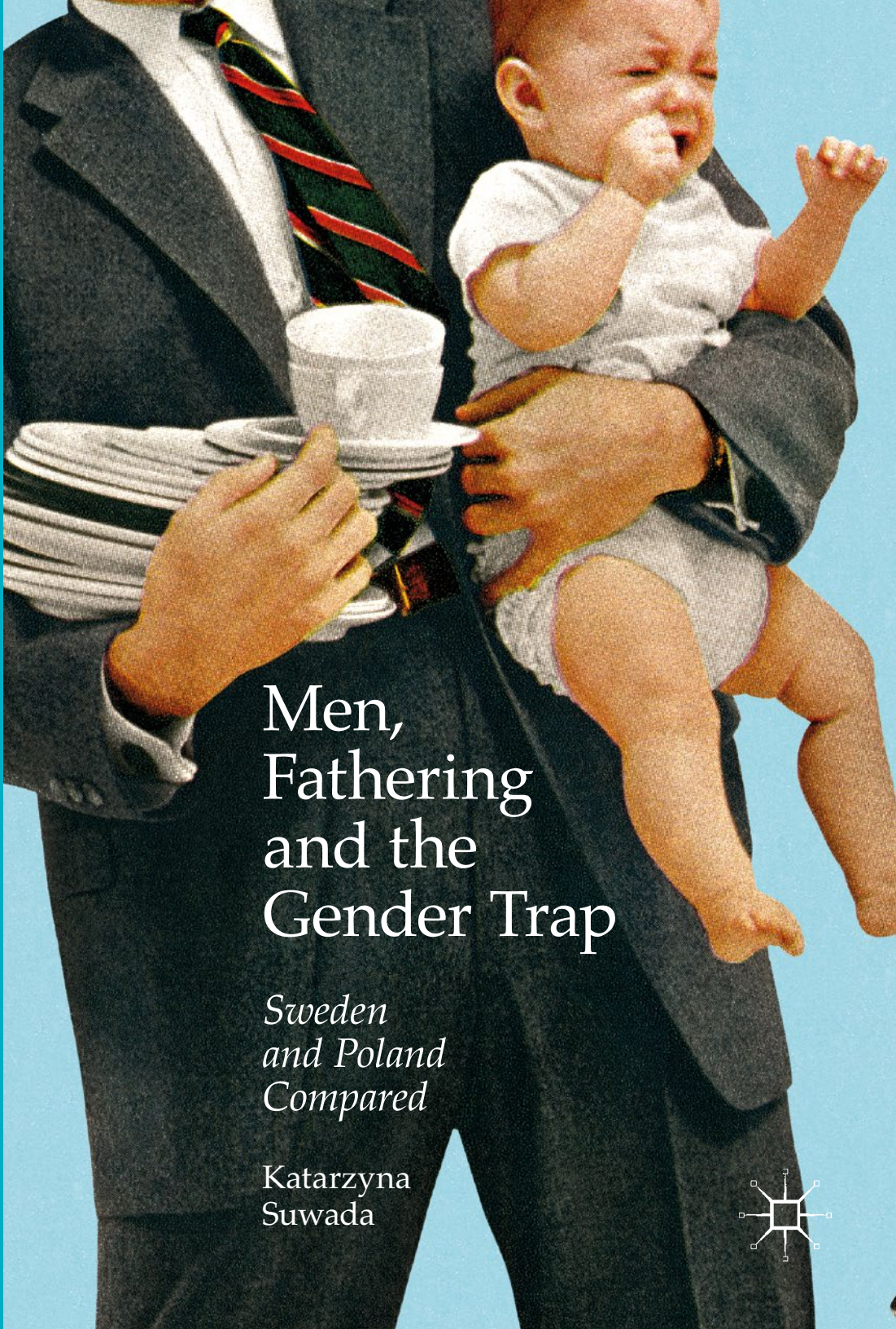

Men, Fathering and the Gender Trap

Sweden and Poland Compared

Katarzyna Suwada

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For Janusz Mucha

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◆ ◆ ◆

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1

Introduction

> There is no reason why one of genders should have a privileged position of having a right to parental leave.
> (Poland, Łukasz, 26 years old, 2-year-old child)

The above citation is taken from one of the interviews I conducted with Polish fathers between June 2012 and April 2013. It might be interpreted as an assertion that there is no equality between men and women when it comes to parenthood. In patriarchal societies gender inequality is not only limited to the privileges individuals get in connection to becoming a parent, but also present in almost every social situation in which one, consciously or unconsciously, refers to particular models of masculinity and femininity. The aim of this book is to examine issues of fatherhood in the Swedish and Polish societies; this subject should be seen as a pretext to describe contemporary societies from the perspective of unequal gender relations, prevailing power orders and the role of welfare states in sustaining or reconstructing gender inequalities. So I carefully examine the family policy systems in Sweden and Poland and the way Swedish and Polish men define fatherhood, engage in their parental roles, share domestic obligations and reconcile work with family life. It is important

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to analyse gender relations within the domestic sphere from the perspective of men—taking into account that men are gendered individuals and are also present in areas traditionally regarded as reserved for females.

Fatherhood studies are a relatively new academic discipline within social sciences that appeared in the last decades of the twentieth century. Fatherhood as an academic concern was first investigated from the psychological perspective in the 1950–1960s. Psychologists, and then other social scientists, concentrated on the father's absence from family life, especially on how this absence affects children's behaviour and personalities (Coltrane and Collins 2001). In the meantime new conceptualisations of fathers' roles emerged. The father figure stopped being regarded as the moral authority, a breadwinner and an economic supporter of the family. Discussions about fatherhood started to concentrate on father involvement and its emotional importance in proper child development and the functioning of the whole family (Lamb 2010b). Lately, fatherhood has become especially important from the perspective of gender studies that deal with power relations between men and women, as well as with the hierarchies of different types of masculinities. From the perspective of critical studies on men and masculinities, the changing models of fatherhood play a crucial role in the reconstruction of patriarchal/hegemonic masculinity, and as such redefine gender relations.[1] The discussion within these frameworks started in the mid-1980s as the new model of fatherhood, aligning with the model of domesticated masculinity, gained recognition. This model suggested that men were spending more time in housework and childcare (Aitken 2007, 184). Since the introduction of this model, fatherhood studies have significantly expanded. Since fatherhood is no longer regarded as a homogenous construct or experience, researchers have started to take into consideration diverse categories of men and different social and cultural contexts that affect the way men understand and fulfil their parental responsibilities. Extensive studies on the fatherhood experience have been conducted primarily in the Scandinavian countries, the United States and lately in the Western

[1] Hegemonic masculinity is a term coined by Raewyn Connell, who suggests thinking in terms of many masculinities instead of only one masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Connell 2005).

European societies, whereas in many other parts of the world, there is a lack of research. Polish society is an example of one of these unexplored areas.

This book concentrates on Swedish and Polish societies. In many aspects, these two societies are very different from each other. Although both are located in Europe, each is characterised by different histories, cultures and religions, as well as different geographical locations, population sizes and political systems. All of these greatly impact how each country is organised; how they deal with diverse social issues, such as social inequalities, gender relations, family problems and so on; and how citizens understand the role of the state. What interest me are the similarities and differences between the constructions of the role of the father in different social settings. A comparison of the traditional, Roman Catholic and still very patriarchal Polish society, dealing with the post-communistic transformation, with the modern, post-Lutheran atheistic and egalitarian, in various aspects, Swedish society sheds new light on fatherhood studies. This comparison may reveal more general features of fatherhood experience and emphasise differences in fathering that emerge from diverse social contexts. This comparative analysis is also important from the perspective of family policy systems. The Swedish fatherhood family policy is now over 40 years old, and therefore Sweden is often regarded as an ideal society with involved fathers and advanced gender equality policy. Poland is at the beginning of this path, partially forced to implement fatherhood mechanisms by the formal directive of *gender mainstreaming* imposed by the European Union on its members. But the picture is more complex. Swedish and Polish fathers employ their own strategies when dealing with parental roles, and in all likelihood, they would never approach parenthood in a similar way. The aim of this comparative research is to capture the impact that external context has on fatherhood and to find the significant, although sometimes subtle, differences and similarities in the approach to parental roles made by Swedish and Polish men.

The main objective of the project presented here was to show how Swedish and Polish fathers define and fulfil their parental roles in the contemporary social reality. Taking into account changes in family life in the twentieth century and at the beginning of the twenty-first century,

fatherhood is not only biologically determined by an individual's sex, but also socially and culturally constructed. It is a construction based on cultural and historical patterns grounded in tradition, other people's expectations and images, and it also depends on institutional and political mechanisms arising from the family policy system. Consequently, political, cultural, religious and social contexts of various societies should have different impacts on the ways in which fatherhood is defined and practised. They set some types of patterns that men as fathers should follow—those patterns, fully grounded in gender roles and not always comfortable for everyone, might play the role of a trap which it is hard to escape from. Therefore, fatherhood should be seen as an area in which men have to face often-conflicting expectations and deal with their gender.

To explore the phenomenon of fatherhood, I completed fieldwork placements in Sweden and Poland in 2012 and 2013. In both societies similar research was conducted. This research consists of four parts. (1) In the historical analysis of family policy systems in Sweden and Poland, I studied how these systems have changed over the last decades, how they are currently organised, what benefits they provide parents, and to which models of fatherhood parents refer. (2) The analysis of the data gathered in a module "Family, Work and Gender Roles" of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP; 1994, 2002, 2012) and in the World Value Survey (WVS; 1981–2008) shows the general attitudes of Swedish and Polish citizens towards parenthood and gender roles. (3) The analysis of the data from the Swedish and Polish state statistical offices and the social insurance institutions provides information about reproductive behaviours of Swedes and Poles, basic information about the situation of men and women in the labour market, and the use of parental leave. (4) Last but not least, the analysis of 68 in-depth interviews with fathers and mothers shows how fatherhood is defined and practised in everyday life in Sweden and Poland. The analyses of quantitative and qualitative data took place simultaneously.

The book comprises eight chapters, including the introduction and the summary. Chapter 2 is theoretical in character. Its aim is to show why fatherhood is an important issue at the beginning of the twenty-first century and why it should be the subject of a critical sociological reflection.

Therefore, I start with a historical review of studies on fatherhood within social sciences. First, I depict how the role of the father has been analysed within sociology, in particular the sociology of family. Since parenthood is a strongly gendered phenomenon, I concentrate mostly on research and theories grounded in the feminist perspective and gender studies. It is also important for me to underline how men's studies, especially critical studies on men and masculinities, have contributed to research on fatherhood. Second, I present different ways of defining fatherhood within social sciences. Definitions that underline the biological and social dimensions of fathering (while keeping in mind that they usually refer to mothering and gendered parental roles) are the definitions utilised most often in my analysis. The third part of the chapter is devoted to a historical analysis of the changes in fatherhood models. The decline of the male breadwinner model has had a significant impact on the way people organise their lives. In this context, I show what consequences the contemporary economic and societal changes have on men's lives within the domestic sphere and how individuals have to reconstruct the model of traditional masculinity and the role of the father. At the end of this chapter, the process of change from the model of traditional fatherhood to the involved fatherhood model is presented; I seek to explain how changes within fathering are intertwined with the process of redefining masculinity models.

Chapter 3 is devoted to my research on fatherhood and the methodology I used in my fieldwork. I present my research project, which is based on in-depth interviews conducted with Swedish and Polish fathers and mothers in 2012 and 2013, data gathered through the International Social Survey Research and the WVS, the official Swedish and Polish national statistics, and a historical analysis of Swedish and Polish family policy systems. My research is based on the comparative analysis of two very different societies and their welfare state regimes. Such comparisons give me a chance to grasp the phenomenon of fatherhood in its complexity and show how institutional contexts influence the way people behave and define their social roles and positions. In this chapter I explicate in detail why I decided to adopt the critical theory perspective to analyse the phenomenon of fatherhood and what the advantages of this comparative analysis are. I also explain my focus on middle-class families and heterosexual men.

In Chap. 4, I examine the institutional contexts of fathering in Sweden and Poland. Therefore, I start by describing different regimes of the European family policy systems. In the context of my analysis, it is important to underline that parenthood and changing parental roles have become a political issue. Therefore, I take into account how parental roles are defined in official documents and what expectations the state has of fathers and mothers. I refer here to different typologies of welfare states (mostly to concepts of Gøsta Esping-Andersen (2002), Jaana Vuori (2007), Steven Saxonberg (2013), Jeff Hearn and Keith Pringle (2006)) and show how Sweden and Poland are located within them. Additionally, since parenthood is a strongly gendered sphere of social reality, I also analyse family policy in regards to gender mainstreaming and gender equality policies. After such an introduction, I concentrate in detail on the history of Swedish and Polish family policy systems. I trace the development of family policies in these two countries, describe their current aims, and examine how they have changed and how these policies have been applied for the last decades. I concentrate mostly on the parental leave schemes, on the public and private day care systems, on employers' attitudes, but I also refer to public parenthood campaigns. The expectations towards men as fathers are of particular importance here.

In Chap. 5, I start with presenting the fathering experiences of Swedish and Polish men based on findings from my own fieldwork—in-depth interviews with Swedish and Polish fathers and mothers. These findings are complemented by the survey data from the ISSP's module "Family, Work and Gender Roles" (1994, 2002, 2012) and the WVS (1981–2008).

First, I concentrate on how Polish and Swedish men define their parental roles. I take into consideration the whole context of fathering, how traditional and new models of fatherhood affect men's ways of thinking, how fatherhood is perceived in comparison with motherhood and how fatherhood is linked to the masculinity models prevailing in both societies. It is important to find out what elements are crucial in defining parental roles and whether fathers concentrate on the biological differences between men and women in parenting or rather talk about the similarities between male and female experiences. The models of breadwinning adopted by Swedish and Polish parents impact whether fathers

perceive themselves more as the main provider for the family or whether they care more about partnership and shared parenting. The institutional context described in the previous chapter is important here because, as I claim, it affects the way people understand their parental obligations. The comparisons of Swedish and Polish societies allow me to capture the complexity of this relationship. The chapter finishes with the problem of gender and power relations of a patriarchal society that prevails even in families with highly involved fathers.

Keeping in mind the ways in which Swedish and Polish fathers define their parental roles, in Chap. 6, I examine the social context of parenthood and how it affects everyday fathering. In social sciences fatherhood is usually located in the broader context. For example, in Scandinavian research on parenting, it is claimed that social structures determine people's practices within the domestic sphere, especially if those structures are gendered. Therefore, in this chapter, I show how Swedish and Polish men deal with the expectations and definitions of fatherhood imposed on them by specific family policy systems, culture and society. In this context it is crucial to see how stereotypical parental roles determine men's behaviour, how these roles are perceived by fathers and whether men behave according to the roles or rather try to overcome and reconstruct them. Since the traditional father's role is associated with being the main breadwinner, I also show how men balance work and life, what their attitudes are towards career and participation in the labour market, and how they reconcile their parental obligations with paid work. It is also interesting to compare fathers' and mothers' attitudes because it shows some of the different approaches individuals take towards parental obligations. Once more, the comparative research between Swedish and Polish societies provides an opportunity to grasp the complexity of the aforementioned problems in the social contexts within which they are set.

Chapter 7 is devoted to practices connected to male parenthood. These practices are usually linked to the definitions of fatherhood described in the previous chapters. Institutional settings can reinforce particular men's behaviours. Therefore, I seek to show how practices are grounded in social and institutional contexts. Based on interviews and survey data, I present the kinds of parenting activities in which fathers most often engage, what activities they avoid, what their declared obligations are

and how these obligations differ from the mother's obligations. When dealing with gender equality in family life, it is important not to ignore the division of domestic work; therefore, I concentrate on how domestic duties are shared by men and women. I confront findings from my own fieldwork with data gathered in the ISSP and the WVS, concentrating on comparing men's opinions with the views of women. Another issue discussed in this chapter is the transformative effect of parenthood on men. Since becoming a parent is often connected with a significant change of everyday life, fathering also impacts male identity and behaviours. This is closely connected to how men, as gendered individuals, deal with *naturalised* differences between men and women. The comparisons between Sweden and Poland are particularly interesting in this case since they underline differences and similarities on the level of *praxis* in these two societies. In this chapter I seek to capture changing fathering practices and try to show how traditional models of masculinity are being renegotiated and redefined in everyday life.

In the final chapter I summarise the results of the field research and analyses presented in the previous chapters. The comparisons between Polish and Swedish societies provide an opportunity to explain the impact of social policy systems on the behaviours of individuals. Therefore, at the end, I show how important the role of institutional context is in redefining traditional parental roles and in reconstructing traditional masculinity models, as well as the gender order in the private and public spheres. I seek to answer the question: what micro and macro changes might result from these redefinitions and reconstructions? And as a consequence: how do they affect the patriarchal power order and unequal gender relations? Finally, I raise a set of new questions that appeared during my analysis and I propose possible areas for further research on fatherhood and masculinities, especially in Polish society.

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2

Fatherhood and Change: An Overview

2.1 Fathers as a Subject of Sociological Reflection

The history of fatherhood studies is not very long—in comparison with other disciplines. Although fatherhood only became a subject of academic reflection in the 1970s, a great body of literature has accumulated over these 40 years. Fatherhood as a social phenomenon is an important issue from the perspective of sociological and gender studies research, and its advanced analysis can contribute to a better understanding of surrounding social reality. To properly understand why fatherhood is significant as a research area, it is necessary to underline its complexity and its embedment in social, institutional and cultural contexts. I only focus here on Western societies and my theoretical considerations about fatherhood refer to families in the Western world. Although in my analysis some elements of historical analysis could be found, I concentrate on contemporary fathering in the particular social settings. This specified focus of interest is connected not only to the methodological choices I made, which are described in the next chapter, but also to my firm conviction that, as social researchers, we need to be

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aware of the contextual character of studied phenomena. Gender studies and research on men and masculinities clearly indicate that there is plenty of ways of experiencing society and life by different people (Connell 2011a; Hearn 2015). While analysing these experiences, we should take into consideration their diversity, fragmentation, changeability and intersectionality. Thus, the analysis presented in this book should be seen as a comparative description of particular social contexts within which men as gendered human beings function. I have no ambition to provide a general analysis that would grasp the experiences of all men. I believe it is impossible.

What it means to be a father is especially important in the sociology of families. Although the contemporary organisation of family life is significantly different from previous models and is constantly changing, family is still regarded as a fundamental institution of society (Slany 2002; Kimmel 2011; Thorne and Yalom 1982). From the conservative perspective, changing models of family life are seen in terms of crises that manifest in high divorce rates, an increasing number of single-parent families, low fertility rates, or in the delaying age of marriage and decision to have the first child. These changes impact the organisation of the entirety of society; thus, the family and parenthood became a political issue in the last decades. When dealing with this issue, it is hard to ignore the gender dimension of family arrangements, especially of parenthood. I concentrate here on men's parenthood and experience of fathering. Changing models of fatherhood are important in the context of at least three problems present in the sociological reflections and political discussions: (1) gender equality within the domestic sphere, which has a noticeable impact on the public sphere; (2) strategies adopted by men and women to achieve work–life balance and (3) the reconstruction of hegemonic masculinity models in contemporary Western societies. These three issues are inseparable on the level of everyday life, but for analytical purposes I describe them below separately. It is also worth noting that this analysis is not only important from the perspective of the sociology of families, but in my opinion, it is also crucial for the advancement of gender studies and critical studies on men and masculinities.

2.1.1 Fathers, Traditional Parental Roles and Gender Equality

Parenthood is one of the areas within which the reproduction of gendered practices occurs. In traditional and patriarchal societies, female and male models of parenthood, that is, motherhood and fatherhood, are connected to distinctively different practices, obligations and social expectations. As Tomasz Szlendak underlines:

> Even 30 years ago fathers were perfectly aware of their social role and had no problems fulfilling it since its script was not terribly complicated. The role of the father was clearly designated—the father went to work and earned money to provide for his family. (2011, 445)[1]

Although this general statement is not correct and adequate for all men in the Western world, it indicates that in times when gender roles were defined as contrasting and complementary, it was easier for men to understand the role of the father. In contrast, the role of the mother was defined primarily in terms of caregiving and an asserted biological predisposition to be a mother. Therefore, motherhood was often seen as a woman's central role and her true vocation (Badinter 2011; Korolczuk and Hryciuk 2012b; Thorne 1982, 11). The source of difference in men and women's parental roles might lie in the biological differences between the sexes. From this perspective, women are seen as the main carers of children because of the long period of pregnancy and breastfeeding. Since men do not experience this initial *biological* parenting experience, it is argued that men are less involved than mothers in caregiving during the first months of the child's life, which impacts family relations and engagement in the child's life later on. But the differences between mothering and fathering should not be seen only in biological terms. In fact, the influence of society and culture are even more important here. It seems that biological differences between the sexes lead to different societal expectations of men and women, to a gendered organisation of society and to the emergence of separate female and male spheres. The

[1] All citations from the Polish publications are translated to English by me.

processes of industrialisation and urbanisation have played a big role in creating distinct spheres of male and female lives; because of these processes, aspects of work have been transferred outside the household to the public sphere, and as a result, a distinction has appeared between public and private spheres.

Currently, the private sphere is regarded as a female area within which the biological reproduction of society occurs. This is a sphere traditionally reserved for women, in which man's participation is limited to that of an additional carer or helper. Whereas men, who by participating in the labour market are largely considered the economic providers for their families, dominate the public sphere. This is a simplistic (and probably idealistic) picture of a patriarchal organisation of society, in which the biological sex determines the way people behave. It is important to note that these two spheres are not valued in the same way. In general, housework and child rearing is regarded as less prestigious than paid work in the labour market. Therefore, female tasks are less attractive and valued. To complicate things more, in contemporary Western societies, men and especially women do not abide by these traditional and idealistic models of behaviour and individuals of both sexes often engage in both spheres. Being a mother does not mean that a woman is isolated to the domestic sphere. But even though contemporary women usually work to the same extent as men outside the home, men, not women, are stereotypically regarded as the main providers for the family (Slany 2002, 86–94). Women with children, in contrast, are expected to be primarily caregivers. This impacts how fathers engage in the domestic sphere and what opportunities women and men have in the labour market. It also creates a reality with unequal work burdens in which women usually work two shifts: in addition to paid work, they are responsible for unpaid domestic work. To achieve gender equality in the private and public spheres, it is crucial to look more carefully at men in the domestic sphere, especially fathers and the ways they define their parental roles, engage in parenthood and share responsibilities with their partners. In this context, studies on fatherhood are important to form a better understanding of changing gender roles and gender inequality.

2.1.2 Fathers and Work–Life Balance

The strategy of combining work and family life is one of the most important and frequently raised problems within the sociology of families today. This issue is linked to previously mentioned changes in traditional gender roles that led to the reorganisation of family life and a new household structure. Work–life balance might be briefly defined as methods for functioning at work and in the family sphere with no or a little role conflict through which a source of life satisfaction is found (see Fahlen 2012, 28–30). Today, women share the same legal rights and opportunities to work in the labour market as men and are no longer mainly responsible for the domestic sphere; thus, achieving work–life balance has become problematic. In the traditional family, based on the male breadwinner model, the roles were unquestioned—a man was engaged in paid work and was responsible for the economic provision of his family, whereas a woman's primary obligation was to take care of the domestic sphere and children. Gendered parental roles were strictly linked to the division between the public and private spheres. Women's entry to the labour market did not free them from domestic work, but resulted in a double burden for women. However, society is constantly changing, as are expectations of men. The contemporary organisation of family life requires that men engage in the domestic sphere and take over a portion of traditionally female-designated tasks. As Tanja Van der Lippe, Annet Jager and Yvonne Kops underline, "work/family conflicts are becoming increasingly similar between men and women" (2006, 305). Thus, the problem of work–life balance has become particularly interesting, and in dealing with it, it is necessary to include the gender dimension of potential role conflicts.

The question arises of whether this "combination pressure," as Van der Lippe, Jager and Kops call it, affects men and women in the same way. What are the differences between women's and men's experiences of conflict with their roles? Research shows that this experience is not the same for women and men. The time spent by men in the labour market is still more constant than it is for women. And the concept of the primary breadwinner is a core to the definition of "fatherhood." It is more difficult for men to resign from successful careers or reduce the number of working hours. Thus, for men, the conflict between work and family

concentrates more on tensions between traditional and new models of fatherhood, which will be described in depth later in this chapter. As Gillian Ranson (2001) underscores, for men, the conflict between the good worker and the involved father is more overt than for women. In this context, it is important also to take into consideration the institutional context of parenting: the social policy system and situation in the labour market, particularly relations between employers and employees. The welfare state, through the instruments of social policy, may help parents to deal with conflicting roles, but may also make it more difficult for men to be more fully involved in family life.

Questions regarding work–life balance extend beyond the question of how people achieve the balance. Additional issues include: what kinds of domestic work men and women engage in, how do men and women take care of their children and whether there are any differences between men's and women's practices. As previous research (see Fine-Davis et al. 2004; Ranson 2001; Wall and Arnold 2007) shows, the father's involvement in caretaking often occurs during after-work hours and weekends. It is also clear that household tasks are not fairly divided[2]:

> Men's actions generally conform to an unequal rather than a coequal caretaking role. In this model, the secondary caretakers have the power and the money in the relationships, and their caretaking is overwhelmingly economic. (Dowd 2000, 2–3)

Similarly, men see themselves as "helping" their female partners with household obligations, rather than seeing those obligations as also their own:

> Men tend to see their participation in housework in relation to their wives' housework; women tend to see their work as necessary for family maintenance. That's why men use terms like "pitch in" or "help out" to describe

[2] There is a problem of what one understands as a fair division. In my perspective, the fair division of domestic work means equal time spent on fulfilling household tasks in a situation when both parents engage in paid work in the labour market. It also means that nobody is using their power to avoid sharing domestic work. In fact, the fair division should be rather seen as "an ideal world" which individuals might seek than an order that can actually be achieved.

> the time they spend in housework—as if the work was their wives' to do. (Kimmel 2011, 162)

Keeping this in mind, it is worth underlining that addressing the issue of work–life balance from the fathers' perspective might help us to understand the prevailing gendered arrangements of social life.

2.1.3 Fatherhood and Masculinity Models

Finally, the issue of fatherhood is closely linked to changing masculinity models. Even the aforementioned problem of work–life balance cannot be analysed without looking at how men function in contemporary society and how their roles have been changing over the last decades. Questions regarding work–life balance are in fact a question of how household tasks can go beyond traditional gender roles and stop being regarded as exclusively female responsibilities. It is not possible to solve this problem without taking into account models of masculinity that I define here as configurations of practices deriving from men's body and as such subjected to change (see Anderson 2009, 2011; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Connell 2005). The relations between masculinity models and fatherhood models are crucial to understand why it is hard to make men into involved fathers and diminish gender inequalities. Over 25 years ago, Susan Faludi in her book *Backlash* pointed out that the leading definition of masculinity had not changed for decades; being a "real" man means that a man is simply "a good provider for his family" (2006, 79). This statement is still valid today. Masculinity models and fatherhood models impact one another. There is the need to reformulate the role of the main, male breadwinner to reflect women's participation in the labour market and changing gender roles. This reformulation in terms of fatherhood is needed not only because of the changing gender order—it is also important for men who do not comply with traditional obligations. As Derrick M. Bryan (2013) argues, the expectation that the father should be the main provider can actually impede men's engagement in their parental role, especially for low-income fathers, who because of shame rather withdraw from family life than overtake traditionally female obligations.

Just recently, in the analyses of the changes in masculinity models, the dimension of care was included. The concept of caring masculinities (in plural) is gaining more and more recognition since it is regarded as crucial in transition to societies based on actual gender equality. The central features of caring masculinities are rejection of domination and integration of values of care, which have their grounds in positive emotions and in the understanding of interdependence and relationality of different human beings (Elliott 2015; "The Role of Men in Gender Equality European Strategies & Insights" 2013; Brandth and Kvande 2016; Hanlon 2012). During their lives, men engage in many different forms of care work. Caring masculinities is an analytical tool that helps to grasp the actual practices of care. Since most men in their lifetime are fathers, they have (at least) the opportunity to engage in care work. Thus, fathering should be seen as one way of adopting caring masculinity and, consequently, crucial for the process of the redefinition of hegemonic masculinity models. Changes in the dominant masculinity models allow a broader set of behaviours to be incorporated into the father's role without undermining the father's male identity. As I show in Chap. 5, men who are more eager to reject hegemonic masculinity tend to cross gender roles more easily, are more involved in their parental obligations and do not avoid fulfilling traditionally female tasks (see Gottzen and Kremer-Sadlik 2012).

These three dimensions of fatherhood—gender roles and equality, work–life balance and models of masculinity—are of particular importance to me. Since they are closely related to one another, I do not analyse them separately, but I seek to disentangle the complex relationship between them and to depict the experience of contemporary fathering in Sweden and Poland.

2.2 Cultural Dimension of Fatherhood Definitions

It seems to be easy to define fatherhood and what it means to be a father. We all have an imaginary model of how family *should* be organised and define in some way female and male parental roles based on our own experiences. Family is often regarded as a basic social institution within

which the biological and social reproductions of society occur. From the biological perspective, every human being should have a father. This biological dimension of parenthood is often underlined in social sciences. In theory, having a biological child by a man is the only one definitive indicator of being a father. But in practice, society is usually more complicated and one can be a father without being biologically related to a child and a biological father might not fulfil his social parental role. Thus, it is important to examine the social and cultural aspects of being a father. The obligations and rights of fatherhood depend on social patterns and the models of families existent in a particular society. These obligations and rights are also influenced by the state and its social policy system. Fatherhood is usually defined in relation to motherhood. Female and male parenting models are often seen differently; they might be characterised as contrasting and, at the same time, complementary. The gendered definitions of parenthood have obvious sources in the biological differences between men and women, but are culturally and socially constructed. Therefore to clarify the perspective I adopt in the book, in this part, my theoretical starting points, that is, theories of *doing gender* and approaches locating fatherhood within the institutional context, are presented. Within these perspectives, parenthood is recognised as a historical phenomenon determined more by cultural, social and institutional factors than by biology. And the prevailing social order is critically analysed by taking into consideration gender inequalities and power relations.

2.2.1 Construction and Deconstruction of Gendered Parental Roles

Although parenthood might seem to be a biological phenomenon resulting from human beings' ability to reproduce, parental roles and family models are not only determined by biology. They are also influenced by the particular social and cultural settings in which they are located. Therefore, adopting biological explanations is not practically useful as we analyse fatherhood in the social context and take into account issues mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, that is gender equality, work–life balance and the reconstruction of traditional masculinity.

In this book, I adopt the constructivist approach and feminist theories that use the term "gender" to underline the social and cultural constructions of female and male roles, masculinities and femininities. They also encompass an analysis of unequal power relations between women and men. Gender studies is a large field of study with different approaches and ways of analysing and defining gender and sex. Yet, as Katarzyna Leszczyńska and Agata Dziuban (2012) underline, although there is no single coherent theory of gender, within gender studies, there is agreement that gender is socially and culturally embedded. In my work, there is no need to address all of these, sometimes conflicting, approaches; therefore, I refer only to theories that are of particular use in analysing fatherhood and parenthood. On the one hand, it is important for me to take into consideration the institutional dimension of parenting and how it is embedded in social structures. On the other hand, I refer to theories which underline the impact of gender on practices and individuals' actions, so in fact, I concentrate on how individuals are *doing* gender in everyday life (West and Zimmerman 1987).

For Cecilia L. Ridgeway and Shelley J. Correll gender is a crucial category which "acts as a fundamental principle for organizing social relations in virtually all spheres of social life" (2004, 521). It should also be understood as "an institutionalized system of social practices for constituting people as two significantly different categories, men and women, and organizing social relations of inequality on the basis of that difference" (2004, 510). Ridgeway and Correll disagree with the assumption that gender is a role or an identity taught in the socialisation process that girls and boys undergo within the family. They claim that it is rather a system of inequality based on cultural beliefs about men and women, which impacts the way individuals define themselves in particular contexts. To grasp the significance of a context's role, they introduce the concept of "social relational contexts" to underline that the way individuals behave depends on how they define themselves while taking into account other people's expectations and beliefs (see Ridgeway and Correll 2004; Ridgeway 2009). From this perspective, gender seems to be a background identity and one of the primary categories which organises social relations and has an enormous impact on an individual's behaviour. It is important to understand that everyone participating in an interaction

acts based on gender beliefs that, on the one hand, specify how to behave according to gender stereotypes and, on the other hand, determine how one should evaluate the behaviour of others.

In their concept, Ridgeway and Correll refer to the theory of *doing gender* of Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman, who define gender as "the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category. Gender activities emerge from and bolster claims to membership in a sex category" (1987, 127). So gender is connected to sex categorisation, which is based on a biological categorisation of a person as female or male. On the grounds of this categorisation, individuals behave and are evaluated according to cultural beliefs of what is regarded as female and male. As West and Zimmerman underlines, in such circumstances, *doing gender* is unavoidable in every domain: not only domestic, economic, political, but also in every interpersonal relationship (1987, 145).

The relation between sex and gender seems to be crucial when one deals with the issue of parenthood. The reproductive dichotomy between men and women is often seen as a basic categorisation organising family life. The biological sex of a human being determines the behaviours and roles in which an individual engages over the course of a lifetime. As R.W. Connell argues, this way of thinking cannot be based solely on a simple relation between nature and society. The biological differences between men and women do not explain why men and women have different positions in social hierarchies, why they engage in different activities and are expected to behave differently, and why so many social control methods must be employed to ensure that people conform to their expected sex/gender role. Therefore, since the biological distinction between sexes is not convincing enough to explain the complexity of social life, it might be assumed that it is *culturally elaborated* by society (Connell 1987, 66–77). Connell (1987; see also Shilling 2003, 88–109) depicts the process of reproducing gendered bodies in which the body, as an object of social practice, is transformed in a particular way. She underlines that from the standpoint of nature, the differences between the male and the female body are not that significant. In fact, gender identities, which derive from the sex of individuals, underline gender differences, not necessarily in a natural way. Make-up, clothing, accessories,

positioning, gestures are socially constructed to create a strong delineation between men and women; this delineation is fundamental to justify the prevailing social order:

> There is, therefore, a logic to such paradoxes as the gross exaggeration of difference by the social practices of dress, adornment and the like. They are part of continuing effort to sustain the social definition of gender, an effort that is necessary precisely because the biological logic, and the inert practice that responds to it, cannot sustain the gender categories. (Connell 1987, 81)

This process of exaggerating differences should be seen as a process of *negating similarities* between sexes in social practices. It is so strong that it results in a practical transformation of the body. The biological female and male bodies are transformed in social practices in a way that produces differences that do not naturally exist. For example, Connell refers to the dichotomy of a weak and small female body and a strong and big male body. In fact, as we look carefully at society, there are many women who are stronger and bigger than many men. What is more, in the process of personal life, individuals engage in practices that construct and reinforce features "typical" for their gender. So, for example, boys, from the very beginning, are pushed to participate in competitive sports to enhance their masculinity. In contrast, girls are expected to maintain focus inordinately on their bodies to attain social beauty standards. This focus in turn reinforces female body fragility because girls are discouraged from participating in activities that might be harmful to their beauty. As Connell underlines, "this is one of the main ways in which the power of men becomes *naturalized* [emphasised by Connell], i.e., seen as part of the order of nature" (1987, 85). The transformation of gendered bodies not only impacts the practices men and women engage in, but also greatly affects our perception of the relationship between the sexes. "Gender involves a lot more than one-to-one relationships between bodies; it involves a vast and complicated institutional and cultural order" (Connell 2009, 56). Socially constructed differences legitimise and sustain the social order, which is based on social inequalities. Additionally, the whole system works as a self-fulfilling prophecy that reinforces and naturalises this prevailing order.

The doing gender approaches are useful to analyse fatherhood for at least two reasons. First, they show how sex categorisations based on biological differences between men and women determine the behaviour of people and the divergent social expectations for females and males. In this context, every interaction can be seen as a performance of differences in social stereotypes for men and women. As Ridgeway underlines, how strongly individual behaviour is determined by gender beliefs depends on the salience and relevance of the gender frame in a particular situation (Ridgeway 2009). In my opinion, parenthood and the modern family must be seen as one of the most gendered arenas of social life (see Kimmel 2011, 141–192). Men's and women's parental roles are defined based on the biological differences between a mother and a father. Although the biological differences in male and female parenting occur mostly in the pregnancy and breastfeeding periods, the practices of mothering and fathering significantly differ. The entire distinction between the obligations of mothers and fathers to a child is built on these initial biological differences; social practices only reinforce and naturalise those differences. Therefore, it is difficult to escape the impact had by gender beliefs about parenthood in contemporary Western societies.

This brings us to the second reason: the theory of *doing gender* claims that gender is constructed on an ongoing basis in everyday life interactions. If so, it would mean that gender is not something imposed on individuals by nature and that a social order based on gender frames is not irreversible. This provides society with the potential for change. It must be underlined that every human interaction takes place in a particular social structure. These social structures constrain individual behaviour; to borrow from Ridgeway and Correll, social structures impact the salience of gender beliefs. The more salient gender beliefs are in a society, the greater the pressure to conform to them is and the smaller the potential for change is. In a system in which gender beliefs are less salient, women and men might be less constrained by sex categorisation. In analysing parenting practices, it is important to take into consideration the social context within which the practices occur. The institution of the family is particularly entangled in this process of reproducing gendered practices and roles. This is particularly so when the whole system, in its definitions of parental roles, rests on gender beliefs that are strongly entrenched in

biological differences and that are "naturalised" in the process of negation and transformation.

On the one hand, gender beliefs frame the behaviour of individuals, but on the other hand, they also shape social structures and the organisation of society. In this context, gender is one of the most fundamental categories enabling a critical analysis of social relations, on both micro and macro levels. An analysis of gender also helps to explain the mechanisms of power distribution in different areas of social life. Individual behaviour is always a performance of gender beliefs, which are self-fulfilling and, in consequence, reproduce the prevailing gender order. Therefore, in analysing fatherhood and the institution of family, it is important to examine how the institutional and social systems affect the behaviour of men and women.

2.2.2 Fatherhood Within the Institutional Context

To grasp the institutional dimension of fatherhood, I refer to approaches that underline the impact of the welfare state on the organisation of family life and men's engagement in parental roles. These approaches are usually grounded in research on changing models of fatherhood, which are in general connected to analyses of the changing gender order. They try to look at the issue of fatherhood more in terms of its embedment in a broader context of a particular society. One such approach is presented in the book *Making Men into Fathers* (Hobson 2002), in which fatherhood is analysed in terms of multiple interdependencies on three levels: (1) the level of inner-familial relations within *the domestic triangle*, (2) the broader level of welfare regime referred to as the *institutional triangle* and (3) the level of practices in everyday life analysed within the so-called *fatherhood triangle*.

The aim of distinguishing these three triangles is to grasp fatherhood in its entire complexity and to understand the impact external context has on fathering. Therefore, the domestic triangle, which consists of father—mother—child, shows how relations within the family are defined and built. A man as a father has to deal with different expectations from his partner and his children. Also the relationship between the mother and the children has a great impact on how the man engages in his parental

role. In this triangle, the organisation of power relations within a family is of key importance, whether they result from economic dependency in a male breadwinner model or are based on partnership. That is why the realisation of fatherhood is also connected to the institutional context. Every man functions in a particular institutional triangle of the family, the market and the state. In contemporary welfare states, the family life has become a political issue, mainly because it became clear that the gender order in the public sphere is affected by the organisation of family life in the private sphere. There is also a demographic problem of ageing societies and low fertility rates in the Western countries.

In the literature, there are several typologies of welfare states showing the differences in how policy regimes provide benefits and services for the family. What is more, the way female and male parenthood is defined within the official documents impacts how men and women are seen in the labour market and in the domestic sphere. Jaana Vuori (2007) distinguishes two kinds of parenting discourses that are usually adopted by welfare states: (1) the *shared parenting* discourse and (2) the *exclusive mothering* discourse:

> The exclusive mothering discourse emphasizes women's innate character as primary nurturers. The shared parenting discourse denies the absolute division between female and male nurturing roles. Both discourses consider men to be important as fathers but disagree on the care of babies and very young children. (Vuori 2007, 45)

In such an approach, attention is drawn to an important issue—the way the female and male parental roles are defined impacts how parents engage in the care of their children, and consequently, it also impacts men's and women's positions in the labour market. The market as such is not interested in the parental roles of its participants. In fact, the interests of the market and family usually conflict. Some important questions ask, how does the state react to this conflict? Does the state help people maintain a work–life balance? And, if so, in what way? Does the state equalise the chances of men and women to enter the labour market as full participants or does the state adhere to the traditional male breadwinner model that encourages women to stay at home and pushes men into the public sphere?

Finally, there is the third triangle that consists of such elements as *a father*, *fatherhood* and *fathering*. As Hobson and Morgan underline, its analytical role is "to capture the complex interplay between institutions and practices" (2002, 10). These three elements point out different dimensions of fatherhood today. The first term, *the father*, reflects the process of attaching the parental obligations of a particular individual. Basically, the man can be seen as a biological father or as a social father, and this distinction is often connected to the privileged position of biological fathers. The second category, *fatherhood*, grasps the cultural coding of fathers. It shows what rights, duties and responsibilities are connected to fatherhood and also what it means to be a father in a particular society. For example, in the modern patriarchal society, the father is mostly seen through his role as the main provider for the family. However, in recent times of changing family models and gender roles, this definition is no longer accurate. The third term, *fathering*, refers to a set of practices connected to fatherhood. The difference between *fatherhood* and *fathering* is analogical to a difference between *being* and *doing*, so it shows in what kinds of practices men engage because of their parenthood. Fathering in everyday life is heavily affected by all of the abovementioned factors—in the domestic triangle, father's practices are intertwined with the division of care and domestic work; the institutional triangle impacts how easy or difficult it is for men (but also women) to reconcile work and family life; in the fatherhood triangle, fathering is strictly connected to models of fatherhood prevailing in a particular society and also reasons of (not) being seen as a father (see Hobson and Morgan 2002; Knijn and Selten 2002). However, changes on the level of fathering might also impact the redefinition of fatherhood, how the family policy system is transformed or how the situations of women and men change in the labour market.

In this theoretical context, fatherhood is a social phenomenon that should not be analysed without taking the broad institutional context into account. What is more, contemporarily, we can observe rapidly changing models of family life, the reconstruction of the traditional gender order, traditional masculinity and femininity. All of these changes impact fatherhood. Therefore, fatherhood is not a stable phenomenon, but one that changes simultaneously with other social transformations.

Keeping these in mind, four important aspects of fatherhood should be distinguished. First, there is an inherent duality of parenthood; it is regarded as a biological and, at the same time, a social phenomenon. An individual's sex categorisation determines what expectations society will have of them as a parent. Sex categorisation also influences individual's behaviour. The following question arises: why are biological differences so important in prescribing parental obligations and how do men deal with them? This is connected to the second issue—since this duality of parenthood is connected to gender, it is important to analyse fatherhood in the context of motherhood. There is a tendency to describe the role of father and the role of mother as contrasting or at least complementary. Gendered beliefs about female and male parenthood are so profound that it is very difficult for individuals to escape them; therefore, they have a powerful impact on how men engage in their parenthood. Third, in the analysis of fatherhood, the problem of changing masculinity models should not be ignored. Being a father is one of the most important elements defining masculinity. But the question is, to which models of masculinity we refer and how the reconstruction of traditional masculinity influences contemporary models of fatherhood and, conversely, how the experience of being a father affects male identity. And finally, since in my analysis I concentrate on two societies and their institutional contexts, it must be noted that parenthood has become a political issue. It is impossible to analyse fatherhood without taking into consideration social policy systems and the types of discourses they use to regulate the issue of parenthood.

2.3 "Involved Fatherhood": Evolving Models of Male Parenting

In social sciences it is common to distinguish a new model of involved fatherhood which contrasts with a traditional model. Within traditional models a man is identified as belonging to the public sphere; his role in a household is often regarded in terms of being a helper or an additional parent expected to support the woman in fulfilling household duties. As

Nancy Dowd notes, using a military metaphor, "fathers are treated as volunteers, while mothers are draftees" (Dowd 2000, 7). The category of "choice" is crucial to this case. Within heterosexual households with children, men can usually choose how and to what extent they want to participate in nurturing and domestic work (see Miller 2011; Plantin et al. 2003). This situation is a consequence of how the male parental role is perceived in particular social settings.

Male parenthood is still primarily defined in terms of economic support, which is particularly evident in the case of divorce. Except for a minority of divorce cases arranged as joint custody between the parents, the father's role after divorce is mostly seen as an obligation to provide economic support for a child. This arrangement is indicative of the unequal treatment afforded to women and men (Troilo and Coleman 2013). If, in theory, the main burden of breadwinning is put on the shoulders of men, men will not and do not feel fully responsible for the labour of the "female" domestic sphere. But for low- and middle-class families in most Western societies, it is impossible to live on only one wage. Changes are required in parenting roles within the domestic sphere. To complement this picture of the changing gender order, we should look more closely at discussions regarding the new model of involved fatherhood. This new model attempts to redefine male parental obligations in terms of a close relationship between the father and the child rather than in terms of the father's financial responsibility to the child.

While keeping this in mind, it is worth examining what features are characteristic of traditional fatherhood and how, in contrast, involved fatherhood is defined. Since the model of involved fatherhood is a phenomenon quite recently described within social sciences, discussions regarding father involvement in parenthood are very broad and ongoing. The "old" model appeared around the time of industrialisation. And it refers to a clear and simple distinction between motherhood and fatherhood, and between the female and male social spheres, which is based on economic activity. As Michael Lamb (2000) shows, this model was dominant in the United States beginning in the middle of ninetieth century until the Great Depression in the 1930s. Although a "good" father's primary responsibility was to provide for the family economically, it does not mean that he was not involved in other aspects of parenting. Before

industrialisation, the father's household role was principally seen in terms of being a moral teacher; it was the responsibility of the man to raise his children with an appropriate sense of values. During industrialisation, the expectation that fathers would provide children with moral instruction continued; the substantial change in parental roles that took place during industrialisation was that the responsibility of economic provision became solely attached to the role of the father. In short, during industrialisation, a separation between domestic and public spheres occurred which led to a redefinition of female and male parenting roles along the lines of this separation.

