children's development. They affect different aspects of a child's psychological development" (47-48). However, these findings may propagate an unwarranted idea of gender essentialism which may hurt families with same-sex parents. It is important to note that several researchers argue that the influence of parents on the development on their child does not depend so much on the parents' sex, but on the gender role that the parent takes on. This means that effects currently attributed to the father should really be attributed to the parent who takes on the more secondary role in caring for the child (Keizer, 2016). This argument, however, does imply that

fathers are most often the ones who are secondary carers, and shows how the heterosexual, traditional distribution of gender roles is engrained in society.

Because of these unique contributions of different types of parenting, designating one parent—which, conforming traditional gender roles, is still most often the mother in heterosexual family units—as the primary caregiver, endangers the relationship with the other parent. It often limits their time with the child and may consequently fail to have positive influences on the child's development. The father, then, should be able to spend as much time with the child as the mother does. Marie Evertsson, Katarina Boye & Jeylan Erman point out both fathers and mothers describe how the relationship between father and child has grown stronger during the father's leave from work and that afterwards, the child will turn to both parents when in need of comfort rather than just the mother (28). Fathers who have taken a significant share of parental leave also tend to be more comfortable in their relationship with the child and their fathering practices themselves (*ibid.*, 6). In order to have a positive relationship with the child, parental leave is required that allows parent a period of total involvement with the child, attentiveness to his or her communicative signals, and preoccupation with being a parent; an involvement that is most important during the first weeks of life (Feldman, Sussman, & Zigler, 461). Even earlier than that, higher involvement of fathers during their partner's pregnancy and the transition phase into fatherhood significantly relates to higher engagement of the father later on, and more interaction with their children during the early years of their lives. These fathers have more and stronger opportunities to bond with the child and their partner and to develop their own identity as a father (Tromp, 2009).

It must be noted that, while paternal involvement in the child's early life has many positive developments for the child's development, it also has positive influences on both of the parents. Fathers who are involved in early child care act as a support system to the mother during pregnancy and after the delivery of the child. With this emotional support, mothers are more likely to enjoy a greater sense of well-being, have a relatively problem free pregnancy, delivery process, and nursing experience, and maintain or adopt healthy pregnancy behaviours, while being less likely to develop post-partum depression and stress. Fathers themselves appear to be more emotionally mature, social, and supportive (Allen & Daly, 2007). Not only do these findings show benefits for the parents individually, they also indirectly imply a more stable and supportive environment for the child within the family. Additionally, research has shown that children with divorced parents also benefit from father involvement: children in shared parenting arrangements have proved to have less behavioural and emotional problems, higher levels of self-worth and self-confidence, a higher capability of building and preserving social contacts and relations, a better performance in school, a higher life satisfaction, and an overall better development. Children from families with divorced parents are

better adapted and adjusted when both parents stay significantly involved in the child's upbringing (Tromp, 2013). This shows that paternal involvement stays important across different family situations.

Lastly, according to Evertsson, Boye, & Erman, fathers' parental leave is a strong indicator of gender equality in the actual sharing of child care when both parents are back at work again (28), and more women will go back to work when their male partners are more involved in care work (OECD report, 2015). In line with these findings, Susanne Fahlén states that more equal sharing of housework is found in countries with longer parental leave policies, in particular for fathers, and no gender discriminatory policy. This suggests that early father involvement as facilitated by father-friendly measures such as paternal leave plays a role in the deconstruction of traditional gender roles.

In short, there is much to say for policies that will increase paternal involvement in family life in order to aid the development of young children and provide stability in the household for the whole family. However, statutory leave is still low in many European countries and its implementation meets many obstacles. One of these countries is The Netherlands, with a focus on a model in which often the male partner works full-time and does little to free more time for the father to spend with his family. According to Fahlén, men's share of household work in dual-earner couples is particularly small in The Netherlands because their support of part-time work and part-time child care often results in an unequal division of paid work and translates into an unequal division of the housework (18). That is to say: traditional gender roles are reinforced by the support of part-time jobs, because it is often the woman in a male/female couple who use this.

As Fahlén also shows that fathers do more housework in countries where they are entitled to parental leave (5), I will look into the reasons fathers still often do not take up leave and what will have to change in order for them to do so, especially at the organisational level. Particularly, I describe how paternal leave can contribute to the father-friendly organisation, and how it can be implemented. Because the project focuses on father-friendly measures such as paternity leave after the partner has given birth to a child, I focus on the heterosexual family unit. That said, it is important to note that this is not the only type of family unit, and that more research is necessary to be able to say more about non-traditional units.

