'The influence of gender norms on psychological well-being'

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Abstract: In both Europe and the United States, there is a trend to gender equality in values and attitudes about family life. It is important to look at the possible consequences of this shift in society's gender norms for psychological well-being, so one can anticipate on the implications of this association. The research question of this paper is: *'To what extent is there an association between one's psychological well-being and the traditionalism of one's gender norms?'* It is expected that people with traditional gender norms have a lower psychological well-being because they have less chance of exploration of the self and feel more pressure to adhere to these norms. The second hypothesis is that people who's gender norms are not confirmed in their behaviour (i.e. norm-congruent experiences) have a lower psychological well-being than people who do have matching norms and behaviour. Using data from the 2008/10 Netherlands Longitudinal Lifecourse Study (NELLS) survey a series of simple and multiple regression models have tested these hypotheses. A central finding is that there is a significant association between gender norms and well-being for women. Women with more traditional gender norms had a significant higher well-being than men. The moderating effect of norm-congruent experiences based on gender norms and the division of household labour was not significant. This implicates that both hypotheses must be rejected. However there was found that when unemployed women's norms match their behaviour (i.e. being unemployed with traditional norms), they have a significant higher well-being than unemployed women who experienced incongruence (i.e. egalitarian norms and unemployment). This is in support of the second hypothesis, but only for unemployed women.

Keywords: gender norms, psychological well-being, norm-congruent behaviour, division of household labour

Introduction

From the day you are born there is a certain value attached to your gender. Boys learn how to be masculine and girls learn how to be feminine from their parents, siblings, peers and other communities (Bryant and Check, 2000). Children and adults vary in how much value one attaches to adhering to gender norms and stereotypes (Egan and Perry, 2001). When one invests (i.e. feels the pressure to act conform to gender norms) in gender ideals, one feels it is important to express a certain consistency with regard to the gender role (Sanchez and Crocker, 2005). When girls invest in gender ideals they show more tendency to communal behaviour like babysitting and helping friends (Egan and Perry, 2001), which is consistent with the more traditional norm that women should be nurturing (Cross and Madson, 1997).

In both Europe and the United States, a trend to gender equality in values and attitudes about family life has been documented (Jansen and Liefbroer, 2006). There is more emphasis on individual autonomy and increasing acceptance of labour force participation of women (i.e. egalitarian norms). This also applies on the Netherlands, a country classified as a feminine country (Hofstede, 2001). This means that there are more egalitarian beliefs about sexes and the social roles of sexes show more overlap. There is a clear shift in gender norms, but the paradoxical part about it is that the actual employment patterns do not match with these egalitarian standards (Krüger and Levy, 2001). Although norms become more egalitarian, structural constraints cause the differences in patterns between men and women. This causes remaining differences in employment patterns between men and women. This means that people will experience norm-incongruent experiences; their egalitarian norms are not confirmed in the traditional structural constraints. These experiences will cause a lower well-being compared to people with norm-congruent experiences (Wood, Christensen, Hebl and Rothgerber, 1997). This is caused by the reducing effect of norm-congruent experiences on the inconsistencies between one's norms about the self and their behaviour, which increases positive feelings about oneself. There is also the possibility for people with traditional gender norms to experience norm-incongruent experiences, when their behaviour is more egalitarian than their norms.

There thus is a long-term change in gender norms towards greater gender equality and increasing acceptance of women's labour market participation (Jansen and Liefbroer, 2006). Investigating the association between this shift and psychological well-being will provide more knowledge about the strength and underlying mechanism of this possible association. It is important to look at the possible consequences of this shift in society's gender norms for psychological well-being, so one can anticipate on the implications of this association.

Although research shows that feeling pressure to conform to gender norms is a risk factor for both woman and men (Sanchez and Crocker, 2005), most research focuses on the effect of adherence to gender norms for women's mental health (Sanchez, Crocker, and Boike, 2005). For this research it is therefore interesting to investigate the association for both men and women. This gives the possibility to investigate if there is a difference between the sexes.

This research is conducted to find out if having more traditional gender norms influences one's psychological well-being. The research question is: *'To what extent is there an association between one's psychological well-being and the traditionalism of one's gender norms?'*

Theory

There is not much research conducted that looked directly at the effect of gender norms on psychological well-being. There is some empirical evidence that shows that more egalitarian gender norms are associated with higher levels of well-being (e.g. Van de Vijver, 2007). However, there are not many theories constructed on how this possible association comes about.

Psychological well-being is defined as 'the overall effectiveness of an individual's psychological functioning' (Gechman and Weiner, 1975), which is the subjective mental health of the respondent. In this research the focus will be on psychological dysfunction and mental problems, hereby assuming that the absence of these negative psychological features means a good psychological well-being.