The first half of the twentieth century was a time of enormous change in the labour market and within family life (Kimmel 2011; Szlendak 2011). Since the model of the single male breadwinning was no longer adequate, it became clear that there was a need of a new conceptualisation of fatherhood. Lamb, in his historical analysis of the research on father involvement, claims that, at that time in professional and popular literature, the need for strong sex-role models was underlined. Thus, the role of father was mostly seen in terms of being a good sex-role model for his children, especially for sons who need to grow into "real" men (Lamb 2000, 27). Ralph LaRossa also shows that, in the late 1950s in the United States, the image of the father presented in public discourse became much more conservative and patriarchal than it was in 1930s and 1940s. The conviction that parenting is mainly a female obligation became particularly strong and fathers in media were portrayed as incompetent carers who should leave the obligations of nurturing to their female partners (LaRossa 2004, 60). This more conservative and patriarchal strain of fatherhood, in my opinion, should be seen as a reaction to the greater participation of women in the labour market and their growing independence. In the face of social changes, the conservative parenting model could not be sustained.

In the 1970s a new conceptualisation of fatherhood emerged. This new conceptualisation asserted that men could be actively involved parents in the everyday care of their children. At this time the new model of involved fatherhood started to be discussed in academic and political debates. Initially, the main concern was how much fathers actually do as parents. Then, people began to question what it means to be an involved

father and why father involvement in child rearing is important for men, women, children, families and for society in general. Social scientists dealing with this issue underline that the need to redefine traditional and patriarchal parenthood is important for at least three reasons: (1) because of the issue of gender equality and the injustices furthered by old models, (2) because of the benefits of paternal engagement for child development and (3) because of the health benefits for all family members of men's greater involvement in parenthood. Since all of these reasons are relevant to my analysis, I will now present the line of argument that underscores each, starting with the problem of how to conceptualise *involved fatherhood*.

2.3.1 How to Redefine Fatherhood?

The process of redefining traditional paternal roles can be seen as an emancipation project for women, men and the whole of society. This is particularly evident to feminist scholars who note the absence of a focus on fathering within men's studies and its possible consequences for the success of the emancipation project. As Nancy E. Dowd notes:

> What is fascinating in the dominant account is the absence of a focus on fathering. In contrast, when feminists and others talk about women, they do not get very far without discussing motherhood. Masculinity seems to focus on the way men live their lives, which makes family subservient to everything else. Fathering is tied to manliness only as a demonstration of virility—the ability to produce a child—not as the conduct of caretaking and nurturing. (Dowd 2000, 182–183)

As long as parenthood and family life are regarded as a sphere of primarily female activity, it will be impossible to achieve true gender equality. Therefore, feminists propose a radical redefinition of fatherhood in terms of nurturing, which is usually seen as a core element of motherhood. There is a need to abandon the traditional definition of fatherhood, which refers to a man's position in the labour market and his paid work, and concentrate more on care duties connected to parenthood. The distinction between motherhood and fatherhood is particularly important

here. While talking about new fatherhood, according to this approach, we should actually refer more to the traditional female role than to the male one. It is also necessary to go beyond thinking about parenthood in terms of purely biological differences, particularly birth-giving, and concentrate more on the *work* of parenting. Sara Ruddick tries to describe this work using language that is not gender neutral but refers to practices usually identified with mothering.

> I speak of "mothering" rather than "parenting" as the work in which child-tending men and women engage. This terminology acknowledges the "fact" that mothering has been—and still is—primarily the responsibility of women and that history has consequences. Also, by the slight if passing frisson of referring to men as mothers I hope to jar a listener into reflecting upon the distinctive rights and privileges of "fathers" and upon the hetero-sexist knot in which our ideas of mothering are tied. By contrast, the abstract notion of "parent" obscures the pervasive injustices suffered by women-mothers and, more generally, the myriad father problems that vex and divide feminists. (Ruddick 1990, 229–230)

This gender-inclusive project is a radical one and requires the reconstruction of ways in which we think not only about male and female parenting, but also about the whole patriarchal society. Ruddick is aware of the fact that this project encounters resistance not only among men, but also among feminists who proclaim the right to difference.

Ruddick's suggestion that the term "motherhood" should be used regardless of a parent's biological sex has not yet been adopted in social sciences. Instead, there are different, also radical, projects that find new ways of defining men's parental roles in contemporary times. One is the project proposed by Nancy Dowd in her book *Redefining Fatherhood* (2000). It focuses on the male ability to nurture and is therefore closely related to the redefinition of motherhood:

> Social fatherhood is defined as the practice of nurture, either alone or in combination with other caretakers, as the sole or primary parent, or contributing as closely as possible to an equal amount of caregiving in partnership with the other primary parent or parents. It is nonexclusive, cooperative parenting. (Dowd 2000, 214)

From this perspective, the new father would share all parental responsibilities equally with his partner or the mother of his child. His obligations would include giving care rather than including just economic responsibilities. Thus, the new model of fatherhood is based on features characteristic of traditional mothering rather than of traditional fathering. However, from the perspective of a patriarchal society, there are multiple problems that occur with this model. First, the legal system in most Western countries is not adjusted to the model of nurturing fathers because it relies on definitions that refer to the traditional model of fatherhood. Such restrictions are especially evident when we take into consideration fathers who do not live with their children—for example, divorced and unmarried fathers. As Dowd notes, the equalising of unmarried fathers' rights and obligations to those of divorced fathers has created

> a purely biological definition of fatherhood that imposes rights and responsibilities on the basis of genetic ties alone. The impetus to do so, however, is primarily economic, to assist the state rather than to support social and nurturing fatherhood. (Dowd 2000, 120)

At the same time, the system is willing to ignore biological fatherhood if the mother marries another man. The unequal situations and completely different obligations and rights of men and women in having children are, therefore, particularly visible in the case of unmarried or divorced people. Men's biological parenthood is seen by the system in terms of economic obligations and so nurturing remains optional or voluntary. This issue is connected to the second problem—fatherhood is always defined in the context of motherhood. Is it possible to move away from economic definitions of fatherhood when wage disparity between women and men is still so high? Economic gender inequalities might undermine the endeavour to implement a new model of nurturing fatherhood. The third problem refers to the institution of marriage. Should nurturing fatherhood be put in the framework of heterosexual and married couples? Should fathering as nurturing support the traditional relationships between men and women? Times are changing and heterosexual marriage is no longer seen as a necessary requirement for having children and creating a family. What is more, feminists often see the institution of marriage as the primary institution within which the subordination of women is reinforced.

The model proposed by Dowd is in fact very similar to Ruddick's project, in which it is suggested that the term "mothering" be used regardless of the parent's sex. "The *work* of child-tending can be, and is being, undertaken by women and men, gay and straight, coupled, or in many kinds of social arrangements" (Ruddick 1990, 229). Thus, nurturing should be seen as a practice that can be undertaken by men and women in different social settings, for example, by single parents, divorced parents, homosexual couples, unemployed men and so on. Fatherhood and motherhood should not be based on the difference between the two, but rather should be seen as an empowering project for every individual. Since, this project has a political dimension, "the definition of fatherhood is a matter of considerable debate among academics, policy makers, and advocacy groups. A redefinition of fatherhood can be centered around a benefit to children, parents, gender equity, and/or society" (Dowd 2000, 172).

2.3.2 Benefits of the New Model of Fatherhood

Another framework within which the discussion of fatherhood is taking place concentrates on two important issues: the role of the father in child development and benefits of an involved father for children. Unsurprisingly, the character and the extent to which the father is involved in his parental role have a great impact on the everyday life and relations within the family. The debate on father involvement started around the problem of *fatherlessness*, sometimes called the crisis of fatherhood, and *deadbeat dads* who do not engage at all in their parental roles. Then, it became a subject of developmental psychology inquiries, which concentrate mostly on how fathers influence child development and compare fathers' involvement with mothers'.

The problem of the absent father first appeared in the context of the traditional family. The changes within family life—increasing number of divorces, the increasing number of children born outside of marriage and growing up in single-mother families—were seen as a threat to the traditional role of the father. These changes were not congruent with the traditional model of masculinity dominant in a patriarchal society. David Blankenhorn, the author of the book *Fatherless America* (1996),

writes about the crisis of fatherhood, which is indicated by the increasing number of children growing up without a father in the household and the increasing number of men abandoning their children. In his conservative approach, this situation is a result of the weakening position of marriage, so he urges contemporary society to defend the marital institution. For him, only stable and durable marriages can solve fatherlessness. "To recover the fatherhood idea, we must recreate a marriage culture. The alternative is the continuing decline of fatherhood" (Blankenhorn 1996, 224). This discourse was an inspiration for developing male-only social movements, which fight for fathers' rights, mostly divorced ones who have lost their custody rights. Although this approach is highly conservative and tends to blame the feminist movement for the current situation, it draws attention to the problem of relations between a father and a child and their impact on child development.

The issue of fatherhood and child development has been explored within developmental psychology for at least the last four decades; Michael E. Lamb and Joseph Pleck are the most well-known psychologists looking at relationships between fathers and children. Father involvement in parenting is a complex concept, and undoubtedly, it has an impact, positively or negatively, on child development. In the approach of developmental psychology, there are different types of parental involvement distinguished—it might be seen in economic terms or in terms of engagement in parental practices in everyday life. In the framework proposed in this book, involved fatherhood should be understood as a man's positive engagement in his parental role based on a partnership with the child's mother. This model contrasts with the model of traditional fatherhood.

In general, research shows a positive impact of father–child relationships for child development. As Lamb enumerates, referring to different studies, "children with highly involved fathers were characterized by increased cognitive competence, increased empathy, fewer sex-stereotyped beliefs, and a more internal locus of control" (2010a, 7); in addition, they also have better future life chances (Coltrane 2010). Researchers seek to answer why such differences exist between children with involved fathers and children without. As Lamb underlines, it used to be believed that the paternal nonresidence is harmful, because of the lack of a sex-role model, but further evidences suggest something else. It is not a problem of male absence, but

of the absence of one parent. In single-parent families or in families in which one of the parents is not engaged, many parental roles—economic, social or emotional—are not properly fulfilled. The lack of one parent's involvement leads to more frequent family conflicts that negatively impact a child's development. Two-parent families deal better with tough situations, it is easier for them to maintain work–life balance and achieve economic stability, and they are also less vulnerable to social isolation. If we look only at male parenting, research shows that fathers who shared or took primary responsibility for childcare had a positive impact on child development. This may be explained by the fact that a child benefits more from a close relationship with two different adults than with only one. By the same token, in the families where both parents found fulfilment in roles other than just parenthood, the men and women were more likely to achieve satisfaction, and this, too, had a positive impact on family relations (Coltrane 2010; Lamb et al. 1985; Lamb 2002, 2010b).

All research regarding father involvement is problematic if one interprets its results conservatively, that is, underlining the need of having two married parents of different genders. In times of dynamic changes in family life, with a growing number of divorces, single-parent households and homosexual families, there is a need to interpret involved fatherhood from different perspectives. First of all, it is necessary to avoid defining parental roles in terms of sex-role models and traditional models of femininity and masculinity. As Lamb notes:

> There is no evidence that children "do better" psychologically when they have more masculine fathers, or that gender differences between mothers and fathers are of great psychological significance to children. As Pleck makes clear, the continuing focus on masculine features of fatherhood in both scholarly and popular articles and books says more about the need to create unique role for men in the family than about well-documented empirical research. (2010a, 7)

A similar conclusion is drawn by William Marsiglio:

> Most scholars agree that, although fathers typically interact with their children differently than do mothers, men are not inherently deficient in their

> ability to parent and a father's gender is far less important in influencing child development than are his qualities as a parent. (Marsiglio 1995, 7)

Second, it is important to remember that not all children have the opportunity to grow up in traditional households with both parents; therefore, in dealing with the concept of involved fatherhood, we should keep in mind how situations of different families vary and that there is no one appropriate way of organising family life.

The last aspect of the involved fatherhood model underlined here relates to its health benefits. Perhaps, the most convincing research showing the effect of father involvement on an individual's life is its impact on health, not only men's health, but also the health of women and children. Statistical data shows that single childless men and single non-custodial fathers face a higher risk of premature mortality, whereas cohabiting fathers are less likely to engage in negative health behaviours such as drug abuse and other risk behaviours ("Fatherhood and Health Outcomes in Europe" 2007). There are many explanations for this. First of all, some scholars argue that becoming a parent dramatically changes an individual's life—life becomes more organised. Children need care and attention; therefore, young parents usually have to resign from their previous practices, especially those that were spontaneous and risky. Having a child is also an important source of meaning in life. Interestingly, a man's involvement in parenthood is as crucial for him, from the very beginning of pregnancy, as it is for the mother and the child. The prenatal period is usually regarded as a period in which the father's role is not important and he is usually rather withdrawn at that time. Nonetheless, research shows that a man's involvement during a woman's pregnancy and his presence during labour are crucial in the process of transition to motherhood and fatherhood. The psychological, emotional and moral support has a great impact on the woman's psychological stability and positively affects her and the child's health ("Fatherhood and Health Outcomes in Europe" 2007). For the man, this initial engagement helps in preparing him for his new role and gives him a sense of being a part of the birth-giving experience. In the model of involved fatherhood, the initial involvement enables the father to more easily develop a new identity and establish a strong relationship with his child, which would last in the

future. Despite this, many men still feel marginalised during this prenatal period and it is more difficult for them to feel involved immediately after the delivery to the same extent as mothers. Thus, the new model of fatherhood might be seen as a mechanism that challenges the initial withdrawal and changes from the very beginning men's attitudes towards their parental roles and practices. Consequently, men can feel more adequate in their new role and experience the process of transition to fatherhood in a less problematic way.

Another aspect of the father involvement is connected to violence, abuse and neglect. Many studies show that a man's dominant position in the patriarchal society is a reason for male violence against women and children (Katz 2006). Men can be harmful for children because of the former's structural power and control. Violent behaviour that takes place in the domestic sphere might be caused by the lack of a privileged position in the public sphere. Violence might be a means of re-establishing masculine power (Hearn and Pringle 2006; Pringle 2000). As research shows, engaging in caring responsibilities might help men to redefine what it means to be a man and, at the same time, a father. For instance, men who take long periods of parental leave change their attitudes towards paid work and career, stop thinking in terms of traditional masculinity values and have more appreciation for domestic work and caring responsibilities (Doucet and Merla 2007; Doucet 2004). It seems crucial to encourage men to engage in their parental roles in order to counter domestic violence and child abuse. As Hearn and Pringle states: "[T]o change men's relations to children involves a fundamental reconstruction of patriarchal relations and dominant forms of men's subjectivity" (2006, 366).

2.3.3 Hegemonic Masculinity, Caring Masculinities and Fatherhood

Culture, based on sex categorisations, defines what it means to be a father or a man in a particular society. Masculinity models and male identities determine the way men fulfil and understand fatherhood. They are also crucial to how they perceive stereotypical parental roles and obligations. Thus, to fully understand contemporary fatherhood, we need to refer

to the critical research on men and masculinities and their theoretical framework.

The concept of masculinities has been present in social sciences since at least the 1980s. The most influential theory of masculinity was formulated and developed by Raewyn Connell. In 1987, she proposed the concepts of *hegemonic masculinity* and *emphasised femininity* (1987, 183–190) to help understand power relations of a patriarchal society. In the mid-1980s hegemonic masculinity was known as patterns of practices that supported men's dominance over women. A hegemonic form of masculinity was constructed in relation to subordinated forms of masculinity and to different forms of femininity. In the case of femininity there was no one hegemonic form, but Connell distinguished one, emphasised femininity, which served in opposition to hegemonic masculinity and complied with its subordination. The concept became particularly popular and influenced the way of thinking about gender order. Yet it also met with fierce criticism, which consequently led to its reformulation (see Connell and Messerschmidt 2005).

Hegemonic masculinity should not be seen as a static and descriptive concept—it is abstract and illustrates the recognised ways of being a man and the power relations between different positions in the society. In such sense it indicates that gender relations are historical. Within a particular society there is a plurality of masculinities hierarchically organised—this hierarchy must be seen as a complexity of the relationships between different constructions of masculinities. Some masculinities are more dominant and more associated with power than others. A dominant in a given society type of masculinity is called a hegemonic masculinity, and it is higher in the hierarchy than other models of non-hegemonic masculinities. This hierarchy is not based on force; it is rather a pattern of hegemony which promotes particular features of accepted masculinities, even though most men and boys do not (or even cannot) closely follow them. Masculinities are defined as configurations of practices which derive from the male body and are performed in social actions. Therefore, hegemonic masculinity cannot be seen as a durable and universal type; it is rather a social process within which subordination and stratification are created. It is subject to change.

Another important theory of masculinity—a theory of *inclusive masculinity*—was formulated by Eric Anderson (2009, 2011). Anderson

locates on the two sides of one continuum different archetypes of masculinities. On the one side, there is an archetype of orthodox masculinity that is based on such values as homophobia, sexism, stoicism and compulsory heterosexuality. On the other side, there are opposing archetypes called inclusive masculinities—they reject values that constitute orthodox masculinities. Like Connell, Anderson uses the constructivist approach and treats masculinities as configurations of social practices subject to changes. In Anderson's theory, the central focus is put on *homohysteria* and the *masculine capital*. Homohysteria should be understood as a culture that is based on homophobia, femphobia and compulsory heterosexuality (Anderson 2009; Anderson and McGuire 2010). In times of high homohysteria, men tend to raise their masculine capital by displaying homophobia and femphobia and demonstrating their heterosexuality. When homohysteria is declining, softer types of masculinities begin to appear. Under such conditions, the boundaries between femininity and masculinity blur and diverse masculinities are not as strictly stratified in a hierarchical order. In societies with a very low level of homohysteria, homophobia is unacceptable and men tend to be more willing to engage in feminine practices.

Yet the real question is about the forces behind the transition from the culture in which orthodox masculinity dominates to the culture based on inclusive masculinities values. I argue that the concept of caring masculinities might be useful here. The model of caring masculinities is gaining more and more recognition today and is often regarded as crucial in transition to societies based on actual gender equality (Elliott 2015; Scambor et al. 2014; "The Role of Men in Gender Equality European Strategies & Insights" 2013). It is also helpful as we look on changing fatherhood models and men's engagement in care work. Karla Elliott (2015) underlines that the central features of caring masculinities are the rejection of men's domination and the integration of values of care into masculine identities. Values of care have their grounds in positive emotions and in the interdependence and relationality of different human beings. This concept is used in plural—caring masculinit*ies*—to avoid the homogenisation of the men's caring experiences, as well as to avoid creating one model of "new men." The proposed model of caring masculinities is a practice-based one and contains the potential of change of men and gen-

der order. The actual practices of care can change men and the way they build their male identities and, consequently, reconstruct the dominating models of masculinities.

The experience of caring is not entirely new in men's lives, especially when it comes to fathering. Caring masculinities are actualised in men's lives. They are taking place when men take over caregiving practices and becoming oriented on other people. A serious question here is how to make these experiences more crucial for men and incorporate them into the dominating models of masculinities. An answer to that is one of the main aims of this book.

I argue that the practices of fathering should be analysed in the framework of the caring masculinities theory. This theory, combined with Anderson's theory, provides useful analytical tools to understand the relations between institutional context, dominating archetypes of masculinities and actual practices men engage in. Since models of orthodox masculinity and inclusive/caring masculinities might be seen as opposite ends of one continuum, an analogical continuum of fatherhood might be proposed. Fathers who acquire values from the model of orthodox masculinity would characterise with a higher level of conservatism and would adhere to stricter gender boundaries. Consequently, they would identify their main parental role as that of the economic provider and would be more orientated towards achieving own success in the occupational sphere than through active participation in the domestic sphere. They would not think in terms of relationality, but rather their relationship with children would be more distant and based on authority. Such fathers would prefer the traditional division of domestic and care work. Fathers with the values of inclusive masculinities would be located on the opposite side of the continuum. They would adopt the caring masculinity values and understand how being a father makes them interdependent, especially with regard to their partners and children. As fathers, these men would be eager to establish from the very beginning a strong relationship with their children. The division of work in their relationships would be based on a partnership in which the boundaries between female and male roles would be frequently crossed. They would not be afraid of participating in domestic work and would be characterised by a higher eagerness to resign from a

successful career for the sake of their children. We can also expect that they would *instinctively* engage in caregiving practices.

These two types of fatherhood fit into an analytical division between the above-described "traditional" and "involved" fatherhoods. The advantage of using masculinity models to analyse contemporary fatherhood is that they take into consideration the dynamic and historical concept of masculinity and help to explicate the links between fathering and gender order.

2.3.4 Motherhood and Fatherhood: Naturalism Versus Culturalism

Fatherhood should be analysed in the context of masculinities, but in such analysis, the issue of motherhood should not be ignored. I agree with Dowd, who argues:

> It is essential that fatherhood not be viewed in isolation. Much of what we know about fatherhood indicates that it is strongly mediated by motherhood. Men's relationships with children are strongly affected by the nature of their relationship with their children's mother. Fathering happens in connection with relationships to other caregivers; fatherhood must be reworked by looking at that larger picture. (2000, 202)

As mentioned above, in contemporary society, fatherhood should be redefined based on the type of nurturing traditionally attributed to the role of the mother. Therefore, the question which appears here is the question of a reconstruction of the traditional model of motherhood and the impact of this reconstruction on fatherhood, and the other way round—how the redefinition of fatherhood influences motherhood.

Historically, within social sciences, the issue of parenthood was first analysed by feminist scholars in terms of motherhood and femininity. From this perspective, motherhood was presented as intertwined in cultural, historical and political contexts, and it was determined by the agency of men and women in particular social settings. Therefore, motherhood is a highly diversified phenomenon that is culturally, rather than biologically, determined. What is more, it is regarded as a

contested terrain on which different images, practices and discourses of gender overlap (Glenn 1994; after Korolczuk and Hryciuk 2012b, 10). Also within the feminist movement, there are various approaches to motherhood. As Elisabeth Badinter (2011) notes, one could distinguish two conflicting visions of motherhood. On the one side, there is the perspective of Simone de Beauvoir, who sees motherhood as the source of women's subordination and oppression. As a remedy, de Beauvoir postulates a gender equality policy and a crossing of gender roles. Her postulations are based on an assumption that men and women are more similar to one another than different (Beauvoir 2010, 3–19). On the other side, Badinter locates new *maternalism*, in which femininity is perceived in terms of virtue. Its core feature is motherhood. For this new generation of feminists, as Badinter calls them, motherhood is the most important experience of femininity around which a new, more equitable society might be created. To do this, she argues that humans must return to nature and to an emphasis on the biological differences between men and women.

From this perspective, the importance of maternal instinct is underlined, although its existence was previously questioned by Badinter in her book *The Myth of Motherhood* (1981). The best example of such an approach is the *philosophy of care* presented in a book by Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, first published in 1982 (Gilligan 1993). Gilligan refers to Sigmund Freud's theory of differences between men and women, a woman's penis envy and motherhood; in her approach, women are defined by their sensibility and ability to care for other people. According to Gilligan, women are more sensitive than men to the pain of other people and to injustice; in contrast to men, who she argues, look at society from the perspective of objective and universal rules. The sources of these differences between men and women lie in their differing experiences of everyday life, particularly in women's specific experience of mothering, which is understood not only as having a child, but also in its connection to the extensive practice of caring for other people[3] (Chodorow 1999). According to this argument, because of their

[3] In such context, it is easier to understand why the concept of caring masculinities, described in the previous section, is based on a practice-based model. The practice of caregiving can actually change

natural predispositions, women are better at taking care of little children than men and therefore are naturally better parents. In the last 20 years, this assumption was reinforced by a social pressure on mothers to breastfeed their children for at least the first six months (Badinter 2011; Zdrojewska-Żywiecka 2012).

The focus on biological differences between men and women should be seen as a shift from *culturalism* to *naturalism*. As Badinter argues in her newest book, *The Conflict: How Modern Motherhood Undermines the Status of Women* (2011), new maternalism is particularly dangerous from the perspective of women's freedom and gender equality, and it does not fit into contemporary society, especially when one takes into consideration middle-class households, which cannot survive on only one wage, and the requirements of the labour market for female labour. But there is another aspect of new maternalism that interests me—it is in regards to the father's role. A focus on the differences between men and women, as well as the uniqueness of the motherhood experience and the pressure to breastfeed, reserves parenthood as a sphere only for women and reinforces the division between female and male parenthood responsibilities and roles. From this perspective, women are silently forced to be mothers and devote themselves to their children, whereas men are expected to play the role of the second carer and to engage mainly in making money, since, for men, their *natural predispositions* make them unable to be active caregivers. In my opinion, new maternalism reinforces the traditional gender order, even though its aim might be the redefinition and appreciation of care. If new materialism aims for a return to family structures organised around traditional sex roles, one wonders whether distinct differences between male and female parenting and between obligations associated with male and female parental roles should be enforced.

Badinter's critique of new maternalism is sometimes seen as an attack on a new model of parenting that emerged recently, called *attachment parenting*. This approach focuses on creating a strong emotional bond between a child and caregivers during childhood, a bond that will have

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people's attitude to children and other people, and help to understand interdependency and relationality.

positive consequences for child development and the child's future. It might be argued that Badinter forgets that a child is also a human being and concentrates only on woman's interests. But in fact, Badinter underlines that the bond between mother, but also father, and child is much stronger today than it has been historically. A woman's active participation in the labour market has not necessarily made her a "bad" mother. The problem that appears here is a problem of women's double burden—women engage in paid work in the labour market, but at the same time, they are overwhelmed with domestic work, which is still regarded as women's responsibility. Therefore, there is a need to redefine the traditional father's role in terms of caring masculinities rather than stressing the uniqueness of women's parenting experience in terms of naturalism. Especially, when we look at statistics which clearly show that women expect men to be more involved in the domestic sphere, we find that women want men to actively participate in caring activities and share equally in domestic duties (Badinter 1981; Budrowska 2008; Stefaniak and Zierkiewicz 2012; Wattis et al. 2013). What is more, Scandinavian countries have shown that it is possible to reconcile the involved fatherhood model with the breastfeeding policy (Ellingsæter 2010). At the end of the book *The Myth of Motherhood*, in which Badinter (1981) debunks the myth of the maternal instinct and shows how motherhood has been changing for centuries, a question about the future of mother's and father's roles appears. Since Badinter does not want to make predictions about the future, she concludes that, in the current times, women want to share with men the world and children, and that their will is going to change the social world in the future.

The book was written in 1980; today, we can assume that the emergence of the model of involved fatherhood is a symptom of diminishing differences between male and female parenting. What is needed in the in-depth reflection on fatherhood in contemporary times is not only changing models of fathering and the reconstruction of traditional masculinity, but also a reflection on the expectations of women in terms of motherhood and femininity. As motherhood and fatherhood are socially constructed phenomena, they tend to be perceived as contrasting, but in times of increasing gender equality, they should be redefined according to the similarities between men and women rather than by the differences.

2.4 Chapter Summary: Fatherhood and Social Change

Parenthood cannot be analysed without taking into account its gendered components. The structural and cultural inequality of men and women in their parental roles is of particular importance here. Being a mother requires much more engagement than being a father, and there exists greater social pressure on women to fulfil their parental role "properly," that is, in a socially acceptable way. The primary difference between fatherhood and motherhood seems to lie in the biological differences between men and women. But in fact, it is also strongly connected to cultural coding of masculinity and femininity. In contemporary times one of the most important aspects of this division is located in the gendered division of labour. As Amy Wharton underlines:

> Some locate the origins of the sexual division of labor in the fact that women historically have had primary responsibilities for the care of children. Children's dependence on their mothers' care shapes the type of labor women can perform (…). Conversely, men's greater average physical strength makes other activities more likely to be their responsibility. (Wharton 2005, 82)

The sexual division of labour is closely connected to the different evaluations of female and male work. In the historical process this division was reinforced. Unequal treatment of female and male activities is still being reproduced. But as Betty Farrell and her colleagues (2012) note, gender does not influence the division of household labour in the same way in different family contexts. Therefore, it is important to look at fatherhood, as well as parenthood, as a historical phenomenon rather than as a biological one. Including the social and institutional contexts is crucial in an analysis that aims to grasp this issue in its complexity. Thus, in my book, I seek to examine fatherhood by taking into account different institutional contexts of parenthood in contemporary European societies and to locate it in the broader framework of changing models of masculinity, femininity and different discourses of motherhood. Additionally, it is important to me to look at the various sides of fatherhood. As Ralph LaRossa (1988)

underlines, there is a difference between the culture of fatherhood and the conduct of fatherhood. Thus, fatherhood can be analysed on the level of definitions and images of the "good father" functioning in particular social settings, yet these images might differ from the actual practices connected to male parenting.

While keeping in mind that the new model of fatherhood should be more similar to traditional mothering than to traditional fathering, it is important to look more closely at how fathers and mothers spend time with their children, in what kinds of activities men tend to engage and what domestic labour women do more often (see Wall and Arnold 2007). Since men are seen as *secondary carers* and *helpers*, whereas women are always seen as *primary carers*, it is important to take into account the category of choice in analysing parenting practices. In the literature, it is often underlined that the difference between the roles of mothers and fathers lies in the option to *choose* to what extent individuals wish to engage in their parental role in everyday life. Mothers in heterosexual couples usually do not have much choice; they are dependent on their male partner: whether they *choose* to engage in nurturing practices or rather decide to devote themselves to their careers. Of course there is room for negotiation, but according to the cultural scripts of parenting, nurturing fathers are seen as an exception rather than the norm. Mothers are not told to be "involved mothers" because the implicit assumption is that they will be. In the case of men, the situation is completely different. In my book I try to show what consequences this has on fathers.

In conclusion, I would like to underline that the models of traditional and involved fatherhood identified in this chapter should be seen as representing a continuum of different ways men fulfil parental roles. I find these models to be useful analytical tools which allow me to examine parenting in contemporary times. From a historical perspective, we can see that, in different periods, fatherhood was defined and perceived differently. The hegemonic discourses of male and female parenting have been changing for centuries, but this does not mean that involved fatherhood is a new phenomenon on the level of practice. In all likelihood, there were men highly engaged in nurturing activities in the 1950s when the traditional and patriarchal model of family dominated public discourse. My analysis asks how the dominating models of fatherhood influence the

everyday lives of men and women in contemporary societies and what impact these models have on the prevailing gender order.

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3

Researching Fatherhood: Methodological Challenges

3.1 Introduction: Fatherhood Studies and Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities

Fatherhood studies are a relatively new academic discipline within social sciences that appeared in the last decades of the twentieth century. As Michael Lamb (2000) underlines, fatherhood is a multifaceted concept, and thus for the last four decades, there have been shifts in the dominating research themes on fatherhood. The scholarly reflection on fatherhood started with a social concern about fatherlessness or "deadbeat dads." This issue was usually considered from a psychological perspective, which analysed the negative impact of father absence on child development, especially in the case of boys. Conclusions concentrated primarily on how the absence of a father results in the lack of masculine models in a child's life. Yet, influenced by the growing development of feminist knowledge, this psychological approach began to be questioned. As Lamb says:

> Noting that masculine fathers were believed to promote filial masculinity, many social scientists were forced to ask whether it was, in fact, desirable

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> for boys to be more masculine and girls more feminine and whether the greater aggressiveness of boys was something to be praised or bemoaned. (2000, 29)

Hence, focus has shifted to the issue of paternal involvement. And a new discussion has started that concentrates on the issue of gender relations and gender inequality within households. Currently, fatherhood research examines many different problems, including a division of domestic work, men's involvement in care work, fatherhood and masculinities, work–life balance in a father's life, father absence, divorced fathers, stay-at-home dads, gay fathers, the role of the "father quota" in family policies and fatherhood's links with low fertility rates.

Fatherhood studies are closely connected to critical studies on men and masculinities (CSMM) (Hearn 2004). From the perspective of CSMM, men are treated as a social category intertwined in power relations, especially between the sexes, but also between men from different social classes and of different races or sexualities. The origins of scientific reflections about men are located in the framework of the sex-role theory that was dominant in sociology in the mid-twentieth century. In the 1970s the sex-role theory was criticised by feminist researchers, who indicated that it masked the issue of power and inequality between men and women (Carrigan et al. 1985, 559). Consequently, masculinity began to be treated as a social construct and analysed in the context of power relations. Jeff Hearn underlines that the aim of CSMM is to study men as gendered individuals and to study them in a more critical way that includes as part of the analysis the dimension of power (2004, 51). The recognition of "men" as a gendered category has important implications for how research on men is conducted and how the results of empirical research are analysed and interpreted. The recognition of men's gender is connected to the required adoption of a particular critical position that might be seen as an attempt to formulate political claims. I am aware that this is also the case of the analysis presented in this book. My aim is to not only show the links between family policy systems and male parenting, but also understand, deconstruct and discuss the gender and power relations of the analysed societies through the lens of male parenting experiences.

This chapter endeavours to explain some of the problems that might appear during the reading of the book. First, I try to clarify my methodological approach, explaining why I have decided to adopt feminist and critical perspectives in my analysis of male parenting and why I use the category of gender to describe fatherhood. My research should be seen as a critical study of gender relations in the context of parenthood in Swedish and Polish societies. Second, I demonstrate here the empirical methodology of this project and the role of comparative research in dealing with the issue of fatherhood and family policies. I present the sociological research methods and the sampling procedure I used and explain my decision to concentrate on middle-class and heterosexually partnered fathers. Finally, I try to summarise the weaknesses and limitations of my project, which are, in my opinion, unavoidable in all sociological research dealing with the complexity of social behaviours and relations.

3.2 Critically About Fathers and Parental Roles

> There is something surprising about the worldwide problematizing of men and masculinities, because in many ways the position of men has not much changed (…). It is clear that, globally, men have a lot to lose from pursuing gender equality because men, collectively, continue to receive a patriarchal dividend. (Connell 2011, 12–13)

Research on fatherhood concentrates on specific social settings. The main subject of this research is the family, which is often seen as one of the most important social institutions; within the social institution of the family, the biological and social reproduction of society occurs. Yet the family might also be seen as a *locus of struggle*, that is, a location in which people enter into conflicts because of their different interests and activities (Hartmann 1987). Heidi I. Hartmann (1987) underlines that individual family members have different relations with capitalism and patriarchy that result in a particular division of domestic work. Gender is the salient category determining intra-familial power relations.

Male parenting is therefore always performed in relation to a particular power order that is based on gendered differences. Within the CSMM, it is underlined that the gender of men is often overlooked by social scientists; it is identified as the default gender. Men have generally dominated the public, but also private, sphere for many centuries; consequently, most studies, public discourses and so-called politics concentrate on men, although their gender remains unnamed and invisible. Male experience is presented as typical, ungendered or natural (Hearn 2004, 2015; Kimmel 2011). This ungendering of men furthers male domination and male positioning at the top of a social hierarchy is reinforced in social research. Academic disciplines are mostly done by men, for men and especially about men. Much research, devoted to analysing the practices of a particular society, proceeds from a male perspective as though this perspective were characteristic of all human beings. This blindness to the impact of gender on male individuals and on society in general is flawed for at least three reasons. First, research that does not take into consideration the gender dimension of human life fails to provide a relevant and accurate analysis of social reality. This research treats the experiences of men and women as identical or at least very similar. Second, it often ignores the experiences of women and diminishes the importance of women to the whole of society, despite the fact that women constitute half of the world's population. Third, it suggests that the experiences of men are not gendered, that men do not have to deal with gender beliefs and gender expectations, and that men are not entangled in gender power relations or at least that these power relations are not problematic for men. If women's experiences can be described as gendered, it is also possible and likely that this is also the case for men. Therefore, from the perspective of the CSMM, the gender of men is recognised.

My research concentrates on male parenting. In the twentieth century, parenthood became a political issue. Together with a growing body of feminist research, the issue of parenthood and family life has started to be critically analysed. Greater consideration is being taken of the power dimension of gender relations. I claim that fatherhood in contemporary times cannot be fully understood without including its gender dimension and the unequal power relations between men and women. I use the concept of *gender* as an analytical tool to help explain the changes and continuities in men's experiences of parenthood, as well as the compli-

cated relationship between the concepts of "motherhood" and "fatherhood" that prevail in contemporary Swedish and Polish societies. From such a perspective, the concept of *gender* should not be seen as an ideological tool, the aim of which is to destroy the traditional family, as it is more and more often seen in the Polish context, but rather as a sociological lens that helps to critically describe and analyse the surrounding social reality (see Connell 2009, Chap. 2). In particular, the category of gender helps to understand how power orders and hierarchies are socially constructed in a historical process. As Ann Shola Orloff writes:

> Gender is not an attribute of individuals but a social relationship, historically varying, and encompassing elements of labor, power, emotion, and language; it crosses individual subjectivities, institutions, culture, and language. (2009, 318)

This is how the concept of gender is understood in my research. My analysis not only tries to answer the question of what affects men's parenting and in what way, but also tries to show what social consequences male engagement or lack of engagement in parenthood might have for gender power relations, gender (in)equality and, consequently, for the whole of society, for women and other men. It is an attempt to go beyond what is recognised as obvious in the reflection about parenthood, family and gender relations.

Therefore, my research and analysis fit into the tradition of critical sociology, which tries not only to describe social reality, but also to take responsibility for the most urgent social and cultural problems and seeks to generate *reflexive knowledge* (Burawoy 2005). Donna Haraway claims that the knowledge produced through sociological inquiries should be potent enough to reconstruct the social world so that it is less organised by hierarchies of domination and subordination:

> We need the power of modern critical theories of how meanings and bodies get made, not in order to deny meaning and bodies, but in order to build meaning and bodies that have a chance for life. (Haraway 2003, 25)

As Max Horkheimer argued many decades ago, critical theory should be not only explanatory, but also practical and normative. The social reality in which individuals function is a product of historical processes and is shaped

by human activities, very often consciously planned. The role of critical theory is "to be sought not in the preservation of contemporary society but in its transformation into the right kind of society" (Horkheimer 1975, 218). I believe that my analysis not only explains how fathering is intertwined in social and institutional contexts, and how within this context, fathering should be seen as a historical phenomenon, but also produces reflexive knowledge that reveals the meanings hidden behind the prevailing power order. This knowledge might be seen as practical and normative; that is to say, it shows the structural constraints and weaknesses of the system in which contemporary fathers function. It also demonstrates that changes leading to a greater gender-equal society are possible.

If we take the project of gender equality seriously, and I strongly believe that one of the roles of sociology is to deal with different kinds of social inequalities, there is a need to look more carefully at men and their experiences of being gendered individuals. One area of research is the domestic sphere and men's involvement in unpaid work, such as domestic and care work. Much research, primarily in the Nordic societies, shows that men can actually change and that the traditional models of femininity and masculinity are constantly under the process of reconstruction (although gender equality may not yet be achieved). To deal with this issue, it is necessary to look more carefully at men and the power they wield in patriarchal societies. If the concept of gender is understood in terms of social relations between individuals, and consequently as a way in which social practices are organised, it is important to take into consideration the models of femininity and masculinity that prevail in the society. These models are important because they define and form the power relations between different genders, as well as between different categories of men and different categories of women. Referring to Raewyn Connell's concept presented in the previous chapter, hegemonic masculinity theory implies that there are multiple hierarchically organised masculinities existing in one society. This approach recognises the interplay between gender, race, class, sexuality and other social dimensions. Yet although not all men fit into the model of hegemonic masculinity and not all men behave according to hegemonic patterns, as a social category, they still benefit from the patriarchal hierarchy and male domination over women (and, in silently accepting this, they are guilty of *complicit masculinity*).

From my perspective, the research on fatherhood provides an opportunity to conduct an in-depth and critical analysis of men as gendered individuals defined by power relations. There are three primary reasons for this. First, the phenomenon of fatherhood clearly implies that men in their parental roles cannot be perceived as genderless, yet their experiences are closely connected to the gender differences between men and women. They are often anchored in the bodily experience of engaging in care work. They face social expectations that are often based on the notion of *naturalised* differences between men and women. Second, fatherhood—as a socially constructed model of behaviour—is a constantly changing historical phenomenon. This change cannot be isolated from the changing gender order and power relations that took place in the twentieth century. Consequently, there are diverse, often contrasting, models of fatherhood that prevail in one society and the clashes between them might cause problems in men's everyday parenting. Finally, parenting is an important area of negotiation between men and women that mostly concerns the reconciliation of work and family life. Parenting and care work belong to the private sphere, which in patriarchal societies is often regarded as the female arena and in which male participation is often not encouraged or at least seen as exceptional (Smith 1987). Yet, in fact, in the context of family life, the organisation of practices in the private sphere is strictly linked to the participation of men and women in the public sphere, particularly in the labour market. This is an issue within contemporary societies, where the value and status of unpaid work goes unrecognised. Therefore, men's engagement in parenting and the domestic sphere is crucial to reconstructing patriarchal gender order and should be seen as one of the essential steps to achieving gender equality.

3.3 Methodology of Fatherhood Research

3.3.1 Introduction: How Fatherhood Is Researched

In recent years a number of studies on fatherhood have been conducted. Since the issue of fatherhood is complex, the methods used by social scientists to analyse fatherhood vary. Before I present the methods used

to gather the data for this book, I will briefly describe the methodology that has been used in fatherhood studies.[1] In general, I distinguish three types of research that dominate this area. The first type of research concentrates on the experience of fatherhood and explores how fatherhood influences men's lives, whether it impacts their identity, their everyday practices or career. This research is most often based on qualitative methods, that is, in-depth interviews, focus groups, case studies, ethnographical observations. Much of such research have the character of longitudinal studies (Adamsons 2013; Doucet and Merla 2007; Doucet 2004; Miller 2011), in which the researcher comes back every few years to the interviewed individuals. The aim of qualitative research is to understand the everyday practices connected to male parenting and answer the question, why men behave in a particular way. This research tries to grasp the variety in fatherhood experiences by talking to different men: stay-at-home dads, divorced men, single fathers, stepfathers, gay fathers, fathers from different social classes, of different ethnicities or races (Armesto and Shapiro 2011; Bryan 2013; Doucet and Merla 2007; Doucet 2004; Dunn et al. 2013; Klinth 2008; Marsiglio 2004; Miller 2011; Plantin 2007; Crespi and Ruspini 2016; Pustułka et al. 2015; Dowd 2000; Brady et al. 2016).

The second type of research concentrates on the links between male parenthood and the welfare state system within which men function. These kinds of projects are mostly quantitative and based on national statistics and international survey data. The problems analysed from a quantitative perspective mostly concern the impact the parental leave system has on a father's engagement in the domestic sphere and care work, the links between men's involvement in the domestic sphere and fertility rates, the impact of parenthood on men's (and also women's) working hours, the impact of men's involvement on the division of domestic work, and the impact of divorce on how much time men spend with their children (Ahlberg et al. 2008; Andersson et al. 2004; Duvander and Johansson 2012b; Hook 2006, 2010). Some of these studies, based on longitudinal data, historically analyse the changes in gender inequal-

[1] Although it should be noted that this brief discussion is not a systematic analysis and its aim is only to give the reader a broader picture of how fatherhood is researched and analysed in social sciences at the turn of the twenty-first century. For a detailed presentation of challenges and opportunities of fatherhood research, see Mitchell et al. (2007).

ity, attitudes towards partnership in the household and the changes in fatherhood models. Since quantitative inquiries are usually conducted on big and representative samples, such analysis tends to show general trends in male parenting and seeks to find the correlations between different variables. It also tries to assess the impact of different family policy mechanisms on men's engagement in parenthood.

The third type of research concentrates on the impact that father absence and presence has on child development. This research was initiated mostly by developmental psychologists, yet had a great impact on fatherhood studies in general. In this area, the most prominent researcher is Michael E. Lamb, who since 1976 has edited and published five editions of the influential book titled *The Role of the Father in Child Development* (2010b). The focus on child development explores whether fathers have a different impact on child development than mothers, and if they do, whether it is a result of biological differences between men and women or rather is connected to cultural models of parenting. Although the primary focus of this research is the children, their socialisation and their development, there is also an attempt to conceptualise the term "paternal involvement." At the beginning, research concentrated mostly on a father's presence in the household and on the influences of interactions with a father on children's social, cognitive and moral development. In the 1980s, the focus shifted to an examination of how much fathers do in their parental roles. This led to an initial conceptualisation of *paternal involvement* formulated by Lamb and Jospeh H. Pleck. This conceptualisation has been continually changing under the influence of new research for the last several decades (Pleck 2010). Recently, paternal involvement, as a broad concept, has been studied and analysed from different perspectives and includes the experiences of different men in different social settings (see Lamb 2004, 2010b).

3.3.2 Comparative Research on Fatherhood

The aim of my research is to show the links between institutional contexts, especially a society's family policy system, the ways in which fatherhood is defined in particular social settings and how men engage in their parental roles. To see these links I have adopted a comparative perspective

and endeavour to show differences and similarities between two different societies: Sweden and Poland. I analyse and compare the historical application of these two countries' family policy systems and then seek to capture the men's experience of being fathers. In particular, I am interested in the ways they understand and define the role of the father and their actual parenting behaviour. I argue that many of the differences between Swedish and Polish fathers might be explained by a reference to the broader social and institutional contexts in which they live.

In my book, the comparative inquiry of two distinctively different societies provides an opportunity to grasp the issue of fatherhood from a broader perspective and to carry out a comprehensive analysis. Parenting always takes place in particular social, cultural and institutional contexts. It is strictly connected to the gender order and models of masculinity and femininity that prevail in a particular society. Consequently, it is impossible to understand men's parenting behaviour without taking each of these systems into consideration. A comparative analysis reveals similarities and differences between Swedish and Polish fathers, and consequently allows one to reflect on the impact of specific family policy instruments on the organisation of family life and, in the case of my research, on men's behaviour.

My initial aim was to conduct research on fatherhood in Polish society. In the Polish sociological and feminist reflection, a comprehensive and critical analysis of male parenting is still missing (although increasingly more researchers have started to deal with this issue today). The idea to conduct comparative research was formulated at the beginning of my project, during the literature review. The literature on fatherhood suggests that there are differences in how men engage in parenthood even within the European context. Additionally, as a consequence of acceptable and desirable cultural models of family life, welfare states adopt differing strategies in designing their family policy. The links between the institutional context and fathering in everyday life seemed to me to be especially interesting. And I realised that it was going to be extremely difficult to identify these links in Poland without a point of comparison. Therefore, I decided to compare Poland with a system that has a distinctively different approach to parenthood and gender roles. Sweden was a perfect choice not only because of its strong social equality policy,

but also because of its pro-fatherhood approach. As a result, my research compares the Swedish system, which has a long tradition of gender equality policy, promotes men's participation in the domestic sphere and advances so-called *shared parenthood*, with the Polish system, which is still based on a very conservative definition of family and defines parenthood mostly in terms of female obligations. The Polish approach is reinforced by a strong role played by the Roman Catholic Church and conservative politicians (from different political parties) in promoting the traditional model of family. The differences in how the roles of women and men are perceived in both of these systems and what consequences each perception has on the prevailing models of family in these societies are most important for my analysis of fatherhood. I assert that the organisation of the welfare state creates an environment that, in a particular way, shapes people's functioning and, at the same time, sustains or reconstructs power relations between men and women.