Fatherhood in the organisation

Fatherhood is a cultural construction, as argued by Rohner & Veneziano (2001)⁷: once formulated, it has implications for the behaviour of those who share the beliefs and assumptions defining this construction (384). That is to say, there are specific ideas about what motherhood and fatherhood entail that dominate society as a whole and, more specifically, work place culture. These ideas still line up with traditional gender roles, where the mother is the domestic carer and the father the breadwinner (Tavecchio, 2015; Rohner & Veneziano, 2013). Particularly in organisational culture, these norms are still abundantly clear. Ranson speaks of this in a paper about the conceptualization of the working father, mentioning “the extent to which organisations are gendered, in which expectations about ideal workers are linked to men whose family responsibilities, if they have them, never intrude on their working lives” (743). Fathers must support their families mainly economically, and family life may not intrude on this. However, where employment for men is something that is part of fatherhood, if not the main component, mothering and employment are seen as “oppositional arenas” which are mutually exclusive. The father’s task is to focus on his professional career in order to support his family, while the mother’s main task is to care for the children and the household, which leaves her no time to build up or keep up a professional career. This gendered separation of work and family is an ideology which Haas & Hwang (2007) describe as the *doctrine of separate spheres*, which allows employers to take little responsibility for family well-being and family-friendly policies. This leads to an unfriendly workplace culture with regards to male caregiving. Fathers will be less likely to use or want to use their right to parental leave when met with hostile cultural norms dictating them to focus on paid labour and economical support—the breadwinner—to the family. Such norms create a social stigma against fathers who want to be involved in early child rearing.

This stigma is only one of several reasons for fathers to take up less parental leave days than mothers even when they have an opportunity to, such as in Sweden. One possible other reason is that often the mother acts as a gatekeeper to child rearing duties, limiting the father’s possible participation and the amount of leave taking (Wells & Sarkadi, 27; Tavecchio, 17). Another reason that comes up often in literature is a financial one. Becker (1993) called this “specialized human capital”: the way paid and unpaid work is distributed in a rational agreement between the partners depends on wages. The partner who earns less from the paid work then takes up more of the unpaid work to maximise the common good (in Fahlén, 3). As women often face labour market

⁷ This can be seen as similar to the construction of gender as theorized by Judith Butler (1988). Rohner & Veneziano add that constructions of fatherhood and motherhood are influenced by cultural conceptions of masculinity and femininity, which fits into Butler’s *systems of belief* of certain gender identities.

discrimination, it is often the female partner who reduces their employment to take up family work (Haas & Hwang, 2007: 57).

That said, Haas & Hwang (2009) claim the greatest obstacle to men wanting to take up paternal leave originates not in individual gender identities or family economics, but in the gendered culture of work organisations (28). Organisational culture both holds on to gendered ideas and accommodates them, making it difficult for women to rise in organisational hierarchy and for men to combine work and family, even though research has pointed out the father is important in particularly the child's early development. Indeed statistics have pointed out that a large part of fathers who do not take up parental leave, even although many of them want to, for fear of losing career opportunities (BNR, 2016). This culture, then, needs to change in order for gender equality to be possible, both in the work space and with regards to housework. Despite the lack of father-friendly policies in many countries including the Netherlands, there is a lot to say for the equality model Sweden has implemented. It is important here to focus on how the organisation can be father-friendly in order to move towards a gender-equal organisation: more father-friendly measures and work culture might lead to fathers taking up more leave to take care of their child, which would allow for more female labour force involvement. In fact, welfare state policies designed to mediate work and family obligations originated in order to facilitate women's labour market participation, and were extended in the 1970s and -80s to encourage fathers to participate in family life (Hojgaard, 250). Although these policies were initially focused on women, it implies that a similar goal may be achieved when implemented the other way around. According to an insight report of the World Economic Forum (2015), "maternity, paternity and parental leave—or any other type of additional shared leave—are closely associated with women's economic participation in many parts of the world and are thus an important element of policies aimed at more efficient use of the country's human capital pool. Parental benefits enabling mothers, fathers or both to take paid or unpaid time off to care for a child following birth can increase women's participation in the workforce and foster a more equitable division of childrearing" (43), a consequence that would follow from the stronger bond fathers have the more involved they are in their child's early life. Additionally, the report finds that countries which offer paternity leave are most successful in closing the gender wage gap. These findings show that paternal involvement is important not only to the development of the child, but also to gender equality issues in organisational culture.

The father-friendly organisation

In order to achieve gender equality in work culture, organisations should strive for more father-friendly policies. But in order to be able to do this, it is necessary to conceptualize what it means to be a father-friendly organisation. Haas & Hwang (2007: 53) define it as follows:

Companies that are responsive to fathers have policies and work practices that facilitate fathers' active participation in early child care; they have accepted that norms associated with the family sphere are important enough to introduce into the work setting; they take for granted that fathers as well as mothers are capable of and interested in providing early child care.