Gender norms are one's shared expectations of social behaviour for men and women. People's gender norms are placed on a spectrum that ranges from traditional gender norms (i.e. idealize a strict male breadwinner/female homemaker structure) to egalitarian gender norms (i.e. view both sexes as equal, they should share the two roles equal). In this study there will be a focus on one's gender norms in relation to the division of labour.

A body of research (Carver, Yunger and Perry, 2003; Egan and Perry, 2001; Sanchez and Crocker, 2005) suggests that the pressure to meet prescribed gender norms limits social behaviour and thus increases psychological difficulties like decreased self-esteem and increased stress. This is supported by Bem (1981, 1993) who states that people who easily adhere to gender norms experience more pressure caused by gender conformity, which opposes the exploration of the self. People with less traditional norms have more chance of exploration of the self, which increases well-being. This is strengthened by the mechanism that people who invest more in their gender norms may feel that their social success and acceptance depends on their personal adherence to these traditional gender norms (Carver, Yunger and Perry; Egan and Perry, 2001; Sanchez and Crocker, 2005). For example, Egan and Perry (2001) argue that people who value gender normativity experience more pressure from the self and their social environment to adhere to these gender norms. Sanchez and Crocker (2005) state that people, who think it is important to adhere to gender norms, put more emphasis on the validation of external sources such as the approval of their social environment. This decreases the psychological well-being because they tend to worry more about the opinion of others and let this determine their own self-worth. This leads to the hypothesis that more traditional gender norms of an individual increases symptoms of depression. The expectation is that *people with traditional gender norms have a lower psychological well-being.*

The translation of gender norms into behaviour and interaction is moderated by structures of opportunities and constraints, which are different for different biographical stages and welfare policies (Bühlmann, Elcheroth and Tettamanti, 2009). There still is a difference in employment patterns and household labour between men and women, although the norms become more egalitarian (Krüger and Levy, 2001). This causes a possible discrepancy between gender norms and gender behaviour, which can also be seen as norm-incongruent experiences. Norm-congruent experiences (in which your behaviour confirms your gender) provide positive feelings to an individual because they bring the actual view of oneself closer to the ideal self (Wood, Christensen, Hebl and Rothgerber, 1997). This ideal self of someone is formed including sex-typed social norms (e.g their gender norms). One feels good when the actual self-concepts match the ideal self (Higgins, 1987). People use these desired aspects as an internal guide and try to meet their standard and avoid failing to meet them (Higgins, 1987). People thus tend to live up to their own (gender) norms.

An example of behaviour that can confirm or disconfirm your gender norms is the division of household labour. Although in the western world the division of labour becomes increasingly egalitarian (Jansen and Liefbroer, 2006) and women perform a larger share of paid work (European Commission, 2008) the division of labour in households is not completely egalitarian. The moderating mechanism is the mechanism of 'norm-congruent gender experiences'. This means that when someone's norms confirm their behaviour they will get norm-congruent experiences, which will provide positive feelings (Wood, Christensen, Hebl and Rothgerber, 1997). In this research the norm-congruent experiences are specified as the extent to which the traditionalism or equality of one's gender norms is confirmed. The expectation is that *people who's gender norms are not confirmed in their behaviour (e.g. their division of household labour) have a lower psychological well-being than people who do have matching norms and behaviour.* Specified to gender norms and to what extent they are confirmed in people's behaviours, it is expected that people with egalitarian norms who divide the housework traditionally will have lower well-being and vice versa. People who have a matching division of household labour to their gender norms are expected to have a higher well-being.

It is known that there is a difference between men and women in the experience of egalitarian and traditional division of household. Men who have a more egalitarian share report less well-being than men in a more traditional division (Glass and Fujimoto 1994), while for women less domestic work and employment contributes to a higher psychological well-being. Additionally a body of research has proven that women have significantly more egalitarian attitudes than men (e.g. Gibbons, Stiles, and Shkodriani, 1991, Jessel and Beymer, 1992). Research shows that men are significantly more traditional than women in their opinion on the role of a woman as a mother and the effect of a working mother on the well-being of their children (Fan and Marini, 2000). Women have a significantly higher participation in domestic work and lower employment rates (Bianchi Milkie, Sayer and Robinson, 2000). This makes it possible that gender norms have a different influence on the well-being of

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women and men and that the experience of norm-congruent experiences are perceived differently by the different genders. This makes it interesting to look at the influence of gender norms and norm-congruent experiences for women and men independently of each other, which will be done in this research.