3.3.3 Triangulation of Methods and Sampling Strategy

In order to provide a more complex picture of contemporary fatherhood, I decided to adopt a triangulation strategy. According to this approach in social sciences, using a combination of research methods assists in the process of describing and analysing a society in its complexity and continuity. It also helps to strengthen findings and enriches interpretations by discovering different dimensions of a researched phenomenon (Rothbauer 2008). In the analysis, I triangulate the data gathered using the qualitative methods employed with the results of the quantitative methods found in particular survey data and official statistics. Since the most extensive part of the analysis is based on in-depth interviews with Swedish and Polish parents, the quantitative data provides primarily a descriptive background of the experience of male parenting in two distinctively different social settings.

The research consists of four parts. Each part plays a different role, but each part is equally crucial to the analysis. Therefore, the chronological order of the parts here does not indicate a ranking of their significance;

rather, it corresponds with the order of their appearance in the book. The first part is devoted to a historical analysis of Swedish and Polish family policy systems. It shows how these systems have developed during the last decades and what they currently offer to parents. I refer here to the different theories of welfare states and the discourses of parenthood that might be adopted to design the instruments of social policies. The crucial issue here is their approach to gender order and the problem of gender inequality in the private and public spheres. In my opinion, the historical analysis helps to explain why the contemporary systems of family policy are designed in a particular way and what the motives behind the development of particular gender policies were. This analysis is presented in Chap. 4.

The second part is based on quantitative data gathered by the national and European statistical offices (the OECD [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development], World Bank, Eurostat, SCB [Statistiska Centralbyrån] Statistics Sweden, Swedish Social Insurance Agency [Försäkringskassan], National Agency for Education in Sweden [Skolverket], Central Statistical Office in Poland [Główny Urząd Statystystyczny] and Social Insurance Institution in Poland [Zakład Ubezpieczeń Społecznych]). I was particularly interested in total fertility rates, women and men's participation in the labour market (employment rates), gender wage gap, the usage of parental leave by men and women (the percentage of men and women taking some parental days, the number of days taken by men and women) and the percentage of children of different ages enrolled in day care institutions (1–5 years old). Most of this data is presented in Chap. 4, but it also appears in other parts of the book.

The third part of the research is based on survey data from the European Value Survey (EVS) and the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP). The EVS and the ISSP are large-scale, longitudinal and cross-national survey research programmes created in the 1980s. The EVS, which utilises standardised questionnaires to gather data, concentrates on the basic human values and tracks how Europeans think about life, family, work, religion, politics and society. This survey is repeated every nine years. Because of my comparative approach, I use in my analysis the data gathered in two waves, 1994–1999 and 2005–2007; these are

the only two waves in which the data from Swedish and Polish societies were included. I concentrate only on those questions that were present in both Swedish and Polish questionnaires in Sections C and D, devoted, respectively, to work and family. The ISSP is a survey based on cross-national collaboration and covers diverse topics important to social sciences. I concentrate on the module "Family and Changing Gender Roles" and its three editions from 1994, 2002 and 2012 (the first edition was conducted in 1988, but neither Sweden nor Poland were included). The advantage of the ISSP surveys is that in every edition of this module, excluding the new questions, most of the questions from the previous survey are repeated. For this reason, it is possible to follow changes in people's attitudes over the last two decades. The ISSP module on family and changing gender roles covers multiple issues that are important from the perspective of fatherhood, gender roles, gender inequality and family policy systems. Both the EVS and the ISSP data are used in the analysis presented in Chaps. 5–7. The primary role of the data is to provide a background for an analysis of the data from my in-depth interviews conducted with fathers and mothers.

The fourth, and the broadest, part of my research project is based on in-depth interviews conducted between June 2012 and April 2013 in Sweden and Poland. In total, 66 interviews were carried out. The research aim was to examine how men engage in fatherhood not only in the context of social policy mechanisms adopted in both welfare states, but also in the context of changing parental and gender roles at the beginning of the twenty-first century. To achieve these goals I conducted comparative research in two substantially different societies. Yet, to make these comparisons possible, in both societies, I deliberately chose fathers belonging to similar social categories. Consequently, the interviews were conducted with middle-class fathers living in big cities. Also, all interviewees were heterosexual, lived with their children and shared a common household with the mother of their children.[2] I also sought to interview only fathers whose children were no older than eight years old. With this sampling method I intended to choose the most heterogeneous—in terms of occupation, type of employment, age, number of children, age of children—

[2] In the fourth part of this chapter, I extensively explain why I decided to make such choices.

groups in both societies. The first interviews were conducted with men who responded to my announcement about the project posted in day care institutions, on playgrounds, and on the Internet in various social networks such as parenting forums or parenting groups on Facebook. After establishing first contacts, a snowball sampling method was initiated.

In Sweden I carried out 20 interviews with men living in Stockholm and its suburbs, Malmö and Lund (interviews were completed in the Stockholm region between September and October 2012; interviews were completed in the Skane region in March 2013). In Poland, the research took place in Warsaw and Krakow. In the first phase of research, 18 interviews were conducted with 18 men (June–August 2012). After the initial analysis I decided to include the perspective of Polish women by interviewing mothers as well. This decision was made because after completing the 18 interviews with Polish fathers, I started to observe an emergence of data saturation. Therefore, subsequent interviews were carried out with couples. Between January and April 2013, 14 couples were interviewed separately; that is, fathers were not present during the interviews with mothers and vice versa. Since my aim was to conduct approximately 50 interviews, it became evident that the mothers' perspective would serve as an important contribution to my project. The intention was not only to verify the narratives of men, but also to examine how Polish women defined the role of the father and what their expectations of their partners were. Since my research on fatherhood, based on in-depth interviews with parents, is one of the first such projects conducted in Poland, I was convinced that I should not miss the opportunity to also talk with women. In the Swedish context, the research on fatherhood has a much longer tradition and research with couples and Swedish mothers has been conducted several times; therefore, I decided to not interview Swedish mothers. In this book, I concentrate on experiences of men and I use the narratives of Polish women only to provide the contextual background.

All interviews were based on semi-structured guides. Interviews with men concentrated on how the men perceive and define their parental role and the role of mothers, how the men take care of their children, how their lives changed after having a baby, how domestic work in their households is divided, what problems they face and what they think

about family polices in their countries. The scripts for Polish and Swedish interviews were constructed in a similar way—only the part concerning the family policy system differed. Similar topics were discussed in the interviews with Polish mothers. I conducted each of the Swedish interviews in English. My decision to conduct the interviews in English was dictated by my inability to speak Swedish. Yet most Swedes, especially with a higher or secondary education, speak English fluently and have no problem using it in everyday conversations. Many of the Swedish interviewees work in companies that use English as the workplace language. When a Swedish interviewee had difficulty finding an appropriate word/phrase in English, I allowed them use the Swedish word/phrase; while transcribing the interviews, I translated the Swedish parts into English. The Polish interviews were conducted in Polish. All interviews were transcribed with confidentiality. The processes of conducting interviews, transcribing the interviews and interview analysis took place, to some extent, simultaneously.

3.3.4 In-Depth Interviews—Characteristics of the Sample

Keeping in mind the methodological choice to interview men and, in the Polish case in the second phase of research, women who are middle class, heterosexual and live together with their partners and children, it might be assumed that the interviewed groups in Sweden and Poland are rather homogeneous. Yet this is not correct. Middle class is highly differentiated, and individuals not only vary with regard to social, cultural and economic capital, but also with regard to an approach to such issues as gender (in)equality, gender roles, attitudes towards welfare states and perceptions of good parenthood. Men follow different models of masculinities and fatherhood, whereas women diversely understand femininity, deal with their motherhood and formulate expectations towards their partners. As a result, my interviewees vary and their narratives about fatherhood demonstrate the multiple perspectives people have in contemporary Swedish and Polish societies. Additionally, the interviewees vary in age, number of children, their age (although the youngest one

could not be over 8 years old) and sex. I also tried to collect people who had divided their parental leave differently.

The age of the interviewed men ranged from 21 to 49; generally, the Swedish fathers were slightly older, which can be explained by the fact the mean age of women at birth of first child is higher in Sweden than in Poland: in 2013, 29.1 and 26.7 years, accordingly (Eurostat 2015). The age of interviewed women ranged from 21 to 41 years.

Since it is difficult to escape from operationalising the middle class in terms of their occupational role and situation in the labour market, my interviewees held typical "middle-class" occupations; they were mostly white-collar workers employed in private and public sectors; some were self-employed and owned their own companies (though rather small ones). Some of the interviewed parents, mostly women, were not employed, which should be seen as a temporary rather than a permanent situation. In the case of women in the Polish context, the lack of employment was connected to motherhood and therefore was not permanent. All of Swedish and Polish interviewees and their partners had secondary or higher education. Their financial situations varied, but in comparison with lower classes, all of them could maintain stable and acceptable levels of consumption. None of the families had severe financial difficulties. Many of them owned their own flats or houses, yet these homes were often purchased on credit. Since Swedish society is richer and the situation in the labour market is more stable, Swedish fathers in my sample were generally in a better and more secure financial situation than Polish fathers.

All of the interviewees were reassured of confidentiality; therefore, their names and all names that appeared in the quotes cited in the book have been changed. I also decided not to include under citations their level of education and occupation, and the sex of their children. Every citation is identified by the interviewee's country of residence (Sweden or Poland), pseudonym, age and the age of their children. All information and each fact in the chosen quotations that might help identify an interviewed person were changed to ensure interviewee confidentiality.

There are at least two reasons for such protection. First, as I have already mentioned, confidentiality was guaranteed at the beginning of every interview. I wanted my interviewees to feel safe and confident that

no one would be able to identify them by any information they might share. This was done to protect interviewees from the fear that their partners, friends or family members might identify them in the quotes. And since I, as a researcher, am not anonymous and this book is publicly available, I want to ensure that my interviewees cannot be identified based on the data and the quotations.

Second, it should be remembered that the issues of parenthood and gender roles are not ideologically neutral. Everyone has an opinion about the way men and women should engage in parental roles. Consequently, there are different, often conflicting, models of fatherhood and motherhood, and they are usually based on a particular value system. In my research, I could not avoid this problem. I am aware that many of my interviewees might not be pleased with my analysis, in which I seek to deconstruct the prevailing model of fatherhood based on *naturalised* differences between men and women. Interviewees may also take issue with my analysis of gender, power relations and men's privileged position in the private and public spheres. This is a concern that is especially important in the context of Polish society, which is less familiar with gender issues than Swedish society. What is more, during the last years in the Polish public debate, there has been a strong attack on the categories of gender and feminism, which, according to some journalists and politicians, aim to diminish differences between men and women. In this context, all analysis of parenthood and family might be seen as ideological and as an attack on the institution of family (Zespół Krytyki Politycznej 2014). Keeping this in mind and while trying to avoid the situation in which some of the interviewees might feel offended by my analysis of his or her words, I want to ensure that it is difficult for interviewees to identify themselves in the tables and quotations. Albeit, I am aware that the interviewees might recognise their own words. In the off chance that this happens, I would like to assure readers that my aim was not to offend or criticise anyone. My analysis is based on an interpretation arising from the particular theoretical approach I have chosen to analyse fatherhood within institutional contexts in Sweden and Poland. I am convinced that such an approach helps us to better understand our surrounding social reality and is a necessary step to take in the process of achieving actual gender equality.

3.4 Explanations and Limitations

3.4.1 My Starting Points

Every sociological research project and every sociological analysis has weaknesses and imperfections, and I am aware that this also applies to the analyses presented in this book. Many of these failings, though, are unavoidable in social sciences. We are formed and constrained by a society, which we try to study, interpret and understand (see Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Heyink and Tymstra 1993; Smith 1987; Wagner 2011; Gouldner 1970). Consequently, our research ideas, interpretations and conclusions are shaped by the social environment within which we function, and by our experiences, convictions and values. In the context of comparative research on fatherhood in Sweden and Poland, it is not without significance that, as a researcher, I am a Polish, middle-class, childless woman with higher education who has always resided in urban areas:

> The only way of knowing a socially constructed world is knowing it from within. We can never stand outside it. A relation in which sociological phenomena are objectified and presented as external to and independent of the observer is itself a special social practice also known from within. The relation of observer and object of observation, of sociologist to "subject," is a specialized social relationship. (Smith 1987, 92)

Therefore, I do not claim that my interpretation is the only adequate one of the fatherhood phenomenon. It also does not describe fatherhood in its entire complexity. While keeping these limitations in mind, I would like to concentrate on the points of my research and analysis that might be seen as problematic. As previously mentioned, I conducted interviews with Swedish and Polish fathers and with Polish mothers. All interviewees were middle class and lived in big cities. What is more, the studied families might be called *traditional* families, since all interviewed parents were heterosexual and resided with their partners and children. As a consequence of such choices, my analysis is only about the fatherhood experiences of a specific group of people and cannot necessarily be applied to homosexual fathers, single fathers, divorced fathers, men who do not live with their children, as well as lower-class or upper-class fathers.

To present my staring points, I begin with the methodological choices I made while I was constructing a sample group with which to conduct my in-depth interviews and then proceed to the weaknesses of qualitative research in social sciences.

3.4.2 In-Depth Interviews—Why Middle Class?

From the methodological choice to conduct research on the middle-class father at least two questions appear: how do I understand the middle class and why did I decide not to include in my analysis the members of other social classes? The problem of definition is especially relevant, on the one hand, in the context of the ongoing discussion about the death of social classes and, on the other hand, in the context of the question of whether the middle class can be regarded as a social class (Domański 2000; Hechter 2004; Nisbet 1959; Pakulski and Waters 1996). Both of these problems result from the conviction that the social class is a social group that is intertwined in relations of production and ownership in the capitalist system. What is more, the social class characterises with a social identity and class consciousness of its members, who hold the same social or economic status and have common interests. With the start of the twenty-first century, the problem of social stratifications seems to have become more complicated, and as Michael Hechter points out:

> Class became the predominant basis of politics only after the triumph of market society and industrialization. The prevalence of class consciousness in any society is like an exotic tropical plant that can only survive under unusual hothouse conditions. (Hechter 2004, 407)

He claims that since the 1950s there has been a decline in the political salience of class, which is directly connected with the decreasing impermeability of class boundaries and a decrease in the capacity of classes to organise, which leads to a very low level of class consciousness. Hechter explains what the reasons for such situations are. He underlines the role of group solidarity and new forms of social segregations that appeared or became relevant in the twentieth century. These issues are also important if one wonders about the stratification of contemporary societies and tries

to define the "middle class" at the beginning of the twenty-first century. As Henryk Domański notes, the so-called middle class is a collectivity that consists of many different social categories and therefore cannot be regarded as a coherent "social class":

> The biggest peculiarity of middle class is that it is called a class despite the fact that it consists of people with different education, diverse financial situations, having different incomes and different preferences in consumption, as well as bestowed with unequal esteem. (Domański 2012, 13)

Consequently, he treats the "middle class" as an element of the social structure of capitalist societies that is not the middle class in the traditional sense. Yet, in his opinion, even though the middle class lost its social and political salience as a "real" social class, it is still one of the fundamental elements of the social structure in contemporary Western societies.

Przemysł Sadura criticises such a theoretical and methodological perspective as an approach that leads to the analysis of "unanchored life styles that gives an illusion of individualised consumptionist society" (Sadura 2012, 164). A perspective that, Sadura argues, by denying the existence of class structure and inequalities, fails to provide a relevant sociological understanding of contemporary Western societies. What he proposes instead is not to look at the middle class as a particular social formation that appeared in Western Europe at some point in history, nor as a social category embedded in the Marxist theory, but to define the middle class according to the theory of Pierre Bourdieu, that is, as a group of people who have medium-sized resources of capital. This capital should be understood as a sum of its different types: social, cultural and economic (Sadura 2012, 168). Based on this definition, Sadura and Maciej Gdula, in another text from the book quoted above, argue that although there are not strict boundaries between the different social classes, it is possible to distinguish particular lifestyle characteristics for each class. The category of lifestyle helps to capture a dynamic of the class system and to analyse different social classes in terms of competing universalities (Gdula and Sadura 2012b, b).

My aim is not to get involved here in the discussion about the death of social classes and historical definitions of social class. This is not a goal

of the book. I use the term "social class" not as a technical concept, but as a category that allows me to analyse fatherhood on the empirical level while choosing a sampling group. In the context of this work, I agree with the approach proposed by Sadura and Gdula to treat the social class as a category of people who share a similar lifestyle resulting from their cultural, economic and social capital. The middle class in this context is one of the most important social categories for contemporary Western societies that should be seen in the context of hierarchically organised, differing lifestyles. The lifestyles, on the one hand, fit into the hierarchy of education and incomes, but on the other, they also result from the social pressure to consume and achieve higher social status, as well as the cultural differences between members of diverse social classes. It means that people from the lower class usually aspire to the lifestyles of the higher classes (Gdula and Sadura 2012a, 21).

The decision to concentrate on middle-class men was dictated by my research objectives: first, to conduct comparative research in Sweden and Poland, and second, to examine the links between institutional contexts and fathering in everyday life. Thus, I had to choose the most comparable groups in Swedish and Polish societies. Research on fathering and parenting clearly shows that social class, race, ethnicity and economic status have a great impact on how men engage in parenting and how they understand the role of the father. The problem of this engagement is also strictly connected with masculinity models that differ for diverse social categories (Bryan 2013; Plantin et al. 2003; Plantin 2007). It can be assumed that low-income or working-class fathers from Poland would experience parenthood differently than middle-class men living in Sweden. To avoid, presumably, a very broad intersectional analysis of fatherhood in two different social settings, I decided to choose only one social class.

The middle class was chosen on the basis of my second aim: to describe fathering within the institutional context of two different family policy systems. In the sociological literature, the middle class is often presented as the most important element of capitalist social structures. Domański claims that even though the middle class cannot be treated as a social class, it is the biggest segment of society that, in the Western world, represents the dominant and the most desirable patterns of behaviour. For

the lower classes, the middle class is an object of aspiration, whereas for the upper classes, it is a symbol of moderation and equal opportunity (Domański 2012).

What is more, a strong middle class is often regarded as a requirement for a stable democratic system; it is a class that can use its political influence to control politicians and those in power. In the context of social policy systems and the welfare state, the middle class is seen as a principal beneficiary of welfare state provisions. Especially in the case of the universal welfare state, as Andreas Bergh (2007) claims in analysing the Swedish system, there is a middle-class bias, which means that the middle class benefits more from social policy mechanisms than do lower and upper classes. And even in the targeted welfare state, in which benefits are mostly directed at the poorest, the middle class is still important. The contemporary welfare state systems not only are oriented towards reducing social inequalities, but also have to deal with universal problems of the whole society, such as ensuring access to education, providing care services and health care or helping people to achieve work–life balance. In such areas of public policy, the middle class often benefits the most. Its members cannot always afford to use (on a regular basis) services from the private sector and, at the same time, they have a cultural capital high enough to know how to use public services and how important these services are. Also benefits, such as the sickness benefit, maternity benefit, unemployment benefits, frequently exclude members of the lower class since these benefits are often only available to people legally employed at least for one year (Bergh 2007; Domański 2012; Fujimura 2000). Thus, in the context of parenthood, it is obvious that middle-class parents benefit more from the mechanisms provided by the family policy system than upper-class parents, who can afford to use the services from the private sector, and lower-class parents, who are not always eligible for the benefits or do not have enough cultural capital to know how to use the public services or to recognise their importance or value.

Finally, the middle class is often seen as the class most aware of changing gender roles and the new models of fatherhood (Gottzen and Kremer-Sadlik 2012; Plantin 2007). Research on fatherhood shows that middle-class men are more eager to engage in care work and overtake domestic obligations that are traditionally regarded as female tasks. Thus,

it might be assumed that the conflicts resulting from the coexistence of two different models of fatherhood, as well as conflicts between partners resulting from different expectations of each other, are highly present in middle-class households. Taking this into account, my selection of the middle class as my main research subject seems to be reasonable, although I am aware that research on fathers from other social classes is also important and highly needed.

3.4.3 In-Depth Interviews—Why Heterosexual Men in "Traditional" Families?

Another methodological decision that requires explanation is the inclusion in the sample of only heterosexual fathers living together with their partners and children. In making such a choice, I excluded gay fathers, single fathers, divorced father and fathers who, for different reasons, do not occupy the same household as their children. Therefore, one might assume that I refer to a restrictive and exclusive definition of the institution of family that treats only heterosexual couples and single parents with their biological or adopted children as "real" families (Mizielińska 2012; Slany 2002, 2005, 2013). Yet this is not true. My intention is not to undermine or ignore the experience of fatherhood in "non-traditional" social settings. I believe that in a comparative research project such as mine, the effort of including the experiences of homosexual, single or divorced fathers would require that I change my research objectives.

Research on gay fatherhood and lesbian motherhood shows that gay parents have a very different approach to traditional maternal and paternal roles. Research on lesbian mothers indicates that they are much more equalitarian in their parental practices and often there exist no clear boundaries between the obligations of the two mothers (Donovan et al. 2004; Mizielińska 2012). There is still lack of research on gay fatherhood, yet the one study conducted suggests that, in Connell's theoretical perspective, gay fathers are located on the subordinated position in the structure of male domination. They do not follow the hegemonic masculinity patterns of behaviour and, because of their sexual orientation, are treated more as women than as men. Therefore, they have dif-

ferent experiences and approaches to the traditional model of fatherhood based on the hegemonic masculinity model. This impacts the way they engage in fatherhood and how they define fatherhood (Bergman et al. 2010; Śmietana 2011). Another issue is the traditional role of the father, which is mostly seen in terms of breadwinning obligations and does not concentrate on care work. Therefore, when a woman is unavailable to meet default, primary familial care obligations, the traditional division between male and female parental responsibilities is neither suitable nor relevant. It also impacts how gay fathers deal with the issue of work–life balance (Richardson et al. 2012). Similarly, the situation of single fathers is distinctive since single fathers have to deal with the *naturalised* dichotomy between motherhood and fatherhood in a different way than partnered fathers, that is, men living together with their partners and children (Janzen and Kelly 2012). Divorced fathers and fathers who do not live with their children experience parenthood and gender parental roles diversely, yet probably in ways more similar to heterosexual partnered fathers than to single or homosexual fathers.

Thus, in an attempt to compare the experience of fatherhood in the context of family policy systems with men's approaches to *naturalised* differences between motherhood and fatherhood, I decided to concentrate in this book on heterosexual, partnered fathers. Marcin Śmietana (2011) claims that gay parenthood is to some degree separate from gender roles because the gender of a parent is not what determines and defines the different roles played by each father. In my research project, the categories of gender and gendered parental roles are essential to understanding the experience of fatherhood in Swedish and Polish societies. In my opinion, investigating the choice of fathers, most strongly integrated into traditional family models, provides a good opportunity to analyse fatherhood in the context of changing gender roles and different family policy systems.

3.4.4 Challenges for the Qualitative Research

Although my research project is based on four different sources of data, gathered using qualitative and quantitative methods, it should be seen as

based on the qualitative methodology. As Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln underline, referring to Uwe Flick (2002):

> Qualitative research is inherently multi-method in focus (Flick 2002, 226–227). However, the use of multiple methods, or triangulation, reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question. Objective reality can never be captured. We know a thing only through its representations. Triangulation is not a tool or a strategy of validation, but an alternative to validation (Flick 2002, 227). The combination of multiple methodological practices, empirical materials, perspectives, and observers in a single study is best understood, then, as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry. (Denzin and Lincoln 2005, 5)

The parts of my research project that are based on quantitative data provide a background for the narratives of interviewed fathers. It is claimed that qualitative research in social sciences is not intended to determine whether a particular phenomenon exists and too what extent, but rather aims to interpret and explain (Heyink and Tymstra 1993). My aim is to gather, through interviews, men's narratives about their experiences of fatherhood. I am interested in the ways they define and understand their parental roles, what strategies they use to explain the division of domestic and care work in their household, how they achieve work–life balance and what work–life balance actually means for them. I also seek to learn how fathers deal with conflicting expectations resulting from different models of fatherhood, whether they notice these conflicts and, if they do, in what situations. Finally, I try to explore their perception of the role of the welfare state in helping individuals to fulfil parental obligations. The in-depth interviews give me a chance to understand their perceptions of parenthood, motherhood, masculinity models, care work, gender equality, work–life balance and family policy systems. My analysis is thus an interpretation not only of their fatherhood narratives, but also of their own interpretations of parenthood and surrounding social reality.

Qualitative research often faces the accusation of being subjective, unscientific or only explanatory; it is argued that its results only show the phenomenon on a small scale, that it cannot be replicated and thus does not meet the requirement of reliability.

The limited range of qualitative research is connected to the subject of study and how detailed the analysis is. The study of people's motivations and everyday practices requires the direct interaction of the researcher with the people she or he studies. There is a need to choose a particular group or category if we want to conduct a detailed analysis. In my project, I intentionally confined the sample and concentrated on heterosexual, middle-class men living in big cities. I was aware that it would be difficult to analyse the fatherhood experience of different men. Even the narratives of interviewed fathers vary significantly, and based on this, it is impossible to present a typical parenting model of middle-class, heterosexual Swedish and Polish men. Because of this, I could not avoid simplifications and sometimes generalisations that, although are not false, do not present the social reality in all its complexity. I argue that such simplifications are needed in order to not only compare two different societies and distinguish similarities and differences between them, but also find the dominant and most significant features of contemporary fatherhood.

Since the sampling group was rather large and heterogeneous, I am convinced that I have managed to describe and analyse the experience of fatherhood of contemporary Swedish and Polish men in a broad and in-depth way. The interpretation of interviews is grounded in the analysis of the survey data and changing family policy systems; this triangulation allows the data to be checked and permits control over my interpretations of facts, convictions and emotions present in the narratives. Therefore, although my analysis is conducted from a particular social position, I believe it provides a good interpretation of contemporary social reality.

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4

Fatherhood as a Political Issue: The Cases of Sweden and Poland

4.1 Fatherhood in Welfare State Regimes

4.1.1 Welfare States' Typologies and Gender Order

Parenthood became a political issue in Western societies in the twentieth century. Comparative research shows that the policies of specific welfare state regimes have differing impacts on fertility rates and people's decisions regarding childbearing, as well as on how men and women engage in their parental roles and how parenthood affects a parent's situation in the labour market and their careers. Therefore, in an analysis of contemporary fatherhood, the links between the welfare state, the labour market and individuals/workers must be explored. The discussion regarding welfare state regimes is now firmly grounded in social sciences. The most known, influential, originally criticised and finally revised typology of welfare states was proposed by Gøsta Esping-Andersen. According to his approach, the welfare state should be understood as a system in which the government socially and economically protects its citizens. According to Esping-Andersen's analysis, the welfare state is strictly connected to the labour market and family life. Since there are different opinions on what

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role the state should play in an individual's life and to what extent the state should control the relations between citizens and the labour market, Esping-Andersen distinguishes three types of welfare state regimes based on the three dominant political movements of the twentieth century in North America and Western Europe: the liberal welfare state regime, the corporatist regime and the social democratic regime (1990, 27–29). As he underlines:

> The welfare state cannot be understood just in terms of the rights it grants. We must also take into account how state activities are interlocked with the market's and the family's role in social provision. (1990, 21)

Therefore, the typology is based on the degree of the *de-commodification* effect the state has on the relations between the worker and the employer, as well as on the kind of stratification produced by the system. The axis of commodification/de-commodification shows to what extent individual's livelihood is dependent on the market: "[T]he concept refers to the degree to which individuals, or families, can uphold a socially accepted standard of living independently of market participation" (1990, 37). The more protections the state provides for the individual worker, the more de-commodified and independent from the labour market she or he is. The degree of de-commodification is measured by considering access to benefits, for example, eligibility rules and restrictions on entitlement, the level of income replacement, forms of protection against social risks, such as unemployment, disability, sickness or old age. It is important to note around what the entitlement is built—in the most de-commodifying social democratic regime, entitlement is based on the principle of universal rights of citizenship; in the corporatist regime, it is based on work performance; in liberal regimes, one builds entitlements around the demonstrable and objective needs of the individual (Esping-Andersen 1990, 47–50). The typology proposed by Esping-Andersen should be seen as a typology of "ideal types," not of "real types," because no existing welfare state can be characterised as strictly representative of any type (see Ferragina and Seeleib-Kaiser 2011).

Esping-Andersen's concept has met fierce criticism, especially from feminist scholars, who noted that his concept does not take into

consideration the relations between social policy and gender relations. Esping-Andersen's concept is mostly based on the commodification of a male worker since it concentrates on the relations between the worker, the state and the labour market and does not include unpaid work, especially care and domestic duties. It is also useless as a tool in measuring the commodification of women, that is, their ability to enter and stay in the labour market. From this perspective, it is argued that in measuring welfare, it is incorrect to ignore the state's family policy and other caring policies:

> Family policy has a great impact on the labour market, since issues such as access to day care, the types of maternity and parental leaves and inducements for fathers to share in parental leave time, all influence the ability of women to stay in the labour market after having children as well as their ability to remain financially independent. (Saxonberg 2013, 27)

To fill this gap, the new, parallel axis of analysis appeared—*the familialisation/de-familialisation axis*. Its aim is to include a gender dimension in the analysis of the welfare state. Ruth Lister defines the term familialisation as "the degree to which individuals can uphold a socially acceptable standard of living independently of family relationships, either through paid work or social security provision" (1994, 37):

> While de-commodified workers in Esping-Andersen's typology gain bargaining power vis-à-vis their prospective employers, defamilialized women also gain power vis-à-vis their male partners (if they are in a heterosexual relationship), because they are no longer dependent on their male partners' incomes to survive. (Saxonberg 2013, 28)

Yet, this axis is also problematic as we take into consideration different situations of men and women in the labour market and in the domestic sphere. A problem arises in the case of a parental leave system—how should long parental leaves be characterised in the framework of de-familialisation? In fact, in using this dimension, we miss an opportunity to distinguish systems based on conservative policies that support the male breadwinner model and force women to take long breaks in paid work after having a baby as compared with systems which use daddy quotas and long parental leaves to encourage men to take active roles in

the caretaking of their children, thus allowing women to return to work earlier after child birth (so as a result, the system has the *familialising* effect on men and the *de-familialisng* effect on women).

Steven Saxonberg (2013, 30–31) points out that in the typologies based on the de-familialisation axis, a problem arises in relation to day care institutions. Typologies based on the de-familialisation axis tend to concentrate on outcomes, such as the percentage of children enrolled in day care, a practice that misses the dimension of public and private day care, how expensive day care is and who can afford public or private day care. These typologies do not factor in cultural norms that often determine when it is appropriate to send a child to a day care institution. Saxonberg claims that concentrating on outcomes may lead to classifying comparable welfare states as different regime types. In order to avoid this, he proposes building a typology based on a new dimension of *genderisation/de-genderisation*. In his approach, he concentrates on actual policies rather than on the regime types, as Esping-Andersen does. Saxonberg claims that his typology is "useful not because it proposes something radically new, but rather because it proposes something very obvious, which easily connects to the mainstream feminist discourse on gender and welfare" (2013, 32). The need to *genderise* the welfare state, so that it supports gender equality and the elimination of gender roles, has been present in feminist discourses for some time. The typology based on the familialisation/de-familialisation axis ignores gender inequality deriving from different traditional female and male roles and the division of society into female and male spheres (see Giullari and Lewis 2005). Additionally, the term "de-familialisation" is sometimes difficult to define and interpret, whereas terms such as "gender," "gendering," and "gendered" are grounded in scientific and feminist literature on politics, public policies and welfare states. As Raewyn Connell argues:

> Though there have been stateless societies, and gender politics occurs in many other arenas, the state (both national and international) is the most important focus of gender politics in the contemporary world. Even in a neoliberal era, where the market is exalted and many public institutions are privatized, the state remains the most important steering mechanism in economies. And it has powerful steering capacities in other areas of life too, as the story of women's reproductive rights shows. (2009, 144)

Therefore, it seems legitimate to look at the welfare state from the framework of genderisation/de-genderisation. To make clear what this means, I refer to Saxonberg, who proposes "a strict definition that we use the term 'genderizing' to describe *policies that promote different gender roles for men and women*. 'Degenderizing' policies then would denote *policies that promote the elimination of gender roles*" (2013, 33).[1] From this approach, Saxonberg also proposes that we look at whether genderising policies genderise society *implicitly* or *explicitly*. The explicitly genderising policies would openly refer to the traditional gender order with different male and female roles, whereas implicitly genderising policies are identified as market oriented, and within the process of reproduction, they support the existing patriarchal order. Although, Saxonberg claims that his typology might be used to analyse almost every type of social policy, he concentrates only on family policy, and in referring to it, he operationalises his typology. Since in my work I concentrate on the gender dimension, fatherhood and changing parental roles, I find Saxonberg's theoretical reasoning valid and useful, and I use it in the following analysis of Swedish and Polish family systems.

This typology is based on the analysis of two of the most important and most common instruments of contemporary family policy: the scheme of (1) paid parental leave and (2) state support for childcare. These two instruments greatly impact the organisation of family life in a particular society and play a significant role in achieving gender equality in both public and private spheres. Saxonberg is not the first to consider the role of gender-neutral parental leave systems and their impact on men's participation in the domestic sphere. Data from Scandinavian countries show that by reserving a portion of parental leave strictly for fathers, society can actually increase gender equality (Duvander and Andersson 2006, 2012a; Ellingsæter and Leira 2006). Saxonberg recognises the parental leave system as *de-genderising* if (1) parental leaves are for both parents and the leave is long enough that fathers can share the time with mothers, who, in the European context, usually want to stay with the baby for the first 4–6 months; (2) the replacement rate is high and allow men, who still earn more than women, to use the parental leave without significant economic loss to the whole family; (3) the benefit ceiling is not too low

[1] The italics made by Saxonberg.

and, finally, (4) there is some kind of daddy quota. In contrast, in the *explicitly genderising system*, parental leave is mostly seen as a mother's right and there exists a strong incentive for women to leave the labour market for a few years after having a baby. In such systems, there are usually three types of parental leave: (1) *maternity leave* (at least 15 weeks) reserved only for mothers with a high replacement rate; (2) extended *parental leave* (two or three years) with a low flat-rate benefit: this type of leave is usually described as a right of both parents, but the low benefit usually prevents fathers from using it; (3) short *paternity leave* (around two weeks) that can be used by a man at the beginning of the baby's life to help the mother after the delivery. On the other hand, the *implicitly genderising system* does not provide any parental leave benefits or only provides short maternity leave and encourages both men and women to stay in the labour market. Since men still earn more, this system implicitly perpetuates a system in which men are the primary economic providers and women are forced to stay at home (Saxonberg 2013, 35–39).

This typology is also based around access to public childcare institutions. In the *de-genderising system*, the public sector provides a large number of places in public day care for children (for children both under and over the age of three) and the states provide subsidies for private childcare services. The *implicitly genderising system* does not provide public childcare, neither in public institutions nor in the form of subsidies, whereas the *explicitly genderising system* provides some places in public childcare institutions, but it supports kindergartens for children over three years old. In such a system, kindergarten is seen more in terms of its educational role than as an instrument enabling the mother to re-enter the labour market. Since Saxonberg concentrates on policy development rather than on policy outcome, it is easier to evaluate the impact of policies on actual people's behaviour in the particular socio-economic and cultural contexts. The term *de-genderisation* is useful in analysing parenthood because it links social policy with the issue of gender roles and gender inequality and allows one to analyse the prevailing division between male and female roles, public and private spheres, and paid and unpaid work.

To fully analyse the welfare state system, one must consider the cultural dimension of society. Birgit Pfau-Effinger (2005b) notes that the cultural system determines the welfare culture, that is, values, ideas and stocks of

knowledge provide a basis for welfare state policies. Consequently, the welfare culture, and cultural context as such, impacts the structures of social inequality, division of labour, the labour market, the non-profit sector, the family and so on. In a similar manner, Jaana Vuori (2007) looks at the welfare state system in the context of fatherhood. She analyses the discourses adopted in public discussions about parenthood and gendered parental roles. She distinguishes the *exclusive mothering discourse* and the *shared parenting discourse*. The first concept, borrowed from Nancy Chodorow (1999), describes women as innately nurturing and, consequently, as the primary nurtures in a heterosexual, parental relationship; this concept is based on the assumption that there should be a clear gendered division between parenting practices. The second concept refers to the issue of gender equality and rejects the division of parenting into female and male roles. It assumes that parents should share parental obligations equally in both spheres, including the domestic sphere. The aim of this approach is to encourage more men to become involved in nurturing practices and to engage in traditionally female tasks. As Vuori underlines, today, both discourses consider men as important parents and underline the role of the father in a child's life, but they do not agree on the extent to which men should be involved in nurturing activities, particularly during the first months after birth. Vuori does not analyse social policies as such, but rather concentrates on discourses that are used in creating a particular family policy:

> The concept of discourse here points to the process in which social practices and linguistic expressions to which they refer form complex but analytically recognizable cultural understandings. These understandings are culturally so well learned that in everyday life they are hardly recognized as learned but taken rather as "*the way things are*[2]." (2007, 47)

Here, Vuori argues that parenting and gendered parental roles are highly tied to cultural and institutional contexts. The parenting discourses define how and to what extent men and women should engage in their parenthood and what kinds of behaviour are appropriate and inappropriate for fathers and mothers. In such a way, they shape practices within

[2] The italics made by Vuori.

family life. The approaches proposed by Pfau-Effinger and Vuori are important because they demonstrate the complex links between culture, the welfare state system and people's behaviours. The cultural patterns of being a father or a mother can be reinforced or reconstructed by the public policy system and these complicated relations between culture and policies influence daily practices of individuals. People tend to behave according to existing standards of conduct and do not often undermine them, especially when their behaviour is supported by the institutional context. On the other hand, new models of behaviour can be legitimised by a particular social policy and thus contribute to change in the cultural system (Pfau-Effinger 2005b, 12).

4.1.2 Paid and Unpaid Work Within the Welfare State

The recent discussions regarding welfare state regimes and public policy systems concentrate on gender equality and gender roles. In the context of labour market and family life, the key problem that should be considered is the different evaluation of paid and unpaid work. This distinction overlaps with other distinctions that have already appeared in the book: the division between public and private spheres, male and female roles as well as obligations of fathers and mothers. Therefore, feminist scholars demand that appreciation be given to care work and, based on this, that welfare state regimes undergo reconstruction. As Ann Shola Orloff (2009) notes, the traditional definition of welfare state is in fact falsely universalising since it is grounded in a masculinist paradigm and does not take into account the experiences of women or gender divisions in the labour market and within family life. In these masculinist analyses, the discussion regarding the welfare state concentrates on pensions and social insurance and is shaped by economic or class interests. In contrast, the feminist analysis focuses on the significance of women's activities within the welfare state, that is, on family life, construction of employment laws, the problem of reproduction, housing and regulations concerning who receives benefits (Orloff 2009, 320).

The discussion is accompanied by the emergence of new ideas regarding what to call the new model of family replacing the traditional male

breadwinner model. First, the focus was on the economic dimension of changing gender roles; therefore, the "male breadwinner model" was replaced with the "dual-earner model" or "the adult-worker model" (see Giullari and Lewis 2005). Yet these terms do not take into account the significance of unpaid work in the domestic sphere, especially care work. As a result, new terms have appeared, such as "dual-earner/dual-carer model," "dual-breadwinner/state-carer model," "dual-earner/female part-time caregiver," "dual-earner/marketised-caregiver model" and so on (see Crompton 1999; Pfau-Effinger 2005a; Saxonberg 2013). The reason for this lies in a shift in thinking about achieving gender equality and men's role in this process. At some point, it became obvious that it is impossible to create a society based on gender equality by only increasing women's participation in the labour market. Women need help in care work, because without it, they are overwhelmed with paid and domestic work. Therefore, care work has been recognised by feminists as one of the most crucial problems for the welfare state system. The tendency to value more labour work and ignore care work should be seen as problematic from the perspective of the society, the existence of which does not rely on its members' economic activity, but rather on raising new generations of citizens. From such a perspective, care work should be seen as an obligation of all individuals, regardless of their gender (see Kershaw 2006).

If women, because of their participation in the labour market, need help in care work, the question arises: how should this help be provided? Since care work usually takes place within the family and concerns taking care of children and elderly people, the above-mentioned axis of familialisation/de-familialisation policies might help us answer this question. On the one hand, in the twentieth century, the state started to supplant women in providing care responsibilities through access to public or private day care institutions for young children and elderly care facilities. The aim of this approach was to enable women to reconcile family life with paid work. But at the same time, long maternity leaves, provided by many Western states, reinforced the division between female care work and male breadwinning obligations. Also, day care institutions do not help women in domestic work; consequently, women continued to be overwhelmed with unpaid work in the private

sphere. Thus, some acaemics and politicians started to recognise the need to increase men's involvement in care and domestic duties. One measure taken to achieve this was to redefine the concept of citizenship and to include in its definition an obligation to care work. Since in the traditional societies, "citizenship" usually refers to the economic and political participation of the citizen, this approach misses the fact that women's role is not limited to only these elements of social life. As Bettina Cass argues:

> A democratic conception of citizenship would value and provide the resources for women's economic and political participation, as well as women's contributions to caring and welfare. But it would also be based unequivocally on the understanding that men cannot be accorded full citizenship if they do not fulfil their responsibilities for care-giving work. (1994, 114–115)

In such a perspective, there is a need to recognise the value of care work, but at the same time a need to redefine the traditional model of masculinity to encompass men's active participation in traditionally female areas.

Recognition of the value of unpaid care work by the state shifts societal understanding of the welfare state beyond its link to the labour market to encompass a perspective that underlines the gender dimension of contemporary societies and the complexity of social reality. This shift in recognition impacts the construction of the public policy system and is strongly influenced by the endeavour to understand how gender equality can be achieved at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

The way in which family policy defines the father's role has a great impact on gender order (see Connell 2009, 134–150). But it should not be forgotten that these definitions are usually grounded in a cultural system. As my comparative analysis of fathering in Sweden and Poland will show, the gender regimes and cultural definitions of parental roles employed within family policies have a great impact on the everyday life of individuals. Before proceeding to the analysis of Swedish and Polish fathering in the next chapters, I will first present a historical review of the family policy systems and gender regimes in Sweden and Poland.

4.2 Gender Equality and Politicising Parenthood—The History of the Swedish Family Policy[3]

4.2.1 The Swedish Family Policy System Since 1930s

The Swedish family policy is closely intertwined with broader social policies that aimed, from the first decades of twentieth century, to modernise the Swedish society and regulate the labour market. All family policy reforms were (and still are) informed by reports from research on family and gender relations. The reports are written by special committees comprising representatives from different political positions, interest groups, officials from different governmental departments, as well as social scientists and researchers.[4] These committees are appointed not only to provide the analyses necessary for designing social policies, but also to provide guidance in the development of public policy in other areas. The committees are regarded as independent institutions, the role of which is to generate sound and scientific knowledge to guide future state development (Lundqvist 2009, 86).

The Swedish modern family policy emerged in the beginning of the 1930s. Its primary aims were to reduce widespread poverty and to address decreasing fertility rates in the country. Industrialisation and urbanisation were identified as having had major impacts on the decreasing agricultural population and the emergence of a modern labour market based on a division between the production process and household and domestic work. Hence, experts from the governmental committees diagnosed "the family crisis," a consequence of the division of society into female and male spheres. Men were expected to be the primary economic providers and to participate in the public labour market, whereas women were isolated in

[3] The Swedish family policy system is described based on Bergman and Hobson (2002), Duvander and Andersson (2006), Duvander and Johansson (2012a), Haas (1992, 1996), Klinth (2008), Lamb and Levine (1983), Lundqvist and Roman (2010), Lundqvist (2009, 2011), Roman (2009) and Suwada (2013).

[4] Among these scientists and researchers, there is a group of feminist researchers who concentrate on gender issues and adopt a feminist perspective. This perspective is visible as one studies the diagnoses presented in their reports.

the domestic sphere, where they were responsible for maintaining consumption and taking care of children. In the experts' opinion, this arrangement led to the decreasing fertility rate. They recommended reforms that would reconstruct the family model and would provide equality between men and women in the public sphere. The key goal undertaken was to liberate women from their sole obligations of care work within the domestic sphere. The aim was to create conditions in which women could also actively engage in paid work. Consequently, women became the main recipients of proposed reforms, while men, as a social category, were not identified as a target group for the new family policy. The reform introduced in the 1930s aimed to release women from childcare duties by shifting this responsibility to the state and by improving women's opportunities in the labour market. Thus, antenatal clinics and child-welfare centres were established, a law was introduced to protect women from being fired by their employers because they got married or became pregnant and women received financial support in the form of the means-tested maternity benefits and a universal child allowance. At the same time, it was underlined that the poorest families should not be encouraged to have more children. For this reason, an education programme about birth control, abortion and sterilisation was launched. The first decades of the twentieth century is a time when sterilisation was accepted as an admissible form of birth control and many poor, older, mentally ill women, as well as women from marginalised ethnic groups, were forcibly sterilised (see Broberg and Roll-Hansen 1996; Zaremba 2011).

The reforms from the 1930s and 1940s, as well as economic growth and stabilisation in the labour market, led to great improvements in the social conditions of Sweden. From the 1940s to 1960s, social justice emerged as a dominant theme in the social policy discourse. Since family policy reforms of these decades concentrated on women rather than on men, the conviction that caregiving was primarily the responsibility of women and that men's main obligation was to provide for their families was reinforced. A decreasing fertility rate was no longer the centre of discussion for experts; instead they had begun to worry about the increasing number of divorces. A conflict was observed between traditional values and the growing democratisation of society. In this period, the contradiction of the expectation that women serve the dual role of

domestic caretaker and active participant in the labour market became particularly evident. The male breadwinner model was undermined not only by feminist discourse, but also by the structural requirements of the labour market, in which women were needed to fill worker shortages. Consequently, in the 1960s, gender equality was recognised as the paramount political goal. Women, together with immigrants, had started to play a crucial role in the Swedish labour market. The political discussion concentrated on the reduction of the gender wage gap and also on the provision of public day care institutions. The aim was to guarantee the "freedom of choice" for every woman. And although, the family was still regarded as the crucial institution for the society, it was underlined that it consists of independent individuals whose rights should be defended. This approach was a result of the broader equality policy in Sweden, the aim of which was to create a classless society with equal citizens in both social and political life.