As Sallee (365) states, the father-friendly organisation not only encourages, but expects fathers to make use of family-friendly policies. The cultures in these organisations actively support fathers' efforts to balance work and family life. This means formal policies and support programs for paternity leave have to be in place, fathers taking leave have to experience positive informal support from managers and co-workers, and a large proportion of fathers must take their entitlement to leave, helping to establish a workplace norm of fathers taking leave (Haas & Hwang, 2009; qtd. in Sallee, 365). Simply put, the father-friendly organisation is one where men are both formally and informally supported and encouraged to utilize family-friendly policies to help them balance work and family life. All these domains—formal policy, formal programs, informal support, and informal flexibility—are included in Haas & Hwang's Father-Friendliness Index (2007), which they measured in, one of the top countries with regards to equality in parental leave. According to Wells & Sarkadi, the main purpose of Sweden's parental leave policy was to reconcile the family-work balance and officially recognize both parents as equal partners in caring for their young children (26). However, The Netherlands is far down on the list of paternal leave policies in Europe and the father-friendliness of their companies have not been measured through this same lens before. But a shift in culture is coming up: there are some companies that have gone beyond the five days of leave fathers can take up without being legally forced to. According to marketing consultancy agency Yonego, this is an investment in the happiness and success of all employees in the company. In addition to this shift, as shown by Moss (2013) and statistics from the CBS (BNR, 2016), an increasing percentage of fathers take up part-time parental leave. Through this research, I will look at the current differences between and within organisations with regards to providing help to fathers who want to take up family leave benefits, and whether fathers would be interested in such a certification mark that would tell them what to expect from an organisation in this regard. It is important to ask the fathers for their standpoint with regards to fatherhood as well as family-friendly policies.

With regards to previous literature, this mark would have to look mainly at formal programs and policies in place to help fathers balance work and family, support of fathers wanting to use family leave benefits within the organisation, support of gender equality within the organisation, and flexibility with regards to working hours.

4. Methodological framework

In order to find the importance of father-friendliness in The Netherlands from fathers' point of view, I have developed two hypotheses to measure father-friendliness in both company culture and Dutch culture as a whole. The first hypothesis is focused on the father-friendliness of organisations in the Netherlands. The second looks at the aspects of organisational culture and outside influences on the father's likeliness to want to take up paternal leave. These hypotheses are meant to look at cultural masculine values from the standpoint of fathers, which is especially important because in corporate culture, this is the standpoint of the subjugated. Fathers who want to spend time at home with their children do not fit into the ideal of managerial masculinity, and thus their point of view on these topics cannot be ignored in order to come to a more father-inclusive organisation.

In the Netherlands, men take up relatively few parental leave days, even though they are entitled to it. Linda Haas & Philip Hwang's 2007 Father-Friendliness Index suggests four domains that are important to fathers wanting to take up leave. Measured in Sweden, the average father-friendliness score among organisations was modest, and only 3% of companies had scores of 50 percent or more of what was possible (2007). With Sweden having radically different legal policies than the Netherlands, the former which are more focused on equality, I hypothesise that Dutch organisations will score badly on father-friendliness.

Hypothesis 1. Dutch companies will score low on father-friendliness on average.

In order to connect the father-friendliness of organisations to cultural ideas of masculinity and answer the question how cultural values influence a work-family balance, I will focus on these values in the next hypothesis. An example of such cultural values can be seen in the different policies of The Netherlands, and Sweden, where day care is well organised and affordable: its price is dependent on the family income and the amount of children in the family, whereas in the Netherlands part-time work and help from grandparents and close friends and family is promoted (Penning & Van Der Woude, 2012), an ideal of homeliness versus the Scandinavian ideal of equality. I hypothesise that masculine cultural values as found in The Netherlands have a negative effect on the father's ability to balance work and family life, both within the organisation and in society as a whole. This hypothesis will show the influence of masculinist culture on this particular group of men.

Hypothesis 2. A less masculinist work culture, as indicated by support from managers and co-workers, will improve the likeliness of men wanting to take up paternal leave.

Study methods

For this study, a mixed methods analysis was used to collect quantitative as well as qualitative data through a survey and interviews respectively. The survey was conducted of Dutch fathers with children of elementary school age and younger, and expecting fathers. That is, fathers who will soon have, currently have, or recently have had a right to some type of leave. It was distributed online via social media. Additionally, five interviews were held to gather more in-depth insight of the quantitative data found and to have a clear sketch of the viewpoint of fathers on the subject. From the view of standpoint theory, this target group is important in learning about the issue at hand. In an organisational context, they form a subjugated group—thus the group with the fewest interests in ignorance (Harding, 125). While Connell & Messerschmidt (2005) assume that hegemonic masculinity is something all men pursue, this view does not take into account the way men try to balance the way they are expected to act with involvement in a sphere where normative masculinity dictates a certain distance. Through both quantitative survey data and qualitative interviews, I bring into view this standpoint.

Measuring father-friendliness

In order to measure the father-friendliness of Dutch organisations, an edited version of Haas & Hwang's 2007 Father-Friendliness Index (FFI) was used. Although the original FFI was meant for personnel directors, I adapted it to be aimed at employees. Because fathers are a marginalised group in organisational culture, it is from their standpoint that the most inclusive information can be obtained, as they are less likely to turn a blind eye to problems that can be encountered by fathers in the company. It was therefore important for male employees in a traditional family unit to evaluate their possibilities to balance work and family life. The edited FFI was then translated into Dutch, as this research focuses on The Netherlands specifically.