Data

To answer the research question the data from Netherlands Longitudinal Lifecourse Study (NELLS) (Tolsma, Kraaykamp, De Graaf, Kalmijn en Monden, 2014) will be used. NELLS is a large-scale panel that focuses on topics such as social cohesion, inequality, and norms and values. There is a face-to-face part and self-completion part. Of the three planned waves, there are two fully conducted (in 2008-2010 and 2013) of which the first will be used. The target population is inhabitants of the Netherlands between 15 and 45 years old. For this research the four largest municipalities of the Netherlands were selected, along with 31 other quasi-randomly selected (stratified by urbanization and region) municipalities. Within the municipalities a random selection from the population registry provided respondents. This was based on age and the origin of the respondent and their parents. Moroccans and Turks, the two largest ethnic minorities, were oversampled. For the first wave there was a total of 5.312 respondents. The response rate was 52%. In this research the focus is on the division of labour between partners. For this reason people without a partner are excluded from the analyses. This will be done by excluding respondents that answered 'no' to the question: 'Do you have a partner at the moment? To be understood as someone with whom you have a relationship of 3 months or longer, you don't have to live together with him or her'. After taking into account this exclusion criterion there are 3.650 (68.71% of the total sample) respondents used in this research of whom 1.987 (54.4%) are female and 1.663 (45.6%) male. 2503 respondents filled in all the items that will be used in the analyses. Of these 2503 respondents 1341 (53.6%) are female and 1162 (46.4%) are male.

Operationalization

The dependent variable, psychological well-being, is measured by multiple items. These sixteen statements are measured on a four point scale ranging from 'rarely or never (less than 1 day)' to 'often or always (5-7 days)'. All of the statements are about the experience of negative emotions (e.g. 'Felt sad even though friends and family tried to cheer me up', 'Felt depressed', 'and 'Felt anxious', for all statement see appendix). For all the statements a higher score (i.e. something happens more frequent) indicates a lower well-being. A mean score is calculated of these answers if the respondent has no more than two missing values. A reliability and factor analysis is conducted to look at the validity and reliability (see results).

The independent variable of 'gender norms' is measured by four items. These are four statements about one's gender norms. Respectively 'Men are equally capable of caring for a baby as

women' (1), 'It is unnatural for men to do housework' (2), 'Men and women should contribute equally to raising children' (3) and 'It is good for a young child if the father contributes to his/her care' (4). The answer category to these statements is a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. A low score should indicate a more traditional opinion about gender norms and the division of work between gender. So statements 1, 3 and 4 are reversed in direction. A mean score is calculated of these answers if the respondent has no more than one missing value. These items concerning gender norms are specified to the division of household and nurturing tasks between partners and thus do not measure the total continuum of gender norms. That is why in the moderating mechanism of norm-congruent experiences the focus is on the division of household tasks. A reliability and factor analysis is conducted to look at the validity and reliability (see results).

The moderating variable is constructed by comparing the gender norms of the respondent to the division of their household, both scales are measured ranging from traditional to egalitarian. Gender norms is measured as mentioned above. The equality or inequality in the division of labour is measured by the question: 'We will mention some household chores, can you indicate to each of them how they are divided between you and your partner?'. The household chores mentioned are 'cooking food', 'grocery shopping', 'cleaning, tidying up', 'doing the laundry, ironing' and 'doing small maintenance/improvement tasks in and around the house'. It is measured on a five point scale ranging from '(Almost) always by you' to '(Almost) always by your partner'. The option 'somebody else always does this chore' (between 0.2% and 1.6% on the different variables) is excluded from the final scale. These items are treated as missing. For male respondents a high score means a traditional division of household labour, in contrast for women this means more liberal division of labour. This is recoded into a high score meaning an egalitarian division in which the male partner does more or the same amount of household labour as their partner. This is done by transferring the statements in a different direction only for men. A mean score is calculated of these answers if the respondent has no more than one missing value. A reliability and factor analysis is conducted to look at the validity and reliability (see results). This scale is mean centered and made into an interaction term by multiplying it with the mean centered variable of gender norms. This scale shows if the division of household labour moderates (i.e. weakens or strengthens) the effect of gender norms.

The regression is stratified for gender. This is measured with the question 'What is your gender?' with answer categories 'man' and 'woman'.

The first control variable that is added into the multiple regression is age. This information was provided by the local authority and measured as age in years at the time of the interview. The second control variable is the education level of the respondent. This is measured with the question 'Which of the following levels of education did you pursue?' With the answer options 'primary school' (1) 'Lower vocational education' (2) 'Lower general secondary education' (3), 'Higher general secondary education' (4), 'Pre-university education' (5), 'short intermediate vocational education' (6), 'Middle-long/long intermediate vocational education' (7), 'Higher vocational

education' (8), 'University (bachelor's degree)' (9), 'University (master's degree)', 'Doctoral degree' (11), 'Foreign education, primary education' (12), 'Foreign education, secondary education' (13), 'Foreign education, higher education' (14). The foreign educations are recoded as primary education (12) being primary school (1), secondary education (13) being the school for higher general secondary education (4) and higher education (14) being higher vocational education (8). With the follow-up question 'Have you completed this degree with a diploma?' only respondents that have completed their degree are taken into account for that specific level of education.