At the turn of 1970s and 1980s, the shift from a policy oriented towards women to a gender-neutral family policy occurred. In the new discourse the word "mother" was gradually replaced with the word "parent." In 1970 the Swedish prime minister, Olof Palme, underlined:

> We have talked long enough about the emancipation of women, of the problem of woman's role in society. But in order that women shall be emancipated from their antiquated role the men must also be emancipated. Thus, it is the *human beings* [emphasised by Palme] we shall emancipate. (Palme 1970)

In the 1970s there was a series of social and family policy reforms introduced by the social democratic government of Olof Palme (who was prime minister from 1969 to 1976 and from 1982 to 1986). This time was also characterised by an increase in academic interest in the relations between men and women; social policy became explicitly grounded in a feminist perspective. The introduction of new reforms was preceded by a discussion about the changing character of marriage and family, which had stopped being regarded as multifunctional institutions within which the social and biological reproduction of society occurs, but which had started to be seen as a source of emotional security for individuals. Therefore, the aim was not to strengthen traditional marriage, but rather to allow people to pur-

sue the life they desired and to increase gender equality. The family policy of 1970s might be characterised as a policy of individualism that aimed to "create a society where every adult individual takes responsibility for herself or himself, without being dependent on other family members" (Roman 2009, 101). In 1971 a tax reform introduced individual taxation within marriage and also reduced the taxation of income for a large part of society. In 1972 the institution of marriage started to be defined in terms of a consensual union in which each partner should support the other one and one in which domestic obligations should be shared. What is more, in 1974, the divorce act removed the requirement that spouses must mutually agree to a divorce and the requirement for an adjudication of guilt. At the same time a joint custody law was also adopted.

Yet, from the perspective of gender equality, the parental insurance reform and the politicisation of childcare were the most significant reforms. With their common acceptance, they were seen as crucial for the functioning of the contemporary Swedish welfare state and its citizens. Even the prime minister of a conservative government, Thorbjörn Fälldin, who was elected after Palme in 1976, followed the path proposed by his predecessor. The reform from 1974—the introduction of parental insurance was based on the replacement of maternity insurance with the gender-neutral parental leave. At the beginning, the leave was 180 days long, and during this period, a parent was paid 90% of her or his regular salary out of the national insurance fund. The minimum payment was set to 25 SEK per day at that time. After just one year, the parental leave was prolonged to 210 days, and in 1978, to 300 days. In the same year, a new regulation was introduced allowing the parental leave to be taken until a child turns eight. In the following years, the number of parental leave days, as well as the minimum compensation level of parental benefit, was regularly increased, and in 2002, it reached 390 days[5] (almost 13 months).

Meanwhile discourse around childcare institutions changed. In previous decades, the public childcare system was discussed mostly in the context of women's participation in the labour market. An access to public day care was intended to allow women to reconcile family life with

[5] All days are paid, but there are three different compensation levels. I will come back to this issue later in the chapter.

paid work and was also intended to equalise opportunities for men and women in the labour market. In the 1970s the Family Policy Committee turned its attention to children and concluded that it was in the best interests of all children to be enrolled in a day care institution. It was theorised that being only with a mother at home, isolated from society and other children, was not good for child development; to develop properly, it was asserted that a child requires contact with the external social environment. The public childcare institutions were also seen as an important tool for raising and educating democratic individuals by qualified teachers; it was believed that gathering children from different families into one public institution would diminish social and class inequalities. The new term "quality time" appeared advocating that the quality of the time a parent spends with their children is more important than the amount of time. Since 1985 every municipality has been obliged to provide preschool care for every child between 18 months to 7 years whose parents are working or studying. In 1995 it was decided that municipalities had to provide care for every child between 1 and 12 years regardless of their parents' financial and occupational situation.

4.2.2 Fathers as Recipients of the Swedish Family Policy

Until the 1970s men, as fathers, were ignored in debates about the family policy system. This changed in 1972 when the experts of the committee working on reforms concluded that fathers should also actively participate in taking care of their children. It was a substantial change from earlier discourse concerning the reconciliation of work with family life. Christine Roman (2009, 111) claims that this change might be a result of inclusion in the committee's analyses of sociological theories and research, since sociological reports of this time focused on the problem of the "fatherless society" and the impact of the father's absence on child development. This was also quite a strong voice in the fatherhood studies and men's studies at that time. Therefore, in 1974, the committee decided to transform maternity insurance into the gender-neutral parental leave. The aim of this reform was to strengthen the relationships between

children and fathers and to actively engage fathers in domestic work. Unfortunately, the response from Swedish society was not satisfactory. In the first year after the introduction of parental leave, only 2% fathers took advantage of the leave; additionally, most of these fathers used only a small proportion of days. Also, fathers usually took their parental leave while mothers were also at home, so it is unlikely that they took over the traditionally female tasks from their partners. Rather, it is likely that they played the role of an additional carer or the mother's helper.

The introduction of gender-neutral parental insurance was unique in the world in the 1970s and it became obvious that this law change would not be enough to make fundamental societal changes. It was also necessary to change people's attitudes towards parenting and care work. Thus, to help facilitate a societal attitude change, in the mid-1970s, a campaign to promote engaged fatherhood was launched. Its aim was to persuade men to use the parental leave days available to them. The campaign tried to demonstrate that taking care of children might also be regarded as masculine. In the 1976 campaign, the famous, but also controversial, weight lifter Lennart "Hoa Hoa" Dahlgren was hired, together with other traditionally masculine-looking men. Presenting a hyper-masculine figure as a father engaged in traditionally female activities sent a clear message that taking the parental leave would not undermine a man's masculinity (see Bergman and Hobson 2002; Klinth 2008). In retrospect, the campaign's impact has been generally regarded as not strong enough, but research papers from the 1980s underlined that the campaign's reach was so broad that only a small percentage of Swedes did not know that the parental leave was available to both mothers and fathers. At this time, the first propositions were made advocating an increase in the number of parental leave days reserved for fathers by 45 days. But the conservative government, which was in power at this time, accepted the proposition without this restriction. Consequently, the number of parental leave days taken by fathers remained low (Lamb and Levine 1983, 44–45).

At the beginning of 1980s it was questioned whether gender equality had really been achieved. In the committee's reports from 1979 and 1982, critiques of previous reforms appeared; it was noted that although the male breadwinner model was replaced with the dual breadwinner model, women still had not achieved an economic position equivalent to that held

by men in the labour market. The committee, referring to the approach of the Marxist feminists, observed that men, by avoiding domestic duties and care work, were leaving women doubly burdened. What is more, women were engaged in a labour market ruled by male values and, consequently, the labour market was divided into a female sector that was subordinate to the male sector. Hereby, the traditional gender order adjusted to accommodate changes in contemporary society. The committee had difficulty finding easy solutions to this problem, but one attempt to address it was with the design of one of "the most regulatory and highly interventionist policies toward men as fathers" (Bergman and Hobson 2002, 93). Of course, such policy creation should be seen as a process. First, in 1980s and 1990s, the parental leave was gradually prolonged with the belief that as the mother desists from breastfeeding after six months, the man could stay home for the following months. These changes were accompanied with new social campaigns encouraging men to use their right to take parental leave. These campaigns were based on a critique of traditional male values such as work orientation, competitiveness and autonomy, but at the same time, they underlined the positive impact on child development of distinct male parenthood. For instance, the main campaign message from 1990, conducted by the National Board of Health and Welfare, was: "Both are needed because we are different." Emphasising gender differences was questionable from the perspective of gender equality and of the society in which new models of family life, in addition to the traditional model of the heterosexual family with two parents, appeared, but was seen as a way to deal with men's "fear of feminization" (Klinth 2008, 26–27).

Yet, society believed that a real breakthrough was accomplished with the introduction of *daddy month reform* in 1995. The proposal of a month of parental leave reserved only for fathers came back to the discourse at the beginning of 1990s as researchers realised that women had changed whereas men had not. As Helen Bergman and Barbara Hobson note:

> The passage of the daddy month was no surprise to Swedes who had heard the message of the importance of father–child contact for two decades, both from experts on commissions as well as from journalists who published articles by fathers who confessed that they had been too busy for fathering and by sons who missed their fathers. (2002, 108–109)

Thus, to the 12-month parental leave a thirteenth month was added that was reserved only for fathers. Although, the new regulation was formulated using gender-neutral language, that is, each parent, the mother and the father, has one month of parental leave reserved for herself or himself that is forfeited if unused, it was in fact addressed to men, who very often did not use their parental leave. In 2002 the second reserved month was introduced and simultaneously the leave was extended to 16 months. This *daddy quota* was and still is regarded as controversial; some people believe that parents should decide by themselves how they want to share their parental leave; on the other hand, there are some who think that this reserved period should be extended (in 2016 it was actually extended to three months). The Swedish prime minister, who introduced the daddy month reform in 1995, underlined its validity by saying that the decision, whether parents want to share the parental leave or not, should not be seen as a private decision since the gender division of paid and unpaid work is a part of a broader social system dominated structurally and symbolically by men (Roman 2009, 112).

In 2006 a centre-right coalition won the election and formulated the first conservative government after 12 years of social democratic governance. This government was not interested in prolonging the parental quota since it underlined the freedom of parents to decide how to share the leave. What is more, their reforms did not fit into a historical development of the Swedish family policy. In 2007 a tax deduction for household services was implemented, the aim of which was to help families with two career-oriented parents. The reform was highly criticised for its exclusive character since it was oriented mainly towards high-income families. Furthermore, in 2008, the home care allowance was introduced, which allows parents, mostly mothers, to stay home instead of sending their children to public day care. Parents who decide to stay home after having used the parental leave are paid 3000 SEK/340 EUR per month of untaxed benefit. In the public day care system, some new changes were also proposed. A childcare voucher was introduced that allows parents to take care of their own children and children from other families and receive financial compensation from the municipality. The main recipients are women, predominantly poor women or women with a migrant background, who have a small chance of being employed in the labour

market. Although, both reforms are formulated using gender-neutral terms, they are seen as mechanisms encouraging a return to the traditional model of family with women engaged in care and domestic work (see Ferrarini and Duvander 2009). Yet, the conservative government did propose one reform that was more in line with the previous political programme; it was a gender equality bonus (*jämställdhetsbonus*) introduced in 2008. This mechanism should be seen as an incentive for parents to share the parental leave equally. Parents receive the bonus in the form of a tax reduction the year after they used the parental leave. For every day of leave shared equally, each parent receives 50 SEK; the bonus is applied only to days that are not reserved in the quotas. The bonus might be seen as a follow-up to the daddy month reform encouraging parents to share the parental leave equally. This bonus is defined as a financial incentive to families to compensate for the fact that since men still earn significantly more than women, when men take a longer parental leave, the family can suffer considerable financial losses. But as Ann-Zofie Duvander and Mats Johansson underline, the impact of this mechanism is not strong and broad enough since it mostly targets low- and middle-income families and since the payment is delayed for an entire year, parents are not encouraged to take it into serious consideration (Duvander and Johansson 2012b).

4.2.3 Summary: Characteristics of the Swedish Family Policy System in 2013

Above I presented a historical perspective of how the Swedish family policy was designed in the twentieth century and at the beginning of the twenty-first century. This family policy was based on social and gender equality, and its aim was to create a society in which women and men have equal rights and the same obligations in family life and in the labour market. To summarise this part, I now describe the situation of Swedish parents in 2013, the year when the analysed interviews were conducted.

Since the beginning of 2013, Swedish parents are entitled to 480 days of parental leave for one child, 60 days of which are reserved for each parent (the parental quota). Women can start receiving the parental benefit

60 days before the baby is due and the benefit is available until a child finishes the first year of a compulsory school (max. eight years old). The parental benefit is reserved for cohabitating parents, for parents who are not living together but have a joint custody, for a person living with the child's parent with whom they share other children and for a person who is married to the child's parent or who is a registered partner. The parental benefit is based on three different compensations levels. For the first 390 days, including the parental quota days, (1) the benefit is based on sickness benefit–qualifying income, which is based on an annual employment income—this is usually 12 times the monthly salary. The benefit is 80% of the sickness benefit with a ceiling amount set at ten times the basic amount, which means that the maximum parental benefit per day is 935 SEK (around 28,050 SEK/3100 EUR per month; the average salary in 2012 was 29,800 SEK/3200 EUR).[6] Parents who have little or no income receive the benefit for this 390 days (2) on the basic level, which is now 225 SEK per day (around 6750 SEK/760 EUR per month). The third compensation level, called the minimum level, lasts for 90 days and is set for 180 SEK per day (5400 SEK/610 EUR per month).

The parental benefit system is very flexible; parents can use full parental benefit if they are not working at all, but they can also combine the parental leave with their part-time job (accordingly they can have 3/4 parental benefit and work 1/4 of normal working hours, 1/2 parental benefit and work 1/2 of working hours, 1/4 parental benefit and work 3/4 of working hours or 1/8 parental benefit and work 7/8 of working hours). Until the child reaches one year of age, both parents can use the so-called double days and stay together at home for the maximum period of 30 days. The double days can be taken only from the shared days and not from the days that are reserved for each parent. Such regulation was created to enable fathers to use their parental days while the mother is also at home. In addition to the parental leave, parents can also receive the equality bonus for sharing equally 270 leave days on the sickness benefit level (not including the reserved days). For every day shared equally,

[6] The amounts of all compensations levels mentioned here were set in 2012. Since the 1970s, they are regularly increased accordingly to growing salaries.

each parent receives 50 SEK, which means that the maximum they can get is 27,000 SEK (3000 EUR). Based on the agreement with the labour unions, some employers, from both the public and private sectors, pay a parental benefit supplement to cover the financial loss connected with taking the leave. The supplement levels vary depending on the agreement, sector and company, but it is usually 10% of the salary. The best conditions are mostly provided by public institutions, such as the governmental sector (for detailed information, see Sjögren Lindquist and Wadensjö Gabriella 2006). A father or the other parent of a child is also entitled to 10 days of temporary parental benefit in the case of a birth or an adoption. It can be taken until the child is 60 days old and can be used concurrently with the mother's leave-taking. The compensation level of this benefit is 80% of the sickness benefit. Child allowance is an additional financial support for all parents who live in Sweden and have children in Sweden. It is 1050 SEK/120 EUR per month per child; it is tax-free and is paid until the child is 16 years old.

As mentioned above, apart from the generous parental leave system, Swedish parents have access to public day care institutions. All municipalities are obliged to provide a place in preschool to children aged 1–5 for at least 15 hours per week. Parents, regardless of their financial situation and employment, have a right to get a place in a day-care institution. Additionally, parents who stay at home can attend so-called open preschools, which are for children not registered with a regular preschool. In open preschools a child must be accompanied by a parent or another adult.

4.3 Re-familialisation and Re-traditionalisation Processes—The Polish Family Policy Systems After 1989

4.3.1 The Communist Legacy and Polish Family Policy

In researching the Polish family policy system, it is important to take into consideration the impact communism has had on the shaping of this system. In a series of articles by Steven Saxonberg and his colleagues

(Saxonberg and Sirovátka 2006a, b; 2007; Saxonberg and Szelewa 2007; Saxonberg 2013), it is underlined that in most post-communist European states, we can observe the process of re-familialisation and a return to more conservative policies. In fact, during the fall of communism, the Central and Eastern European families and women were in a peculiar situation. On the one hand, the communist states were characterised by one of the highest percentages of women's participation in the labour market—most women were economically active, but on the other hand, since there was a lack of discussion about men's participation in the domestic sphere, women were overwhelmed with a double work burden. As Saxonberg and Sirovátka note:

> Since virtually all women worked during the communist era and since a well-developed system of childcare existed, one could imagine that the post-communist regimes would follow the Swedish path of taking measures to encourage men to share in raising children, which would make it much easier for women to pursue careers and balance family and work. (2006b, 186)

On the contrary, the post-communist countries chose another path that reintroduced the traditional family model that coerced women into withdrawing from the labour market, segregating them in the domestic sphere to take care of children and homes. Saxonberg distinguishes two ways in which this change took place. Some countries supported the traditional model explicitly by introducing the conservative family policy; in other countries, the re-familialisation was implicitly adopted with the market-liberal policy. Poland is an example of the second case. It is important to outline the impact the communist legacy has had on the Polish family policy, especially the parental leave scheme and access to day care institutions; on women's social situation in Poland, on the changes that have taken place in the family policy system over the last 15 years, and on the planning and implementation of this system by consecutive governments.

The Polish parental leave system is described in the Labour Code introduced in 1974. Since 1974, after multiple amendments, it has been in force. In 1989 every working woman had a right to fully paid maternity leave that lasted 16 weeks in the case of the first child, 18 weeks in the

case of each subsequent child or 26 weeks in the case of a multiple birth. Additionally, the mother had a right to three years of extended parental leave, called "the leave for raising up children." The benefit connected to this leave was means tested, and to receive it, the mother could not earn more than 20% of the average wage, so for most individuals, this leave was unpaid. The maternity leave and the extended parental leave might be seen as a base of the parental leave scheme in Poland. Until 2013 the system remained fairly unchanged. In 2000–2001, the maternity leave was extended to 26 weeks in the case of one child and 39 weeks in the case of a multiple birth, but after one year, the social democratic government decided that Poland could not afford such a generous system and the country reverted to the previous scheme of 16 and 26 weeks, accordingly. In 2006, the maternity leave was extended to 18 and 28 weeks, and in 2009, to 20 weeks, and in the case of a multiple birth, up to 37 weeks.[7] This system should be characterised as highly genderising since it focuses exclusively on mothers, who are seen as the main recipients of the parental leave policy.

Yet the situation has been gradually changing and men as fathers have started to slowly be included in the system, although it must be noted that the reasons for this inclusion were not followed by a shift to the degenderising policy approach. In 1996, in connection with the European Union (EU) accession process, Poland was forced to open the extended parental leave for fathers. But in the case of two working parents, the right was limited only to one parent and, as Steven Saxonberg and Dorota Szelewa underline, the "officials did not expect any men to actually take part in this leave" (2007, 364). The change in law was not accompanied by a social discussion about men's role in the domestic sphere and family life; what is more, nobody was really interested in how many men actually use this right, and until today, it is practically impossible to get official statistics on men's use of extended parental leave. Only in 2004 did the extended parental leave become a right of both parents, who also gained the right to use the leave at the same time for a maximum period of three months. In fact, since the leave is unpaid or paid at a low level, it

[7] Thirty-one weeks in the case of twins, 33 in the case of three children, 35 in the case of four and 37 in the case of five and more.

is practically impossible for both parents to use it at the same time. What is more, since most middle-class families live on two wages, it is financially difficult for both men and women to use this leave. Therefore, these changes should be seen more as a result of the EU recommendations than as a reflection of changing gender roles. Similarly, another change in the law introduced in 2013 followed this path—one month of the 36-month leave was reserved for each parent (something like the *daddy quota* in the Scandinavian countries). Apart from making the extended leave gender neutral, in 2002, Polish fathers gained the right to use two weeks of maternity leave after the mother used her obligatory 14 weeks. Additionally, in 2010, a new paternal leave scheme was introduced. This type of leave is reserved only for men and cannot be used by mothers. In 2010 and 2011, it lasted for one week, and in 2012, it was prolonged to two weeks. This fully paid leave can be used until a child is 12 months old. As mentioned above, such short paternal leave can be regarded as explicitly genderising since it perceives the father's role as primarily that of an additional parent or the mother's helper.[8]

Aside from the parental leave system, the key element of the family policy system is the system of public day care. In Poland, there are two kinds of childcare institutions, with each under the control of a different ministry. Such institutional arrangements are not unique to Poland, but are characteristic of most post-communist countries that inherited their current system from a communist system (see Saxonberg et al. 2012; Saxonberg and Maříková 2012; Saxonberg and Sirovátka 2007). Nursery schools exist for children aged 0–3 and kindergartens for children aged 3–6. This division of early childcare into nurseries and kindergartens has its origins in the nineteenth century, during which time the concept of the publicly financed day care institution was implemented in most European countries. In the Austro-Hungarian Empire, these institutions were free and open for long hours to allow mothers to work. But the main role of kindergarten was connected to the nationalist project of reinforcing the role of vernacular languages—children were taught in the local languages (Czech, Polish, Hungarian, Slovak or Slovenian). Due to

[8] In 2013, additional, sometimes seen as formally *degenderising*, changes to the parental leave scheme were introduced, but I will come back to this issue later in this chapter.

their primarily educational role, it was justifiable that they were dedicated to older children. The age limit was set at three years since by this age a child can usually speak. Saxonberg claims that, thanks to their nationalist character, the kindergartens did not lose prestige and popularity during the communist times, in contrast to nurseries. As Steven Saxonberg and Hana Maříková (2012) underline, the loss of popularity of the nurseries happened later in the twentieth century and was connected to Joseph Stalin's decision to close the ministries of social welfare. Consequently, the nurseries were moved under the control of the Ministry of Health and became perceived as healthcare institutions. It might be surprising that the Ministry of Education did not overtake this responsibility, but as Saxonberg notes:

> Since policy goals concerned women rather than children, the communist officials were not very concerned about the pedagogical standards of nurseries. Instead, they saw the main purpose of nurseries as being to keep young children healthy so that mothers could work. If the children became sick, then mothers had to miss work to stay at home with their children. (Saxonberg 2011, 61)

Consequently, children were under the care of nurses, rather than pedagogically and psychologically educated teachers. What is more, to make nurseries more "productive" and less expensive, groups of children were systematically enlarged, a process that paradoxically created conditions in which sicknesses spread more easily.

In the 1970s women were not as needed in the labour market as they had been in the period of post-war restoration. To cheaply and efficiently solve the problem of the high rate of illness among children, in 1980s, the communist governments introduced a three-year maternity leave and advanced the myth that it is better for children to stay at home with their mothers for the first three years of life. Since nurseries did not have a high reputation, were overcrowded and did not provide proper care, it was easy to convince parents, especially mothers, to use the long maternity leave and to withdraw from the labour market (Kubisa 2011; Saxonberg and Maříková 2012; Saxonberg 2011). The conviction that a child should stay with the mother at home for the first three years (called by Saxonberg

and his colleagues as *the myth of threeness*) is still strong in many Central and Eastern European countries and the division between nurseries and kindergartens is still binding (although among most EU members, there is no such differentiation). The situation in Poland is grounded in these historical circumstances and is reinforced by the negative association between the advancement of women's emancipation through their participation in the labour market and the communist ideology.[9] What is more, this emancipation project did not take into consideration men and their participation in the domestic sphere, a consequence that very often led to women carrying a double burden of paid and unpaid work.

As of 2013, nurseries and kindergartens are still under the control of different ministries. The Ministry of National Education is responsible for the kindergartens, whereas in 2011, the responsibility for the nursery schools was transferred from the Ministry of Health to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. Therefore, it is difficult to talk about one coherent approach to the public day care system. The functioning of nurseries and kindergartens is described in different acts and there is no one political programme or analysis in which both of these institutions are included.

Generally, after the fall of communism in 1989, the number of day care institutions dropped dramatically. There are several reasons for this. First, during the process of decentralisation, the obligation of organising, running and financing of these institutions was transferred from state to local governments (*samorządy*); the local governments did not have enough financial resources to deal with these new responsibilities. Second, after 1989, many employers and enterprises resigned from running the nurseries and kindergartens for their employees; some of these institutions were liquidated, others were privatised. As a consequence of these changes, day care institutions became more expensive and often only parents with higher incomes had access to them. For the last two decades, there has not been enough places in day care institutions, especially in the nurseries, for every child. According to governmental statis-

[9] Such attitude was also characteristic of the first years after the post-communist transformation. Elisabeth Dunn describes how Polish working-class women see the domestic sphere and family life as the main area in which they realise themselves and participations in the labour market as a necessity (Dunn 2004).

tics in 2012, only 4.5% of children aged 0–3 and 69.7% of those aged 3–5 were enrolled in any kind of day care.[10] The situation is even worse in small cities and villages. Only at the beginning of 2010s did the Polish government direct its attention to this issue as it realised that the low enrolments were related to very low total fertility rates (in 2012, 1.29), a consequence of a rapidly ageing society. As a result, several reforms were introduced. First, in 2011, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy took over the responsibility for the nurseries from the Ministry of Health. The aim of this change was to stop treating the nurseries as health institutions and to reduce the sanitary requirements that very often impeded them from running successfully. Consequently, day care institutions for children under three years of age became an important issue for the Department of Family Policy. In a new law introduced in 2011,[11] the government focused on different kinds of child care, with the aim of supporting parents, especially women, in their procreative decisions and in child-raising, as well as in the process of reconciling work with family life (Rada Ministrów 2013). The most important task now is to increase the number of spots in day care institutions. Second, in 2013, a new law regulating the financing of kindergartens passed. Its aim is to financially support parents who send their children to preschools. Additionally, the government agreed to regularly increase the number of spots in kindergartens so that, by 2015, every four-year-old child can be enrolled in a day care institution, and by 2017, every three-year-old child.[12]

In addition to the parental leave system and the day care system, the Polish family policy focuses on providing financial assistance, especially to the poorest families. In 2013, in the Polish law, there are three types of family benefits. (1) Family allowance (*zasiłek rodzinny*): this is an allowance for the poorest families in which the monthly expenditure for one person in a household is less than 539 PLN/130 EUR (the average monthly expenditure for one person in a household in 2012 was 1050.78 PLN/250 EUR). The level of allowance is 77 PLN/18 EUR per month

[10] The official Polish governmental statistics are available at http://strateg.stat.gov.pl/Home/Strateg.

[11] Act: Ustawa z dnia 4-02-2011 r. o opiece nad dziećmi w wieku do lat 3 (Dz. U. Nr 45, poz. 235, z późn. zm.).

[12] Act: Ustawa z dnia 13 czerwca 2013 r. o zmianie ustawy o systemie oświaty oraz niektórych innych (Dz. U. Nr 827).

for a child under the age of 5, 106 PLN/25 EUR for a child aged 5–18 and 115 PLN/27 EUR for a child up to the age of 24 if she or he is still studying. (2) The second family benefit is the *baby bonus* (*becikowe*): this allowance was introduced in 2010 as a mechanism to encourage people to have children. The baby bonus is a one-time allowance at the level of 1000 PLN/240 EUR per child. Initially, every parent had a right to the baby bonus, but as of January 2013, it is available only to families in which the net expenditure for one person in the household is less than 1922 PLN/460 EUR. (3) The third type of family benefit is limited to families that include a disabled person. The level of benefit differs depending on a particular family's financial situation. Aside from family benefits, parents have a right to a tax reduction for raising a child (until she or he is 18 years old, or if the child is studying, 25 years old). The tax reduction is progressive; it means that parents who have more than one child can have a higher tax reduction. The level of reduction per year is 1112.04 PLN/265 EUR for the first and second child, 1668.12 PLN/400 EUR for the third child and 2224.08 PLN/530 EUR for each subsequent child. Only parents with one child and with earnings higher than 56,000 PLN/13,400 EUR per year have no right to tax reduction.[13]

4.3.2 The Parental Leave Reform in 2013

The increased focus on day care institutions illustrates a change in thinking about parenthood in Poland on the level of family policy. If the first 20 years after the transformation are characterised by re-traditionalisation and re-familialisation processes, which might be seen as a result of neglect by the government in the area of family life, the issue of gender equality and demographic problems are connected to low total fertility rates or to an ageing society. The second decade of the twenty-first century was characterised by a shift in thinking about this issue. One example of this shift

[13] In 2016 the new conservative government introduced the Programme 500 Plus, which provides a monthly child allowance of 500 PLN for the second and each subsequent child. The aim of the programme is to enhance Polish parents to have more than one child. The programme might be seen as an instrument fighting low fertility rates. Yet, since the programme is fairly new, it is difficult to assess its impact now.

is the government's increased focus on day care institutions, which are regarded as important mechanisms for increasing women's participation in the labour market and for encouraging Poles to have more children. Yet this change can also be seen as a shift in Polish politicians' thinking about gender equality or family life, but as a response to the EU that, based on the document "Europe 2020. A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth," obliged Poland to improve access to public day care institutions for children under six and to increase the number of women participating in the labour market. Consequently, these actions should be seen as ones that aim at achieving gender equality in the public sphere rather than ones that would help to change the traditional model of family within the domestic sphere. However, the Polish government decided to reform the parental leave system and give men the opportunity to be more engaged at the beginning in taking care of their children.

In 2013, according to new changes in the Labour Code, parents gained the right to an additional 26 weeks of gender-neutral parental leave. Since the government did not want to make big changes in the prevailing legal order, the parental leave was introduced as a completely new kind of leave that is in addition to the maternity leave, paternity leave and extended leave for raising children. The new parental leave is based on the same rules as the maternity leave and can be used directly after the maternity leave has been used. Consequently, parents whose children were born after 1 January 2013 have a right to:

- Twenty weeks of maternity leave; the mother is obliged to use 14 weeks of this leave, the remaining 6 weeks she can transfer to father of her child;
- Six weeks of additional maternity leave that can be used directly after the maternity leave is used and which can be transferred to the father;
- Twenty-six weeks of gender-neutral parental leave that can be taken after using all weeks of both maternity leaves;
- Two weeks of paternity leave that can be taken only by the father and cannot be transferred to the mother. It should be taken during the first 12 months of the child's life;
- Thirty-six months of extended parental leave available to both parents until the child is four years old.

The compensation level of the maternity and parental leaves differs depending on how many leave weeks parents want to use. If parents decide to use 26 weeks of maternity leave, they receive the benefit at the level of 100% of the salary of the parent who stays home. If they decide later to stay on the leave for a longer period, they receive only 60% of the salary. If parents decide from the very beginning that they want to use all 52 weeks of maternity and parental leaves, they receive the benefit at the level of 80% of the stay-at-home parent's salary for the whole period. With regard to the paternity leave, the father receives 100% of his salary. There is no ceiling on any of these leaves. The extended parental leave is means tested and only the poorest parents receive the low benefit (if the expenditure for one person in a household is not higher than 539 PLN/130 EURO, then the parent on leave can get 400 PLN/100 EURO).

The parental leave reform was introduced with big hopes; it was thought that it would greatly impact the procreative decision-making of young Poles, and it was very often characterised as an adoption of the Swedish model (because of 52 weeks, i.e., 12 months of paid parental leave). The reform was seen as one of the crucial instruments in fighting Poland's extremely low fertility rate. The government also expected fathers to use more of the parental leave, although it was not eager to introduce the *daddy quota*. Feminist activists, academics as well as politicians, with the support of the Swedish ambassador in Poland, Staffan Herrström, tried to persuade the government to use the quota, underlining that without it, the new leave would actually prolong the period of staying at home for women and, consequently, would reinforce gender inequality in the labour market. They also argued that the quota would be a useful tool in changing men's attitudes towards parental and domestic obligations. But the parliament, together with the Minister of Labour and Social Policy Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz and the president Bronisław Komorowski, agreed that it would be better if the decision on how to share the leave was left up to parents since they should have a right to *choose*.[14] The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy was also criticised for making the

[14] The category of *choice* was extensively used in politicians' explanations. I will come back to this issue and its gender dimension in next chapters.

parental leave scheme highly complicated. In fact, it would be easier to change the maternity leave directly into gender-neutral leave, as was done in Sweden, and prolong it to 52 weeks. But the government did not want to be accused of taking away a mother's right to maternity leave and preferred to present reform as a gift for both parents in the form of additional weeks of parental leave.

It must be noted that since the parental leave reform was introduced in June 2013, the interviewed fathers and mothers could not get the opportunity to use the new leave (I finished the interviews in April 2013).

4.3.3 Summary: Characteristics of the Polish Family Policy

In summarising the Polish family policy system, we can distinguish at least four primary characteristics. First of all, the current system is grounded in the communist family policy, which was based on a few months of fully paid maternity leave, extended maternity leave with the low benefit and public child care system available for children over three years of age. This system was fully directed at mothers, who were seen as its main recipients. What is more, the system's aim was to help women to reconcile work with family life. It did not include men and their participation in the domestic sphere. Second, after 1989, all introduced reforms were liberal and market oriented. As Saxonberg and Szelewa (2007) note, the Polish family policy came closer to the Anglo-Saxon model, in which the market should solve all family problems and benefits are means tested and reserved only for the poorest families. But because of the limited budget, the benefits remained at the low level. Also the negligence of nurseries and kindergartens can be explained with this liberal approach and conviction that, in the liberal market, childcare institutions would appear as private companies. Third, the communist legacy and the liberal approach after 1989 created a system that is implicitly genderising, using Saxonberg's terms (2013), and the issue of gender equality and the necessity of including men in the domestic sphere have never been seen as the priority. A serious and profound debate on changing gender roles and on gender equality is still missing at the political level. Family

life is still recognised as a private issue between individuals in which the state should not interfere overly much. The fourth characteristic important here is connected to the EU and its requirement of the member states. As previously mentioned, Polish changes in family law were often connected to recommendations made by the EU; the implementation of these changes were not always preceded by a deeper discussion about the whole family system.

In fact, the lack of a coherent and long-term programme perfectly characterises the Polish family policy system. In the document published by the Prime Minister's Office "Poland 2030. Development strategies" ("Raport Polska 2030. Wyzwania rozwojowe" 2009), there is an attempt to describe Poland's developmental strategies. The chapter devoted to the demographic crisis deals with the issue of low fertility rates, ageing society, migration, and changes within family life and in the labour market. There is also a good description of how the ageing society is a threat to current social security systems, but there is no concrete or adequate recommendations on what should be done in response to this issue. The only clear recommendation is to eliminate the retirement privileges that allow for early retirement in some professions and to increase the retirement age for men and women. In the summary section of the report, the issue of low fertility rates is not addressed; there is also no exploration of the issues connected to work–life balance and gender equality within the domestic sphere. The lack of a coherent and long-term strategy is characteristic not only of the family policy system, but of the entire public policy (see Zybała 2012). With regard to the family policy system, the problems lie also in the fact that there are now two different ministries responsible for the family issue—the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, which is responsible for the parental leave system, family benefits and nurseries; and the Ministry of National Education, which oversees the functioning of kindergartens. Additionally, the tax reduction for parents, set according to the government budget, is delineated and controlled by the Ministry of Finance, and until 2011, nurseries were under the control of the Ministry of Health. These institutional arrangements certainly make it more difficult to develop one coherent family policy.

Prior to 2014 there was no discussion on gender in Polish political debates, especially within the family policy debate. Despite this, as part

of the EU's gender mainstreaming policy, Nadja Bergmann, Elli Scambor and Katarzyna Wojnicka classify Poland with a group of countries in the first phase of gender mainstreaming implementation. This group consists mainly of new member states that:

> have started to implement gender mainstreaming in strict relation to EU equal treatment directives and have little infrastructure for the implementation of gender mainstreaming. The integration of gender equality issue within national policies is mainly associated with membership in the EU. (2014, 71)

This is likely the reason why most mechanisms that might be characterised as de-genderising had either no impact (as the *daddy quota* in the extended parental leave) or had an implicitly genderising effect. For instance, the policy granting two weeks of paternity leave, often presented as a mechanism for engaging men in the caretaking of children, defines fathers as the mother's helper rather than as one of two primary carers. The introduction of paid parental leave in 2013 is often seen as the extension of maternity leave, and it is predicted that, rather than encouraging men to take a long break in their career, it will likely pressure women into staying at home with children for longer periods. This can impact the behaviour of individuals and the way they define parental obligations, which is an assertion I will explore in ensuing chapters.

4.4 Comparisons of Swedish and Polish Systems

The family policy systems in Sweden and Poland are entirely different, with different histories and grounded in different cultures. The primary aim of Swedish family policy is to increase gender equality in the labour market and the domestic sphere—strong de-genderising mechanisms have been introduced to accomplish this goal. This approach has a 40-year-long tradition. Therefore, the shift from the exclusive mothering discourse to the shared parenting discourse, currently dominant in Sweden, should be seen as a long process reinforced by a great effort to actually change

people's attitudes towards parenthood and gendered parental roles. In contrast, in Poland, there is no such tradition. The framework of gender equality, especially applied to the domestic sphere, is not a commonly used framework for Polish politicians and most of Polish society. All equalising mechanisms should be seen as a consequence of requirements made by the EU's than as a deep societal commitment to this issue. As a result, the contemporary political discourse on parenthood in Poland advances the traditional model of family, in which the mother occupies the traditional role as the primary and irreplaceable carer for her children. It must be noted that, in Poland, motherhood is an experience accorded great respect (see Korolczuk and Hryciuk 2012a; Korolczuk 2010a and 2010b), and perhaps this is one of the reasons why it is so difficult for the culture to shift to the shared parenting discourse in public and political debates. In summarising this chapter, I show what Swedish and Polish societies look like and how they function within the systems presented above. In Table 4.1, a comparison between Swedish and Polish parental leave systems is presented. Since my Polish interviews were conducted in 2012, I decided to show how the Polish system was constructed before and after introducing the last reform.

As many studies show, family policy has a large impact on the procreative decisions that people make, as well as on parenting choices and decisions about how to organise everyday family life. The differences between Poland and Sweden in regards to family life and gender equality are significant. The most important issue is the total fertility rate (TFR), which is an indicator of the average number of children born to a woman during her lifetime. In most industrialised countries the replacement fertility rate is 2.1; this is the number of live births per woman required to keep the population size constant. Throughout the twentieth century in Europe, the TFR has been decreasing. In 2014 the TFR was not higher than 2.1 in any of the EU member states. According to the statistics from the World Bank, the TFR for Europe and Central Asia dropped from 3.59 in 1960 to 1.7 in 2014. Although on the large scale the TFR decrease is evident, the situation in different European countries varies. In Poland, the TFR has been systematically decreasing since the 1960s, and at the beginning of 2000s, it stabilised at the level of 1.2–1.35, a number that is extremely low in comparison with other countries. In

Table 4.1 Parental leave systems in Sweden and Poland

	Sweden in 2013	Poland till December 2012	Poland since January 2013
Types of parental leave/length/ the level of benefit	Parental leave: 480 days Benefit: for 390 days: 80% of sickness benefit (min. 225 SEK per day, max. 935 SEK per day); for 90 days: 180 SEK per day	Maternity leave (14 weeks only for mothers): 20 weeks/140 days Benefit: 100% of salary Additional maternity leave: 6 weeks/42 days Benefit: 100% of salary Paternity leave (only for fathers): 2 weeks/14 days Benefit: 100% of salary Extended parental leave: 36 months Means-tested benefit on low level	Maternity leave (14 weeks only for mothers): 20 weeks/140 days Benefit: 100% or 80% of salary Additional maternity leave: 6 weeks/42 days Benefit: 100% or 80% of salary Parental leave: 26 weeks/182 days Benefit: 60% or 80% of salary *Total: 52 weeks/364 days* Paternity leave (only for fathers): 2 weeks/14 days Benefit: 100% of salary extended Parental leave: 36 months Means-tested benefit on low level
Mother's days (reserved and shared)	480 days, reserved 60 days	26 weeks/182 days, obligatory 14 weeks (plus 36 months of extended leave)	52 weeks/364 days, obligatory 14 weeks (plus 36 months of extended leave)

(*continued*)

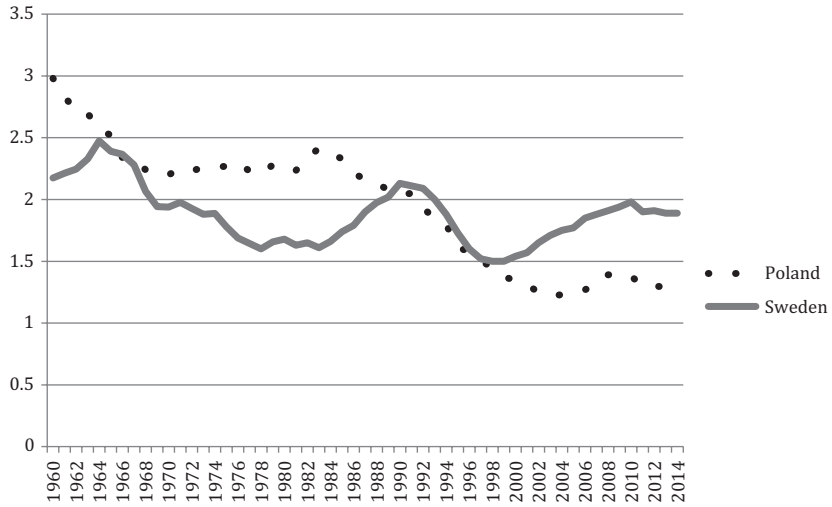
Table 4.1 (continued)

	Sweden in 2013	Poland till December 2012	Poland since January 2013
Father's days (reserved and shared)	480 days, reserved 60 days	Reserved 14 days 12 weeks/84 days of maternity leave (if a mother transfers them to a father) (plus 36 months of extended leave)	Reserved 14 days 38 weeks/266 days of maternity leave (plus 36 months of extended leave)
Child allowance	1050 SEK/120 EUR per child per month until the child is 16 years old	Means-tested family allowance for the poorest families: 539 PLN/130 EUR per month	
Other allowances	Gender equality bonus, up to 13,500/1500 EUR tax reduction	Baby bonus (*becikowe*)—1000 PLN/240 EUR	

Source: The compilation is made by the author based on legal documents

contrast, the TFR in Sweden fluctuated during the previous decades, but since 1998, when it was at its lowest (1.5), it started to increase, and in 2010, it reached 1.98 and then stabilised at 1.9 (see Graph 4.1).

The TFR differences between Sweden and Poland might be explained by the different social situations occupied by Swedish and Polish parents. Parenthood can dramatically reorganise an individual's life. When parenthood is too costly and when the state does not provide appropriate conditions for having children, young people are less eager to have children, especially more than one. In times of female participation in the labour market, these external conditions are particularly important for women. If women do not have enough support from the state and from men to help them reconcile work with family life, they are less eager to have children. One of the consequences of women's participation in the labour market and a symptom of changing attitudes towards parenthood is an increase in the average age of women at the birth of the first child. Paradoxically, delaying the decision to have one's first child is not connected to a low TFR. In Sweden, the mean age of a woman at the birth of her first child in 2013 was 29.1, whereas in Poland, it was 26.7 (Eurostat



Graph 4.1 Total fertility rate in Sweden and Poland, 1960–2014. *Source*: The graph made by the author is based on the World Bank data

2015). Women are deciding to have children in their late twenties and early thirties. A growing number of women are deciding to have their first child after the age of 40. The increasing number of women accessing higher education and women's changing attitudes towards careers can explain the postponement of family formation. In countries where it is easier to reconcile paid work with family life, it is easier for an individual to decide to have children as this enables them to remain active in the labour market.

As shown above, the state administration can have different strategies towards parenthood and parental obligations of women and men. The family policy though is strictly connected to the labour market and gender equality issues. Again, the situation of Swedish and Polish men and women differs significantly. The first important difference is demonstrated by the rates of participation of women and men in the labour market. The percentages of women in the labour force are similar in Sweden and Poland (in 2011 women formed 47.2% of total labour force in Sweden and 45.2% in Poland). But parenthood has a large impact on employment rates, which impacts the differences in women's and men's experience. In 2013 in Poland, the employment rate for women,

aged 20–49, with children was lower than for women without children, 66.6% and 73.1%, respectively. What is more, the more the number of children, the lower the employment rate for women (1 child—71.9%, 2 children—69%, 3 children or more—58.9%). Whereas for men the situation was reversed, the employment rate for fathers was 86.8%, and for men without children, the rate was 74.5% (the highest employment rate is observed among men with two children—89.5%). In Sweden, parenthood is not connected to women's withdrawal from the labour market; in fact, the percentage of employed mothers aged 20–49 is higher (8 percentage points) than employed women without children. In comparing employed fathers and fathers without children, the difference is even higher (almost 13 percentage points).[15] Table 4.2 shows the employment rate of men and women aged 15–64 in 2015; this data indicates similar trends. In Poland, having more than one child is correlated to women's decreased participation in the labour market, whereas in Sweden, women with more than one child are often more active in the labour market than mothers without children. The situation of men in both societies is similar. Yet including in the data women over 50 shows that, in Poland, the elder generation of childless women is less active in the labour market in comparison with childless women before 49. This might suggest that having children, to some extent, forces women to engage in paid work.

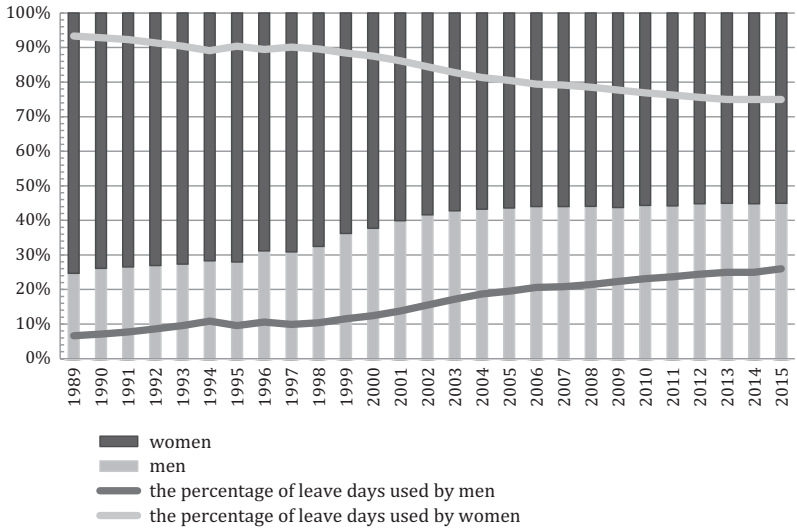
Besides labour market participation, an important characteristic of gender order is men's participation in unpaid work. According to the European Working Condition Survey conducted in 2010, there are big differences between Sweden and Poland in this area. In Sweden, men's share in caring and educating activities is 42.2% and in household activities 36.9%, whereas in Poland, it is, respectively, 29.5% and 14.3% (see "The Role of Men in Gender Equality European Strategies & Insights" 2013). Men's engagement in the private sphere is also shown in statistics on the use of parental leave. The Swedish statistical database provides detailed statistics on the use of parental leave by Swedish parents (Graph 4.2). The number of Swedish fathers using the parental leave has been systematically increasing since 1989. Though in 2010s, nine out of ten

[15] *Source*: Eurostat's Labour Force Survey 2013.