As in the original FFI, this survey measured four dimensions of father-friendliness: formal policy, formal programs, informal support, and informal flexibility. It measured on a scale from 1 to 10 whether employees agreed with four statements per domain. For formal policy, these included a) the importance to the organisation to make it possible for all employees to combine work and family, b) whether the personnel director has sufficient knowledge and instruments to help men combine work and family, c) whether the organisation kept records of how many fathers took up paid leave, and d) whether the organisation has taken a clear formal decision to help men combine work and family.

Items measuring formal programs recorded the fathers' feelings on a) whether they had sufficient access to formal flextime, b) if there was a specific person or group in charge of encouraging men in

their organisation to take family leave benefits, c) whether there were programs to stimulate men in their organisation to take family leave benefits, and d) whether the organisation offers sufficient programs and measures specifically directed toward working fathers. Additionally to the last item, fathers could indicate what kind of measures they would like for their organisation to offer in case they had indicated for the current measures to be insufficient.

The FFI also includes two subindices that look beyond formal provision of work-family benefits. The first is informal support, which asked participants in how much they agreed with the statements that a) the typical reaction of managers to fathers wanting to take up parental leave is generally positive, b) the typical reaction of co-workers to fathers wanting to take up parental leave is generally positive, c) they feel problems would come up if more fathers within their organisation wanted to take up parental leave, and d) managers in their organisation function as examples for employees in the organisation and take up parental leave or other benefits to reduce their working hours to care for their child.

The final subindex measured the organisation's informal flexibility by asking fathers a) how easy it is for fathers in their organisation to stay home to take care of sick children, b) how easy it is for fathers in their organisation to avoid having to take long trips out of town, c) how easy it is for fathers in their organisation to refuse to work overtime, and d) how easy it is for fathers in their organisation to adjust work times to their children's times at school or day care.

In order to be able to split formal and informal support, that is, formal policies and programs and informal work culture, these measures will be considered at separately as well as together.

Independent variables

Type of fatherhood. This variable is based on a typology by Wall, Aboim, & Marinho (2007), who distinguished seven categories of fatherhood by looking at, among other things, the father's perception of his place in the family, the division of paid and unpaid work within the family, and the perception of the father regarding his care for the child. Items regarded the father's own perceived role(s) in the family, the division of care work between the partners (male focused, female focused, or equal), and their closeness to the child (on a scale of 1-5). This variable is important in order to compare hegemonic masculine ideals to fathers' own perception of what it means to be a father. The outcome of this comparison must be taken into consideration when analysing the data.

Father's interest in involvement in family life. In order to measure the wishes of fathers to be more involved in their children's upbringing, items were included to measure the extent to which Dutch fathers are content with current parental leave policies and whether a certification mark for father-

friendly organisations would play a role in their choosing an organisation to apply to. These items show the extent to which fathers are interested in a change in normative organisational culture.

Partner support. This variable was measured by including an item to measure the partner being open to the father taking up longer leave, and the importance to the partner of an organisation offering father-friendly programs and policies.

In-depth interviews

In addition to the survey, five in-depth interviews have been conducted with fathers of young children in order to be able to connect qualitative information to the quantitative data of the survey, to better understand the reasoning of men who are involved in the topic of fatherhood. These interviews are especially important in understanding the obstacles fathers face at work and what needs to change in this regard. Why are father-friendly benefits important to them (or not), and if it is, what are the obstacles they have encountered in being involved in their children's lives? The interviews were meant to gain more insight in the quantitative data obtained by the survey.

The interviews were semi-structured and covered the following topics: how much time and effort the fathers put into taking care of their child (in relation to how much time they spend at work); to what extent the fathers are content with the current ways they are able to balance work and family life, and their reasoning behind this; and, if the case is they are not content with their current work/family balance, what obstacles they run into and what changes they would like to see in organisational culture. The goal of these interviews is to gain an understanding of the standpoint of a group that is most often seen as privileged, about a specific point in which they are not. While feminist standpoint theory focuses on the view of the marginalized group in order to come to the most objective conclusion, this marginalized group is often assumed to always be the same, and does not often include this specific group of men.

5. Masculinity and fatherhood: connections and consequences

The survey was distributed through social media and filled in by 65 fathers of young children (under ten years of age). I look at several different variables to sketch a background context for the hypotheses as well as to answer them.