The third control variable is ethnicity measured with the question: 'In what country where you born?' This is recoded into a dummy variable with the two categories 'immigrants' and 'Dutch'. The third variable work status is constructed on the question 'Are you currently performing paid work?' which is made into the dummy variable of 'having a paid job'. Additionally the control variable of being married is added to the analyses. This is based on the question 'Are you married with your partner?' The last control variable that is added to the analyses is the parental status. This is measured with the question 'Do you have children? Including stepchildren.'

As shown in table 1, all variables contained N=2503 respondents. Psychological well-being is measured on a scale ranging from 1 to 3.88 and has an average of 1.264. Male respondents have a slightly lower average of 1.227 compared to 1.297 for women. Egalitarian gender norms is a scale with a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 5. The mean of this scale is 4.012 which implies that overall the respondents have a tendency to egalitarian gender norms. This average is higher (and thus more egalitarian) for female respondents (4.093) than for male respondents (3.920). Egalitarian household division is measured on a scale with a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 5. The mean of this scale is 2.086 which implies that overall the respondents have a tendency to a more traditional division of household labour. The interaction term of gender norms and division of household (norm-congruent experiences) has a range from -3.49 to 3.10 and a mean of 0.100. The averages of men and women are respectively 0.115 and 0.105. The average age of respondents was 36. The youngest respondent was 15 years old and the oldest 49. The lowest level of education that a respondent could have is primary school (1) and the highest is a doctoral degree (11). Respondents had on average a short intermediate vocational education (6). All the other control variables (i.e. immigration background, having paid work, being married and having children) are dummy variables. From these averages it can be deducted that 32.3% of the respondents are not born in the Netherlands, for women this is 27.4% and for men this is 37.9%. Of the respondents 88.3% have paid work. The average is lower for female respondents (83.2%) than for male respondents (94.2%). 74.0% of the respondents are married and 76.2% have children. This average is very close to each other for men (respectively 73.8% and 76.4%) and women (respectively 74.2% and 75.9%).

Table 1. Variable descriptives

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Low psych. well-being	2503	1.00	3.88	1.264	0.381
Women	1341	1.00	3.56	1.297	0.393
Men	1162	1.00	3.88	1.227	0.363
Egal. gender norms	2503	2.00	5.00	4.012	0.601
Women	1341	2.00	5.00	4.093	0.570
Men	1162	2.00	5.00	3.920	0.622
Egal. Household division	2503	1.00	5.00	2.086	0.755
Women	1341	1.00	5.00	2.002	0.760
Men	1162	1.00	5.00	2.181	0.738
Gender norms * Household division	2503	-3.49	3.10	0.109	0.470
Women	1341	-2.24	3.10	0.105	0.445
Men	1162	-3.49	3.10	0.115	0.496
Age	2503	15	49	35.59	6.343
Women	1341	15	47	34.94	6.570
Men	1162	18	49	36.35	5.986
Education	2503	0.00	11.00	5.867	2.703
Women	1341	1.00	11.00	5.999	2.579
Men	1162	1.00	11.00	5.715	2.833
Immigrant	2503	0.00	1.00	0.323	
Women	1341	0.00	1.00	0.274	
Men	1162	0.00	1.00	0.379	
Paid work	2503	0.00	1.00	0.883	
Women	1341	0.00	1.00	0.832	
Men	1162	0.00	1.00	0.942	
Married	2503	0.00	1.00	0.740	
Women	1341	0.00	1.00	0.742	
Men	1162	0.00	1.00	0.738	
Children	2503	0.00	1.00	0.762	
Women	1341	0.00	1.00	0.759	
Men	1162	0.00	1.00	0.764	

Methods

Multiple regression analyses will be performed. First the constructs 'psychological well-being', 'gender norms' and 'division of household labour' will be checked for validity in a factor analysis. This is done to look at possible underlying patterns and correlations between the different items in the constructs and between the different constructs. If there are no multiple factors found the construct 'psychological well-being', 'division of household labour' and 'gender norms' shall be treated as one variable. Cronbach's Alpha will be used to estimate the reliability of these variables. The aim is at a Cronbach's alpha above .7 (Lund Research Ltd, 2013). Items that heighten the Cronbach's alpha when removed, will lead to consideration about removing the item. When corrected item-total correlation is lower than .3, it might lead to consideration of removal (Field, 2013). After the construction of these items a linear regression will be conducted between 'psychological well-being' and 'gender norms' (i.e. respectively the dependent and independent variable) to test the main effect. A multiple regression will be conducted with the mechanism of 'norm-congruent experiences' to look at the possible moderation of this construct in the association between one's gender norms and psychological well-being. After this analyses the control variables (i.e. age, education and religion) will be added to a multiple regression to look at their possible responsibility in any part of the association. Interaction terms will be made of the control variables that change the main effect and tested in a multiple regression. All regression analyses will be done separately for men and women.