Table 4.2 Employment rate of adults aged 15–64 by sex and number of children aged less than 6 years in 2015

	Number of children	Total	Male	Female
Poland	No children	62.2	67.3	56.7
	1 child	77.2	**84.2**	**70.7**
	2 children	79.0	**89.5**	**69.2**
	3 and more	71.1	**85.0**	**58.3**
Sweden	No children	74.9	76.0	73.7
	1 child	86.1	**90.4**	**82.6**
	2 children	90.7	**94.5**	**87.2**
	3 and more	84.0	**90.3**	**78.1**

Source: The compilation made by the author is based on the Eurostat data. The bolded numbers indicate the situation of mothers and fathers.
Data available at the Eurostat Database



Graph 4.2 Parental leave in Sweden. Percentage of recipients and percentage of days used by fathers. *Source*: The graph made by the author is based on data from the Swedish Social Insurance Agency

men used some part of their parental leave, the number of days used by men and women indicates that women are still the ones taking longer breaks from the labour market in response to having a baby. In the first half of 2010s, Swedish men used only 23–25% of their parental leave days.

The situation in Poland is even more unequal. Since the gender-neutral parental leave was introduced in 2013, the statistics presented show the situation until 2012 (Table 4.3) and in 2014 (Table 4.4). What should be mentioned here is that the Polish Social Insurance Institution (Zakład Ubezpieczeń Społecznych) collects statistics only for employees of small companies that employ less than 20 people, because it provides parental benefit only to these employees. Bigger companies are obliged to provide the benefit to their employees by themselves. Thus, the statistics do not show the whole picture. In Table 4.3, information about the recipients

Table 4.3 Number of parental leave recipients in Poland till 2012

	2010	2011	2012
Number of men using the paternity leave	17,200	14,900	28,600
% of men entitled to it	–	**3.1%**	**5.4%**
Number of parents receiving the maternity benefit (including the paternity leave)	–	478,200	526,100
Women	–	363,200	360,500
%	–	76.0%	68.5%
Men	–	111,500	165,600
%	–	**23.3%**	**31.5%**
Number of parents using the extended parental leave	–	293,600	266,600
Women	–	287,000	260,800
%	–	97.8%	97.8%
Men	–	6600	5800
%	–	**2.2%**	**2.2%**

Source: The compilation made by the author is based on data from the Social Insurance Institution in Poland. The percentages of men are bolded.

Table 4.4 Number of parental leave recipient in Poland in 2014

	Maternity benefit—in total		Basic maternity benefit		Maternity benefit due to paternity leave		Maternity benefit due to parental leave	
Recipients	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	631,200	100	427,300	100	129,400	100	315,800	100
Women	471,900	**74.8**	396,000	**92.6**	X	**0**	310,600	**98.4**
Men	159,300	**25.2**	31,300	**7.4**	129,400	**100**	5200	**1.6**

Source: The compilation made by the author is based on data from the Social Insurance Institution in Poland. The percentages of parents are bolded.

of different types of parental leave is provided for 2010–2012. Table 4.4 shows the recipients of the benefit in 2014. Since the benefit paid on the paternity leave and the parental leave is based on the same rules as for the maternity leave, it is called maternity benefit.

The Polish statistics clearly show that mothers are still the parent primarily responsible for taking care of little children. All mothers took some part of the maternity leave and only 40% of men used some type of parental leave in 2012. What can be surprising is the low level of men using their right to paternity leave, since it cannot be transferred to a mother. Table 4.4 indicates that, in 2014, one quarter of recipients were men, yet it should be noted that most of them (81.2%) were recipients due to the use of the two-week-long paternity leave, which is only men's privilege and cannot be transferred to a mother. It should be remembered that the scope of this data is limited to parents employed in small companies, and it is likely that statistics including all employees in Poland would provide a different picture.

Finally, the last element of the family situations in both societies is the access to childcare institutions. As mentioned above, in Sweden, all children over one year of age are guaranteed a placement by a municipality in a day care. In Poland, access to nurseries and kindergartens is limited. Table 4.5 presents the statistical data of the percentage of children enrolled in childcare institutions from 2008 to 2015. In both societies, the numbers are increasing, but it is clear that, in Sweden, the access is much higher. The situation of Polish parents with children aged 0–3 is particularly difficult because only a small percentage of children are provided a placement in the nurseries (although in the last years, we can

Table 4.5 Percentage of children enrolled in day care institutions

		2008	2010	2012	2013	2014	2015
Sweden	0–3 years	73.9	75.3	77.2	77.4	75.7	75.9
	3–4 years	91.3	93.1	93.9	94.0	92.4	93.1
	3–5 years	91.9	93.6	94.1	94.2	92.6	93.4
Poland	0–3 years	2.6	2.6	4.5	7.8	9.5	10.4
	3–4 years	47.1	54.7	59.2	64.2	71.6	77.3
	3–5 years	52.7	62.6	69.7	74.1	79.4	84.2

Source: The compilation made by the author is based on data from the Swedish National Agency for Education and the Central Statistical Office of Poland

observe a big progress with regard to the number of children enrolled in day care institutions—from 2.6% to 10.4% in 2015). In Sweden, the average age of enrolment in preschool is 1.5 years; therefore, there is a big difference in the number of one- and two-year-old children attending day care institutions (accordingly in 2015, 47.6% and 87.8%). Since in Poland parents usually have to wait until a child is three years old to enrol her or him in a kindergarten, for these first three years, they have to organise care differently (by taking extended parental leave, shift work, hiring nannies, receiving help from grandparents).

4.5 Chapter Summary

Sweden and Poland provide distinctively different living conditions for their citizens with children. Their family policy systems are based on different assumptions about gender roles and family models; on different attitudes towards unpaid work, care work and domestic duties; as well as on different convictions regarding the extent to which the state should intervene in individuals' private lives and how the private sphere is connected to the broader system of gender inequality (see Giullari and Lewis 2005). Sweden has implemented a highly de-genderising policy, the main aim of which is to achieve gender equality in the labour market and the public sphere. An important role is played by the state, which is obliged to provide help to their citizens in caring activities. Swedish politicians assume that it is impossible to fight for gender equality by only decreasing the gender wage gap and by providing equal treatment for men and women in the labour market. They believe that social policies should also concentrate on the division of domestic work and look more carefully at the issue of unpaid work. They are also convinced that the organisation of family life is part of a broader social system of inequalities, and therefore, parents should not have total freedom in choosing how they want to share caring duties. Of course, Sweden also has problems with gender inequality: the gender wage gap is quite high, 15.9% in 2012, and according to the Eurostat, it is higher than in Poland—6.4% (see "Tackling the Gender Pay Gap in the European Union" 2014). It

also has one of the most gender-segregated labour markets, in which more women are concentrated in the public sector and more men in the private one ("Gender Segregation in the Labour Market. Root Causes, Implications and Policy Responses in the EU" 2009; "The Role of Men in Gender Equality European Strategies & Insights" 2013; see also Hakim 2004).

In Poland, the issue of gender equality does not receive as much attention as it does in Sweden. The Polish family policy is mother-oriented and based on the exclusive mothering discourse. Although Polish politicians likened the new family policy reforms in 2013 to the Swedish system, they decided not to implement interventionist policies within the family sphere. The prevailing family policy is still based on a system that was created during the communist era, albeit at the beginning of 1990s it became more market oriented and the issue of childcare institutions was neglected. All reforms of the public day care system were introduced in response to the EU requirements and justified by the decreasing fertility rate and the problem of an ageing society; there was, and still is, a lack of discussion about the value of care and domestic work. To solve the problem of not enough places in day care institutions for children, the Polish government has introduced reforms leading to greater privatisations of this sector (see Korolczuk and Hryciuk 2012b; Kubisa 2011). As a consequence of all these developments, the system does not challenge the traditional gender order and should be characterised as implicitly genderising.

The design of the family policy system should have a great impact on how individuals organise their everyday life. To observe this impact, it is useful to look at two systems with different approaches to parenthood and gender roles. In the next chapters, I show how Swedish and Polish fathers define their parental obligations, how they engage in fathering on the practical level, how they manage to reconcile work with family life and how fatherhood is connected to the masculinities models, motherhood and the issue of gender equality. My aim is to demonstrate differences and similarities and, through a comparative analysis, to explain the role of institutional context in constructing parenting behaviours in contemporary Western societies.

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5

"It's My Responsibility …": Definitions of Fatherhood

5.1 Introduction

In this book I concentrate on the perspective of interviewed parents, especially fathers. I assume that individuals first interpret a situation they find themselves in and then behave in accordance with these interpretations (Harris 2010; Wagner 2011, 41). According to the constructivist approach, the interpretations of social situations are grounded in a broader societal and cultural context. Therefore, the analysis starts with outlining the ways in which Swedish and Polish parents define fatherhood; that is, their interpretations of family life situations and gendered parental roles are presented and sociologically analysed. Chapter 6 shows these interpretations are embedded in the external social context of parenting and how this context affects their interpretations. Finally, in Chap. 7, the focus is put on parenting practices that derive, to some extent, from a person's interpretation of their life situation.

The institution of family is highly gendered and is based on different role expectations for women and men; the ways in which men and women engage in parenting are connected to the prevailing gender order, an order based on gender differences, and socially acceptable models of

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family life (Kimmel 2011). The interviewees refer to these models and gender differences when talking about their experience of parenting. Their experiences vary depending on individual life positions and the institutional contexts within which they function. I concentrate on the most common themes and attitudes that emerge from the interviews. It would be impossible to present every interviewee's experience in detail. I start with a reference to the continuum of the traditional model of fatherhood and the new model, involved fatherhood (Dowd 2000; Ruddick 1990). Then, since fatherhood is always defined in the context of motherhood, I proceed to an examination of the differences between male and female parenting, and finally, I concentrate on the links between the models of fatherhood and the masculinity models.

5.2 Men as Breadwinners and Men as Involved Fathers

5.2.1 Breadwinning and Care Work

A parental role is often perceived as one of the most responsible roles in which an individual might engage over the course of a lifetime. In the interviews parenthood responsibility was brought up by both Swedish and Polish fathers. This responsibility involves providing a child the adequate conditions to thrive and survive for the first years of life, but it is also associated with the obligation to raise a good and honest individual who can cope with life in the future:

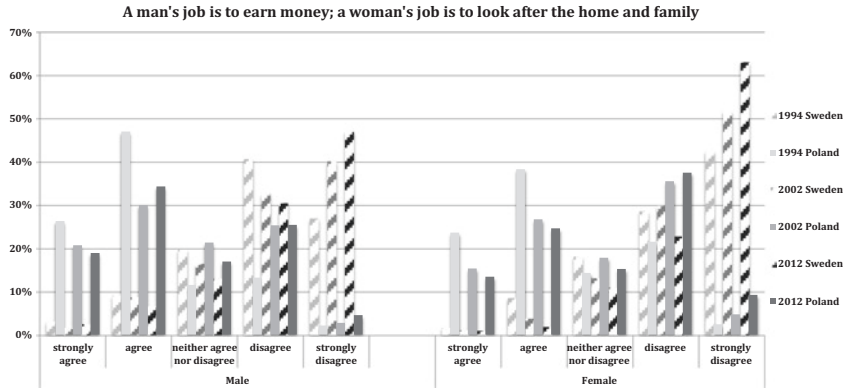
> I am responsible for making sure that this little one survives until he can survive on his own. Try to form him into a good human being. I guess that is a base of it. I create the poor thing, so I have some kind of responsibility to him.
>
> (Sweden, Rickard, 31 years old, 12-month-old child)

> As a father I have full responsibility, or at least great responsibility not full … for the people who live here, for my wife and most of all for my child. Anyway the order doesn't matter; I treat my wife, my kid and me as a unit, we are one unit.
>
> (Poland, Dawid, 41 years old, 2-year-old child)

Although both fathers talk about parental responsibility, there are subtle differences in their approaches to the paternity role. These differences are connected to a particular gender order. The Swedish father talks about his responsibility to take care of his child, whereas the Polish father underlines his responsibility to the whole family, including his additional responsibility to his wife.[1] He presents himself as a guard. Contemporary fathering in Sweden and Poland is grounded in the traditional male breadwinning model, in which the role of father is defined in terms of a strong figure and is closely related to the father's activity in the labour market and his responsibility to financially provide for the family. Although the situation is changing due to women's engagement in paid work and the transformation in traditional male and female roles within the family, there is still a tendency to refer to the traditional gender order. In the case of Swedish and Polish societies, we can observe significant differences in how the parental roles are defined.

According to data from Swedish and Polish societies gathered in the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) in the panel "Family and Changing Gender Roles" conducted in 1994, 2002 and 2012 (ISSP Research Group 1994, 2002, 2012), attitudes towards gender roles have been changing since 1994, moving in the direction of a more egalitarian model based on diminishing the differences between male and female roles within the family. Yet the attitudes of Swedes and the Poles vary significantly, as do the attitudes of men and women in both societies (see Graph 5.1). In 1994, 73% of Polish men and 62% of Polish women agreed to the statement that "a man's job is to earn money and a woman's job is to look after the home and family." In the same year, only 12% of Swedish men and 10% of Swedish women thought along these lines. In 2012, attitudes in both societies became more egalitarian: 53% of Polish men and 38% Polish women agreed with the statement, and 9% of men and 3% of women in Sweden. Two interesting findings emerge here. First, even though the change is more evident in Polish society, in 2012, the Poles think in more conservative terms than the Swedes did in 1994. What is more, they are less eager to strongly disagree with this statement

[1] Similar conclusions about Christian men were formulated by Thomas Johansson and Roger Klinth (2008).



Graph 5.1 To what extent do you agree with the statement? A men's job is to earn money; a women's job is to look after the home and family. *Source*: ISSP 2012. Prepared by the author

(only 7.1% in 2012). Second, although in both societies women more easily reject the traditional model, the Swedish men are more egalitarian than Polish women.

A similar picture emerges from the interviews with Polish and Swedish men. Their different approaches might be striking. All interviews in both societies started with the question: "how do you understand your role of father?" which initiated the interviewees' narratives about their experience. For Polish men, fatherhood is strictly connected with breadwinning and providing for the family: on the one hand, financial stability for the family, and on the other hand, security:

> If you don't have money, you have no way to provide the most basic living condition for your child. So I would say that being a good dad means … *it is all about earning money for your child*.[2]
>
> (Poland, Błażej, 31 years old, 21-month-old child)

> On the one hand, of course, men are those … who earn money. Still they statistically earn more, either they are the only ones who earn or their proportion of family income is bigger. Consequently … automatically they work a lot, *so I would say that father's obligation is to provide for the family, right?* Of course I think that this is somehow grounded in the experience of

[2] In this and following chapters all marked fragments in the quotations from interviews and from other publications are marked by me.

> previous generations, because I have friends who organise their lives conversely; the woman has a better paid job, so the man stays at home and both are super happy.
>
> (Poland, Oskar, 40 years old, 9-year-old and 6-year-old children)

Despite the fact that, in contemporary Polish society, the traditional model of the male breadwinner is gradually being replaced with the dual breadwinner model in middle-class households, most of my interviewees concentrate on their financial obligations to the family. This is particularly evident for men struggling with financial problems; in such cases their incapacity to succeed in the labour market might be a source of worry and problems, even though their partners work:

> All in all, *the father is still expected, I guess usually, to provide for his family.* And this was a little bit problematic for me when I was supposed to find myself in a father's role, because at that time my financial situation, let's say my professional life, was not bad, but for the first two years after Kasia's birth, it was unstable. Only after a while my position became more stable and I felt more comfortable. That is why … that is why this working life is so … is so important for me and for other fathers.
>
> (Poland, Janusz, 27 years old, 4-year-old child)

The same questions when posed to Swedish fathers resulted in very different answers, in which the issue of breadwinning was hardly ever raised. The Swedes concentrate more on the similarity and interchangeability of male and female parental roles. Therefore, they try to not talk about specific male obligations and do not refer to the traditional breadwinner role. What is more, the characteristic feature of Swedish men's responses is that they underline the shared responsibility of mother and father for their children that results in equal sharing of all other parental obligations:

> I am a parent together with my wife, she's a parent as well and …. I think *our job is to share the things we need to do* because of our baby and in most parts we share it equally, so there are no special things that is my job to do as a father or her job as a mother, but we do it together as parents.
>
> (Sweden, Daniel, 38 years old, 13-month-old child)

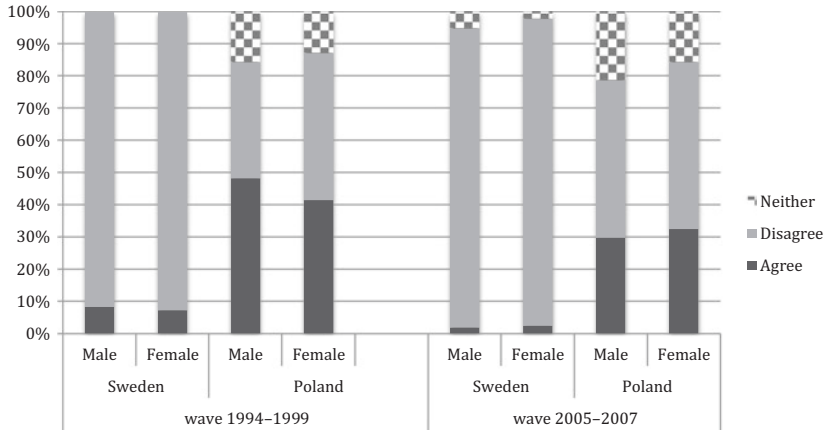
> I think … *my attitude is that we have to split responsibility* we have and we have also done that on parental leave to split the time equal between us to have such a good contact with children from the very beginning. And it is … it was natural to have … I wanted to have as much time as possible; it's good when they got good contact with both of us.
>
> (Sweden, Mattias, 42 years old, 8-year-old and 5-year-old children)

The traditional role of the breadwinner also appears in the Swedish interviews and Swedish men are also not very eager to resign from their career in the labour market because of parenthood. But they do not treat this role as a core characteristic of fatherhood. They rather tend to disagree with the assumption that financial provision is more important for men than for women and they tend to treat it as an obstacle to their greater involvement in their children's life:

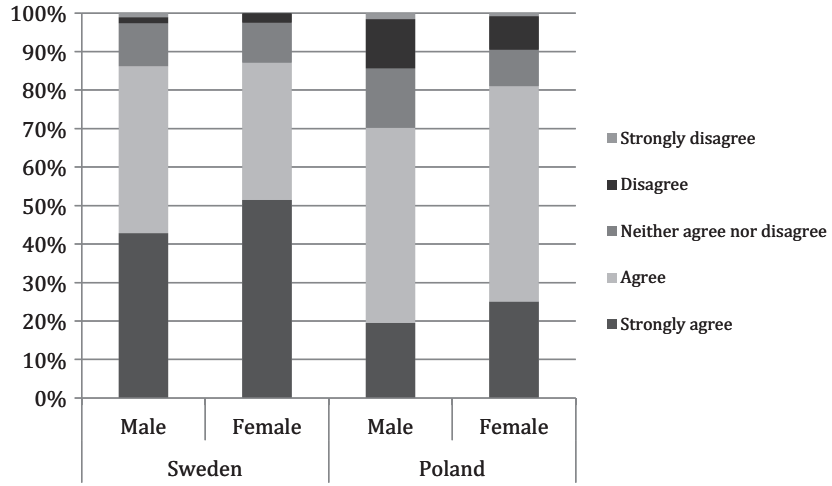
> The thing is that *we're kind of stuck in a society* with men usually earn more than women. So for us if I stayed at home, we'd lose so much money on that and we cannot accustom to this budget, you know […]. We discussed it several times with my wife. The only reason it is like that it is because I earn more money, which is extremely sad, because I would love to stay home more.
>
> (Sweden, Fredrik, 34 years old, 5-year-old and 8-year-old children)

These different approaches to the role of the father are grounded in a social, especially institutional, context of parenting in both societies. As previously mentioned, the gender order has been rapidly changing for the last decades. And as Graph 5.2 shows in Poland, we can also observe the changing attitude towards the traditional division between gender roles. What is interesting here is the attitude towards breadwinning as such. Although in the Polish society 45% of people agree with the assertion that a man's job is to earn money and a women's job is to look after the home and family and more that 30% believe that men have more of a right to a job than women (see Graph 5.2), they think that both men and women should contribute to the household income (see Graph 5.3). Around 80% of Polish women and 70% of Polish men agree or strongly agree with this statement.

Questions arise regarding what the reasons are for such a way of thinking and whether this fits into the traditional division of parental roles. In fact, high support of women's participation in the labour market is a result of women's emancipation movements, the achievements of which



Graph 5.2 Men should have more right to a job than women. Source: World Value Survey. Prepared by the author



Graph 5.3 Both man and woman should contribute to the household income. *Source:* ISSP 2012. Prepared by the author

cannot be undone. What is more, the support is related to the status of the contemporary labour market and the fact that, for the middle-class families, it is impossible to comfortably live on only one wage. As a result, women's participation in the labour market is generally accepted. Yet it requires, in the least, a slight redefinition of male parenthood, and consequently, a shift in men's behaviour. Therefore, in the Polish interviews, beside breadwinning, parents indicate that their obligation is to help their partners in caring and domestic duties:

> First of all, I'm obliged to support my wife, *to help* her in taking care of our daughter. She stays at home and I work, so I come back home and I try to help her. I think this is the most important.
>
> (Poland, Daniel, 27 years old, 2.5-year-old child)
>
> For me a *father should support a mother [in her parental duties - KS]* and should be the main person playing with a child. This is our case at least.
>
> (Poland, Anna, 28 years old, 12-month-old child)

From this perspective, the father is seen as an additional carer who should support the mother, who otherwise would be overwhelmed by her double burdens, rather than as a primary caregiver. So his role is to take over the care of a child after work or during the weekends to give the mother some free time. Thus, the redefinition of the fatherhood model of male breadwinning into greater father involvement still refers to the traditional division of labour/caregiving into male and female spheres. The domestic sphere and family life is seen as the female area in which men's participation is perceived as needed, but not obligatory (Dowd 2000; Korolczuk and Hryciuk 2012; Miller 2011; Titkow et al. 2004). And the other way round, men are primarily responsible for financially providing for their family, while women are welcome to help men in this duty. These situations are seen as *natural* or *normal* and, in fact, they are very common in both Swedish and Polish families, as is shown in Chap. 7. But this positioning situates men in a privileged position since the father can usually choose to what extent he wants to participate in the domestic sphere. It also forces women to be fully engaged in caring practices. Women often perceive this sphere as their responsibility and men's participation in it as a type of help that is needed and appreciated:

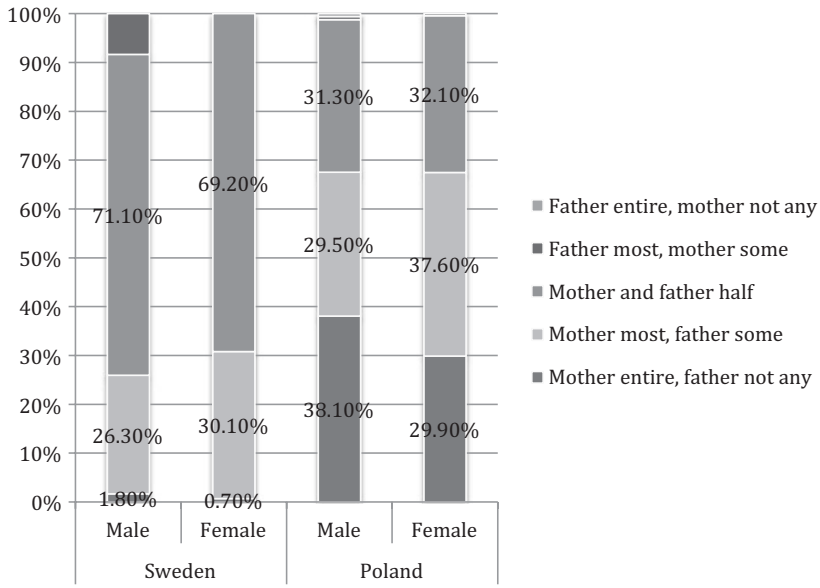
> Mother has to be all day with a child. And a dad is at work and then comes back and plays with a child. It is easier for him (…). We share the obligations; *he helps me* when it comes to bath or feeding.
>
> (Poland, Alicja, 29 years old, 14-month-old child)

5.2.2 Division of Parental Leave

The primacy of women's caregiving roles is also evident in Polish men's attitudes towards the idea of gender-neutral parental leave. Although all interviewed parents had not had the opportunity to take this leave, available also to fathers (it was introduced in January 2013), most of the parents had an opinion about the policy:

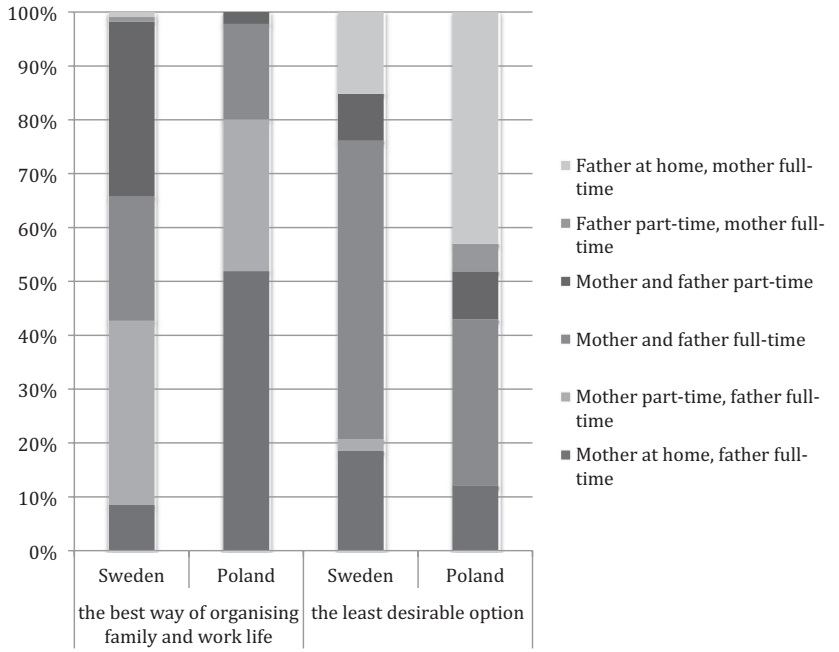
> It is a completely different situation if the father is on a parental leave to be with the mother and the child, and quite different is the situation in which we have to choose—the mother or the father. In case of such a choice the decision is easy, because the father of course can feed from a bottle or be with a child for a while, but … *the child needs the mother. And the father can take a leave only to be with the mother*, to cook for her and take care for her.
>
> (Poland, Robert, 35 years old, 5-year-old and 8-year-old children)

Data from the ISSP survey confirms that Polish society is not convinced that it is a good idea to reserve some part of parental leave for men. Graphs 5.4, 5.5, and 5.6 show the answers of Swedish and Polish parents about organising care work and paid work. In 2012 almost 33.4% of Polish fathers and mothers thought that all parental leave days should be used by a mother and 34.1% thought that a father can use some of them. In comparison, 70% of Swedish said that parents should divide parental leave equally. In Poland, we can also observe a difference between men's and women's attitudes—there are less women who claim that a mother should take the whole leave and more women declare that men should take some of it. Yet, interestingly, the support for the equal sharing of leave is similar among Polish fathers and mothers (about 30%). In this context, the opinions of Swedish fathers and mothers are more similar.



Graph 5.4 How should the parental leave be divided? *Source*: ISSP 2012. Prepared by the author

In examining the attitudes towards the parental leave system, it is important to include the age of the child. In fact, it has a major impact on how people perceive male and female obligations. Graphs 5.5 and 5.6 show opinions of fathers and mothers on the best and worst ways of organising family life with an under school-age child. It is worth noting the negative attitude towards situations in which the father stays at home and the mother works full time. Children "under school age" are children under 6 years old; these children no longer need to be breastfed and it is not necessary that the mother be their sole caregiver. Under school-age children are often enrolled in day care institutions or they are cared for by babysitters. Still almost 41% of Polish parents think that a stay-at-home father and a mother working full time is the least desirable option for organising family life; in Sweden, 10.4% of people also believe this. However, 18.6% Swedish mothers believe that the least desirable option for organising family and work life is when a mother stays at home and the father works full time; for Polish mothers, this is 10.4%, who dis-

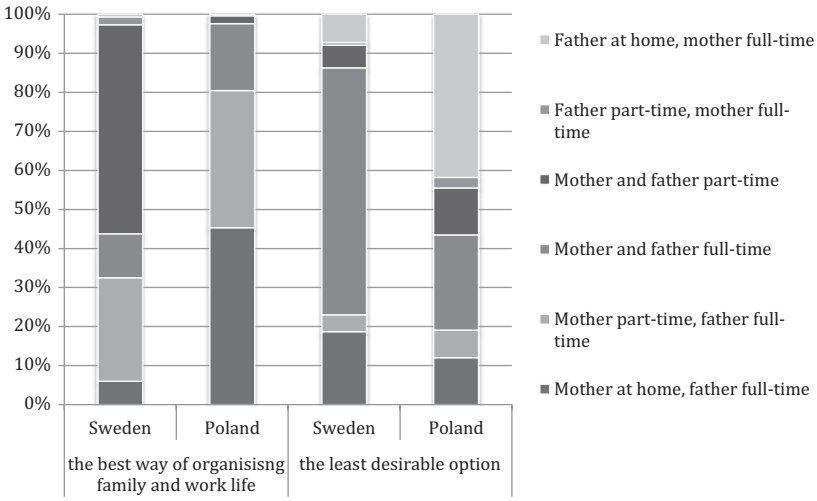


Graph 5.5 Consider a family with a child under school age. What, in your opinion, is the best way for them to organise their family and work life? Fathers' opinion. *Source*: ISSP 2012. Prepared by the author

approve of the main male-caregiver model (men are more consistent in disapproving both models, respectively 18.5% and 15.2%).

Negative attitudes towards fathers staying at home are more prevalent in Polish society. Both Polish women and men believe that the optimal choice is for a woman to resign from participation in the labour market to care for the child/children, yet it is acceptable if she works part time. The situation in Sweden is less explicit; most people believe that the optimal situation is to have both parents working part time, the second most desirable option is for the mother to work part time and the father full time.

During the interviews, Swedes showed greater support for gender-neutral parental leaves and the temporary withdrawal of fathers from the labour market. Men generally regard parental leave as a positive opportunity to establish a strong relationship with their children:



Graph 5.6 Consider a family with a child under school age. What, in your opinion, is the best way for them to organise their family and work life? Mothers' opinion. *Source*: ISSP 2012. Prepared by the author

> I think, I don't say that you need to take 50/50, but *I think that both mother and father should take relatively long time with their child, because you get to learn to know your child and the child gets to know you* … better than if you see them only during the weekend or … he's now used to being alone with me or my wife and it's not a problem for him when she goes to work, for example, he's left here with me. And if she took all parental leave and I worked all the time, then of course I would spend time with him on evenings and on weekends, but my wife would be then too, so he would not spend a lot of time alone together with me and I think that is important.
>
> (Sweden, Daniel, 38 years old, 13-year-old child)

The large support for the gender-neutral parental leave system in Sweden is explained by the institutional context—in particular, it is explained by the highly interventionist family policy that encompasses fathers. This issue is more carefully examined in the next chapter, but it is worth indicating here that there is also an observable change in some Polish men's attitudes towards the idea of gender-neutral parental leave. This is illustrated by comments made by Łukasz, who claims that men and women should have similar rights:

A: What do you think about paternal leave?
B: I think that the same leave should be for mothers and fathers. *Besides some biological differences, which are obvious like the pregnant woman should have additional leave, there is no reason why one of sexes has privileged position of having a right to parental leave.* I think there should be no maternity or paternity leaves, but just parental leave. It doesn't matter what the parent's gender is.

(Poland, Łukasz, 26 years old, 2-year-old child)

A comparison of how fatherhood is defined in Sweden and Poland indicates a strong division between the female and male spheres. The domestic sphere and family life, particularly in Polish society, is still regarded as mainly a women's area in which men should help, but an area for which men are not held primarily responsible. A father is expected to participate primarily in the labour market and in the public sphere. The realm of caregiving is reserved for women. What are the reasons for this prevailing division? The interviewee Łukasz noted the biological differences between men and women; let us examine these differences in more depth.

5.3 Fatherhood and Motherhood: Naturalisation of the Difference

5.3.1 The Reproduction of Gendered Individuals

As we analyse fatherhood, we must refer to motherhood and the cultural differences between male and female parenting. Models of fathering and mothering are part of a broader gender order that is often justified by a reference to the biological differences between men and women. What interests me here is the role that biological differences play in explaining the different assignments of male and female parental roles, and as result, the different expectations of fathers and mothers. Parenthood is often presented as one of the most natural phenomenon in a human being's life. What is more, childbearing is a necessary condition for the biological reproduction of human species. The experience of fertilisation, pregnancy, birthing or breastfeeding is closely connected to the human body.

And at this stage in parenthood, the differences between the experiences of women and men are particularly evident. Because of biological differences, women experience parenthood more intensively during the pregnancy and breastfeeding phases. How does this initial difference affect the organisation of family life and parental roles as the child gets older? Since parenthood is not only a biological phenomenon, but also culturally and socially constructed (Kimmel 2011; Thorne 1982), the assumption made here is that the biological differences between a mother and a father serve as a justification for the prevailing gender order in contemporary Western societies. A comparison of Sweden and Poland shows the significance social context plays in the way individuals understand and approach the biological dimension of parenthood.

The relation between nature and society is one of the most fundamental themes in social sciences, especially when pertaining to the issue of gender equality and family life. For many theories that refer to the natural differences between women and men, biology is a convenient justification of the social order and social processes. But the critical research on gender relations shows that the situation is more complicated. As R.W. Connell (1987) underlines, the assumption of a natural dichotomy between men and women as human beings, which is the basis for many theories, is fundamentally wrong:

> Biology, in this line of thought, establishes a certain difference between human females and males, but this is *insufficient for the complexity of social life* [emphasised by Connell]. It must be added to, build upon. Society therefore culturally elaborates the distinction between the sexes. (1987, 73)

In her argument, Connell underlines that society is unnatural since its structures cannot be derived from natural structures. But the unnaturalness does not mean that society is not connected to nature at all. In fact, society accepts its biological origin and uses the concept of *nature* as a means of explaining the prevailing social order. Although men and women, as representatives of one species, are more similar to than different from one another, society exaggerates and emphasises the differences between them. The reason for these exaggerations is that, in many cases, biological explanations do not sufficiently explain the social order; they

fall especially short in explaining the unequal balance of power between women and men in a particular society. To justify this power imbalance, in social practices, the natural dimension of social life is emphasised. A similar analysis is employed by Norbert Elias in his study of the relations between biology and society, as well as in his historical analysis of the uneven balance between sexes (see Elias 1978, 1987, 2007). As he underlines in the introduction to *Involvement and Detachment*, contemporary usage of the term "nature" refers to a particular order. Similar to the social order, the natural order is based on specified laws, but these laws, called *natural laws*, are characterised by autonomy and independence from human beings, and therefore are uncritically accepted by society (Elias 2007; see Introduction).

The process of *naturalisation* of the social order can therefore be a powerful ideological instrument in sustaining the prevailing social order and gender inequalities. Connell formulates a theory on the reproduction of gendered bodies that is based on two processes. First, in the process of negation, social categories give new meanings to the human body. These new meanings are not connected to the body's biological predispositions. The negation of the body does not necessarily mean the neglect of biology, but rather the body's deformation. In this process the similarities between different bodies are marginalised and distinct social categories, such as assignment to the gendered categories of man or woman, are imposed on individuals. This process is particularly evident in the case of children, who, as Chris Shilling notes, "have gender identities imposed on them long before they are capable of reproducing, asserting dominance over each other, or even understanding the processes involved in reproduction" (2003, 95). After the negation of similarities, the body is *transformed* through social practices. The body belongs, to some extent, to the natural order, but in social practices, it is transformed in a way so that it fits into social categories. For example, social categories that define femininity and masculinity as contrasting in terms of physical strength are reinforced by the social expectation that boys should be physically active and engaged in competitive sports, while girls are discouraged from building too much muscle and are expected to focus on the aesthetic of their bodies by dressing up or wearing make-up. Consequently, the processes of negation and

transformation work as a self-fulfilling prophecy that validates the initial social categories:

> Our conception of what is natural, and what natural differences consists of, is itself *a cultural construct*, part of our specific way of thinking about gender. Gender is (…) a practical accomplishment—something accomplished by social practice. (Connell 1987, 76)

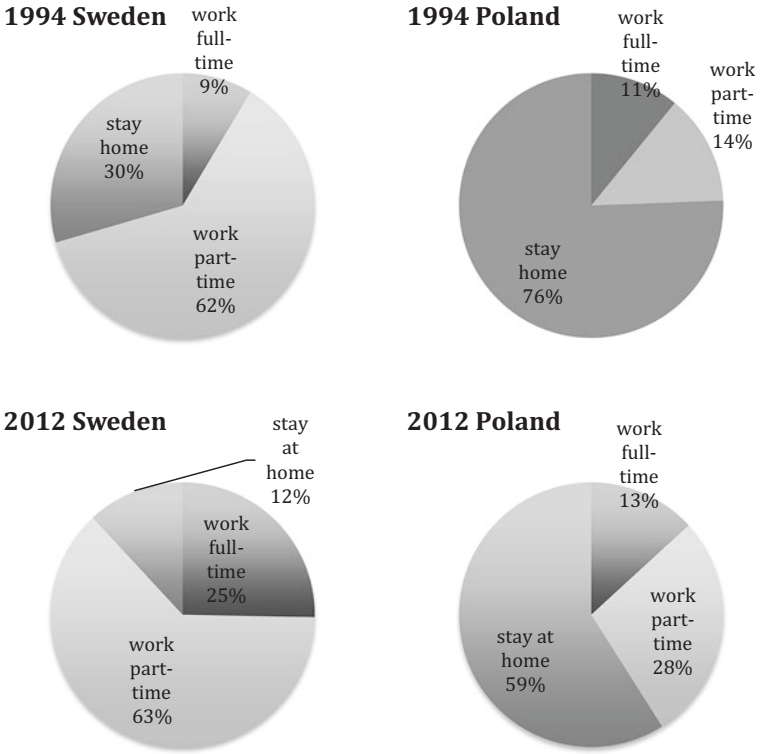
The dichotomy between male and female parental roles can be similarly analysed. The modern family is one of the most gendered contemporary institutions. The male and female roles are differently defined within family life; the question is, to what extent these differences are a result of biological differences between women and men and to what extent they are based on social categories, which through the processes of negation and transformation reproduce highly gendered parents.

5.3.2 Do Children Suffer When the Woman Has a Full-Time Job?

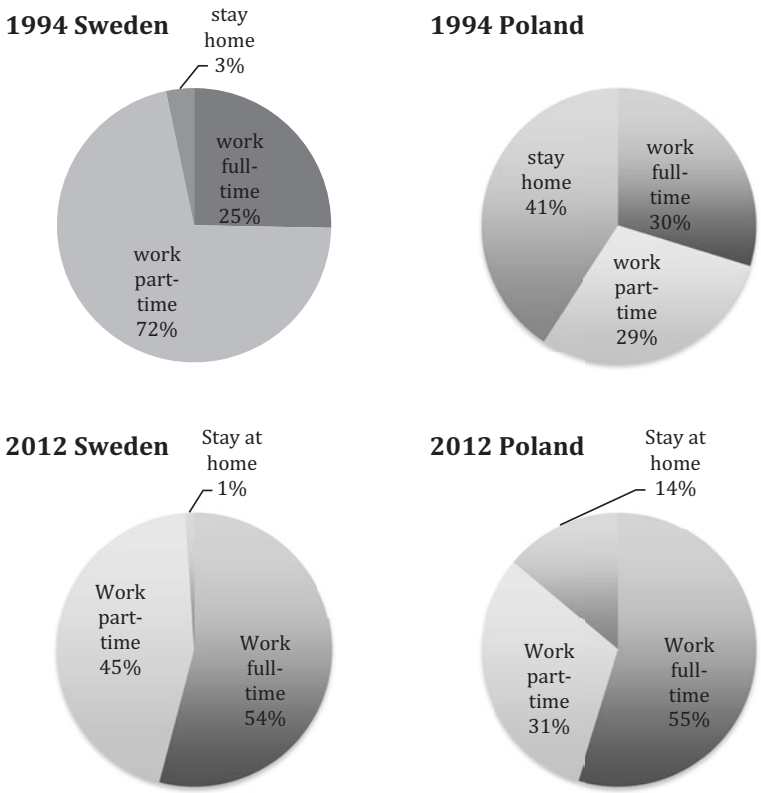
The biological differences between men and women are often mentioned in the interviews with both Swedish and Polish parents. The naturalised division between female and male parental obligations seems to be particularly important at the very beginning of the child's life. It is a common belief that, for at least the first year, the mother is a more important parent than the father. The special role of women is determined by the strong relationship with the child, which is based on a natural bond (called *a maternity instinct*) that is formed during the period of pregnancy and breastfeeding. Consequently, the woman is more attached to the domestic sphere and family life when the first child is born (see Kuhhirt 2012; Laurijssen and Glorieux 2013). Yet in analysing different societies, different approaches to the naturalised parental roles emerge.

The comparison of Swedish and Polish societies shows that the biological predispositions of women to be pregnant and to breastfeed the child do not necessarily have to require her devotion to the domestic sphere and a resignation from her career. In 1994 and 2012 in the ISSP, questions were asked about a woman's participation in the labour market in

situations when in the family (1) there is a child under school age and (2) when the youngest child starts school (ISSP Research Group 1994, 2012). These questions were not about the actual situation of the asked person, but their attitudes to this issue. Therefore, the answers demonstrate how people perceive the mother's role and her paid work. On Graphs 5.7 and 5.8, the responses of Swedes and Poles to these queries are presented. As usual, there is a great disparity between the attitudes in Swedish and Polish societies. This is particularly applicable to the first situation (child under school age), where both Polish men and women think that the mother should stay at home. Although the percentage of



Graph 5.7 Do you think that women should work outside the home when there is a child under school age? *Source*: ISSP 1994, 2002, 2012. Prepared by the author



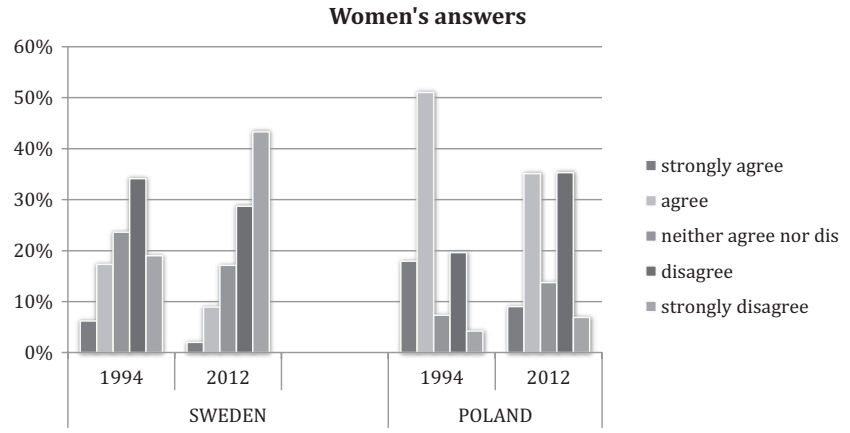
Graph 5.8 Do you think that women should work outside the home after the youngest child starts school? *Source*: ISSP 1994, 2002, 2012. Prepared by the author

people agreeing to this has dropped since 1994 from 76% to 59%, it is still much higher in comparison with Sweden, where only 12% of people thought so in 2012. It appears that Polish society expects women to resign from their careers if they choose to have children. In Sweden, there is also not strong support for women choosing to work full time and have a small child. Only 25% of Swedes expect women to work full time. More people support Swedish women working part time (63%). The expectations of women's engagement in paid work dramatically change when the child starts school. Only 1% of Swedes in 2012 believed that once a child begins school that a mother should continue to stay at home.

In the more conservative Poland, 14% of people agreed with this assessment, but it must be noted that attitudes have changed significantly since 1994 (41%).

Why is there an expectation that women should resign from their careers in order to become a parent? Insights can be gleaned by reviewing the answers to questions posed in the ISSP that concern the role of mother in family life and women's participation in the labour market. Let us focus on one of them. In the three waves of the ISSP (1994, 2002, 2012), the respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the following statement: "A preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works." Answers differ in Swedish and Polish societies. As stated previously, Graphs 5.9 and 5.10 present the results from 1994 and 2012 to show how the attitudes have changed in the last two decades. The question provides a complex illustration of the situation, both in Sweden and in Poland. In both societies, there is a growing number of people disagreeing with the statement. In Sweden, by 1994, disagreement had arisen from 48.3% to 62.9%, but there is still a great number of Swedes who think that a preschool child suffers if their mother works (15.3%). In Poland, even more people agree with this statement—almost half of the respondents (46.4%). But at the same time, there is a significant

Graph 5.9 To what extent do you agree? A preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works. Men's answers. *Source*: ISSP 2012. Prepared by the author



Graph 5.10 To what extent do you agree? A preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works. Women's answers. *Source*: ISSP 2012. Prepared by the author

change from 1994, when only 23.1% disagreed with the statement, to 2012, when the disagreement was shared by 39.4% of the respondents. Men in both societies are more eager than women to agree with the statement that children suffer when their mother is working, especially in Sweden, where 72% of women disagree or strongly disagree. Swedish men are less convinced (almost 28% have no opinion), although they rather disagree, whereas the opinion of Polish men is more differentiated.

It would be interesting to see how people would respond to a similar question posed about men. I suspect that the answers would not vary dramatically, especially in Sweden. The surveys show that perceptions regarding the special relationship between a mother and her child are very grounded in contemporary social norms, although this is changing with time. The increasing possibility of reconciling work with family life is probably the reason for these changes in attitude. The traditional thinking about the role that women should play is so strong that even the survey designers did not consider asking similar questions about men. I argue that the reason for this lies in the *naturalising* of differences between parental roles of men and women.