Before looking at the FFI results, I look at the variable Type of Fatherhood in order to see how fathers see themselves compared to hegemonic masculinity and fatherhood as described in chapter one: the one-dimensional patriarchal breadwinner—who, however, increasingly chooses to spend more time with the family for emotional and affective reasons. This variable consisted of four items that measured gender equality within the household and how the father perceived himself. First of all, over half of the respondents (52.3%) indicated there is a more or less equal division of household tasks between them and their partner. However, out of the remaining fathers, 41.5% said that it is mainly their female partner who takes care of household tasks, compared to 6.2% that stated it was mainly them. However, 64.3% of fathers indicated their partner has a part-time job, compared to 33.8% of fathers themselves. Dutch fathers do see themselves mainly as breadwinner (76.9%), which fits into the traditional male gender role; however, a majority of fathers also indicated their role is that of caregiver (64.6%) and support to their partner (53.8%), which shows emotional and affective motivations in line with the observation of Duyvendak & Stavenuyter that increasingly, men choose fatherhood for these reasons. Only a minority of fathers indicated more unequal roles such as head of the family (20%) or more emotionally distant roles such as educator to their children (15.4%). Indeed, the average score on the strength of the bond between father and child was 4.5 out of 5 and shows involvement of the father with the child's life. This shows a difference from hegemonic masculinity that is a fairly recent change, according to one of the interviewed fathers. "I can see a change [in what it means to be a father]. My father acts very differently when it comes to my daughter than my mother does. He will not take a walk with the stroller as easily, for instance. But I think these kinds of differences are decreasing. Fathers are more and more showing that they [are also interested in care work]."

Although Dutch fathers do see themselves as fitting into the traditional male role of breadwinner, there is also an emotional component to their type of fatherhood that is traditionally more linked to female characteristics. This goes together with a changing society that includes fatherhood coaches and organisations voluntarily offering longer paternal leave than the two days required. Dutch fathers, then, take up a place within masculine ideals that involves both normative masculine characteristics and more affective, traditionally feminine ideals when it comes to family life. It is

from this standpoint that this group of respondents look at organisational culture and its needs for change.

Hypothesis 1 states that organisations in The Netherlands are likely not father-friendly. As one item was deleted from the adapted Father-Friendliness Index due to possible confusion, the maximum score on the full index was 150. The total average Dutch men gave their organisations on father-friendliness was 75.01, only 50% of the total score. When looking at how this relates to the subindices, there are several interesting findings.⁸

The first subindex, formal policy, shows a 50.3% rating and is closest to the FFI average. It is rated highest by men in leadership positions (6.16), compared to a rating of 5.24 by men in general and technical services and 4.46 by men in executive positions. The lowest rating within this subindex was whether the organisation had made a clear formal decision to help fathers balance work and family life, with a general average of 4.18.

The subindex formal programs only scores an average of 3.63 out of 10 and is the only subindex that is rated below 50% by people from executive, supporting, and leadership positions. The subindex also includes the only three items out of the index that are rated with a general average below 4: the sufficiency of facilities on offer to help fathers balance work and family (3.83), encouragement from the company for men to take up parental leave (2.72), and programs to stimulate uptake of leave (2.29). This correlates with the percentage of fathers who state that the paternal leave they were able to take up was not sufficient, nor would an upgrade from two to five days have been sufficient. 80% of fathers indicated they would have liked to be able to take up more paid leave. During the interviews, fathers indicated differing favoured amounts of time to spend at home after the birth of the child. During the interviews, one of the fathers stated that “it is weird that we think we live in an emancipated country and that men actually get two days of [paid] leave and three without pay. (...) If you compare it to the Scandinavian countries for instance, or something like that, then it’s laughable, those few days you get here. So I would say a month at least, a few weeks, so that at least you can decide for yourself about it. Because I noticed at home, especially after the birth of your first child, those few days are over before you realize it. You are needed at home.” In two other interviews, the fathers acknowledged that there are different factors at play, such as complications after the birth for mother or child. While the majority of men indicate they would prefer a longer paid leave than they are able to take up now, there is no specific period

⁸ See Appendix for full table of results FFI

of time that is agreed on to be the best. S.⁹, father of a two-year-old daughter and also coach to prospective fathers, said:

I think it is beautiful, if an organization takes that step [to voluntarily offer longer paid leave]. But it is not that, erm, that that would be that. It is about being more open to it in general. And that is very personal, depending on—your boss, your chef, your work. (...) It is about really looking into the situation and seeing, hey, wait a minute, this man needs a bit more for this, I am going to sit around the table with him. And then getting to an understanding from both sides, of, how can we do this together [to end up with the best possible option for both].

He pleads for a more open and understanding work culture, where informal support and flexibility take precedence over set measures, despite agreeing that formal rules can be helpful.

When it comes to informal possibilities, it is interesting to see that the subindices that look at informal support and informal flexibility score highest on the index: 56.2% and 54.7% respectively. Informal flexibility, such as the ability to take off work to take care of a sick child and the ability to work overtime, scored highest among employees in general and technical services: 6.58, compared to 5.71 for fathers in leadership positions and as little as 5.07 for executive employees. This explains why fathers most often mentioned working more flexible times when asked for options they would like to see to help them facilitate their desired work/family balance.