Results

Factor analyses

A principal component analysis (PCA) on the construct of psychological well-being shows that the 16 items form a one-dimensional scale. The eigenvalue of this factor is 7.757. There is a clear bend visible in the scree-plot after this component. All the items correlate positively with the factor, so the variable psychological well-being is treated as one.

The second factor analysis that is conducted is on the construct of gender norms. The 4 items form a one-dimensional scale. This factor has an eigenvalue of 1.995. The scree-plot shows a clear bend after this component. All the items correlate positively with the factor, so the variable psychological well-being is treated as one.

The last factor analysis is conducted on the construct measuring the division of household. The 5 items form a one-dimensional scale with a eigenvalue 2.194. The items correlate positively and the scree-plot shows a clear bend.

When combining the three constructs in one factor analysis three clear separate factors show. All items load on the expected factor.

Reliability

For the construct of psychological well-being there is an initial Cronbach's Alpha of .925, this is

fitting the rule of thumb of .7 (Field, 2013). None of the items have an item-total correlation under the rule of the thumb of .3 (Field, 2013) and none of the variables increase the Cronbach's Alpha when deleted.

The second construct of gender norms has a relatively low initial Cronbach's Alpha of .635. This is not fitting the rule of thumb of .7. Because none of the items have an item-total correlation under the rule of the thumb of .3 and none of the variables increase the Cronbach's Alpha when deleted. It is chosen to keep all the items in the construct for sake of completeness.

The last reliability analysis was conducted on the scale about the division of household tasks. The initial Cronbach's Alpha is .630. which is under .7 The last question about the division of small maintenance/improvement tasks in and around the house between partners has a an item-total correlation of .119 which is under the rule of the thumb of .3. If this item is taken out of the construct the Cronbach's Alpha increases to .703. This means that this question has a low correlation with the other items concerning the scale of division of household tasks. This could possibly be explained by the fact that the partner who does the 'typical female household tasks' (i.e. 'cooking food', 'grocery shopping', 'cleaning, tidying up' and 'doing the laundry, ironing') often does not do small maintenance/improvement tasks in and around the house. Because the final construct of norm-congruent experiences is constructed with gender norms concerning the division in household and nurturing tasks between partners, it is chosen to only look at the division of traditional female household. The item of the division of small maintenance/improvement tasks in and around the house is deleted. The final Cronbach's Alpha is thus .703.

Simple and multiple regression

As shown in table 2 – model 1 there is no significant association between the degree of liberal or traditional norms on the psychological well-being of the respondent for women (b = 0.030, t = 1.586, p = .113). Based on these results there is no evidence for the hypothesis that people with traditional gender norms have a lower psychological well-being. When looking at the results for men (model 2) there is a significant association between their gender norms and their psychological well-being (b = -0.039, t = -2.278, p = .023). Their well-being increases when they have more egalitarian norms and thus decreases when their norms are more traditional, which therefore confirms the first hypothesis. The initial adjusted R square for women is .001, which means that 0.1% of the variance in psychological well-being is explained by gender norms. For men this is 0.4% (Adjusted R^2 = .004).

In the third and fourth model (table 2) the division of household labour and the moderation effect of the household division on the effect of gender norms on psychological well-being are taken into account. Based on this analysis stratified for women the extent to which someone's household division is traditional or non-traditional has no significant effect on one's well-being (b = -0.003, t = -0.207, p = .836). For women their division of household has no moderating effect on the possible association of gender norms and psychosocial health (b = -0.009, t = -0.351, p = .725). The association

for men is different, for them the division of household does have a significant effect on their psychological well-being (b = 0.041, t = 2.736, p = .006). This means that when the household of men has a more traditional division, their psychological well-being is significantly higher. Similar to women, for men their division of household labour has no moderating effect in the possible association of gender norms and psychosocial health (b = -0.010, t = -0.435, p = .663). The hypothesis that people who's gender norms are not confirmed in their behaviour (e.g. their division of household labour) have a lower psychological well-being than people who do have matching norms and behaviour is not confirmed based on this analyses. The initial adjusted R square is .000 and .009 for respectively women and men. This means that the model does not fit the data for women and 0.9% of the variance in psychological well-being is explained by gender norms and the interaction term for men.