5.3.3 "Father Is Important for a Child Because He Is Tougher"

Parenthood is regarded as a natural phenomenon because it is strongly connected to the human body and childbearing is seen as a biological mechanism that is necessary for the species to survive. The *natural* and biological character of parenting is underlined by both Swedish and Polish fathers:

> Being a parent is somehow so deeply imprinted somewhere in our minds, let's say in our nature of living creatures, not only human beings, that we very often do it mechanically.
>
> (Poland, Konrad, 32 years old, 2-year-old child)

> I was not really afraid of becoming a parent. You know, I think this is something very natural; you cannot really learn it. You react instinctively when you take care of your child. We are somehow programmed to be parents. It's biology.
>
> (Sweden, Jon, 38 years old, 1-year-old child)

Yet, even though fathers regard parenthood as natural for both men and women and it is seen as closely connected to human biology, parenting norms are not equally applied to both sexes. The main difference between motherhood and fatherhood that my interviewees identify is connected to the periods of pregnancy and breastfeeding. This initial difference in the experience of parenting often seems to justify the different character of mothering and fathering established during later stages of child development. The strict difference between women's and men's approach to parental engagement was most emphatically underlined in the Polish interviews. This is connected to the stereotypical views of femininity and masculinity, in which women are seen as more emotional and fragile, whereas men are viewed as more rational and stronger:

> My wife, she has so much love and warmth for Antek that she has problems with being consistent to him, therefore one of my obligations is to make sure we are consistent in parenting and our behaviour.
>
> (Poland, Wojciech, 26 years old, 21-month-old child)

> For example, what is interesting, my sole obligation is … actually not obligation, but privilege, is to take my children to the park with bikes. Because the man's thing is to be distant and women's to worry all the time. And my wife says that she … she fears for the children and me, I let them go somewhere further for example, and she says that it's great, it's better when I go with them, because they have more freedom. And I have no fear that something bad happens.
>
> (Poland, Igor, 33 years old, 30-month-old children)

The stronger character of men in parenting is justified by referencing biological differences between men and women. But this differentiation is also strongly connected to the model of traditional fatherhood, which is based not only on breadwinning, but also on the father's parental authority. The different approaches to parenting taken by mothers and fathers, such as whether one is strict or emphatic, are explained by the biological differences between sexes, although they might also be explained by the different personalities of individuals or roles adopted as a consequence of cultural norms of masculinity and femininity. This *naturalised* way of thinking is more common in Polish society than in Swedish society. Swedish men tended to ignore gender differences at the beginning of their narratives. In Polish interviews, this issue usually appeared without direct questioning—when talking about fathering, Polish men tended to automatically refer to mothering and its *biological* dimension. In the Swedish interviews, such references were not that obvious at the very beginning. What is more, when asked directly about the difference between fatherhood and motherhood, Swedish fathers tended to note that differences are more connected to the society and culture within which one lives rather than a consequence of biological differences between women and men:

> - Are there any differences between motherhood and fatherhood?
> - Yeah, probably … but I am not sure if that is … it is probably mostly a cultural thing. Not that much a gender thing really.
>
> (Sweden, Olof, 36 years old, 30-month-old daughter)

This initial resistance in talking about gender differences between motherhood and fatherhood can be explained by the institutional, degendering context in which Swedish parents function. Since they are expected to

challenge the traditional parental roles of parents, it is easier for them to accept the cultural differences between a mother and a father, rather than refer to biological explanations. Yet on the other hand, they do not experience parenthood in the same ways that their female partners do. On the contrary, they often underline that because of biological differences, they are unable to experience parenthood in the same way as women. This is especially identifiable when they describe the first months of their children's life and compare their situation with the women's:

> From my point of view it is kind of changing, because during the first months as a father you are just standing *outside watching*, because at least during the first months it is very much the … mum and the children together, so you are not really … *sometimes you feel that you are not really participating* … but then after a year when I started my parental leave it was like a shift, change, because we [the father and the child] had a lot of fun together, we played and then she was yeah a bit more than one year old. And and we could start communicating or even she could tell me what she wants to do and not to do and … So I really liked that time when I was spending home with her, unfortunately it was … I think it was too short, I was home for 5 or 6 months.
>
> (Sweden, Olof, 36 years old, 2.5-year-old child)

As Olof notices, the situation changes as the child gets older and begins to be more independent from the mother. The *naturalised* parenting differences between the sexes might explain how the parental leave system is perceived. In both societies, the mother, rather than the father, is expected to stay at home or at least reduce the number of her working hours when a child is under school age. But at the same time, many men who had the opportunity to use parental leave for a longer period of time regard the staying home period as crucial to their ability to establish a stronger relationship with their children and, to some extent, to catch up with the mother, who, usually due to the pregnancy and breastfeeding, had created a better and stronger relationship with the child. The long parental leave for men can be seen as a denaturalising mechanism that helps to overcome the differences between male and female parenting established by social practices. The stronger the naturalisation of parental roles in a particular society, the more resistant men (and also women) are to using

long parental leave when a child is small. Therefore, it is not surprising that in Poland, where the family policy system is explicitly genderising, parents are not convinced of the idea of gender-neutral parental leaves, whereas in the degenderising context of Swedish society, men often try to do as much as they can, from the very beginning, with regard to their newborn children. The attitudes of Michał and Oskar regarding the first weeks of a child's life illustrate the divergent approaches of Polish and Swedish men to parenting during the early period of a child's life:

> But I think it is hard to force the father's great presence in the first phases of child's life, in these first weeks. *Because I wouldn't be really useful*. I mean, you know the woman is breastfeeding, she knows what is going on … of course I can dress him [the child] up, change a diaper, I can hug him or something like that, but it is hard to compete with a woman or let's say take care of the child to the same extent as the woman (…). I think that, you know, the nature created as this way and I just don't see any specific for the father during these first months.
>
> (Poland, Michał, 30 years old, 2.5-year-old twins)

> I think it is important for the father to be home as long as he can at the beginning. *I actually took my vacations, so I was home for eight weeks when he was born.* That was very good, because I could, I can feel that we connected in a certain way […]. So that's a big … because the mother and the child connect through the breastfeeding in a much different way than the father and the child do. So I am trying to be around for as much as I can when he's awake, so he can recognise me and everything like that.
>
> (Sweden, Oskar, 35 years old, 2-month-old child)

For Michał, biological differences are used to justify his absence from home when his twins were young. Whereas for Oskar, biological differences compelled him to work harder to establish a strong bond with his newborn son. Since his child was very little at the time of the interview, he had not had any experience using parental leave, but he had planned to take as many days as he could.

The naturalisation of differences between the mother's and the father's roles can be a powerful tool that impacts the organisation of a family's everyday life. The social and cultural context seems to play a crucial role in determining how men deal with the differences in early parenthood

experiences caused by differences in biology. The cultural scripts of what it means to be a father and a mother are deeply imprinted on individuals' minds. This is exemplified by one Polish father who, after the interview, emailed me some additional thoughts he had on how he experiences the biological differences:

> Despite the full partnership and interchangeability, I happened to think that the mother—just because she is a mother—should *more often* take care of a child. Sometimes I was ashamed of such thoughts, because they were not compatible with my own image of myself—a person who believes in an equal division of work with a child. So they aroused some dissonance. The uneven amount of time we spent with our son was additionally reinforced by the fact I had so much work at that time. So it can be said that although there was no practice that was reserved for a particular parent because of his or her sex, the division of work was based on the frequency the particular practices were done. Care work was done more often by my wife. And I thought it was OK. It is hard to say now why, maybe because I had so much work to do, *but maybe because I believed it should be done by the mother.*
>
> (Poland, Konrad, 32 years old, 2-year-old son)

Summarising this part of the chapter, it must be noted that fatherhood as a social phenomenon cannot be analysed without reference to motherhood (see Chap. 2). The differences between fatherhood and motherhood fit into a dichotomy between masculinity and femininity. Since the care work and the family sphere are traditionally regarded as a female domain, it is impossible to talk only about male parenting without including female parenting. As Janna Vuori underlines, even in contemporary societies, where gender equality is much higher than it used to be and fathers are more involved in care work, the role of father is always constructed in relation to motherhood:

> The figure of the father is therefore constructed through women—the father can be either the kind of man who equally shares all work and the responsibility for parenting with the mother or the kind of man who works beside the nurturing mother, supports her and is marked by the gender difference. (Vuori 2007, 60)

This greatly impacts men's engagement in fathering and the parental obligations they assign to women and to themselves. The naturalisation of gender differences serves as a mechanism that legitimises gender inequality in different spheres of social life. Therefore, how society defines "fatherhood" and "motherhood" is part of a broader context that structures the power distribution between men and women. To ascertain how the changing models of fatherhood are connected to changes in the balance of power, we must first examine the relationship between fatherhood and masculinity.

5.4 Fatherhood and Masculinity Models

5.4.1 "Suddenly They Became Real Men …"

In Chap. 2, it was argued that the changing models of fatherhood should not be analysed separately from the model of hegemonic masculinity prevailing in a particular society. I refer here to the theory of inclusive masculinity formulated by Eric Anderson (2009, 2011; Anderson and McGuire 2010) and to the concept of caring masculinities (Elliott 2015; 'The Role of Men in Gender Equality European Strategies & Insights' 2013). From this perspective, the prevailing model of masculinity is connected to the gender order and the strength of male domination over women and over men who do not fit into the orthodox masculinity model. Thus, a society in which the values of orthodox masculinity dominate is less tolerant of individuals who transgress traditional gender boundaries, especially for men who are too feminine, are not heterosexual or do not reinforce the differences between men and women. On the other hand, there are societies in which the values of inclusive masculinity start to dominate. In such societies, there is less emphasis on one acceptable standard of behaviour for men and women. This society is less hierarchical and tends to approve of different types of masculinity that can be expressed without an individual being threatened with stigma or social exclusion. These types are characterised by caring masculinities that reject domination and hold values of care.

I seek to show the relationship between the prevailing masculinity models and the ways in which men define and engage in their parental roles. The comparative perspective once again gives us a chance to identify links between these two issues. Polish fathers tend to define fatherhood in traditional male breadwinner terms and tend to underline the differences between male and female parenting. In contrast, Swedish men try to avoid dichotomising motherhood and fatherhood and are more eager to cross the boundaries between traditional parental roles. This boundary crossing has different consequences for men, and the dominant models of masculinities differently affect men's parenting practices. Let us examine these issues more carefully.

The theory of inclusive masculinity helps to explain the changing models of fatherhood and the different ways in which men engage in parenting. From this view, the prevailing masculinity model impacts how parental roles are defined. The continuum of orthodox and inclusive masculinities fits into the previous analysis of traditional and involved fatherhood models, as well as into the *naturalised* differences between fathers and mothers. The model of orthodox masculinity supports clear and naturalised boundaries between men and women, between paternal and maternal roles. As has been discussed, Polish men mostly concentrate on their breadwinner role and tend to define themselves as an additional carer or a helper whose duty is to support the mother in her domestic sphere. They also easily accept the discourse that naturalises the differences between men and women. In the case of the Swedish fathers, the situation is slightly different—Swedish fathers tend to question the biological determination of gendered parental roles and concentrate on establishing a strong relationship with their children from the very beginning.

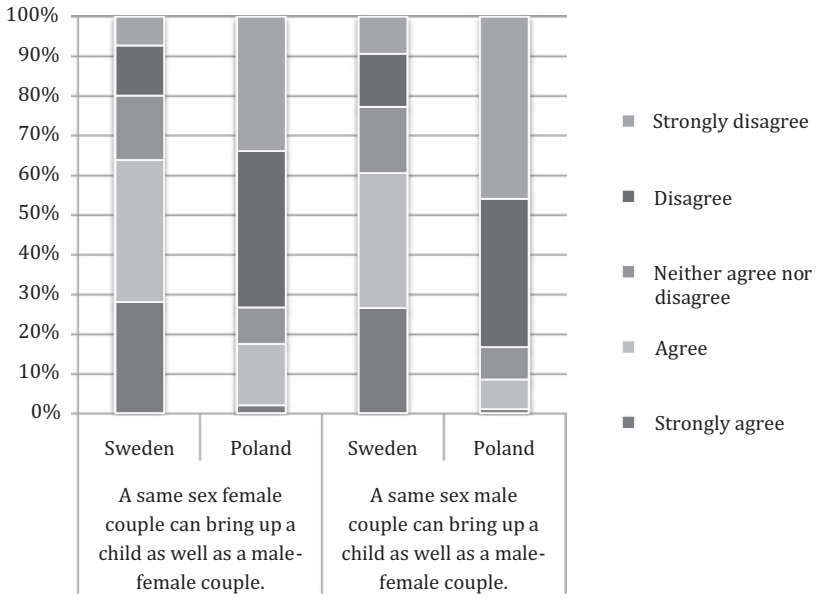
Before I proceed to the analysis of interviewees' experiences, it is worth to underline that Anderson links the dominating masculinity models with the so-called level of homohysteria. Homohysteria is characteristic of societies with high level of homophobia, anti-femininity and heteronormativity. In such societies, orthodox masculinity values dominate. It can be assumed that the high level of homohysteria is connected with the prevalence of the traditional model of fatherhood—that is, the model

of male breadwinner. And conversely, low level of homohysteria might result in greater acceptance of the model of involved fatherhood. The level of homohysteria is definitely higher in Poland than in Sweden. Sweden was the first country in the world that crossed out homosexuality from the list of illnesses. Homosexual couples in Sweden have rights to register their partnerships, to get married and to adopt children. Also the Eurobarometer poll shows Swedes' support for same-sex marriage—in 2015, 90% agreed with the statement that same-sex marriage should be allowed throughout Europe. In contrast, in Poland, similar opinion was shared only by 28% of the population and 61% disagreed with it (European Commission 2015). At the institutional level, Polish homosexuals do not have rights—they cannot register their partnerships, have no right to marriage and cannot adopt.

Data from the ISSP provide a similar assessment that the level of homophobia, in particular the acceptance of homosexual couples, is much lower in Poland than in Sweden (see Graph 5.11). In 2012 in Sweden, more than 60% of the population agreed or strongly agreed that homosexual female and male couples can raise a child as well as a male–female couple. Additionally, there is no difference perceived between the *caregiving ability* of homosexual men in comparison with homosexual women. In Poland, there is low tolerance for homosexual couples raising children. More than 70% of Poles disagree with the statement that a same-sex female couple can raise a child as well as a heterosexual couple. In the case of same-sex male couples, the disagreement is even bigger (more than 80%).

The discrepancy between attitudes towards same-sex female couples and male couples shows that parenting is seen as a female domain. Presumably, homosexual men, because of their gender, are innately unable to take care of a child and thus are not seen as individuals who can provide good conditions to raise a child. The acceptance of same-sex couples as parents would mean that there is a greater eagerness to cross the traditional models of masculinities and femininity, yet instead most Polish people prefer to keep to traditional models and accept the strong division between male and female parenting obligations.

Homophobic remarks also appeared during the Polish interviews. A few interviewees associated becoming a father with the tangible proof of heterosexuality and of real manhood:



Graph 5.11 To what extent do you agree? A same sex couple can... *Source*: ISSP 2012. Prepared by the author

> A child should see a difference between the father and the mother. We are against homosexual couples with children—this is a tragedy.
>
> (Poland, Filip, 44 years old, 4-year-old child)
>
> I have a few friends who just became dads for the first or the second time. Some of them, especially those who used to be a little bit faggy, suddenly they became real men and they are starting to … they are full of energy, because they have a son, for example.
>
> (Poland, Rafał, 26 years old, 6-month-old child)

Such comments were not very common—they appeared in only four Polish interviews—but the fact that they were made shows that the homophobic language is not necessarily regarded as something inappropriate in front of the researcher. They also indicate that it is acceptable to believe that the traditional family, based on a heterosexual relationship, is important to child development because children "should" grow up in

a family that teaches them heterosexual and dichotomously gendered sex roles.

Similar statements did not appear in the interviews with Swedish fathers. Of course, it does not indicate that there is no homophobia in Sweden. Rather, it shows that fatherhood is not generally seen as proof of heterosexuality and that it is not limited to heterosexual men. I also argue it shows that fatherhood is not understood in terms of orthodox masculinity values.

5.4.2 Practice of Care and Reconstruction of Masculinity Models

Declining homophobia might be regarded as one of the indicators of changing masculinity models into a direction of inclusive masculinities archetypes, yet it is not the only one. The greater presence of inclusive masculinities' values is also connected with the greater acceptance of feminine behaviours and "feminine" features among men. In such circumstances, the differences between male and female roles start to blur.

Yet, how to make the change into a direction of inclusive masculinities' values happen? What are the forces behind the transition from the orthodox masculinity to the inclusive masculinities? In this book I argue that, to answer this question, we need to look more carefully on fatherhood and fathering practices in the contemporary gender order. Parenting and care work as traditionally female practices are an excellent research field for examining men as gendered individuals who face expectations arising from prevailing, often conflicting, models of masculinity.

The model of caring masculinities provides us with tools that help us to analyse the experience of fathering in the context of changing masculinity models. As mentioned in Chap. 2, caring masculinities is a concept that is regarded as crucial for the transition to societies based on gender equality. It is a practice-based model—men's actual caregiving practices have a potential to change men and the way they construct their male identity and gender. The concept of caring masculinities is intentionally formulated in plural since "the framework is not intended as a homogenizing

character description of the 'new men'" (Elliott 2015, 2). Experiences of fathering should be seen as one of the ways in which men can adopt caring masculinities today.

Karla Elliott (2015) argues that at the core of caring masculinities lie the rejection of domination and the incorporation of care values, such as positive emotions, interdependence and relationality. Since the birth of the first child is usually connected with a huge shift in a new parent's life, not only on the level of everyday practices, but also on an identity level, I argue that this experience has the potential to actually change men and their ideas of what it means to be a *real man*. Discovering the more sensitive part of an identity was an important topic in men's narratives about their fathering experiences in these interviews:

> Well, when Lisa was born … I was present during both childbirths and both of them went smoothly, but a few days after the birth, my daughter stopped to breathe for a while and we had to go to hospital. She had to stay there with her mother and I couldn't; I came back home and *it was terrible experience. Even now I have tears in my eyes …. I don't know how to explain it, but before her birth I wasn't that sensitive.* And now I cannot even watch movies without being moved.
>
> (Sweden, Tobias, 49 years old, 19-year-old and 6-year-old children)
>
> So we're like this old couple … "Look how he drives!" … because we know we have a kid in a back seat and … I think that *switches personality.* I read … some Swedish journalist wrote once about it (…), I almost started crying when I was reading this, it was like: "I understand that you are in real rush on your way to work, I just wanted to say that I'd be so sad if my son would …", *I can't really say*, but … I understand the mentality and I don't know if I would, if I didn't have a kid.
>
> (Sweden, Trols, 33 years old, 3-year-old child)

Men regard the discovery of their emotionality as a very positive process and sometimes could not understand why they used to be so insensitive. This topic was more common in the Swedish interviews. Swedish men had fewer problems with talking about their emotions, and also experience of being a father was strictly connected for them with feelings and sensibility, whereas for Polish men, this topic showed up rarely. This difference might indicate that in Swedish societies, the model of inclusive

masculinities is more common, while in Poland, men still refer to the orthodox masculinity archetype. Such assumption is confirmed with the presence of feeling of shame in some Polish interviews:

> You know at the very beginning after Filip was *born I had a problem with my male image to go out with a pram.* A single father? You know, it doesn't look good, definitely. That is why I bought the coolest pram … that was natural [laugh].
>
> (Poland, Mateusz, 34 years old, 4-year-old child)

Niall Hanlon (2012) claims that the requirements of hegemonic masculinity cause shame in men who do not or cannot fulfil them. The case of Mateusz is an excellent example of how two conflicting models of masculinity impact fathers' practices. The image of the single father does not fit the model of orthodox masculinity, in which manhood is understood in conservative terms. A real man should have a heterosexual family and is responsible for earning money, not for taking the child to a park. Yet his partner expected him to take the child out for a walk. Formulating her expectations, she referred to the model of involved fatherhood and a relationship based on partnership (she was making a successful career in the labour market), and these expectations did not entirely match to the model of fatherhood Mateusz had internalised. He had to change his way of thinking about fathering—during the interview, he shared with me that feeling as a funny story and it was clear he did not think like that anymore. Interestingly, similar problems never appeared in the Swedish interviews.

Another dimension of caring masculinities is the value of interdependence (Elliott 2015; Scambor et al. 2014). Interdependence is strictly connected with equality. Caregiving should be seen as a process in which the traditional masculine value—protection—is transformed in a relation oriented towards care and responsibility for other people. In the model of caring masculinity, respect, responsibility and love are understood in terms of looking after a small child who needs care and attention. Thus, it is not based on power relations; the figure of a father is not build on *fear* and *distance*, but on the conviction that nobody is totally independent and everyone at some point in their life requires care. In this case, the care

relations are not linear—care is not only provided by the caregiver to the one who needs it, but it is also beneficial to the caregiver:

> I was always responsible and serious, but now I am even more. I worry more about all these economic issues … to have a job, because if you have a job, you have money and this is the thing that I am the most worried.
> (Poland, Eryk, 29 years old, 12-month-old child)
>
> I am a parent *together* with my wife, she's a parent as well and the … I think our job is to share the things we need to do because of our baby.
> (Sweden, Daniel, 38, 13-month-old son)

The tricky question is how to understand responsibility. Anderson underlines that orthodox masculinity is based on values of autonomy and independence. In such context, responsibility would rather be understood in terms of power and domination. Men's autonomy mostly refers to men's presence in the public sphere—mainly, in the labour market. Participation in the labour market has consequences for the domestic sphere and the organisation of family life, and also for the way responsibility of men is defined. A traditional man has a responsibility towards his family, which is defined in financial terms. In the model of caring masculinities, responsibility is no longer understood in terms of breadwinning, but rather it is seen as taking care of other people—in the case of fatherhood, looking after the child.

For the orthodox masculinity, an important element is pride. *Male pride* is the reason why men might feel ashamed on not fulfilling the requirements of hegemonic masculinity. Pride and shame are negative feelings that explain men's resistance to actually involve themselves in care work. The problem is how to make men engage in care work. The model of caring masculinities is practice based. In this framework it is assumed that, through actual practice of caregiving, men can change their thinking about gender roles and masculinity models. The above-mentioned case of Mateusz is a good example that, through practice, men are transforming. Yet in the context of gender inequalities, another aspect is crucial—the undervaluation of care work. Care work is seen as women's obligation and in fact is mostly performed by women. In a patriarchal society, as a female

area it is connected with a lower status, although care work is necessary for human beings. Someone has to provide care. But even though without care work a society could not survive, in contemporary societies, care work is seen as optional for men. Men can choose to what extent they want to engage in various forms of caregiving. And caring is not a central feature of masculinity models. How to change this situation?

One way is to make men recognise the value of care work. Paradoxically, I argue that the burden of care work is of particular importance here. The experiences of interviewed men clearly show that most of them had not known how difficult and tiring it is to take care of a child before they became parents. Swedish and Polish fathers had similar conclusions in this regard:

> It is the most tiring job I had. I used to have two full-time jobs and I was more tired than now. These diapers … are the worst.
>
> (Poland, Grzegorz, 29 years old, 21-month-old child)
>
> I knew it is difficult to be a parent, but I had no idea it might be so hard sometimes.
>
> (Sweden, Martin, 35 years old, 2-year-old child)

Especially, the experiences of men who adopted the role of a full-time caregiver indicate that actual engagement in parenting helps men to redefine their roles and the mother's roles, change their thinking about gender roles and gender inequalities, and recognise the value not only of care work, but also of domestic work. In Chap. 7, which is devoted to fathering practices, I will come back to this issue.

What should also be mentioned here is the problem that arises when cultural and social expectations do not fit with what fathers actually have to do. In societies with prevailing orthodox masculinity values (and also in highly genderising systems), men might have problems with engaging in *feminine* practices, or with trials to cross the *naturalised* differences. Tensions arising from the clash of two contrasting models of fatherhood and masculinity might influence men's attitudes and actual practices and impede their engagement in fathering.

The Swedish case is interesting. The problems of Swedish men often arise from the tension between currently prevailing models of involved

fatherhood, which requires men to engage in *maternal* practices, and biological differences, which can sometimes actually impede establishing as strong a relationship with the child as the mother forms through breastfeeding. Therefore, even though the father's role has been redefined, to some extent, it still refers to the traditional fatherhood model based on orthodox masculinity values. Lars Plantin et al. (2003) claim that, even if fathers are engaged in nurturing, they still tend to transfer parts of their caregiving in order to give fatherhood a more masculine expression. So, overtaking traditionally female tasks might be connected with giving them a new, more masculine character (as in the case of Mateusz from Poland and his "cool pram"). This shows that the concept of masculinity is crucial to the process of redefining the father's role. I claim that the recognition of the value of care work and greater presence of caring masculinities values might allow for widening the range of fathers' behaviours without undermining male identity.

5.5 Chapter Summary: Fatherhood, Change and Men's Power

The definitions of "father's role" and "fatherhood" are grounded in social and cultural contexts. They are based on how the differences between men and women are conceptualised and what models of masculinity (and femininity) prevail in a particular society. They are reinforced and reconstructed by social policy mechanisms. The gendered dimension of power and domination, as well as the question of social changes, is of particular importance to note.

The process of naturalising the difference between men and women is a powerful mechanism that legitimises gender inequality in many spheres of social life. This naturalisation often has an oppressive character that forces men and women to behave according to sex categorisation and gender beliefs (see Ridgeway and Correll 2004; Ridgeway 2009). The sources of this oppression are located in the individual's body, which through the processes of negation and transformation is gendered (Connell 1987; Shilling 2003). Also family life and parenting are organised based on this naturalised inequality. It can be assumed that the difference between

male and female parenting is grounded in biological differences that enable women to become pregnant and to breastfeed. However, it does not explain why women are expected to be responsible for the entirety of care and domestic work, and why men should be responsible for providing for the family economically. It seems that these expectations serve as convenient explanations for the patriarchal organisation of social life. The division between female and male parental roles is strictly linked to the division of unpaid and paid work and of the private and public spheres (Kimmel 2011). The private sphere is subordinated to the public one; paid work is more valued and prestigious than care work. In times of changing relations between men and women, the relationships between paid work and care work are changing, as are men's engagement in the domestic sphere and parenthood, but the situation is still not equal. The reconstruction of the prevailing order is connected with the process of *denaturalisation* of gender differences.

Norbert Elias, who underlines that biology is often used as an excuse for unequal social order, also notes the chance for crossing the *naturalised* obstacles. The fundamental issue here is the human ability to learn. In fact, human beings behave according to their individual experiences and reactions they learned in the process of socialisation, not according to innate disposition (Elias 1978, 1987). Similar conclusions might be drawn from Connell's theory of the reproduction of gendered bodies. She also points out the role masculinity models play in making individuals believe in the superiority of men. The hegemonic model of masculinity is important in the context of fatherhood because it can be a great barrier for men to become more engaged in the domestic sphere. In effect, such models can be harmful not only for women, who are expected to make greater sacrifices, but also for men, for whom it is sometimes very difficult to establish a strong relationship with their children. Derrick M. Bryan (2013; see also Roy 2004) argues that expectations for fathers to be main providers can do more harm than good in fulfilling parental roles, especially for low-income or unemployed fathers, who cannot financially provide for their children.

Yet the changing relations between men and women, the declining orthodox masculinity model and changing models of fatherhood are observable. Even in more traditional societies, as in Poland, the traditional model of male breadwinner is no longer desirable:

> This is a radical change in contrast to what it used to be. The role of father created by media, press, television is completely different. In my opinion, it is a better image of the father: he is closer to his family, more engaged, he takes care of a child, helps his wife. For woman it is important. And I really think it is good. Woman is not alone; she has a support.
>
> (Poland, Ola, 28 years old, 7-year-old child)

Barbara Hobson and David Morgan (2002) underline that the growing emphasis on fatherhood and men's care work provide men with new discursive resources that they can use in reconstructing their identities, as well as in establishing relationships with their partners, children, employers and other important individuals. A problem that arises is connected to conflicting definitions of fatherhood that can function within one society; these definitions are grounded in the cultural models of parenthood passed by people's beliefs and expectations, presented in media, reconstructed or reinforced by family policy systems, and the organisation of the labour market. In fact, expectations of men as fathers are growing. Sometimes, this puts men in a problematic position and makes them feel lost and disoriented, especially as their own expectations do not fit with others' expectations and the social models of parenting. Therefore, I argue that fathering is closely related to the external context. The next chapter presents how this context affects men in Sweden and Poland, what is expected from fathers in these two societies and how they deal with the reconciliation of work with family life.

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6

"I Can't Really Work Less": Fathers Facing Social Expectations

6.1 Introduction

Naturalised biological differences serve as one explanation for a society's gender order. How society defines "fatherhood" is a direct result of the process of naturalisation. In this chapter I examine the links between social and institutional contexts and fathering, that is, what men's parental practices look like. Beliefs about gender and masculinity and femininity models specify in what kind of practices men and women can engage. As Cecilia Ridgeway and Shelley Correll underline:

> Gender is an *institutionalized system [emphasised by KS]* of social practices for constituting people as two significantly different categories, men and women, and organizing social relations of inequality on the basis of that difference. (2004, 510)

Since the family is one of society's most gendered institutions, the situation of fathers differs significantly from the situation of mothers, and from the situation of childless partnered men and even more from the situation of single childless men. Many researchers reflect on the con-

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K. Suwada, *Men, Fathering and the Gender Trap*,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-47782-4_6

textual factors that influence contemporary fathering. William Doherty et al. (1998), in their article on responsible fathering, claim that fathering is influenced more by external contexts as compared with mothering. Their thesis is based on research on poor and unemployed fathers who struggle with their parental role in societies where the dominating discourse underlines the financial obligations of the father. Yet it seems that, generally in times of changing gender roles and family models, the impact of contextual factors on parenthood is more complex in the case of men than in the case of women.

In Chap. 2, I refer to a theoretical framework proposed by Barbara Hobson and David Morgan (2002). Their framework analyses fatherhood within three triangles: (1) the domestic triangle, (2) the institutional triangle and (3) the fatherhood triangle. This concept is useful since it shows how fatherhood is affected by many different contextual factors such as the labour market, the welfare state system, family life, relations within family life and the domestic sphere as well as cultural definitions of parenthood. Tomasz Szlendak describes the situations of fathers in a similar way (2011, 445–452). Szlendak claims that, in modern society, fathers are constrained by four walls: (1) fatherhood models, (2) marriage (I would call it rather a stable relationship with a woman—the mother of a man's children[1]), (3) paid work and (4) household obligations. From this perspective, the situation of fathers is becoming more complicated because of growing expectations of fathers; it is argued that the new model of fatherhood imposes on men new obligations without eliminating traditional demands.

Since the relations between family policy systems, fatherhood and changing gender roles are most important to my analysis, I concentrate here on four contextual elements that are crucial to analysing the situation of fathers in everyday life: (1) welfare state system, (2) the labour market, (3) the organisation of family life and (4) models of fatherhood, that is, social and cultural expectations of men as fathers. These are presented in Figure 6.1.

[1] I concentrate here on heterosexual fathers living with their children and partners/wives; therefore, I refer here to Szlendak's concept, but I am aware of the fact that the situation of single, divorced, remarried or homosexual men would be at least slightly different.

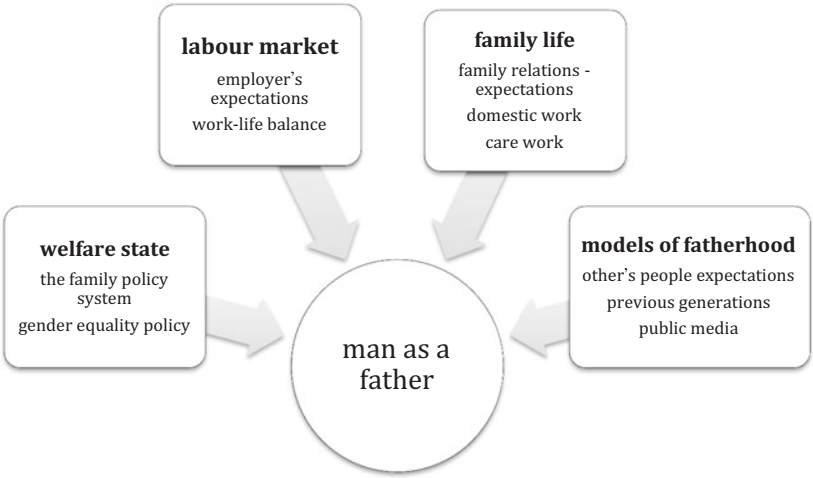


Figure 6.1 Father's situation in the contemporary European societies. *Source*: The diagram prepared by the author

First, the institutional dimension of fathering is underlined and I show how Swedish and Polish fathers function within the welfare state systems, what expectations they have of the state and how they perceive the family policy systems in their countries in the context of fatherhood issues and gender equality. Then, I proceed to the models of fatherhood prevailing in each society and the expectations of other people fathers are confronted with; these expectations are often connected to gender stereotypes. Finally, in the last section of this chapter, I concurrently concentrate on men's positioning in the labour market and within family life; the aim is to show how men deal with the issue of work–life balance and how paid work affects their engagement in the domestic sphere.

6.2 Fathers Within the Welfare State System

6.2.1 Fatherhood: Cash or Care

There are different approaches the welfare state system can adopt in regard to parenthood, gender roles and gender equality. Fathers as recipients of

the family policy is a relatively new phenomenon, and still in many countries, political mechanisms aim predominantly to help women reconcile work with family life rather than to promote involved fatherhood (see also Saxonberg 2013; Vuori 2007; Chap. 4 in this book). Yet experiences of many countries, especially in Scandinavia, show that men's engagement in the domestic sphere greatly impacts the social gender order and substantially helps women to achieve greater work–life balance (see Dunn et al. 2013; Fahlen 2012; Fine-Davis et al. 2004; Neilson and Stanfors 2014). I concentrate here on the experience of fatherhood in two significantly different welfare state regimes. The Swedish model is an example of *degenderising* family policy—the aim of which is to eliminate gender roles within family life. In this system, fathers are treated as equal to women recipients of family policy benefits—they have the right to a long paid parental leave and special mechanisms exist to encourage fathers to be more involved in parenting. The Swedish interventionist and pro-fatherhood policy has an almost 40-year-long tradition. On the contrary, the Polish system is explicitly *genderising*. On the one hand, it is based on the previous communist family policy that focused entirely on mothers and in practice did not take into consideration men as fathers. On the other hand, it is affected by the liberal and market-oriented reforms introduced after the fall of communism, and therefore, is not concentrated on gender equality issues and changing gender roles (see Chap. 4 in this book and Saxonberg 2013).

According to the analysis presented in the previous chapter, clear differences exist between the ways that Swedish and Polish men apprehend the role of the father. Swedes tend to think about fatherhood not in terms of traditional gender roles, but rather by concentrating on their relationship with their children, their engagement in the domestic sphere and their partnership. Polish fathers, in contrast, expect and are expected to be the primary economic providers for their family and to help the mothers occasionally with domestic duties. These modes of defining fatherhood, which arose during my interviews, are congruent with one of two types of parenting discourses distinguished by Jaana Vuori (2007)—the *shared parenting* discourse and the *exclusive mothering* discourse. What interests me here is whether there are links between fatherhood practices in everyday life and the institutional context and parenting discourses adopted in the family policy.

Barbara Hobson and David Morgan (2002) claim that *men can be made into fathers*. In their definition *the role of a father* is understood in terms of involved fatherhood and suggests that fathers should be more similar to mothers rather than fulfil the figure of the traditional father. This approach is unsurprising when we take into consideration the fact that both of these researchers are Swedish. The Swedish social policy is regarded as one of the most interventionist in the world; its aim is to promote a social order that is based on the equality of all individuals regardless of their gender.

The status of men and women in a family policy system is here of key importance. Fatherhood can be defined in legal documents from two different perspectives. On the one hand, the father's obligation may be perceived mostly in terms of his financial responsibility to his offspring. On the other hand, parenthood might be defined chiefly in terms of care. This is particularly evident in the case of divorced couples and single-parent households, in which life is usually organised by a strict division between the *primary* parent, the parent who takes care of the child in everyday life, and the isolated or withdrawn parent, the parent who is the primary financial provider for the child. The division between *cash* and *care* is often reinforced by family laws, which, in the case of divorce, might grant only one parent custody of a child. This is the case in Polish law, which does not guarantee joint custody when one of the parents does not agree on it. To acquire joint custody parents have to reach a settlement together, which is not that common in Polish society. Usually, the parent living with the child is awarded sole custody, whereas the second parent can only preserve his/her right to contact the child. In a society in which women are regarded as primary caregivers, in the case of a divorce, men face difficulty in obtaining child custody and their parental obligations are more often defined in terms of financial provision.[2]

[2] The parental obligations are defined in the Family and Guardianship Code [Kodeks rodzinny i opiekuńczy]. Unfortunately, a coherent and deep analysis of divorced parenting is lacking in Poland. Yet it is clear that men are in the unprivileged position. The father's rights movement is getting stronger (Bergmann et al. 2014; Wojnicka 2012, 2013, 2016). According to the statistics, only 3–4% of men get custody rights in the case of divorce. But it is uncertain how many men actually fight for custody rights.

On the contrary, the Swedish law guarantees joint custody for married couples, and even in the case of a divorce, joint custody prevails. When parents are not married, the mother is automatically awarded sole custody, but parents may acquire joint custody by a simple registration procedure. Only in a special situation, when it is in the child's best interest, may the court terminate joint custody and award sole custody to one of the parents. Joint custody might be awarded even against the wishes of one of the parents. This law was introduced in 1998 to force divorced and absent biological fathers to be more engaged in their parenthood and not to give them an excuse to withdraw from their children's lives (Ahlberg et al. 2008; Bergman and Hobson 2002).

These legal regulations, along with the whole system of family policy, determine the status of the mother and the father in family life. Although I conducted interviews with parents living in heterosexual relationships together with their children, the issue of the unequal status of men and women in the case of divorce was often broached:

> A: I guess as long as I am going to live, this generation will always perceive the father … that the *mother is the most important*. There is no equality and justice. Even gay people have more right.
> B: Do you feel discredited as a father?
> A: So far I don't have any problems, because for instance I am not getting divorced, but if I were, I would be in worse situation than the mother. It is always like that.
>
> (Poland, Filip, 44 years old, 4-year-old child)

> In general, when it comes to the state and fatherhood, what makes me angry is that when the parents are splitting up, child custody is automatically awarded to the mother (…). And if the father is sharing all care obligations, is actively involved, then he should be treated as the mother. Honestly, I don't feel that my child prefers to be with me and only I can calm him down and the dad can't. From the very beginning we are together and there is no difference where Julek is with the dad or me.
>
> (Poland, Małgorzata, 32 years old, 11-month-old child)

When the issue of divorce arose during my Polish interviews, it was usually connected to fear and conviction of great inequality between men

and women. Men are presented as being in an unprivileged position within the family. In contrast, this issue rarely arose during my interviews with Swedish fathers. It can be assumed that Swedish fathers do not feel that their position as fathers changes dramatically during a divorce. What is more, for Swedish parents, joint custody is a common consequence of divorce. It is also more common for Swedish parents to remarry and to have children from different relationships.

6.2.2 The Relations Between Parents and the State

The way that Polish parents approach the issue of divorce and child custody in the context of gender relations shows that they do not feel the legal system is functional, protects the right of every individual, regardless of gender, and meets their expectations. Yet the feeling of being ignored or discriminated against is not only evident during discussions about divorce; this was also characteristic of parents who live in a stable relationship and have a good social and financial situation. Polish fathers and mothers complain a lot about a system that, in their opinion, does not help them in parenting:

> In our society the parent is left alone. What is more, he/she doesn't get any benefits, apart this unfortunate baby bonus [*becikowe*—KS] and is exposed on many additional costs. For example the problem we had to face—nurseries or kindergartens, right? Basically we had to choose the private kindergarten, because the public, subsidised kindergartens are not for us. It turns out we are too rich.
>
> (Poland, Krzysztof, 39 years old, 30-month-old child)

The baby bonus (*becikowe*) mentioned by Krzysztof has been a main object of attack in the Polish interviews. At the time of the interviews, the baby bonus was a one-time allowance provided by the state of the amount of 1000 PLN/240 EUR per child; parents could get this bonus during the first 12 months of the child's life. Some communes, for example, the city of Krakow, used to give an additional baby bonus for their parents. It was introduced in 2005 by the conservative government of Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz and was presented

at that time as an important instrument in encouraging Polish parents to have children.[3] In my interviews, middle-class parents are very critical of the bonus, especially when they face formal problems with receiving it:

> I would say, it *is really pitiful and degrading*, you know it is 2000 PLN, which disappeared immediately, it was enough for a while, but in fact it was a moment and this was the only time I felt some help from the local government. Of course the legislation is on the level of the whole state, but in fact the local government has to deal with it. So I didn't experience any support from the state in my life.
>
> (Poland, Igor, 33 years old, 31-month-old twins)

Attitudes towards the baby bonus are helpful in analysing the relations between the Polish welfare state and Polish parents. The baby bonus is not the most important mechanism of the Polish family policy. Polish parents, especially mothers, have a right to a long, highly paid maternity leave, but the system of parental leave is not recognised by many people as a generous one.[4] No interviewee said it was helpful that the Polish law granted mothers, but also fathers, a right to parental leave and legally protected their position in the labour market as they became parents. Perhaps in the European context, in which the welfare state is supposed to protect its citizens, the mother's right to paid leave is so obvious that people take it for granted.

Yet this is also connected to the issue of who should be the main recipient of the parental leave system. As shown previously, Polish men tend to think that it is a woman's responsibility to take care of children; Polish men tend to think that the mother should resign from her career or suspend it for a while to become a parent. It can be assumed that the system, which does not guarantee paid maternity leave, would be recognised as unfriendly for the family. At the same time, men, who are

[3] Since 2013, *becikowe* is only for parents whose net earnings are not higher than 1922 PLN per person.

[4] Whereas in my opinion, in comparison with other welfare states, the Polish parental leave system is rather generous. It is definitely not gender neutral, but it guarantees to the mothers half a year, and now one year, of highly paid leave.

usually in the labour market and are primarily responsible for financial provision, are more focused on financial stability than on organising care for children. This might explain why they talk so much about financial mechanisms rather than about the gender-neutral parental leave and gender equality.

A different picture of relationship between fathers and the welfare state emerges from the interviews with Swedish fathers. The Swedish family policy is highly interventionist, is pro-fatherhood and its aim is to achieve gender equality in the family sphere and the labour market. Its interventionist character might be seen as a problematic from the perspective of individuals, especially when it comes to regulations of the private sphere. The most controversial mechanism is the *daddy quota*, which *forces* men to take longer periods of parental leave. Even though the family policy system is positively rated by Swedish men in general, the attitudes towards gender quotas are diverse. On the one hand, there are fathers who believe that the quota is necessary and important if the aim is to achieve gender equality. What is more, many men thought it is crucial to force men to establish strong relationships with their children. Some Swedes also underline that, although it might be described as interventionist, it is not obligatory, because if you do not use it, you are not punished by the system:

> What I was kind of thinking, it [the quota] is probably good, because I think that both parents should take responsibility for the child for at least two months … I think … you should probably spend that with your child and if you don't like to do that, *there is no punishment if you don't do that*, the only thing that is happening is that you cannot use those days. If it helps in any way, it is good.
>
> (Sweden, Olof, 36 years old, 2.5-year-old child)

On the other hand, some interviewees are convinced that the *daddy quota* is no longer needed. Yet they do not question its positive impact; they only wonder if it is still needed in their society, a society in which they believe gender equality has been achieved. Therefore, they indicate that it was useful when it was first introduced to change men's and women's attitudes towards parental leave and gender roles:

A: And what do you think about the daddy quota?
B: I don't know, I don't really feel this. I mean I think *it was necessary at the beginning to make this whole revolution*, to force men to stay with kids, but now I think the situation looks differently. Men want to stay with children, it is not a problem, regardless of whether this rule exists or not, the parental leave is used equally.
A: Do you think it is used equally? 50/50?
I: No, maybe not exactly 50/50, but this two months are definitely used by fathers.

(Sweden, Andreas, 39 years old, 2-month-old child)

Personally I am not very fond of quotas and an attempt to regulate this by making laws instead of leave it up to parents themselves depending on their situation. *But then again back to old times fathers were not staying home very much with their kids*. Maybe it is more or less still necessary to have legislation in order to try to shift this position from the past.

(Sweden, Johan, 44 years old, 6-year-old child)

This approach is connected to the conviction that new generations of Swedish fathers want to share parental obligations equally with their partners and institutional mechanisms are not necessary to force this. This is even more evident in the opinion of Christian, who on the one hand is convinced that people should have a right to decide for themselves how to share parental leave, but on the other hand, believes that this law is needed in the case of migrant families, in which the model of shared parenting is not so strongly internalised as is the case with Swedish families:

So people don't want government to have a policy forcing fathers to take a number of days out or they lose these days, they want the right to choose between themselves how to do it. But then *there is another question what happen with migrants, in whose families fathers are not doing anything* and mothers are having many children and they are like … very hard to do any kind of career or … studies or anything. *I think that people want to decide themselves*.

(Sweden, Christian, 36 years old, 16-month-old child)

These attitudes show that the model of involved fatherhood is broadly accepted by Swedish men. Yet not all Swedish fathers are eager to take a long parental leave. The widespread internalisation of the new model

is also noticeable in the previous chapter regarding definitions of fatherhood. It can be assumed that the new model of fatherhood is strongly grounded in Swedish ways of thinking about parenthood, thanks to the impact of a long-standing pro-fatherhood family policy that was supported with national paternity leave campaigns since 1970s. As Roger Klinth (2008) notes, the aims of campaigns from 1976 to 2006 were to change traditional ways of thinking about fatherhood and gender roles in the family life. These campaigns also presented men's engagement in parenthood as a core feature of "Swedishness." The data from my interviews suggest that in Sweden fatherhood is currently defined in terms of caring masculinities, that is, emotional engagement, relationship with children and partnership in the domestic sphere.

What is more, the Swedish family policy is often described as one of the most men-friendly in the world since it recognises men's right to care and has proactive mechanisms that encourage men to take some parental leave. At the same time, as Bergman and Hobson (2002, 123–124) underline, it provides men with discursive and ideological resources that can be helpful in negotiating with employers around the issue of child care and in facing gendered expectations from others. These resources also help in the process of reconstructing the traditional male identity. Consequently, Swedish fathers feel comfortable in the system they function in and might have further expectations of the welfare state, but in general, their opinions about the Swedish family policy are positive and they feel that they have support from the state.

6.2.3 Parents' Expectations About State Support

In the chapter on family policy regimes, I refer to concepts developed by Steven Saxonberg (2013), who claims that the most important elements of contemporary family policies are the parental leave system and the system of public child care. I argue that the way parents perceive the (lack of) support from the welfare state is directly connected to these two systems. Previously in the chapter, it was indicated that Polish fathers do not recognise the Polish system of parental leave as generous; in fact, they concentrate more on financial instruments addressed to families (such as

baby bonus or child allowances). On the contrary, Swedish fathers in their narratives ignore the allowances they get as parents and concentrate more on the gender-neutral parental leave, which they identify as providing fathers with the opportunity to establish strong relationships with their children, in addition to noting its equalising character. Parental leave is a necessary tool that allows women and men to reconcile family with work life. From the perspective of European states, it is a common instrument of family policies used to protect parents in the labour market; its existence is generally unquestioned—most people agree that it should exist.