For informal support, the relatively high score mainly comes from the positive reaction of managers (6.03) and co-workers (7.12) to fathers wanting to take up parental leave. However, when asked, three of the interviewed fathers indicated that management formed an obstacle. This was the case in different sectors, namely education, the hotel and catering industry, and building and architecture. However, when accounted for the father's position within the company, employees in executive work positions rated management support 4% lower than employees in general and technical services, and 10% lower than workers in a leadership position. Co-worker support, although ranging from 6.97 for executive employees to as much as 7.47 for men in leadership functions, was relatively highest for each position.

This leads me to the second hypothesis, which stated that a less masculinist work culture will improve the likeliness of men wanting to take up paternal leave. Fathers sometimes feel like they have to break the current norm within the organisation, which dictates they do not take up much leave to spend time with their family but focus on their career or the amount of work they have to

⁹ Interviewees' full names will not be disclosed in order to keep them anonymous.

do. Although he had the opportunity to take a longer period of leave, for three weeks after the birth of his second child, one father stated that

I had the impression that, at the university for instance, it did not happen often that fathers took up parental leave, and that there were a few hurdles before I got it done. (...) So the norm seemed to be, yeah, better not do it, and erm, why would you do that. So it felt like swimming against the tide. It is possible, but before you get it arranged, it is... It takes effort, so to say. And I can imagine that some people get scared off by that, both it taking effort and getting the idea that the norm is not to [take up leave]. (...) In an ideal world everyone would be very supportive, like, you get kids, everything revolves around that. But that is not the case with everyone. For different reasons. But [when it comes to taking up leave or not]... Do you make use of the facilities available... It plays a role.

Not only did he experience workplace norms that dictated not to take up parental leave, but there getting leave meant going through a lot of administration, which could put people off.

Another father, who worked in a restaurant at the time his child was born, spoke about the obstacles he ran into trying to take up leave that he should have a right to:

To be honest, I tried to get unpaid leave, and in theory you have a right to that. But, yeah, my boss just did not really agree with it, and he basically said, "if you want to take these days off, you can take up vacation days." In other words, you cannot go on vacation over the summer if every now and then you want to [spend a day with your child].

There is an active discouragement in Dutch work culture to fathers who want to be more involved in family life. "There were possibilities," another father said, "but it was not always appreciated [if I made use of them]. It was possible, but still, in reality you got the feeling... that the organization was not your priority if you [wanted to make use of these possibilities]. That felt somewhat incriminating." These findings do suggest that men would more likely take up leave if there was a more father-friendly work culture around them. Indeed, several times during the interviews the problem came up that fathers might not want to ask about it because they felt they were being discouraged to do so.

Other obstacles

Most findings from the interviews supported the data found in the Father-Friendliness Index.

However, a few other obstacles were mentioned which the interviewed fathers had run into that have to be taken into account.

The youngest father that was interviewed for this research, 25 years old when his now 1.5-year-old son was born, mentioned age discrimination as an obstacle that young men run into when wanting to make use of family-friendly policies.

Because there are also very young fathers, four or five years younger than I am—these guys should also be seen as fathers, not as boys. So with planning, making a work schedule, if they cannot work a day, [it should] not be such a problem. Because that is [the case] with friends of mine who are a bit younger than me and are also fathers, they... Yeah, they were laughed at, almost, to put it that way. “You are a young guy, just come to work.” That makes me think, if they ask for a day off for a reason that is quite important, like a consultancy or something of the sort, or... just a vaccination or the like. Yeah, it is nice if you can be there as a father. And a lot of organisations are like, “you have to work, you are on the schedule for that day.” So there should be more leeway for that, that would be appreciated. I think that is important as well.

Another problem highlighted several times was that high prices of day care can lead to trouble when both parents spend significant time at a job. Although fathers described different solutions to this problem, such as grandparents regularly looking after the child or even bringing the child to meetings, such solutions might bring with them their own problems. Father, mother, and grandparent would have to be comfortable with leaving the child with its grandparents, and bringing the child to work means breaking social norms, if it is possible at all. However, the father who brought his daughter to work indicated once coworkers got used to it, it became so normalized people wondered where she was when he did not bring her. This lines up with Haas & Hwang’s theory of a doctrine of separate spheres, where work and family life have to stay separate. At the same time, it shows that norms can change simply by breaking them. Indeed, most fathers acknowledged a need for fathers to speak up more about their wishes and their rights.