In the last two models (table 2 – model 5 and 6) the full model is tested (dependent, independent, moderating and control variables). It is conspicuous what happens when adding the control variables. The association of gender norms on psychological well-being becomes insignificant for men (b = -0.028, t = -1.502, p = .133), while for women the effect becomes significant (b = 0.049, t = 2.512, p = .012). This means that for women there is a suppressor effect, which means that an effect appears once other variables are taken into account. Women who have traditional gender norms thus have a significantly higher psychological well-being than women who are less traditional in their gender norms. For men there is a spurious relationship, which means that there is no causal association found between gender norms and psychological well-being. Based on these results there is no evidence for the hypothesis that people with traditional gender norms have a lower psychological well-being, for men there is no significant difference and for women it is the other way around. The association of one's division of household labour becomes insignificant for men and stays insignificant for women (respectively b = -0.028, t = -1.502, p = .071 and b = 0.007, t = 0.420, p = .675 for men and women). The moderating effect of the division of household labour being traditional or non-traditional on this association stay insignificant for both women and men (respectively b = -0.004, t = -0.151, p = .880 and b = -0.008, t = -0.350, p = .727 for women and men). The second hypothesis that people who's gender norms are not confirmed in their behaviour (i.e. their division of household labour) have a lower psychological well-being than people who do have matching norms and behaviour thus stays unconfirmed

The first control variable of age has a significant effect on psychological well-being for women, when you get older your psychological well-being increases significantly (b = -0.004, t = -0.151, p = .012). For men there was no significant association found for age and their psychological well-being (b = -0.002, t = -0.834, p = .404). The effect of education was only found to be significant on well-being for women (b = -0.013, t = -2.956, p = .003.) It was not significant for men (b = -0.006, t = -1.539, p = .124). This means that for women their psychological well-being is significantly higher when they have a higher education. There is a significant effect found of being an immigrant on the

respondents psychological well-being for both women and men (respectively b = 0.060, t = 2.375, p = .018 and b = 0.095, t = 4.041, p < .001 for women and men). This indicates that when you are an immigrant your psychological well-being is significantly lower than when you are not born in the Netherlands. Having paid work has a significant effect on one's psychological well-being for both women and men (respectively b = -0.137, t = -4.574, p < .001 and b = -0.211, t = -4.627, p < .001 for women and men). People who are unemployed or do not have a paid job have a significantly lower psychological well-being than people who do have a paid job. The other control variables added to the model, being married and having children, have no significant effect on psychological well-being for women (respectively b = -0.014, t = -0.516, p = .606 and b = -0.006, t = -0.185, p = .854 for being married and having children). This is also the case for men (respectively b = -0.010, t = -0.360, p = .719 and b = -0.023, t = -0.789, p = .430 for being married and having children). The disappearance of the significant effect for gender norms of psychological well-being for men and the appearance of this effect for women is thus due to the added significant control variables. Thus for women, their age, level of education, being an immigrant and having paid work and for men, being an immigrant and having paid work have a possible influence on the association between gender norms and psychological well-being.

According to the adjusted R square for men 5% and for women 3.9%. of the variance in psychological well-being is explained by the variables included in the final model.

The control variables are added separately one by one to further investigate the suppressor effect. It is found that for women having paid work or being an immigrant changes the association between gender norms and psychological well-being from insignificant to significant. For men it is the variable of being an immigrant that creates the spurious relationship for men. Interaction terms are made for these control variables. The interaction term of having paid work and gender norms is significant. This means that alongside the significant main effect of both having paid work and gender norms on psychological well-being for women, the effect of gender norms on psychological well-being is moderated by being employed. In other words the effect of gender norms on psychological well-being is being strengthened or weakened by being employed or unemployed. Women who are unemployed have a stronger negative effect of gender norms on psychological well-being (b = 0.574, t = 2.863, p = .004). However women who are employed have a stronger positive effect of gender norms on psychological well-being (b = 0.574, t = 2.863, p = .004). The interaction term of immigration and gender norms is not significant for women (b = 0.574, t = 2.863, p = .004)

Table 2. Results of regression analyses of gender norms and household division on psychological well-being (n=2503)