Another question that often arises is regarding for how long parental leave should be available and who should pay for it. Such questions were asked in the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) panel on "Family and Changing Gender Roles" in 2012. In Table 6.1 the answers of parents are presented. In both societies, Swedish and Polish, there is general consensus that paid leave should be available at least for 12 months. Swedes though, more often than Poles, think that paid leave should last longer than 12 months (29% of Swedish women think it should be 18 months long and 24% would like to prolong it to two years). In Poland, there are not that many proponents of the 18-month-long leave, most people think that 12 months is enough (45%), but there is quite a large group of people, especially women, who would like to have a right to 36 months of paid leave (11.2% of men and 13.7% of women). The difference in desired lengths of paid leave in Sweden and

Table 6.1 Do you think there should be paid leave available and, if so, for how long? Parents' answers

	Sweden		Poland	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
No, there should be no paid leave	2.3%	1.1%	0.6%	1.3%
1–5 months	0.8%	0.6%	7.3%	8.7%
6 months	39.4%	1.7%	12.9%	16.1%
7–11 months	0.8%	2.3%	1.7%	1.3%
12 months	34.1%	23%	48.9%	41.7%
13–17 months	9.3%	5.2%	0%	0.4%
18 months	24%	32.8%	5.6%	1.7%
24 months	20.2%	27.6%	11.8%	13%
36 months	3.1%	4.6%	11.2%	15.7%

Source: ISSP 2012. Prepared by the author

Poland might be explained by the context in which the people function. People would rather have longer than shorter leaves. At the time the survey was conducted in Poland, paid maternity leave lasted for 6 months; therefore, its extension to 12 months was more reasonable than to 18. Also the large support for a three-year-long paid leave is likely connected to three issues: (1) the extended parental leave available in Poland, (2) the distinction between the two kinds of day care institution, for children under and over three years old and (3) *the myth of threeness* (see Chap. 4). One third of Swedes agree with the length of one year. One year of parental leave likely seems to be adequate in a system that provides public childcare for all children over 12 months old.

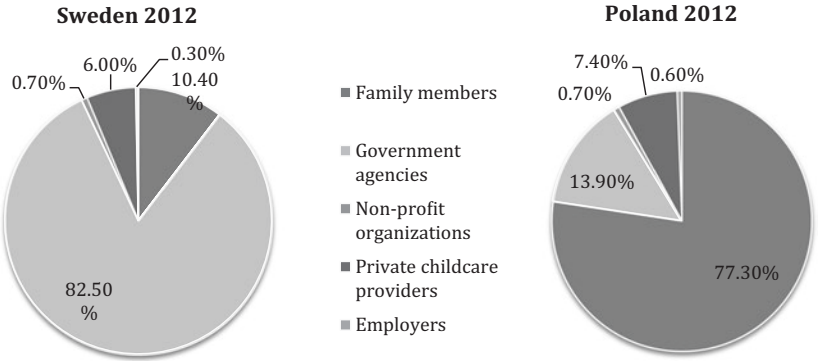
Another facet of the issue is determining who should pay for the paid leave (see Graph 6.1). In Sweden, over 70% think that the government is obliged to pay for paid leave and 27% think that this is the role of both the government and the employer. Whereas in Poland, over 56% expect the government to pay for the leave, 11.5% believe that parental leave should be paid by the employer and 28% feel that parental leave should be paid by both the government and the employer.

It seems that, in both societies, expectations of the state are quite high in regard to the parental leave system. The aim of parental leave is to enable parents to take care of their young children. But it is also an instru-

Graph 6.1 Paid parental leave. *Source*: ISSP 2012. Prepared by the author

ment that regulates the relationship between the employee, who has children, and the employer, for whom hiring parents might not necessarily be financially attractive. So in regard to parental leave, it seems that, in both Swedish and Polish societies, there is an expectation that the state will help facilitate the engagement of parents in care work. But as we look at the system of day care institutions, the expectations of Swedes and Poles differ significantly (see Graph 6.2). In Sweden, there is a general consensus that the state and its government agencies are obliged to provide care for children under school age—over 82% of Sweden think so. Only 10.40% indicate that family members should be the main providers of care. The opinions in Polish society are exactly the reverse—77% of Poles think that family members should be primarily responsible for providing care for children under school age and only 14% expect the state to take on this responsibility. Interestingly, Polish men are more convinced that this responsibility should reside with family members (80%) in comparison with Polish women (74%). Since they are not supposed to engage in care work, they probably are not imagining themselves in this role, but rather they expect their female partners, and other female members of the kinship system, to engage in the care work.

In both societies there is little support for private childcare providers, even in the Polish system (a system that, after 1989, transformed, to



Graph 6.2 People have different views on childcare for children under school age. Who do you think should primarily provide childcare? *Source*: ISSP 2012. Prepared by the author

some extent, into a liberal and market-oriented one), only 7.4% think that the childcare institution should be privatised. The responsibility of employers and non-profit organisations to support childcare is hardly ever mentioned.

The high expectations that Swedes have of the Swedish state are not surprising. The Swedish welfare state took over the responsibility for childcare early in the 1930s to release women from the double burden and to allow them to fully participate in the labour market. In the 1970s, childcare institutions came to be seen as an important instrument in achieving gender equality and started to be presented in the public discourse as good for child development and socialisation. Therefore, the role of a state in providing childcare has not been undermined. In contrast, in Poland, childcare institutions never had a good reputation. Before 1989 the quality of childcare institutions was not high, and in fact, after the extended leave was introduced in 1970s, women were encouraged to resign from their participation in the labour market to engage in care work (see Chap. 4). The weak role of nurseries and kindergartens was reinforced after the fall of communism, when the number of childcare institutions dramatically dropped. The division of childcare institutions into two separate categories, one for children under three years and one for children over three years, bolsters the impression that the state is more responsible for older children than for younger ones and that family members should organise child care on their own. What is more, the conviction that family members, presumably mostly women, should primarily provide childcare is connected to the clear division between female and male parental roles. Since women are mainly responsible for care work, they are not supposed to relinquish their obligation to the state. It does not fit to the model of motherhood that prevails in Polish society.

The survey data show that, in both societies, the expectations towards the state are quite high, especially when it comes to the length of parental leave. It might be assumed that the institutional context, in which individuals function, has a great impact on how people understand and engage in their parental roles. Institutional tools can reinforce particular behaviours and the organisation of family life, whereas their absence results in different practices. Similar conclusions are confirmed by my

interviews; in the Polish context, parents indicate many problems connected with a lack of care institutions for children:

> The family policy … it's not only what the state offers you immediately after the child is born, because everyone expects something, but it is more about the environment in which we live. Why can't I have an access to a nursery … get a place in a nursery? This is a part of the family policy, isn't it? At this moment the best option would be … *if my wife gave up her work and took care of our child*. It is profoundly sad that there are not enough places in nurseries.
>
> (Poland, Emil, 31 years old, 4-month-old child)
>
> First of all, kindergartens and nurseries are the most basic thing to enable parents functioning on the labour market, which means generating government revenue and at the same time having children. *Because not everyone has a grandma, not everyone has a possibility to hire a nanny, I mean, financial possibilities.* So there should be plenty of kindergartens and they should be good.
>
> (Poland, Łukasz, 26 years old, 2-year-old child)

Although the results from the ISSP 2012 suggest that, in Polish society, the family is expected to primarily provide care for children, it does not mean that parents do not expect the state to guarantee places in childcare institutions for their children. In fact, the lack of places in nurseries and kindergartens is one of the major problems Polish parents have to deal with. It also reveals the gender dimension of the issue. It can be assumed that the lack of childcare institutions reinforces expectations that women be more engaged in care work. Thus, mothers are implicitly forced to resign from participation in the labour market. There are several reasons for that. First, women still earn less than men, and because of the lack of childcare institutions, parents are made to find other sources of childcare. If they have to choose one person to resign from work, parents usually choose the women because men are typically higher earners than women. Second, this decision is congruent with the socially accepted models of motherhood and fatherhood that still prevail in Polish society. Third, today many people are employed on short-term or fixed-term contracts (see Baranowska et al. 2011) that do not guarantee the right to parental leave and thus, in the case of pregnancy, women lose their jobs. Under

such circumstances, the situation of women is particularly difficult—for families with one unemployed parent, it is more difficult to get a place in a nursery or kindergarten since priority is given to families with two working parents. It creates a *vicious cycle* because unemployed mothers cannot send their children to day care institutions, and as a result, they have increased difficulty in finding a job. What is more, women's lack of paid work also reinforces the traditional division of parental roles. Men, whose partners or wives do not work, are often less eager to engage in domestic and care work because they feel they are solely responsible for breadwinning and, therefore, are not obliged to overtake some domestic obligations:

> You know, children are not always sweet. They are sometimes, but not always, so if I can say that I have work to do, it is a very, very convenient excuse. In my case, it's even better, since my wife doesn't work.
>
> (Poland, Janusz, 27 years old, 4-year-old child)

This is why Saxonberg claims that the welfare state that does not provide broad and cheap access to the public childcare institutions is genderising.

Another aspect of the Polish system and individuals' expectations is connected to childbearing behaviour. Poland had one of the lowest total fertility rates in the world in 2014. In multiple analyses on childbearing, Scandinavian researchers seek to identify whether there is a connection between the decision to have children and the state's family policy (Andersson et al. 2004; Duvander and Andersson 2006; Lappegård et al. 2011; Rønsen and Skrede 2006). These researchers indicate that there is a correlation between advanced gender equality policy and higher fertility levels; in fact, the more support women have in combining paid work and parenthood, the more likely they are to have children. Therefore, two mechanisms are crucial to explain greater eagerness to become a parent: a generous parental leave system that also encourages men to use more leave days and the extensive provision of high-quality and cheap public child care. Both of these mechanisms help to reconcile work with family life, as well as to improve women's situation in the labour market. In the case of the Polish system, there is a lack of both. Although the parental leave system might be characterised as generous, there are no incentives

for men to take parental leave, and as a result, childbearing is highly gendered and associated mostly with the reorganisation of women's career plans. In connection to the low total fertility rate, the problem of an ageing society becomes particularly evident. Just recently, the Polish government decided to increase the retirement age. This age was equated for women and men; for women, this meant an increase in the retirement age from 60 to 67, and in the case of men, from 65 to 67. The discussion that started in connection with this significant increase in retirement age for women was linked to care work and the problem of who is going to provide care work for children and the elderly (see Krzyżowski et al. 2014, Chap. 4). In my Polish interviews, this issue was raised frequently and was interpreted as ignorance on the part of the Polish state towards parenting and family care:

> The Polish policy is not enhancing people to have children at all. There is no sufficient support; there is no place you can leave your child. I'm planning to work till I'm 67 no matter what, but this recent change is a nasty blow, because in fact it *eliminates the institution of grandma!* I counted this and at this moment when woman stops working, her grandchild will be in school age, so in fact now young parents have to hire a nanny and most people cannot afford this.
>
> (Poland, Helena, 26 years old, 2-year-old child)

The lack of institutions providing care, not only for children, but also for the elderly, in Poland shows that there are no systematic mechanisms in place to solve the problem of care in contemporary times. And apparently, this affects childbearing behaviours of Polish women and men.

In contrast, Swedish fathers do not experience the same problems as Polish fathers. The question for Swedish fathers, whether they face any problems as parents, did not initiate a long narrative about the institutional obstacles to parenthood as it did with Polish interviewees; in contrast, Swedish fathers respond to the question with a rather short statement, saying that everything is fine. The only problem some Swedish fathers indicated was connected to getting a placement in a preschool. In Sweden, municipalities are obliged to guarantee a place in a day care institution for every child over 12 months. To get the placement, parents need to register in a special system and choose five institutions to which

they would like to send their children. But because there are lots of children, especially in bigger municipalities, some parents do not get placed in their chosen preschools:

> There are many preschools around here, but there is a system, in which you say which one you want to be in the queue for. And you pick up five, so we had to read about, not all of them, a lot of them and we tried to pick five we thought are … sound they have good ideas of how to take care of kids, and what they do during the day and if they try to learn them something or if it's just like putting them in the box [laugh]. And we don't know yet if we get any of these five preschools or if we get something else, because there is a guarantee that we will get place somewhere, but they don't guarantee any of these five we want. And we don't know yet, we haven't got any place yet.
>
> (Sweden, Daniel, 38 years old, 13-month-old child)

> No, we live a bit outside of the city, so getting a place in kindergarten was really easy. We also live in a municipality which is actually pretty rich, so the schools are quite good and there is lots of them, so … We actually got the one we wanted, without transferring or waiting or anything like that. I heard that there is another business here in Stockholm city.
>
> (Sweden, Markus, 29 years old, 5-year-old child)

My comparative analysis shows that parenthood and childbearing behaviour are firmly embedded in the institutional context. The mechanisms of the family policy, especially its efficiency, accessibility and equalising character, greatly impact how men and women organise their family life and make childbearing decisions. Since in Swedish society parents do not face many barriers at the institutional level, they are more eager to have children.

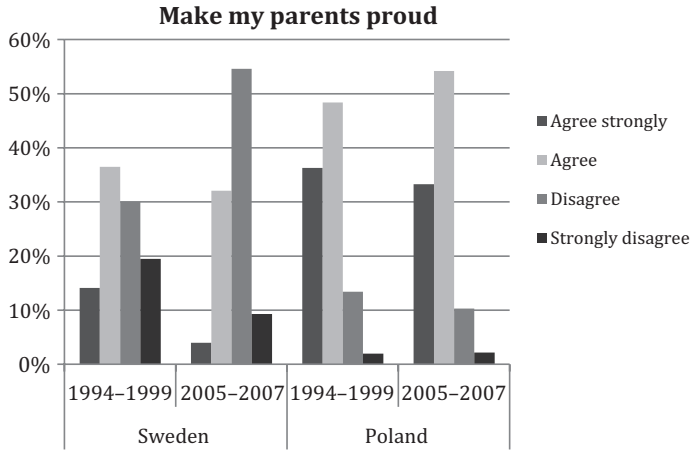
6.3 Fathers Facing Social Expectations

6.3.1 'I Would Be Careful with Grandmas …'

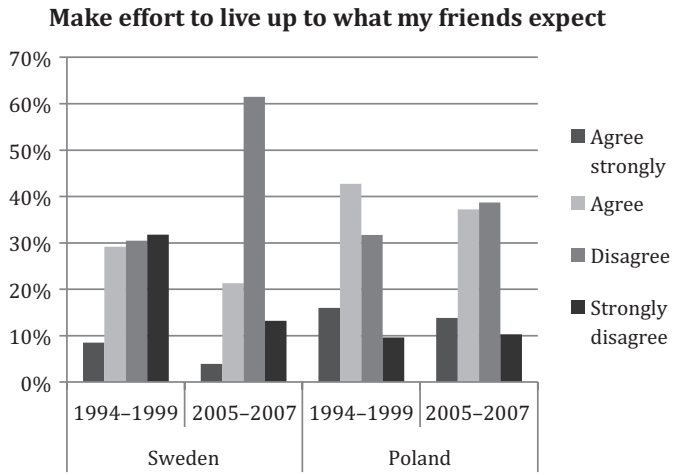
On the one hand, the models of parenthood adopted by welfare states are grounded in cultural and social patterns of behaviour and the models of masculinity and femininity that prevail in a particular society. Yet on the other hand, they might also promote behaviours and demeanours

that are divergent from the ones grounded in culture. In such a situation, individuals have to deal with conflicting expectations. As argued in Chap. 2, in reference to gender theorists (Ridgeway and Correll 2004; Ridgeway 2009; West and Zimmerman 1987), parental roles are highly gendered, and as such, they are strictly connected to cultural beliefs of what it means to be a man or a woman in a particular society. Gender should be understood as a background identity that organises individual lives and human relations. Consequently, everyone has to deal with particular gender beliefs that, on the one hand, define how to properly behave and, on the other hand, indicate how one should evaluate the behaviours of others. Also in my interviews, the role of gender beliefs in men's engagement in the parental role seems to be crucial.

In this context, it is important to ask how Swedish and Polish citizens cope with social expectations and how important these are for them. In the European Value Survey (EVS) in two waves of 1990s and 2000s, two questions were asked about people's attitudes towards the expectations of others. The first one concerns the parents, the second one friends—I would call them the *significant others*. The interesting conclusion is that Swedes are much less eager to meet the expectations of their significant others than are Polish citizens (see Graphs 6.3 and 6.4). In 2007 almost



Graph 6.3 One of the main goals in life has been to make my parents proud. *Source*: EVS. Prepared by the author



Graph 6.4 One of the main goals in life has been to make effort to live up to what my friends expect. *Source*: EVS. Prepared by the author

64% of Swedes disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that one of their main goals in life has been to make their parents proud; what is more, this number increased by 15 percentage points since 1996, when the opinion was roughly divided. In comparison, in 2005, only 12% of Poles thought similarly, 88% of Polish people care about making their parents proud, and it seems that these attitudes have not changed dramatically since 1997. Also the expectations of friends are differently perceived in Swedish and Polish societies. In 2007 almost 75% of Swedes disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that they made an effort to live up to their friends' expectations, and 49% of Poles disagreed with this attitude. Although the data suggest that Polish people are becoming more independent from social expectations, as this is an increase from 1997 when only 41% disagreed, it seems that, in both societies, the expectations of parents are more important than the expectations of other significant others.

Also in my interviews, the tensions between a man's own viewpoint and social expectations, not only of significant others, but also of strangers met in the public sphere, have an important influence on a man's experience of fatherhood. The clash between models of traditional and

involved fatherhood seems to be a basis for these tensions. This is particularly evident in the case of Polish fathers. The problem of social expectations or gender stereotypes rarely appears in the Swedish interviews. Sometimes, the interviewees mentioned it, but more often, they noted that it is completely normal to cross traditional gender roles of a mother and a father, and that with this "crossing," they do not experience any problems:

> The truth is that my father was very masculine. I mean I have a great relation with him, but I would like to be a different father for my child. And I think this is completely normal for him [his father—KS]. He would never take a parental leave, and actually he didn't when we were small, but he understands that I was at home for 4 months. Nobody questions our decision.
>
> (Sweden, Martin, 35 years old, 2-year-old child)

> Well, I put it this way, I think they wouldn't be expecting anything else from me than from my wife. So I mean just … to be a good parent, but it is not very major task. I don't think they would expect any different from me than from her.
>
> (Sweden, Johan, 44 years old, 6-year-old child)

The issue of social expectations and the ways in which these expectations are or are not fulfilled was of greater importance in the Polish interviews than it was in the Swedish interviewees. On the one hand, the definition of fatherhood is still based on the traditional model of masculinity and there is a division between female and male tasks in family life. On the other hand, the social reality encourages men's greater participation in their parental roles and encourages greater sharing of traditionally female tasks. Tensions that arise between younger parents and individuals from older generations, often their own parents or grandparents, illustrate how the old and new models of parenting collide and put young parents in uncomfortable situations:

> I would be careful with grandmas, you know? They are seen as experts in practices, but *they have very often imprinted* that a guy cannot do that and this, and he causes harm to his child. And there is a need to make it clear that if we ask grandma for help, then she can help and if not, it's our business.
>
> (Poland, Oskar, 40 years old, 9-year-old and 6-year-old children)

> Our parents, people in their sixties, they have different mentality—at least in case of my parents. For our generation it is normal that a father takes a child for a walk or bathes him. For us it's not strange. It isn't strange for me that Leszek [her partner—KS] does it; it's completely normal. Women used to have more obligations at home, but it was socially determined, a kind of social expectations that were acceptable. I'm sure that the situation varied in different families, because it wasn't said that a father couldn't bathe a child 30 years ago or something like that, but for example fathers were not allowed to get into the hospital where women were with children. The child was shown through a window. And nowadays, since the moment of a conception a father participates, attends medical appointments and antenatal classes. Nowadays it is natural that both parents participate.
>
> (Poland, Gosia, 32 years old, 11-month-old child)

Social expectations are grounded in a society's prevailing models of masculinity and femininity, and linked to models of mothering and fathering. In the Polish context, the model of involved fatherhood, which is comparable to mothering, is quite new. The distinct role of motherhood—the myth of Mother-Pole (*Matka Polka*)—is characteristic of Polish culture[5] and care work is still seen as the woman's domain. In Swedish society, the discourse started to change over 30 years ago. The introduction of the gender-neutral parental leave was connected to new social beliefs that men can be as good as women in the caring roles. Yet changes in the law did not result in an immediate change of attitudes and expectations in Swedish society. On the contrary, it took decades to make men use the parental leave and to redefine the traditional paternity role around care work. Several nationwide and local campaigns were launched to promote the new model of fatherhood. The aim of these campaigns was to reveal the negative aspects of traditional male values, such as work orientation, competitiveness or autonomy, and, at the same time, to show that an improvement in the male capacity for caregiving was needed and possible. The reconstruction of the father's role has always been presented in a broader framework of gender equality; this has been accompanied by

[5] I come back to this issue in the next section of this chapter.

an emphasis on the benefits for both men and women (for more detailed description of fatherhood campaigns, see Klinth 2008). This helps clarify why today Swedish fathers do not feel that they are burdened with specifically *male* expectations. What is more, they are rather convinced that the expectations of mothers and fathers are similar. It is not without significance that Swedes do not care as much about the opinions of others, even their significant others. Under such conditions, it is easier for them to behave in ways they wish. As I show in the next chapter, this is relevant to our analysis of how men deal with *naturalised* differences between male and female parental roles.

6.3.2 Models of Motherhood and Women's Expectations

The prevailing model of motherhood greatly impacts both men's and women's engagement in parenting, as well as their expectations of their partners (Badinter 1981, 2011; Korolczuk and Hryciuk 2012b). The changing models of family and gender relations result in new models of parenthood. As Małgorzata Sikorska (2009, 189) assumes, the changing power balance between parents is one of the most important shifts in interpersonal relationships in contemporary Western societies. Yet the domination of women in the private sphere is still unquestioned. Agata Stanisz (2014, 203–208), based on extensive ethnographic research of Polish families, concludes that Polish fathers are absent from everyday family life and that they are deprived of agency within the private sphere. Female partners, by infantilising their male partners, reiterate that men, because of their sex, are innately incapable of properly fulfilling domestic obligations and engaging in care work—they do not know how to cook, how to clean, are not interested in family life and do not care about family relations. They have to be taught to engage in these life tasks. So the role of a mother or a woman is not only to take care of the family, but also to teach men how to be fathers.

The dominating role of a mother in the domestic sphere was present in both Swedish and Polish interviews. Men often indicate that their partners or wives are more engaged in the family sphere and know much more

about taking care of children. The women tend to control the domestic sphere and know what should be done in the household and how. They play the role of household *manager*. Men usually are fully aware that their partners are overwhelmed with domestic obligations:

> I don't know why, but sometimes I have an impression that she [the partner—KS] knows much more about all this caring stuff. And she is also better in organising the whole domestic work.
>
> (Sweden, Lars, 41 years old, 10-year-old, 7-year-old and 5-year-old children)

> I can't say that this [domestic—KS] obligations are mine, because my wife treats me as I could do nothing and I think she wouldn't leave me then, but for sure much greater burden is on my wife's side. I try to help, when I can, but still.
>
> (Poland, Wojciech, 26 years old, 21-month-old child)

Yet it does not mean that women expect men to be withdrawn from the domestic sphere. On the contrary, women's expectations are more congruent with the new model of fatherhood that requires men's greater engagement in care work and family life. The Swedish interviewees are perfectly aware of these expectations and often underline that they try to organise their life so that the division of work is the most equal. Support from the state in the form of public childcare institutions, as well as discursive resources promoting involved fathering, creates conditions that make it easier for fathers to actually fulfil these expectations. What is more, for many of the interviewees, partnership is key to a happy and long relationship:

> I try not to be that kind of father … I hear my girlfriend's friends how they complain about their men or … that they don't take responsibility or stuff like that and I don't compare in that way, but I say to myself "I don't wanna be that kind of guy," because I always help … because we planned this child, it was planned birth, so I said to myself that I wanna be there as much as I can.
>
> (Sweden, Oskar, 35 years old, 2-month-old child)

With Polish fathers, this drive to match women's new expectations was not that evident. The Polish fathers indicated that their partners expect

them to spend more time with children; the division of domestic work is rarely raised as an important issue. On the one hand, men might not always be aware of the domestic tasks. Expectations of Polish women, for male engagement in fatherhood, lay somewhere in between the traditional and new models of fatherhood:

> What I think about it is that the role of the father is to be a breadwinner. I don't say I can't work, but I'd prefer the situation in which my husband earns more and provide for this family. I also expect him to raise our son to be a man.
>
> (Poland, Ola, 28 years old, 7-year-old child)

Yet such a conservative approach is not very common in the narratives of interviewed Polish women. Most Polish mothers, in expressing their expectations, refer to the model of involved fatherhood and partnership. Women want their partners to actively engage in care work, to establish strong relationships with their children and also to share with them domestic duties:

> The point is that he wouldn't be a man who says "I earn money, I can go out for a beer with friend." Because it's not how it works, he has some social role to fulfil, he is a father, so he must do something, and actually he has to do everything what is connected to care for a child. If I work, everything should be shared 50/50, he cooks, I cook, he plays with her [the child—KS], I play with her, I talk to her, he talks to her. It should not be like … I only talk to her, because I can, and he doesn't have to. We simply have to be together.
>
> (Poland, Ula, 28 years old, 2.5-year-old child)
>
> And of course I can't imagine a situation in which fathers don't change diapers and don't take care of their children, because they are afraid.
>
> (Poland, Agnieszka, 21 years old, 2.5-year-old child)

The changing attitude towards men's engagement in care work in Polish society is a new social phenomenon. The reason for this lies with the strong conviction that parenthood, as well as other types of care work, is an area reserved for women. And women, because of biological predispositions, are naturally chosen to take care of other family members and children. In Polish culture there is a myth of the Mother-Pole (*mit Matki Polki*); this

figure is assigned to the domestic sphere and is expected to devote herself to childbearing and childrearing for the good of the country. The myth was particularly important while Poland was fighting for independence; the role of a woman was to take care of children and to raise patriots, who in the future would engage in fights or in building an independent and strong Poland. Consequently, the figure of the mother was characterised as a powerful woman who devoted herself to the homeland and children. She had the power to solve every household issue in hard times:

> In Poland, motherhood lies at the heart of the local ideals of femininity and national identity. Three vital symbolic figures linking motherhood and nation, idealizing women's suffering and patriotic self-sacrifice, continue to influence the representations, discourses, and practices of mothering in Poland. They are the Polish Mother, Poland as Mother and Madonna of the national shrine in Częstochowa. Rooted in the nation-building process of the 19th century (during the Partitions) and fueled by Catholic doctrine, these symbols continue to inform state policies and gender identity construction. (Korolczuk 2010b)

As Polish feminist researchers show, this myth impacts how motherhood and care work are perceived as women's concerns in contemporary Polish society. Elżbieta Korolczuk and Renata E. Hryciuk (2012b) deconstruct this myth and show the divergence between the romantic discourse and actual mothering, linking this to women's discrimination and disempowerment (see also Graff 2014; Korolczuk and Hryciuk 2012a; Korolczuk 2010a). The figure of the mother serves to sustain the prevailing patriarchal order in the society. This order was reinforced after 1989, when the power of Roman Catholic Church increased and the new restrictive laws on reproductive rights were introduced (in 1993 abortion was practically delegalised); at the same time, big reductions in expenditures on childcare were made. As a result, Polish society now deals with the so-called *women's reproductive strike*; that is, young Polish women decide not to have children, even though they often want to have them (Graff 2014, 61; Korolczuk and Hryciuk 2012b, 17).[6]

[6] For more on relations between motherhood and national discourses, see Goodman (2002), Grzebalska (2013, 55–63) and Molyneux (1981, 1985).

What is the role of Polish men in a family model that refers to the ideological and moral construction of motherhood, and parenthood in general? One problem is that men are excluded from this debate. Even though society has changed and the new expectations of fathers are more clearly articulated, the Polish discourse on parenthood is still based on beliefs about the special role of women that is ideologised and naturalised. Polish parents in the first decades of the twenty-first century have to deal with changing models of family life, as well as changing models of parenting, masculinity and femininity. On the one hand, for men, it is easier to refer to the traditional models that clearly define the men's role as breadwinning. On the other hand, the expectations of women are growing. This often puts men in a difficult position; they might feel confused and lost under the pressure of conflicting expectations, models of parenting, as well as their own beliefs and wishes:

> It is paradoxical, because only women are present in the media and therefore a parental role is only imposed on women. On the one hand, it is bad, because only women are expected to be parents, not men, and on the other hand men don't have any support … that you feel that maybe you'd like to do something, but the media don't say anything about that, so maybe this is stupid, you know. All in all, it is not nice to both sides; I mean it's not good for women either.
>
> (Poland, Bartek, 35 years old, 3-year-old child)

6.4 Men and Work–Life Balance[7]

6.4.1 Paid and Unpaid Work

> A: And what is the most problematic about fathering?
> B: Yeah, being there more, not being able to or … it's like maybe I should prioritise more being a parent, I am prioritising my work a lot and that's the hardest part and instead of that … just putting more effort on home and my wife, my kids. So I don't know, it is something which is pretty hard, just to be able … just to let work go, be home more, more focus … and I

[7] Some excerpts of this part were previously published in Suwada (2016).

> hope that it will be soon. I don't know when, I'll be comfortable just to change it, just to be with my family. That's being the hardest part, get those two parts together in some kind of harmony.
>
> (Sweden, Patrick, 32 years old, 7-year-old, 5-year-old and 9-month-old children)

> Everyone has to find his way, but the problem is that if men work so much, even if they want to take care of their children, they really work a lot, because they are the main breadwinners, then they are somehow automatically excluded from many things at home. They simply have no time.
>
> (Poland, Oskar, 40 years old, 9-year-old and 6-year-old children)

Tensions between different social expectations of fathers and mothers, from significant others as well as from the welfare state system, arise from the conflict between paid and unpaid work. In fact, the discussion about changing parental roles is a discussion about redefining care work to make it not only an area of women's practices and encouraging men to participate in it. In other words, it is a discussion about how to make society recognise care work as an important element of society. In the case of parenthood, the discussion centres on the issue of work–life balance. In the definitions of work–life balance, the conflict between roles in the labour market and in the domestic sphere is usually underlined. All individuals in contemporary societies have to adopt strategies that allow them to organise their lives so that tensions between requirements of the labour market and family life are not too high. It is not surprising that men and women experience the conflict between work and family differently. In general, expectations of women in the household are greater than men, even though they also participate in the labour market. To balance this double burden, women are more eager than men to work part time, work fewer hours and more often resign from their careers to accommodate parenthood (Lippe et al. 2006; Wattis et al. 2013). Nevertheless, since the gender roles are changing and moving in the direction of greater equality between men and women in both private and public spheres, the conflicts between work and family are becoming more similar for fathers and mothers (Lippe et al. 2006, 305).

As Gillian Ranson (2001) claims, the debate on new fatherhood concentrates mostly on how men participate in family life, whereas there is a lack of discussion about how fathers deal at work and how parenthood

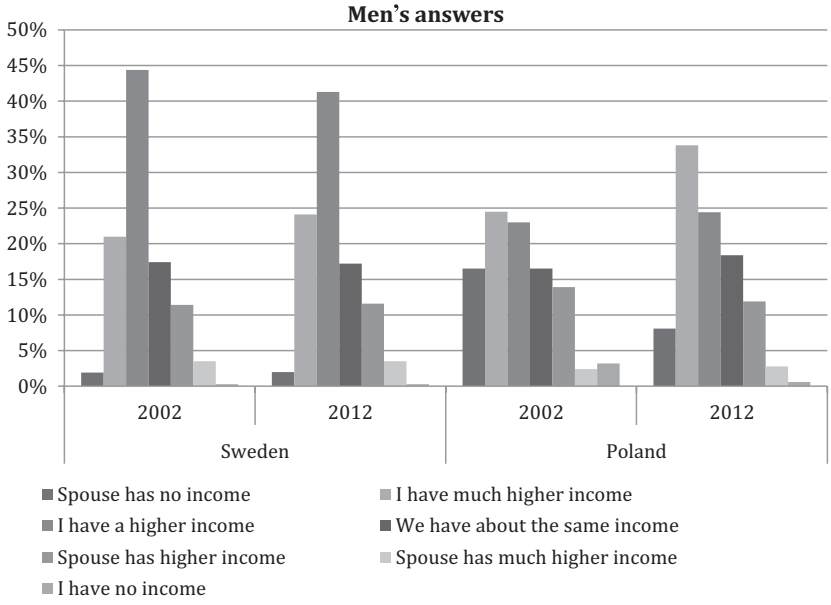
affects their work life (see Burnett et al. 2013). My aim is to partially fill this gap by analysing Swedish and Polish middle-class working men. What interests me here is how men in Sweden and Poland deal with the issue of work–life balance, what strategies they adopt to reconcile work with family life and what kind of problems they face. In analysing the work–life balance, one has to take into consideration at least three issues: (1) the family policy system and its mechanisms that might facilitate or hinder men's and women's opportunities to achieve work–life balance, (2) the relations between the employer and employees with children and (3) one's own expectations and ways of psychologically experiencing the role conflict (expectations that are usually shaped by the cultural models of parenthood). In the analysis, all these aspects are included, yet since the issue of family policy has already been discussed, as well as the definitions and models of fatherhood in both societies, this section concentrates mostly on the relations between employers and employees in the labour market and their impact on family life.

6.4.2 The Labour Market and Gender Wage Gap

Since being a man still means being a breadwinner in the family, it can be assumed that it is more difficult for men to resign from work in connection to parenthood. Besides the unequal division of unpaid work in the domestic sphere, the biggest problem for gender inequality is the gender wage gap. Men still earn more than women, and therefore for many families, it is financially impossible for men to resign from paid work or reduce working hours in connection to parenthood; very often, they cannot even afford to take a long parental leave. According to statistics from the European Union, although the gender pay gap is narrowing in most European countries, women in the EU still on average earn 16% less per hour than men. Surprisingly, despite the equalising family policies in Sweden, the gender wage gap is higher in Sweden (15.9%) than in Poland (6.4%) ("Tackling the Gender Pay Gap in the European Union" 2014). Yet, in both societies the problem is still serious and is recognised by individuals in everyday life. In the ISSP in 2002 and 2012, the question was asked: "Considering all sources of income, between you and

your spouse/partner, who has the higher income?" (see Graph 6.5). The results are unambiguous—both from the perception of men and that of women, men earn more. And in fact, for the last ten years, the answers have not changed much. The only significant change is the drop in percentage of Polish women who have no income at all (according to men's opinion in 2002, 16.5% of men had wives without incomes, in 2012 only 8.1%). In Sweden, less than 2% of men have a partner with no income. In both societies, only 16–18% of couples have the same income and only around 14–15% of men declare that their partners earn more.

Similar conclusions might be drawn from my interviews. Most men in both societies complain about gender inequality in the labour market. They notice this gap when they begin to consider how much parental leave they can use (this is mostly the case for Swedes) or as they talk about the barriers their wives and partners face in the labour market in connection to parenthood. The latter complaints mostly concern Polish women.



Graph 6.5 Considering all sources of income, between you and your spouse/partner, who has the higher income? *Source*: ISSP 2002 and 2012. Prepared by the author

In Sweden, from the perception of my interviewees, the right to be free from gender discrimination is met and an unemployed woman who has a small child or is pregnant still has the opportunity to find employment (some of my interviewees' partners were changing jobs during pregnancy or had successfully found employment):

> The thing is that we're kind of stuck in a society with men usually earn more than women. So for us if I stayed at home, we'd lose so much money on that and we cannot accustom to this budget, you know.
>
> (Sweden, Fredrik, 34 years old, 5-year-old and 8-year-old children)

> B: I look on my employees and people my wife works with and men work, whereas women don't. They stay at home and take care of children, this is their only one obligation.
> A: And do you think this is common among your colleagues?
> B. I used to think it is not common, because I looked at my friends, but … there are lots of people, even educated, who make such decisions. Sometimes such decisions are easy, because the woman cannot earn enough to pay for the baby-sitter. And then … the decision is easy.
>
> (Poland, Robert, 35 years old, 8-year-old and 5-year-old children)

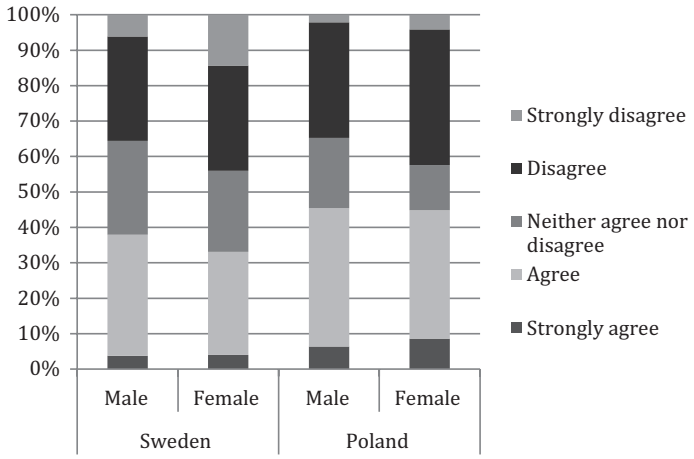
Polish men talk a lot about the problems women face in the labour market as a consequence of being a parent. Most problems are related to finding a new job, especially when a woman is not working. In the Polish childcare system, unemployed parents, mostly mothers, have difficulty in securing a placement in kindergarten because it is assumed that since they do not work, they have time to take care of children. As a consequence, their ability to look for a job and find one dramatically decreases. It was common that the Polish men interviewed did not face a similar problem. Polish men are expected to work and being a parent does not change this:

> I mean, I think that this is natural that you work. You have to reconcile it somehow. On the one hand, it is wonderful to be all the time with a kid, but on the other … life is expensive and you have to earn money, so everyone has to reconcile work with parenthood to some extent. Without a job it is hard to be a parent.
>
> (Poland, Błażej, 30 years old, 21-month-old child)

6.4.3 How to Achieve Work–Life Balance?

Since the situation in the labour market is very important for the financial well-being of middle-class families, the tension between having a career and being a parent is one of the main problems faced by my interviewees. The situation differs in Swedish and Polish societies. In the ISSP in 2012, people were asked to what extent they agree with the statement: "Having children restricts the employment and career chances of one or both parents." Graph 6.6 presents answers of people with children. Around 45% of Polish fathers and 46% of Polish mothers agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. At the same time, in Sweden, only 35% agreed. Although the situation in the labour market is worse for mothers than for fathers, in both societies, women are more eager to strongly disagree with this sentence, especially in Sweden (14.3% of women strongly disagree in comparison with 6.1% of Swedish men). Similarly, in Poland, mothers are more eager to disagree with this statement.

The problem with this question is that it does not separately ask about women and men. If it had done so, it can be assumed that the answers would be different; presumably, people would think that men's career



Graph 6.6 Having children restricts the employment and career chances of one or both parents. To what extent do you agree? *Source*: ISSP 2012. Prepared by the author

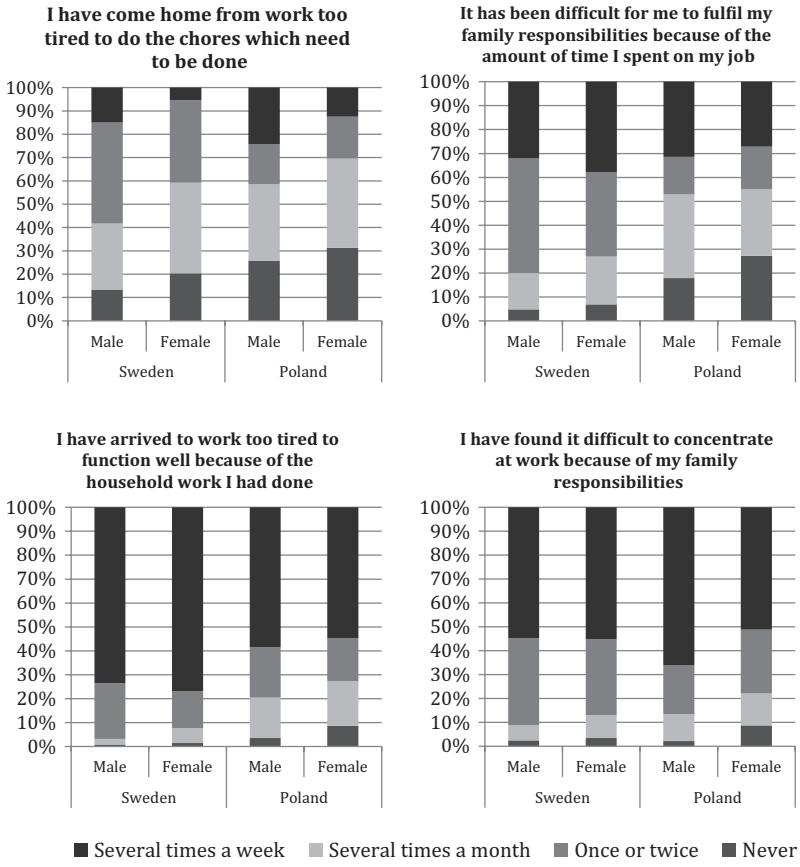
would be less restricted by having children than women's (see Boje 2006; Laurijssen and Glorieux 2013; Stier et al. 2012). Another problem is that, in the sentence, the logical conjunction (*or*) is used, and as a result, we do not know whether the respondents think that having children restricts the career of both or only one parent. From the perspective of gender equality, as well as the studies on men and fatherhood, this is a very important issue—whose career is restricted because of having children in a heterosexual couple? Do both parents have to resign from their careers or does only one have to? If only one, who? The mother or the father? In the *ideal* traditional, heterosexual family model, these problems would never occur. Since the mother's role was to take care of children in the domestic sphere, a man did not experience the conflict between family life and work—his role was to control financial issues. Together with women's emancipation and their growing participation in the labour market, the problem of work–life balance has become particularly evident. Yet, even though many women work to the same extent as men, their paid work is usually regarded as less oriented towards pursuing a successful career; it is rather seen as necessary to supplementing a family's income if they are not doing well financially, or work for women is seen as a kind of hobby that prevents women from being bored. This approach is especially evident in the Polish interviews. Polish fathers often underline their primary responsibility for breadwinning, whereas paid work of their partners is seen as something additional and not necessary. With the Swedish interviewees, the difference in the approach to parenthood and its impact on one's career is mostly visible in the way parental leave is divided. The Swedish interviewees often underline that they could not take a long parental leave since it would undermine their career or that they decided to work part time to avoid dropping their career path entirely or in order to maintain contact with their companies:

> In our case it is me who does the career. My wife has worked part-time since the childbirth, but I wouldn't say she's making a career. She doesn't really want to, she isn't motivated to achieve an occupational success. She knows that I can guarantee our family good living condition *and I think she accepts that and it's not a problem for her at all.* If she wanted to make a career and I wanted to make a career, then it'd be extremely difficult. Someone would have to resign.
>
> (Poland, Michał, 30 years old, 2.5-year-old twins)

> I have been working 60% and that kind of work is OK. I couldn't really work less, it would probably hurt me if I … sure I could have been away [on parental leave—KS] for 6 months, but then … *I would not come back to where I were*, I would have to do something else. And since she does not have this problem, she can easily draw back … anyway she wants to.
>
> (Sweden, Rickard, 31 years old, 12-month-old son)

In the Swedish case, the greater eagerness of women to take longer periods of parental leave might be explained not only by the *naturalised* differences between men and women, but also by the fact that more Swedish women work in the public sector than in the private one, whereas in the case of men, the situation is reversed—men dominate the private sphere (see Carlsson and Rooth 2008; Gonas 2006). This gender segregation of the labour market impacts the pay gap. In the public sector, the employers, that is, the state, must grant employees a long parental leave if they seek it; the state is responsible for setting a good example for other employers. The public agencies provide more mechanisms that are intended to encourage people to have children, including an additional allowance to supplement the parental benefit. It seems that even though in Swedish society the family model based on partnership is socially accepted and promoted by the state, the way parenthood affects employment and career choices is different for men and women. Men occupy a more privileged position since their professional position is never questioned. As Tanja van der Lippe et al. underline, "time spent in the labour market is a factor that is more often constant for men than it is for women" (2006, 305), and therefore, women experience more "combination pressures" than men. Combination pressures should be understood as pressures that result from the combination of two spheres that impose conflicting expectations on individuals. The category of *choice* is particularly significant here. Men can usually *choose* to what extent they want to be engaged in family life—for how long they are going to stay on parental leave or if they want to reduce their working hours. Of course, most decisions made in the family are presented as a result of negotiations that ended up in a consensus, but in fact, the cultural models of masculinity and femininity reinforce the man's right to choose over the woman's right (see Miller 2011; Titkow et al. 2004; Titkow 2010).

Another issue that arises is how paid work affects family life and a parent's contribution to domestic obligations. In the ISSP in 2012, several questions were asked about the way people experience these conflicting roles. Graph 6.7 shows answers only of people with children. The results clearly show that in both societies women's condition is more affected by the conflicting expectations from both spheres; women are, more often than men, too tired to do the chores, which need to be done,



Graph 6.7 How often each of the following happened to you during the past three months? *Source*: ISSP 2012. Prepared by the author

after they return from work and have more difficulty in concentrating at work because of family responsibilities. But what has also been observed is that in general Swedish parents experience less combination pressures than Polish parents. They have less problems with fulfilling their family responsibilities in comparison with Polish parents—almost 77% of Swedes say that they never or only once or twice a year have problems with fulfilling family responsibilities because of the amount of time spent at work. In comparison, 22.3% of Poles have such problems several times a week and 31.6% have them several times a month.

What is interesting is the relationship between paid work duties and domestic obligations. It seems that, in both societies, paid work has more of an impact on the way individuals deal with home duties than the other way round. In both societies, more than 55% (in the case of Sweden up to around 75%) declared that they had never arrived at work too tired to function well because of the household work. Only 6% of Polish citizens noted that they had faced this dilemma several times a week; in Sweden, it was 1% (although what should be noted here is that women experienced such dilemmas more often). It seems that most people prioritise paid work and that it is more important to fulfil this duty more properly than household duties. In Sweden, where the conflict between paid and unpaid work seems to be less overt, state support is a significant asset to Swedish parents, helping them to balance care work for children (and also for the elderly).