Suggestions for change

Most men would like to see more father-friendly instruments in organisations. 80% of respondents expressed discontent with current paternal leave policies and would like to take up more paternal leave days. As men want to spend more time with their family, 86.2% agreed that initiatives to help them balance work and family life would influence their decision to apply for a job at the organisation. 95.3% of fathers indicate their partner would be open to them taking up longer leave, and 86.2% of partners see father-friendly benefits on offer at an organisation as important when the father applies for a job. However, Dutch organisations are not rated as father-friendly, largely because of a lack of formal programs fathers can appeal to. When asked further about this, however, it is largely informal work culture that fathers seem to think is an obstacle—and therefore a possible solution—to the low uptake of paternal leave. There is still a cultural idea of masculinity

that holds fathers back, both within organisations and in general, despite an overall shift in attitudes toward fatherhood. This relates back to traditional gender roles as Rohner & Veneziano (2001) describe them: with the mother as sole caregiver, and the father as breadwinner and teacher—separate spheres that cannot overlap. Indeed, responses were in line with Collinson & Hearn’s (1996) observation that values associated with family life have historically been (and still are) suppressed in organisational culture. D., an IT worker with two young children, illustrated this as follows:

In my planner I have my working hours, and underneath I had written, ‘Wednesdays unavailable because I have a daddy day’. And that is not allowed. They think it is a stupid word. But that is what it is. You are not a babysitter. It is a very sensitive thing. Whenever I am in a meeting, and we are trying to plan for the next one, and they want to plan it on a Wednesday, I tell them, ‘I cannot do Wednesdays, that is my daddy day’. And you can see people sigh and be annoyed. It is not accepted. There is still a masculine work culture.

S. explained that in his work as a coach for young fathers, he often sees a similar occurrence.

Men too have—officially have a right to more... parental leave, for instance. To just for two years take one day, or one afternoon, a week, to spend with the little one. And that is still seen as, “really, you are taking a daddy day?” But a man has a right to this, and men... Men do not demand this as easily, and maybe act a bit old-fashioned and tough about it. Because I still see a lot of men who follow a class with us, who either have not thought about it at all, or just assume that, after the birth of the child, they will go back to working until late at night five days a week.

This lines up with the finding that a majority of men see themselves as the breadwinner of the family and shows that ideals of traditional gender roles are still at play, despite fathers opening up to the idea of care work and involved fatherhood. This combination makes fathers’ standpoint especially valuable because they are in the middle of these two norms, in which their work environment expects them to focus on their career and their role as a breadwinner—on the traditional male role—but they want this role to change to include values traditionally associated with femininity. D., also brought up the importance of this change for more gender equality in organisational culture. “By subsidising father-friendly organisations, women will have a chance to grow in the labour market,” he argued in favour of the government being involved in changing family policies. “As well as letting fathers see their children grow up, rather than just being that guy who is only home during the weekends.”

When asked the question what measures fathers would be interested in seeing more in their organisations to help them balance work and family life, several options came up more than once.

Most fathers let know that more flexible work times would be an interesting option for them, as well as the option to take up leave, which comes on top of most men stating they would appreciate longer paternal leave. Both formal and informal flexibility were thus important to men. In addition to this, assessment of results would be necessary rather than assessment of hours made. "On paper everything is possible, but it is also about actually being able to work less without it being detrimental to your place in the organisation," one father wrote when asked about what measures would be important.

Another option that was mentioned several times was working from home. The survey showed that the majority of fathers, 73.4%, can only work from home incidentally (46.9%) or not at all (26.5%). However, the option to work from home partly depends on the sector and position of an employee, and findings therefore cannot be generalized.

Further research of case studies would have to look into the influence of implementing formal policy and programs on informal work culture in order to see if such measures as longer paternity leave make a difference on managerial support, which fathers indicate as being the most important to them. Additionally, more research needs to be done after the consequences of such measures for organisations. As economic arguments are often in the centre of such discussions, longitudinal studies have to look further into this.

6. Conclusion

Gender, according to Judith Butler, consists of performative acts that are associated with that gender. Western hegemonic masculinity, then, is a performance of toughness, rationality, and autonomy, among other things. On top of that, this type of masculinity is heteronormative. It goes out from a male-female family unit with traditional gender roles. This leads to men seeing themselves as being the breadwinner of the family and taking pride of this role. Indeed, three quarters of Dutch men indicate that they are the breadwinner of their family, although a majority also see themselves as caregiver and support to their partner. Particularly the percentage of men who indicate they are also caregivers shows a change in masculine values, a fairly recent change. Fathers spend increasingly more time taking care of their children compared to previous generations. On average, fathers indicated spending 28 hours a week with their child, and most were interested in father-friendly measures to help them spend more. This is important, as literature shows that involved fatherhood—as opposed to distant or uninvolved fatherhood—has positive consequences for the development of their child in educational, behavioural, social, linguistic, and emotional areas. The way fathers interact with their children is different from the way mothers, who are most often the primary carers, do, and thereby have an influence that is partly unique in the way it differs from the mother's. Additionally, men who are involved in early child rearing have a stronger bond with the child and function as a support system for their partner after the birth, which leads to a more supportive family unit. These positive consequences show that father-friendly measures are important to help the father be involved in family life without running into problems at work.