	Model 1. Main effect women		Model 2. Main effect men		Model 3. Moderation women		Model 4. Moderation men		Model 5. Complete model women		Model 6. Complete model men	
	B	s.e.	B	s.e.	B	s.e.	B	s.e.	B	s.e.	B	s.e.
Egalitarian gender norms	0.030	0.019	-0.039*	0.017	0.031	0.019	-0.050**	0.018	0.049*	0.019	-0.028	0.019
Egalitarian household division					-0.003	0.015	0.041**	0.015	0.007	0.016	0.028	0.015
Gender norms * household division					-0.009	0.025	-0.010	0.022	-0.004	0.025	-0.008	0.022
Age									-0.004*	0.002	-0.002	0.002
Education									-0.013**	0.004	-0.006	0.004
Immigrant									0.060*	0.025	0.095***	0.024
Paid work									-0.137***	0.030	-0.211***	0.046
Married									-0.014	0.027	-0.010	0.027
Children									-0.006	0.030	-0.023	0.030
Intercept	1.175***	0.078	1.379***	0.068	1.177***	0.079	1.335***	0.071	1.432***	0.104	1.557***	0.109
Adjusted R^2	.001		.004		.000		.009		.039		.050	
N	1341		1162		1341		1162		1341		1162	

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .010$, * $p < .050$

The control variables are added separately one by one to further investigate the suppressor effect. It is found that for women having paid work or being an immigrant changes the association between gender norms and psychological well-being from insignificant to significant. For men it is the variable of being an immigrant that creates the spurious relationship between gender norms and psychological well-being. For women interaction terms are made for these control variables (table 3 – model 1). The interaction term of having paid work and gender norms is significant employment (b = -0.179, t = -3.592, p < .001). This means that alongside the significant main effect of both having paid work and gender norms on psychological well-being for women, the effect of gender norms on psychological well-being is moderated by being employed. In other words the effect of gender norms on psychological well-being is strengthened or weakened by being employed or unemployed. Women who are unemployed have a stronger effect of gender norms on psychological well-being (b = 0.574, t = 2.863, p = .004). However, women who are employed hardly have an effect of gender norms on psychological well-being, because the effect of their gender norms on their well-being is compensated by their employment (b = -0.179, t = -3.592, p < .001). This means that when the gender norms of unemployed women become more traditional, their well-being increases significantly and decreases significantly when their norms get more egalitarian. The interaction term of immigration and gender norms is not significant for women (b = -0.011, t = 0.042, p = .786)

Table 3. Results of regression analysis of gender norms and household division on psychological well-being with interaction terms of paid work and immigration (n=1341)

	Model 1. Interaction terms women	
	B	s.e.
Egalitarian gender norms	0.196***	0.049
Egalitarian household division	0.005	0.016
Gender norms * household division	0.011	0.025
Age	-0.005*	0.002
Education	-0.012**	0.004
Immigrant	0.113	0.173
Immigrant * gender norms	-0.011	0.042
Paid work	0.574**	0.200
Paid work * gender norms	-0.179***	0.050
Married	-0.015	0.027
Children	-0.005	0.030
Intercept	0.846***	0.209
Adjusted R^2	.047	
N	1341	

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .010$, * $p < .050$

Discussion

In this study the following research question was investigated: *'To what extent is there an association between one's psychological well-being and the traditionalism of one's gender norms?'* The first hypothesis is that people with traditional gender norms have a lower psychological well-being. This is based on the theory that people who easily adhere to gender norms experience more pressure for gender conformity, which opposes the exploration of the self (Bem, 1993). People with less traditional norms have more chance of exploration of the self, which increases well-being. People who value gender normativity experience more pressure from the self and their social environment to adhere to these gender norms (Egan and Perry, 2001). According to the performed analyses this hypothesis is not supported. For men there was no significant association found between their psychological well-being and their gender norms. For women there is a significant association found, but this one is the other way around. It was found that women who have traditional gender norms have a significantly higher psychological well-being than women who have less traditional gender norms.

The second hypothesis was that people who's gender norms are not confirmed in their behaviour (e.g. their division of household labour) have a lower psychological well-being than people who do have matching norms and behaviour. According to the performed analyses based on the norm-congruence of your gender norms and one's division of household labour this hypothesis is not supported. This hypothesis was based on the theory that norm-congruent experiences (in which your norms are confirmed by your behaviour) provide positive feelings to an individual because they bring the actual view of oneself closer to the ideal self (Wood, Christensen, Hebl and Rothgerber, 1997). In this study the norm-congruent experiences were specified to the extent to which the traditionalism or equality of one's gender norms is confirmed in their behaviour (i.e. the division of labour between men and women). For both men and women there was no significant association found in the conducted analyses with norm congruent experiences. The second hypothesis was thus not supported based on these analyses.

Lastly for women there was a significant moderation effect found of paid work on the effect of gender norms on psychological well-being. This indicated that when the gender norms of unemployed women become more traditional, their well-being increases significantly and decreases significantly when their norms get more egalitarian. This moderation is thus partly responsibly the main effect of gender norms on psychological well-being found for women. The moderation effect of having paid work on women who are employed was hardly there, because the negative effect on one's psychological well-being of equalitarian gender norms was compensated by being employed. This moderation effect can possibly be explained with the mechanism of norm-congruent experiences. As mentioned earlier these experiences will cause a higher well-being compared to people with norm-incongruent experiences because it reduces inconsistencies between one's norms about the self and behaviour, which increases positive feelings about oneself (Wood, Christensen, Hebl and Rothgerber,

1997). Applied to unemployed women this means that the behaviour of being unemployed is congruent with traditional gender norms that women should be nurturing and men should be the breadwinner. This provides unemployed women with traditional norms positive feelings which increase their psychological well-being. On the other hand, women with more egalitarian gender norms who are unemployed possibly feel incongruence between their egalitarian norms of individual autonomy and increasing acceptance of labour force participation of women and their behaviour of being unemployed. In this way the is the second hypothesis that people who's gender norms are not confirmed in their behaviour (e.g. being employed) have a lower psychological well-being than people who do have matching norms and behaviour is confirmed, but only for unemployed women. The difference between men and women can possibly be explained by the fact that for men with both traditional as non-traditional gender norms it is just as desirable to be employed (or there is a smaller difference than there is for women). Future research could investigate the absent effect of norm-congruent experiences with being employed and gender norms for women who are employed. It possibly can be due to the fact that their lower well-being when having non-traditional norms is being compensated by the increasing effect on your psychological well-being of being employed and vice versa.

There are also some limitations in the current study. For the construct of gender norms there was a low reliability found (i.e. an initial Cronbach's Alpha of .635). In future research it is important to improve the reliability of the construct of gender norms. It is also possible to look at other aspects of gender norms or a broader view of them. The four statements that measure gender norms are now focused the capability of men to do housework and raise children. It future research one could also present statements about the woman's share of raising a child and household or look at opinions about employment.

Research suggests that men are less tolerant of depressed mood and have more difficulty in recognizing depressed mood than women (Brownhill, Wilhelm and Barclay, 2005). This can be a bias in the data of male respondents collected on their psychological well-being and thus possibly explain (part) of the difference in the effect of gender norms on well-being for men and women.

In future research it is necessary to closer examine the mechanism between gender norms and psychological well-being for women. The moderating effect of being unemployed on this relationship could be further investigated. Future research could also include people without a partner and look if the effect of gender norms on psychological well-being is the same for them. This was not done in this study, for the sake of taking into account the division of household labour between the respondent and his or her partner.

The match of the gender norms and behaviour for the construct of norm-congruent experiences could be improved. The tasks that were taken into account with the division of household

labour were all daily household tasks, while most of the statements of the construct of gender norms were about men participating in nurturing their child (only one was about housework).

Another possibility for the construct of norm-congruent behaviour is to look at the perception of the respondent on how their norms are confirmed or disconfirmed in their behaviour. There is a possibility that there is a difference between what difference people perceive as congruence or incongruence between their norms and behaviour and the contrast or similarity between these two being measured by asking both their norms and their behaviour and comparing them. It is interesting to see if there is an actual difference and if there is a difference in the association with psychological well-being and gender norms.

The control variable of being an immigrant is measured with the question 'In what country where you born?' This has the assumption that all people who are not born in the Netherlands are an immigrant. Of course there are other possible situations in which parents are on a vacation or live temporarily abroad. This variable could be improved in further research.

Because in the analyses one's norms on division of labour between you and your partner and your norms about the gender norms about men and women are compared (in the mechanism of norm-congruent experiences) only heterosexual respondents (i.e. men with a female partner, and women with a male partner) should be taken into account. There is no question defining the gender of your partner. It is thus assumed that every respondent has a heterosexual relationship, which is of course not the case. The variable of norm-congruent experiences could thus be improved in later research.

Despite these limitations this study gives first insights about the association between gender norms and psychological well-being and the difference for men and women. This research took into account the effect of behaviour in the association between gender norms and psychological well-being. It showed that the division of household and the congruence or incongruence between someone's gender norms and division of household labour had no significant effect on psychological well-being. And showed that for unemployed women there was a reason to believe that the mechanism of norm-congruent experiences is effective. The congruence or incongruence with being unemployed and their gender norms showed to significantly increase and decrease their psychological well-being. These interesting results are inviting to conduct further research on these topics.

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Appendix

For the dependent variable 'psychological well-being' fifteen statements are used, they are as follows: 'Felt annoyed by things that usually don't annoy me', 'I didn't feel like eating', 'Felt sad even though friends and family tried to cheer me up', 'Difficulty to focus on tasks', 'Felt depressed', 'Everything I do takes effort', 'Considered my life a failure', 'Felt anxious', 'Slept restlessly', 'Talked less than usually', 'Felt lonely', 'People were unkind', 'Dad crying fits', 'Felt sad', 'Felt that people didn't like me' and 'Couldn't get going'.