Yet despite this, work culture is still based on traditional gender roles, with masculine values such as autonomy, rationality, and toughness being highly valued and with a doctrine that separates the spheres of work and family, leading to a lack of understanding when men want to balance these spheres rather than spend most time focusing on the organisation. These norms are felt across different sectors and positions, although mainly among executive employees, and result in a particular context in which a normative group (straight men) becomes marginalised. This allows for an interesting application of feminist standpoint theory within the context of work culture. Young fathers' opinions highlight the issue from a subjugated standpoint: a type of masculinity which, when it comes to traditional gender roles, is shifting more towards the middle.

Organisations, then, should become more father-friendly. This means the organisation encourages as well as expects fathers to make use of family-friendly policies. That is to say, the organisation offers policies and programs to help fathers obtain their desired work/family balance, and offers an atmosphere in which fathers feel their choices are accepted and even encouraged. However, when

fathers were asked to share their standpoint on the subject, they revealed that this supportive work environment is still lacking in Dutch work culture. Although informal support is rated the highest on a scale of 1-10, this is mainly because of high ratings of managerial support from employees in leadership positions. Fathers indicated that men are still being discouraged to make use of father-friendly instruments even though they have a right to this. A change in work culture to a more understanding and facilitating attitude from managers seems most important to them. In order to come to this change, I have called onto standpoint theory to show why the opinion of fathers specifically is important within this context. As organisational culture often does not allow for men with young children to balance their work and family life as desired, but assumes what Haas & Hwang (2007) call a doctrine of separate spheres—in other words, a separation of career and home life relying on traditional gender roles of the male breadwinner and the female carer, allowing employers to deny responsibility for family well-being—men who do want to spend more time at home become marginalised. According to standpoint theory, it is subjugated and marginalised groups which have the clearest view of specific issues, because they have no reason for ignorance on the issue. I have looked at the intersection of (male) gender and (hetero)sexuality in order to show that people who fall into more than one group that is usually considered dominant can nevertheless experience subjugation. I have shown through a literary framework that majoritising and minoritising processes rely heavily on context rather than being set in stone, and that this context must always be considered when using an intersectional approach in research. In organisational culture, for instance, men are the dominant group, as can be seen in the way aggressive and rational management styles are favoured. However, men in a young family they want to spend time with experience obstacles precisely because of this management style. Despite traditionally male values being the norm, men can still be marginalised by these values if they do not fit into organisational hegemonic masculinity.

In order to see what needs to change within this context, I asked fathers at a particular intersection—straight men in traditional family units with young children—about solutions they would like to see to help them facilitate a better work/family balance. When it comes to specific measures that would help facilitate this, a variety of programs and instruments came up. Most often, fathers mentioned working flexible times, working from home, and assessment of results rather than working hours. Paid leave was mentioned often as well, on top of 80% of fathers indicating they would like longer paternal leave than the current two and future five work days.

In short, involved fatherhood is important to the child's development and should be facilitated by organisations. Current ideas on hegemonic masculinity hold on to traditional gender roles, in which the father is the breadwinner of the family and the mother the carer. In order to achieve more

equality, organisations have to let go of these norms and allow fathers to spend more time at home, leading to more equal involvement in care work and more likeliness for women to be able to stay in the work force. Most importantly, managers need to listen to the wishes of their male employees and give them the opportunity to make use of policies norms currently deny them. More involvement of men in the early days of the child's life leads to more involvement in family life and household duties, and allows their partners to spend time working on their career. A more father-friendly work culture allows for less strict traditional gender roles by giving men the opportunity to spend more time on household and child care duties. This change in what constitutes masculinity is slowly but surely happening within society as a whole, but less so in work culture specifically, while this is a context in which a change is especially important. Men being able to spend time at home is for the good of child and partner health and the father's bond with both, as well as a more equal division of paid and unpaid work: an option that is, in short, essential in contemporary society.

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Appendix

General results Father-Friendliness Index

	Formal policy		
	knowledge and instruments personnel officer	records of male leave uptake	clear formal decision to help fathers
Item average	5.97	4.92	4.18
Avg. subindex	5.03		

Table 1: FFI results subindex 'Formal policy'

	Formal programs			
	possibility of flexible times	encouragement to take up leave	programs to stimulate leave uptake	sufficient facilities to help working fathers
Item average	5.92	2.72	2.29	3.83
Avg. subindex	3.63			

Table 2: FFI results subindex 'Formal programs'

	Informal support			
	reaction of managers	reaction of coworkers	no problems will arise when the father takes up leave	managers setting an example
Item average	6.03	7.12	5.4	4.72
Avg. subindex	5.62			

Table 3: FFI results subindex 'Informal support'

	Informal flexibility			
	ease of taking leave to take care of sick child	ease of avoiding long travels	ease of refusing to work overtime	ease of adapting work times to the child's school or day care
Item average	6.08	5.48	4.86	5.46
Avg. subindex	5.47			

Table 4: FFI results subindex 'Informal flexibility'