A similar conclusion can be drawn from the interviews. The tension between work and parenthood is most visible in the example of care work. On becoming a parent, the amount of obligations within the household grows dramatically (see Dribe and Stanfors 2009; Kuhhirt 2012; Schober 2013). The way in which care work is organised, whether it must be obtained privately or whether it is provided by the state, that is, public day care institutions, significantly impacts parents. Since in Sweden it is easy to get a placement in preschool, obtaining care work is not seen as problematic even if both parents are working. Also Swedish fathers underline how positive employers are when parents take a long parental leave or take a day off when a child is sick:

> Maybe it depends, where you work, but in my company I don't have any problems, when I take a day off or have to go out earlier … Nobody is

saying that I'm lazy or something like that, everyone does it, everyone understands.

(Sweden, Andreas, 39 years old, 2-month-old child)

A: It is difficult for you to bring together your professional job and raising your child?

G: No, it is not. But I think I am very fortunate, because I have a job which is very flexible, flexible in time and … I mean I can arrive late in the morning if I would need to, I can take day off if it is cool with my clients. And also I can leave earlier if I need. So, it is very flexible.

(Sweden, Johan, 44 years old, 6-year-old child)

What is also characteristic of Swedish fathers is that they often do not face problems if they bring their children to their workplace. In general, children are highly accepted in the Swedish public sphere. Parents shop with children, take them to restaurants and pubs, and in almost every library, there is a place where children can play and so on. In fact, it is natural that, in every social sphere, children are present; therefore, taking one's child to the office is not intolerable and seen as something strange. Conversely, it is seen as completely natural and reasonable:

I actually spend quite a lot of time in the office with my son, he's probably the child who was in the office the most often. So it's quite common … let's say that my team is working over weekend for instance and I probably go by and then I would take my son. As I said we are not really a typical company, we don't have overtime, but we sometimes work in inconvenient times and OK if I work on Saturday, what then? Do I count it as a working time? And Forsakringskassan [Swedish Social Insurance Agency—KS] they are very old-school, the system would never support things like that. So basically unless weekends are free, I usually take my son … and also during some of my parental leave days during the week … and we spend some time in the office, because I have some meetings or something and I bring him with me. And of course I could be a more efficient parent, I could spend more time with him on those parental days, and not be on these meetings, I guess.

(Sweden, Rickard, 31 years old, 12-month-old child)

The case of Rickard is a good example because he was working part time and was on part-time parental leave. So it happened that sometimes he

had to be in the office when he officially had a parental leave day. But since he was very career oriented, he did not want to omit important meetings and events; instead, he preferred to take his son with him to the office. As he stated, nobody was against this and everyone understood his decision.

Another contrasting picture is drawn from the Polish interviews. The way in which care work is organised usually poses a big problem for the family, especially when a woman decides not to take the unpaid extensive leave or parents do not get help from grandparents. One solution is to hire a babysitter, but this option is limited to people with high earnings:

> The problem with nannies is dramatic. Working men … nowadays there is even the lack of this relationship with grandparents. Grandparents, at least in big cities, they are becoming grandparents in their fifties, maybe sixties and they are still active in the labour market. My parents were sixty, so how can they help? We have no grandparents who could help us. So if both parents want to work, they need to hire a nanny. Illegally of course. And this is very expensive.
>
> (Poland, Robert, 35 years old, 8-year-old and 5-year-old children)

Interviewed fathers also indicated the problem of long breastfeeding periods and women's decision to come back to work directly after the maternity leave. When I conducted my interviews, the maternity leave was 26 weeks long; thus, many people had problems with organising the day without access to childcare institutions:

> First of all, there is a lack of right for mothers at work for example. What I observe, looking on young mothers, for example my sister-in-law … The employers are not helping mothers who are breastfeeding and who need to be at home in the afternoon to put the child to sleep. Ok, their work time is shortened, but that's all. Nobody cares if they are working in the morning or in the evening and this is stupid.
>
> (Poland, Rafał, 26 years old, 6-month-old child)

Yet the shift-work mentioned by Rafał is not always seen as problematic under Polish conditions. In fact, in many cases, it allows parents to organise their week in such a way that they do not need to hire a full-time

babysitter or ask grandparents to take care of the child. In such a situation, they rotate the caregiver role, although this often leads to situations where they do not spend much time together. This strategy is also adopted by people whose working hours are flexible, who can work at home or have their own companies and can freely schedule their work. The paradox of this situation is created by the unfriendly conditions for parents in contemporary Poland—just to name a few: the lack of placements in kindergartens, low wages, shift-work—that force couples to adopt partnership in the organisation of their family life. They often do not have a choice and have to share all responsibilities, even if on the level of discourse, they support a traditional model with a strict division between female and male parental obligations. Thus, although the Polish system is characterised as implicitly genderising, in families in which women's paid work is unquestioned, the lack of state support makes men more involved in care work and domestic obligations. Now the question is, to what extent it transforms people's views on gender roles, motherhood and fatherhood?

6.5 Chapter Summary: Fathers' Embedment in the Institutional Context

The father's embedment in the institutional and social contexts shows that the way men engage in their parental roles not only results from their own choices, but is also affected by the family policy system, gender beliefs and stereotypes, as well as by other people's expectations. All of these might have conflicting interests and might impose on men conflicting obligations. As Barbara Hobson and David Morgan underline:

> Policy frameworks shape the kinds of choices men make as fathers and foster certain kinds of identities and interests. *Public discourse creates hegemonic ideologies around fatherhood, which can be enabling or constraining for fathers*. A growing emphasis on fatherhood and care has provided men with discursive resources to make claims upon their employers. These same ideologies, when they are at odds with cultural and ethnic practices of fathering, can lead to conflict in families and divorce. (2002, 14; emphasis added)

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, fathers in the European context have to deal with opposing models of fatherhood, one that refers to a conservative model of family and another that promotes gender equality. The central issue in this conflict is the way care work is perceived and appreciated, as well as who is seen as the main caregiver. The significance of this issue becomes particularly evident in comparative research of Swedish and Polish societies. As underlined in the report of the Social Diagnosis 2013—a project based on panel research that aims to investigate households and their occupants in Poland (Strzelecki et al. 2013; Czapliński 2014)—Poland is part of a group of countries in which the reconciliation of work with family obligations is the most difficult. The employment ratio shows that men's and women's employment is greatly impacted by the number of children they have and their children's age. For men, having children enforces their participation in the labour market, whereas for women, the more children they have and the younger they are, the more restricted a woman's participation is in the labour market. This indicates that care work is still perceived as a woman's obligation and there is limited state support of care work. Consequently, for the Polish middle-class families, the conflict between paid work and parenthood is sharp. The situation in Swedish societies shows that support from the state through child care institutions and the cultural emphasis on the important role that men play in care work help parents to reduce conflict between work and family life.

This also has a great impact on men's situation and the way they deal with their parental roles. One the one hand, men are usually oriented more towards paid work than their female partners. Their career is often more important for them and, consequently, can be a major obstacle that impedes their engagement in care work within the domestic sphere. On the other hand, together with the new model of involved fatherhood, the expectations of fathers are becoming more similar to the expectations imposed on mothers. Therefore, the conflict between family life and work is becoming more and more overt for men. In the literature, the feeling of being lost, as experienced by fathers, is often underlined, such as when Tomasz Szlendak writes, "The new father is a figure a little bit helpless and stressed, because a number of new requirements is imposed on him and at the same time the old ones are not eliminated" (2011,

451). Yet the feeling of being lost is more evident in the case of the Polish fathers—they have to function in a reality where the two conflicting models of fatherhood impose on them different obligations. The Swedish case shows that the coherent and interventionist social policy can actually help men to reject traditional models and adopt new models. In fact, my Swedish interviewees often talked about their fathering experiences using the discourse of shared parenting adopted by the Swedish state. The problem that emerges here is that, on the institutional and structural level, full partnership and equality between men and women is difficult to achieve. There is the problem of gender pay gap, as well as gender-based segregation of the labour market, but also individuals' expectations that might refer to the traditional model of family:

> It is funny that, I think, most people in Sweden in one way are for equality and believe it should be the same for everyone, so it is good when woman has a good position in working life and so on, but at the end of the day it is often that the father is doing more work and the mother is staying home anyway.
>
> (Sweden, Christian, 36 years old, 16-month-old child)

Keeping in mind the ways in which Swedish and Polish fathers define their parental roles and the institutional context in which fatherhood is embedded today, the following chapter concentrates on fathering in everyday life and on the parenting practices men are involved in and the division of domestic work in Swedish and Polish households.

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7

"I Had No Idea It Is So Hard": Practices of Fatherhood

7.1 Introduction

The division of domestic chores and care work between men and women is an important theme in the literature on gender equality, parenthood and work–life balance (see Ahlberg et al. 2008; Dotti Sani 2014; Dribe and Stanfors 2009; Duch-Krzystoszek 2007; Fahlen 2012; Fuwa and Cohen 2007; Kuhhirt 2012; Schober 2013; Sevón 2011; Titkow et al. 2004). The amount of time men and women spend on housework is closely connected to women's situation in the labour market, the gender wage gap, as well as a state's family policy mechanisms. How men and women divide housework hours is also a consequence of a society's gender beliefs and social expectations of mothers and fathers. As Giulia Maria Dotti Sani underlines, people behave according to perceived proper practices for an individual. These "proper practices" are connected not only to an individual's gender, but also to their position within the social structure of their society (2014, 3). Some researchers have noted that the gender gap in housework is narrowing (Hook 2006, 2010). This narrowing is often connected to the *diffusion of egalitarian values*, across both individual and societal levels, and the *structural changes* in the relationships between

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men and women (Dotti Sani 2014, 2). The cultural changes in women's behaviour have caused a shift in men's behaviour in the domestic sphere.

Yet in contemporary European societies, housework is still largely regarded as a "woman's thing"; consequently, inequality between heterosexual couples prevails. The gender division of work is even more evident in the case of couples with children (Dribe and Stanfors 2009):

> Namely, domestic work hours range particularly high for mothers, whereas men's specialization on market work is somewhat more advanced in the presence of children. (Kuhhirt 2012, 565)

An analysis of systems in welfare states shows that family policy mechanisms can impact the division of housework. On the one hand, the instruments of the *degenderising* system can favour the equalitarian model, whereas the structural mechanisms of the *genderising* system can hinder it. As Jennifer L. Hook (2006) indicates, the effect of having children on men and their engagement in unpaid work is connected to women's national employments hours, the length of parental leave available, the parental leave replacement rate and men's right to use a long parental leave. In this context, men's participation in domestic and care work is more connected to the institutional context than to personal traits.

In general, men spend more time at their workplace than do women. Gender beliefs about male parenting are still strictly connected to the role of the breadwinner. As Caroline Gatrell (2007) shows with her qualitative research on married and cohabiting couples, parenthood and the division of domestic work are based on the power imbalance between men and women. As a consequence, many men feel, to some extent, ambivalent about their partner's employment since they might see this as a threat to their hegemonic position.

In this chapter, an analysis of fathering, that is, practices connected to male parenthood, is presented. The aim is to show how Swedish and Polish men engage in domestic and care work. From the constructivist approach, the division of domestic work is seen as a result of *doing gender*; gender beliefs are theorised to be so deeply acquired in the process of socialisation and transformed in the *habitus* of women and men that it is difficult for an individual to escape from them. The tension between

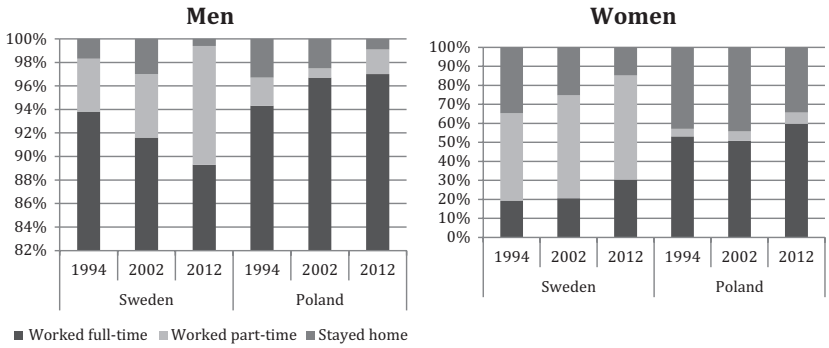
gender beliefs about parental roles and men's parenting behaviour is the main theme of this chapter.

7.2 Fathering, Paid Work and the Division of Domestic Obligations Within a Household: Some Statistics

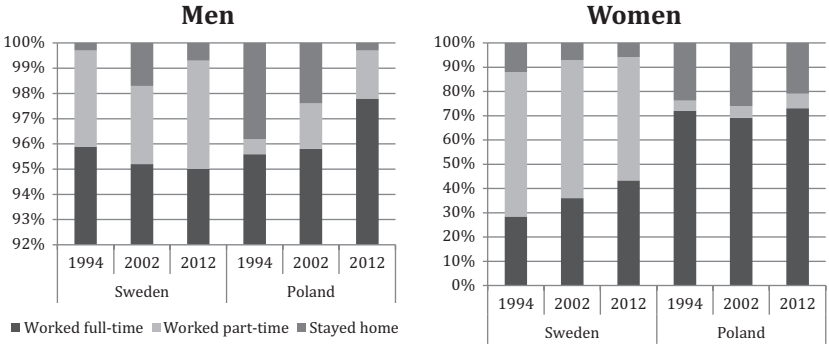
7.2.1 Men's and Women's Paid Work

Polish men, as well as the Polish system, are more eager to define the role of the father in terms of breadwinning and that, for both, there is still a strict distinction between motherhood and fatherhood. In contrast, male Swedish interviewees avoid discussing the differences between the roles of the mother and father, and prefer to define parenthood in terms of partnership and equality. The Swedish men are also aware that distinct parental roles are culturally and socially constructed, and not necessarily a result of biological differences between men and women. Yet the level of definitions is not always congruent with the level of practices. In the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) in 2012, a series of questions were asked about the household division of labour and parents' engagement in paid work after having a child. Since parenthood for men is primarily connected to their ability to provide financial stability for the family, the participation of fathers and mothers in the labour market is first examined.

In 1994, 2002 and 2012, respondents were asked if they worked outside the home when their children were under school age and after their youngest child started school (Graphs 7.1 and 7.2). In both Swedish and Polish societies, men's full-time work is unquestioned, more than 90% of men worked full time when the child was under school age, and over 95% after the youngest child started school (on both of the graphs showing men's answers, the Y-axis starts on a point over 80%, in contrast to the graphs with women's answers, on which the Y-axis *normally* starts with 0%). Yet the situations in Sweden and Poland are not similar. Since 1994, the number of Swedish men working full time has been decreasing and,



Graph 7.1 Did you work outside the home when the child was under school age? *Source*: ISSP 1994, 2002 and 2012. Prepared by the author



Graph 7.2 Did you work outside the home after the youngest child started school? *Source*: ISSP 1994, 2002 and 2012. Prepared by the author

in 2012, it dropped slightly below 90%. At the same time, the number of fathers working part time doubled (from 4.5% to 10.1%). The situation of Swedish men with school-age children has not changed. In Poland, in both cases, the situation is stable, with a slight tendency to increase.

In comparison with men's participation in the labour market, the situation of women is dramatically different. Parenthood also affects Swedish and Polish mothers differently. In Swedish society the number of employed mothers has been systematically increasing since 1994, yet the largest proportion of women, having both a preschool-aged child and a school-aged child, have been working part time for those two decades

(around 50–55%). The number of women working full time increases after their children start school, and since 1994, there has been a significant drop in the percentage of women who stay home (in 1994, 34.7% of women with a preschool-aged child were not engaged in any kind of paid work in comparison with only 14.8% in 2012). The numbers are even lower for families in which the youngest child started school, 12% and 5.8% accordingly. The situation of Polish women differs mostly because of the low numbers of individuals working part time—only around 4–6% of women. In comparison with the Swedish data, since 1994, more than 50% of Polish women have worked full time when they had an under-school-age child; these numbers increase to 70% as the youngest child starts school. Other than this though, there is still a significant number of Polish mothers staying home. The differences in the employment of Swedish and Polish women is connected to the differences in the Swedish and Polish labour markets, as well as to the different family policy mechanisms that help reconcile family life with work. In the Polish setting, part-time work is not as popular as it is in Sweden and is often connected to very low wages, which might not be enough to afford a private preschool or to hire a babysitter.

Interestingly, the position of men in the labour market is unquestioned. Yet, the growing number of men deciding to reduce their working hours in response to parenthood suggests that fatherhood is becoming more connected to care work than to financial obligations. The ISSP data show that the number of Swedish men working part time when the child is of preschool age has doubled since 2002 (5.4% in 2002 and 10.10% in 2012). During this decade the Swedish government decided to directly encourage men to use parental leave days. Therefore, the *daddy quota* was extended to two months in 2002, and the gender equality bonus was introduced in 2008. The Swedish system gives parents a chance to combine parental leave with part-time work, and according to the analysis of my interviews, it seems this is the most attractive option for men, who are more oriented towards careers than women and less eager to take long periods of full-time parental leave.

Another area demonstrating the relationship between cohabitating partners is revealed in the process of decision-making. In the case of family life, two issues seem to be the most important—first, the way

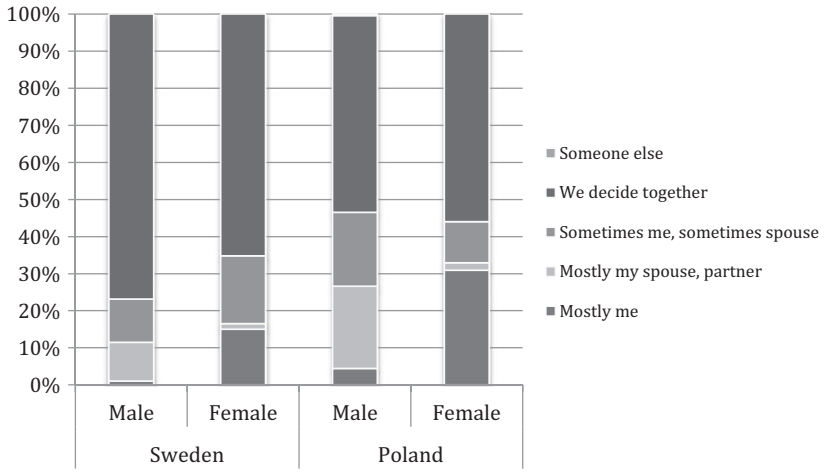
the income is managed and who is primarily responsible for household finances; second, who is making the primary decisions about how to raise the children. On Graph 7.3, the following ISSP question is presented: *how do you and your spouse/partner organise the income that one or both of you receive?* The way money is divided and managed shows the degree of autonomy of both individuals in the couple. From this perspective, the relationships between Swedish partners are more independent and individualised. Around 12% of Swedes claim that they keep their money separate. There is an interesting difference between Swedish men and women; women in general think that the finances in the family are more separated than men do. Around 36.5% of women claim that they pool some money and the rest is managed separately, in comparison with only 26% of men. Men, instead, are more eager to think that they pool all money and each one takes out what she or he needs (57% in comparison with 47% of women). According to 5.2% of men and 2.2% of women, the money is managed by one person. Conversely in Poland, women (74.3%) more often claim that they pool all of the income and each one takes money when she or he needs to than men do (65.3%). Men are also more eager to claim that their finances are, to some extent, independent. What is interesting in the situation of Polish couples is that almost 12%

Graph 7.3 How do you and your spouse/partner organise the income that one or both of you receive? Please choose the option that comes closest. *Source*: ISSP 2012. Prepared by the author

of Polish men believe that their partner/spouse manages all of the money and gives them their share. But only 8.4% of women think that they are actually responsible for family finances. The situation in which men were the only individual responsible for the income is indicated by only 5% of men and 3.3% of women.

It seems that the partners in the Swedish couples are more financially independent than Polish partners. Swedish women's greater eagerness to claim financial independence might indicate that Swedish women want to feel independent from their male partners. This eagerness might be explained by the fact that all reforms from the 1970s onwards have aimed to create individualised societies, within both the public and private spheres.

Beside the financial decisions made in the household, partners also have to make decisions regarding their children and the way they will raise them. In the ISSP a question about this was asked—*who usually makes/made the decisions about how to bring up your children?* Since the answers, in the form of multiple choices, differ in the Swedish and Polish part of the survey in 2012, I decided to present the data from 2002 (see Graph 7.4). In both societies there is a general consensus that the parents



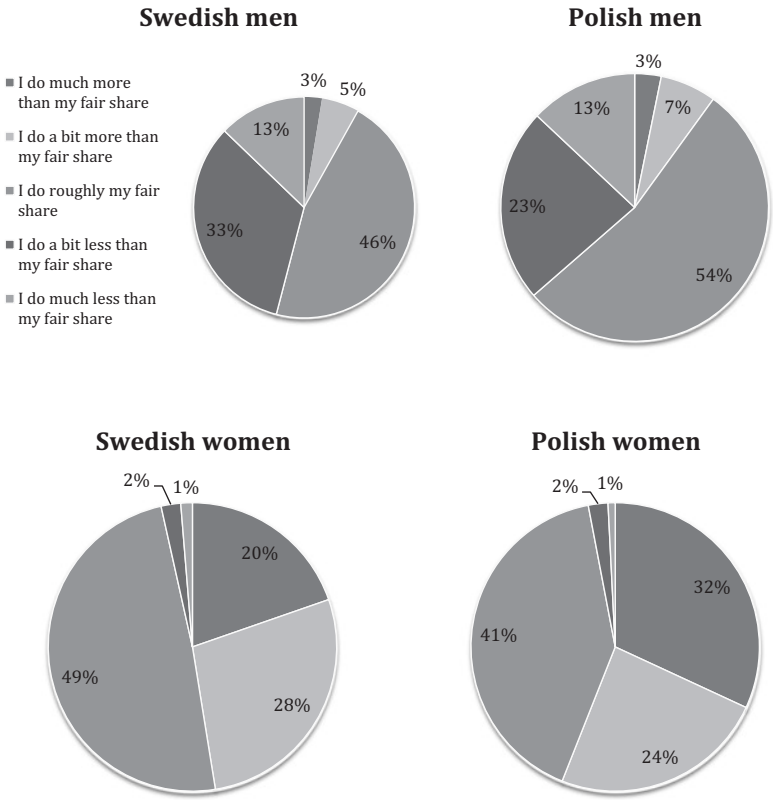
Graph 7.4 Who usually makes/made the decisions about how to bring up your children? *Source*: ISSP 2002. Prepared by the author

decide together how to bringing up their children. Yet Swedish parents make this declaration at a rate higher than Poles (70% in comparison with 55% of Poles). If the decisions are not made jointly, then in both societies, women are more often in control of this decision-making. In Polish society, according to women's declarations, in 30% of households, women make the childrearing decisions. Around 22% of Polish men think so.

The results analysed here from the ISSP panel on "Family and changing gender roles" show that the institution of family is still gendered and that the division between parental roles relies on the traditional model, in which women are responsible for the domestic sphere, whereas men belong to the public sphere. The unquestioned participation of fathers in the labour market, even though more and more women also work part or full time, indicates that men have to decide less often whether to resign from their career in connection to parenthood. On the other hand, duties strictly connected to the domestic sphere, such as planning the family budget or making decisions about raising children, are more often regarded as part of the female domain. Yet, as shown in Chap. 2, the organisation of family is constantly changing, and in both societies, we can observe a growing number of mothers of preschool children working full time, growing independence of individuals within couples, as well as a growing (albeit slowly) number of men who choose to concentrate more on their parental roles than on their career (this is mostly the case in Sweden).

7.2.2 The Division of Housework

Besides the asymmetrical situations of men and women in relation to the labour market, there is also an unequal division of work within the household. Even in societies with a small gender wage gap and with a strong gender equality policy, men are less eager to engage in domestic and care work, which leaves women with a double burden. Also the data from ISSP show the considerable inequalities that exist between men's and women's participation in unpaid work. Answers to the questions asked in 2012 about sharing of household work in the couple show the asymmetrical division of domestic chores in the Swedish and Polish households (see Graph 7.5). Around 48% of Swedish women and 56%



Graph 7.5 Which of the following best applies to the sharing of household work between you and your spouse/partner? *Source*: ISSP 2012. Prepared by the author

of Polish women declare that they do much more or a bit more than their fair share. In comparison, 8% and 10%, accordingly, of men give such answers. What is more, there is a discrepancy, particularly visible in the Polish case, between men's and women's declarations about doing roughly a fair share of household work. Around 54% of Polish men believe they complete roughly a fair share of household work, in comparison with only 41% of Polish women. In general, among all answers, the differences between men's and women's declarations in the Swedish case are narrower than in the Polish case. Based on only the responses from women, it

seems that the Swedish share domestic duties with their female partners more often than Polish men. What is more, a comparison of Swedish and Polish men shows that Swedes are more aware that domestic chores are divided unequally, and Swedish men are more likely to admit that they do a bit or much less than they should do (46% Swedes declare so in comparison with 36% Poles).

Several doubts arise in analysing this data. First, the question is, whose answers, women's or men's, are more in accordance with reality? Since people tend to present themselves as a better person, it can be assumed that men are too optimistic in their declarations about their participation in domestic work. Second, one must ask what people understand by *fair share*. It is likely that in families where the woman does not work outside of the household, *fair share* is understood in terms of the traditional division between male and female roles, according to which men participate in the labour market and women are responsible for domestic work. Nevertheless, the survey indicates that women feel they do more than they should and men agree with that.

Routine domestic work consists of different duties within the household. In the ISSP survey, questions were raised about doing the laundry, making small repairs, caring for sick family members, shopping, doing the household cleaning and preparing meals. In Table 7.1, the answers of men with at least one child are presented. In general, the only duty that is primarily performed by men, in both Swedish and Polish societies, is that of making small repairs. More than 80% of Swedish men and 90% of Polish men always or usually do this. The other duties are areas in which women dominate. The domination of women in traditionally female tasks is especially evident in Polish society. Around 90% of Polish men declare that their partners/spouses always or usually do the laundry, while 70% of Polish men declare that their partners/spouses prepare the meals. The most shared duties are caring for sick family members and shopping for groceries, yet women in general are more often involved in these practices. In comparing Swedish and Polish fathers, Swedes always declare greater involvement in the domestic work than do Poles.

The declarations presented in Table 7.1 show only men's opinion about how they engage in domestic work. If one compares the men's and women's answers, once again, a discrepancy between their opinions appears.

Table 7.1 In your household who does the following things …? Answers of men with at least one child

	Does the laundry		Makes small repairs		Cares for sick family members	
	Sweden	Poland	Sweden	Poland	Sweden	Poland
Always me	2.6%	0%	**35.9%**	**53.4%**	0.9%	0.9%
Usually me	9.4%	0.7%	**45.3%**	**38.5%**	6.2%	1.8%
About equal or both together	21.4%	8.1%	12%	1.4%	**64.6%**	**58.7%**
Usually my spouse/partner	**38.5%**	**23.6%**	1.7%	3.4%	**25.7%**	**15.6%**
Always my spouse/partner	**26.5%**	**66.9%**	3.4%	2%	2.7%	19.3%
Is done by a third person	1.7%	0.7%	1.7%	1.4%	0%	3.7%
	Shops for groceries		Does the household cleaning		Prepares the meals	
	Sweden	Poland	Sweden	Poland	Sweden	Poland
Always me	1.7%	1.4%	0.9%	0.7%	6%	1.4%
Usually me	14.5%	8.1%	10.3%	2.7%	11.2%	4.7%
About equal or both together	**54.7%**	**49.3%**	**31.6%**	**28.4%**	**33.6%**	20.9%
Usually my spouse/partner	**24.8%**	**23.6%**	**45.3%**	**37.2%**	**39.7%**	**29.1%**
Always my spouse/partner	3.4%	16.9%	6.8%	29.1%	9.5%	**41.9%**
Is done by a third person	0.9%	0.7%	5.1%	2%	0%	2%

Source: ISSP 2012. Prepared by the author. The bolded numbers indicate the most common answers.

The example of such dissimilarities is presented in Table 7.2. In the first cell, the men's extensive engagement in care work might be surprising. The women's answers suggest that, even though many men declare equal sharing of care work with their partners, in many families, it is still the female duty. Only 3.9% of Swedish women and 0.7% of Polish women say that men always or usually care for sick family members. Additionally, there is a huge discrepancy between the declarations about equal sharing—13% in Sweden and almost 20% in Poland. It might suggest that men are not always aware of how much care work women do during the week.

Similarly, in the case of household cleaning, men declare that they do more than their partners think they do. And as it is shown in Table 7.2,

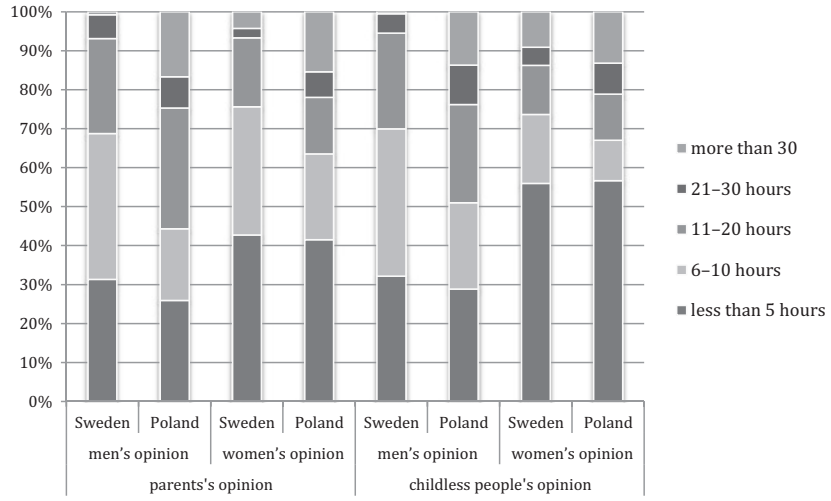
Table 7.2 In your household who does the following things …?

	Cares for sick family members				Does the household cleaning			
	Sweden		Poland		Sweden		Poland	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Always men	0.9%	0.8%	0.9%	0.7%	0.90%	1.4%	0.7%	0%
Usually men	6.2%	3.1%	1.8%	0%	10.3%	2.9%	2.7%	1.6%
About equal or both together	**64.6%**	**51.6%**	**58.7%**	**39.9%**	31.6%	31.7%	28.4%	18%
Usually women	**25.7%**	33.6%	**15.6%**	23.2%	**45.3%**	**43.2%**	**37.2%**	**26.2%**
Always women	2.7%	**10.9%**	19.3%	**32.6%**	**6.8%**	**17.3%**	**29.1%**	**50.8%**
Is done by a third person	0%	0%	3.7%	3.6%	5.1%	3.6%	2%	3.3%

Source: ISSP 2012. Prepared by the author. The bolded numbers indicate the most significant answers.

in half of the Polish households, women are always responsible for the cleaning. The situation in the Swedish households is more equalised, yet the household cleaning is almost never indicated as an area in which men dominate.

This discrepancy between men's and women's opinion about men's engagement in household work is also visible in declarations about the number of hours devoted to domestic duties. Graph 7.6 shows men's and women's answers to the question—*on average, how many hours a week do you personally spend on household work, not including childcare and leisure time activities?*—but about their partners/spouses. Additionally, the replies of parents and people who do not have children are shown separately. As has been mentioned above, having children is related to an increase in the number of hours devoted to domestic and care work. According to the responses of Swedish and Polish men, childless men and fathers spend a similar number of hours on housework. In contrast, according to women, childless men spend fewer hours on housework (around 56% of men spend less than five hours a week) than fathers. The explanation for such difference might lie in the fact that, in connection

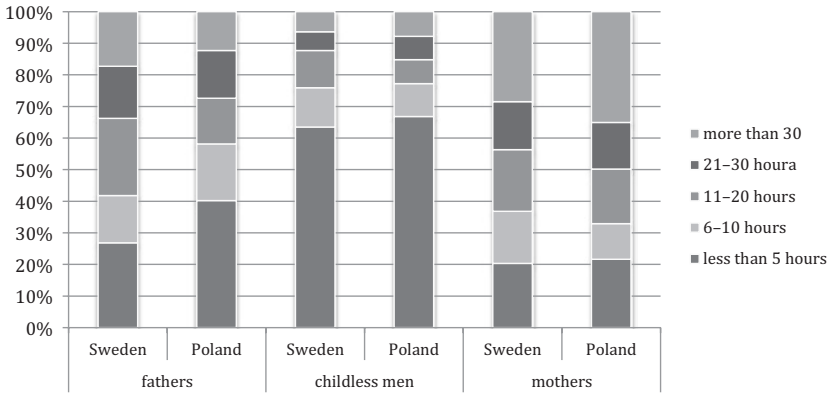


Graph 7.6 How many hours do men spend on household work, not including childcare and leisure time activities? *Source*: ISSP 2012. Prepared by the author

to parenthood, the number of hours spent on paid work does not change for men (Baxter et al. 2008); they also do not feel that there is more work at home. For women, the situation is different; since they are the parent primarily responsible for the domestic sphere, they are more aware of the increasing number of household chores and, therefore, they expect that men's engagement should rise accordingly.

The previous graphs confirm that, in general, Swedish men declare spending more hours on housework than Polish men. A similar opinion is characteristic of women's responses.

Although men do not feel that their engagement in domestic work increases as they become parents, they definitely feel that parenting is connected to a significant increase in hours spent on care work. Graph 7.7 shows men's declarations of the number of hours devoted to care work (ISSP 2012). Most childless men (around 65%), both in Sweden and in Poland, spend less than five hours a week looking after family members. The situation changes markedly in the case of fathers—26.8% of Swedish men and 40.2% of Polish men spend less than five hours a week on care work. Presumably, they mostly engage in care over their



Graph 7.7 On average, how many hours a week do you spend looking after family members (e.g. children, elderly, ill or disabled family members)? *Source*: ISSP 2012. Prepared by the author

children, not other family members. Though the situations of childless men in Sweden and Poland are rather similar, the situations of Swedish and Polish fathers differ significantly.

On the one hand, Polish fathers seem to spend far less time on care work than Swedish fathers. More than half of Polish fathers spend less than ten hours a week on care work in comparison with one third of Swedes. At the same time, the situations of Swedish and Polish mothers are much more similar than of fathers. One third of mothers spend more than 30 hours a week on care work. Only 20% spend less than five hours. Hypothetically, these women do not want to resign from their career and have greater external support, for instance, a highly engaged partner, access to a day care institution, or help from grandparents, or they can afford private childcare.

* * *

The statistics presented in this section clearly show that parenthood has a different meaning for women and men, not only in regard to the bodily experience of pregnancy and breastfeeding, but also in the way it affects individuals' careers in the labour market and engagement in domestic and care work. Although it seems that Swedish men are more eager than Polish men to cross traditional gender roles and engage in practices that stereotypically are regarded as female, in the contemporary

model of family, there is still a clear division between female and male areas and parenting obligations. In the following sections, based on the qualitative interviews and literature, I try to ascertain what determines this gender order.

7.3 Experience of Being a Father

7.3.1 Becoming a Father

The earlier research on parenthood, especially motherhood (Craig 2007; Miller 2005, 2011; Sevón 2011), suggests that the birth of a child has a great impact on a couple's everyday life, as well as on the new parents' identity. In the life course perspective, it is assumed that in an individual's life, there are points or periods that have a significant impact on their identity and initiate transitions that introduce them into clearly distinctive social roles (Hockey 2003, 3–20). The anthropologist Arnold van Gennep calls them *the rites of passage* (Gennep 1960). From this perspective, the life of human beings is full of biographical turning points that substantially change their life course and have an impact on their identities and self-identities. One such point is parenthood. Becoming a parent usually means a serious reorganisation of an individual's life, not only on the level of self-conception, but also on the level of relationships with other people, especially the other parent. Yet, as previous chapters indicate, this process of change is not only a result of personal traits and choices, but also strictly connected to the cultural patterns of parenting and expectations other people have towards new parents. As Eija Sevón underlines:

> Cultural narratives may be sought in order to maintain a sense of identity, coherence and self worth, especially in the turning points, disruption and transitions of our lives, when our experiences do not readily make sense. (Sevón 2011, 64)

Also in my interviews, the moment of becoming a parent was usually described as an important point in the interviewees' lives. In this section

I concentrate on the changes men experience as they become fathers, the changes on the identity level, as well as the changes connected to the reorganisation of everyday life.

Parenthood is often seen as a natural step in a human's life. Most of the interviewed men underline that they always wanted to have children. Especially Polish fathers, who, on the one hand, see it as an essential aspect of human nature, as human species we are *programmed* to have offspring, and on the other hand, they perceive having children as an obligation to the society in which one functions. In the Swedish interviews, fathers pointed out that the decision to have children was connected to reaching a particular moment in their lives in which this decision became simply *natural* or *rational*. It usually means that they have already attained the education they had wanted, have a job with decent earnings and have met a woman with whom they want to spend their lives:

> *It was only a very late stage when I decided that actually I want to be a father.* Before I had thought that I was not going to have children on my own at any time. But then once I've got an education, I've got a job and the … an apartment and a wife [laugh], I started gradually to change my mind and then finally we decided to have a child.
>
> (Sweden, Johan, 44 years old, 6-year-old child)

Yet, although parenthood seems to be a natural step in human life, the decision to actually have children is usually a result of planning and is made when a couple feels ready. In both Swedish and Polish interviews, the concept of *high time for having a child* was often mentioned. Since I did not conduct interviews with teen parents, even when the child was not planned in the particular moment in the life course, the pregnancy was usually welcomed and newly parents agreed that, sooner or later, they would have had a child anyway. The timing seems to be very important in the planning of becoming a parent. Therefore, finding a good time was often crucial for my interviewees:

> You know, I always function having some aims, *I always set myself aims*, for example that I am going to achieve this and this till the end of the year, in five years or ten years. And one of such aims was to have a family, such family as we have now, and to make it bigger. *This is our aim to make it big-*

> *ger in a near future*. We want to have a house and so on, and we are consequently achieving that.
>
> (Poland, Wojciech, 26 years old, 21-month-old child)

> We wanted to … we had a long time when we knew both that we wanted to have children and that we maybe wanted to move to countryside at some time and stuff like that. And when we figured out what we wanted, we said "Ok, when?" and initially we were both like "in the future, some time," but then we realised "*well we would like to do this in five years time and why are we waiting?*"
>
> (Sweden, Anders, 31 years old, 2-year-old and 3-year-old children)

As Pia Sevón (2011) notes, based on the data gathered from in-depth longitudinal interviews with Finnish first-time mothers, the experience of transformation to a parent is more exacting for women than for men. For women, parenthood is often connected with a greater reorganisation of life than for men; they usually have to change their career paths and their domestic duties dramatically increase. For heterosexual men, having a child is easier, especially if they assume that their female partners or spouses will take care of this child. This might explain why in my interviews, some fathers noted that their partners were more reluctant to have a child than they were:

> Since we have been together, from the beginning we loosely talked about having children. And *Anna was hesitating*, so she had her reasons against it. But later, when we were engaged, she was saying she wouldn't like to have children. After marriage, during the first … because after half year of getting married she got pregnant, she was not that willing. *She wanted to be independent, at least for some time.* But it turns out after half a year we're gonna have a son.
>
> (Poland, Eryk, 30 years old, 12-month-old child)

This unwillingness of Eryk's wife to have a child became more understandable as their son was born:

> I used to think it is easier. And it turned out it is more difficult, or maybe not difficult, but it requires more time. *And it is monotonous, troublesome and very often boring.* This is the truth. I had no idea about that before.
>
> (Poland, Eryk)

Also Swedish fathers mentioned that they were not aware of all the troubles and problems that are connected to having children:

> I knew it is difficult to be a parent, but I had no idea it might be *so hard* sometimes.
>
> (Sweden, Martin, 35 years old, 2-year-old child)

From the perspective of Polish women, many men just want to have children and do not think about the consequences of parenthood, whereas for women, the decision to have a child requires careful deliberation and preparations:

> I think that most men, they just want to have children and that's all. They don't think what it requires. I can tell as I look on my friends and their husbands*, they just want to have children at home.*
>
> (Poland, Katarzyna, 41 years old, 4-year-old child)

Swedish and Polish men's understanding of parental obligations and their approach to gender differs. These differences are partially a result of institutional and cultural contexts. However, on the individual level of everyday life, Swedish and Polish fathers experience the moment of becoming a parent, to some extent, similarly. First, the pregnancy seems to be an important period for many men, during which they start to think more seriously about their lives and start to prepare for this new role. These preparations are often initiated by women, who have to change their diet and stop smoking or drinking alcohol. Since for many men it is important to participate in this experience from the very beginning, they also change their eating or drinking habits. Many men declared during the interviews that they had quit smoking. Yet at the same time, they often say that during this time they did not feel that all this is *real*, they feel a little bit distanced (see also Doucet 2009):

> In fact, the man is only active during the conception, and then during the pregnancy, yeah, maybe he participates somehow … Of course there is something in the belly and it's moving, kicking and so on. The belly is getting bigger and you can see something. *But really, it is really abstract.*
>
> (Poland, Oskar, 40 years old, 9-year-old and 6-year-old children)

Usually the first moment men really experience parenthood is during the delivery. Almost all Swedish fathers and most of the Polish fathers I talked to participated in the delivery. In Sweden, men are permitted to participate in a Caesarean section; if the woman is conscious, the man can be with her on her side (the cut is hidden behind a curtain). This experience is always described as a very important one, in which the process of bonding between a parent and a child begins. Yet, since this moment does not affect men as directly as women, they often feel frustrated that they cannot help or relieve their partner's suffering:

> It was a … well the big job was obviously not mine, but *it was a little bit frustrating to see my wife being in the great pain and knowing that I couldn't do anything*, I could just stand there, beside her and try to talk to her, but that was what could I do. But I think it was a good thing that we were … I was there together with her.
>
> (Sweden, Daniel, 38 years old, 13-month-old child)

> In general, *the man has a very difficult task to do during the delivery*. Of course the role of woman is beyond comparison much bigger, but the man participating in it … he is experiencing a few hours of merciless helplessness, as he sees his beloved person in pain and cannot do anything.
>
> (Poland, Marcin, 30 years old, 2.5-year-old child)

The participation in the delivery gives men a feeling of becoming a part of the whole experience of parenthood and might be seen as a first step in creating a real and strong bond with their children. In recent years home birth is becoming more and more popular. In such a situation the role of the father is even bigger. He is usually fully included in this process, especially if the midwife or lay attendant does not manage to be on time. One of the interviewed Swedish fathers had such an intense experience that, for him, birthing was a process in which he fully participated, an experience he feels that he was *a big part of*:

> A: We did it, because neither my girlfriend nor me like hospitals, we feel really insecure there and I think the biggest factor in having a successful birth is feeling really secure, so it was quite an easy decision to stay at home. We had to read on it a lot of course and we found out that the statistics are as good as at the hospital, if there is an accident most of the things they can

do in the hospital, the nurse can do at home and if there is something that would required the cut, we could get an ambulance, so … (…) Then it turned out she [the nurse—KS] couldn't come to us on time of birth, so the actual birth we had without her and she arrived like a quarter after [laugh].

B: O! So you helped your wife to give a birth …

A: Yeah [laugh]

B: And what do you think about this experience?

A: *Yeah, it was great. She gave birth in our bathtub and I caught the baby in the tub and gave him to his mother*. (…) During this time all of your feelings are mixed up, I was really involved in giving birth to him, so … I was also really tired after being up for the whole day and night and just before he came out I was almost falling asleep, I had my eyes open and I was in a bathroom together with my girlfriend, but I started dreaming with my eyes opened … I had really hard time being awake, but I … when the action started, I was pretty awake.

(Sweden, Anders, 31 years old, 2-year-old and 3-year-old children)

We come back to the experience of Anders, who is an example of a father trying really hard to overcome the *naturalised* differences between motherhood and fatherhood. For him, becoming a parent had a very transformative effect and highly influenced his life and identity.

In almost every narrative of the interviewed fathers, becoming a parent is described as an important turning point in their lives that made them more responsible and mature, but at the same time allowed them to discover emotional and sensitive parts of their identity. This growing sensitivity is often connected with a greater stabilisation in life, which is manifested in making more serious decisions, such as finding a stable job and not changing it without a good reason, buying a bigger flat or a house, choosing the city in which new parents want to live for a longer period of time or moving nearer to the parents or other members of the family. Using the term characteristic for the caring masculinities framework, men discover that they are not autonomous anymore, but are interdependent and their decisions affect others. In general, fathers describe their lives after becoming a parent as more stable and organised; sometimes, they even call them more boring or tedious, as well as tiring:

> I think *I'm a little bit more boring than I used to be.* Because of all those stuff you have to do, you have to think about to make sure your child is OK and everything is functioning well, and this changes your way of thinking. You are becoming more pragmatic and start thinking about the reality.
>
> (Poland, Łukasz, 26 years old, 2-year-old child)

Since parenthood is undoubtedly one of the most important points in human life, it also brings problems. In contemporary times, men have to function within the conflicting models of fatherhood and masculinities. The experience of parenting might be seen as a trigger that starts a process of reconstructing the male identity, often defined in terms of orthodox masculinity values. Therefore, it is not surprising that, for some men, it is hard to deal with discovering this emotional part of themselves.

This was confirmed by some of my interviewees. In the process of preparing to have a first child, many men missed having someone to help them to deal with this transformation. As they underline, it is easier to learn how to change a diaper than to learn how to deal with emotions, if for your whole life you had not been used to them. A good example is demonstrated by the story of Fredrik, the father of two children. At the beginning of fatherhood, he had a hard time finding himself in this new role; as a result, he enrolled in a special course for fathers organised by the Swedish municipalities. Yet he did not learn from them how to handle all of the emotions he had started to experience:

> The only part missing was the emotional part, we spoke a lot about … you know, you have to keep the wall sockets safe and you have to … you know practical stuff, like really male practical stuff to be honest, put up a gate to the staircase, you know, stuff like that and not that much about the whole emotional … which was kind of sad, because … it was the biggest problem … being a dad and not being a dad.
>
> (Sweden, Fredrik, 34 years old, 5-year-old and 8-year-old children)

In such context, the experience of fathering should be seen as a trigger that helps men to reconstruct their male identity in terms of inclusive masculinity values and to accept their "female" side. Since men are not taught how to deal with it, they learn by engaging in caregiving practices.

7.3.2 How Fathers Become More Motherly

As we can see, becoming a father is an important point in an individual's life that impacts the man's identity and often requires identity reconstruction. In the sociology of family and the studies on men and masculinities, there is a growing interest in research on the experience of fatherhood and its impact on the masculinities model. There are many cultural models of masculinities and fatherhood, but the new model of involved fatherhood is often presented as clashing with orthodox masculinity (Anderson 2009; Elliott 2015; Doucet 2004; Gottzen and Kremer-Sadlik 2012; Johansson and Klinth 2008; Wall and Arnold 2007). The heart of this clash lies within care work and men's involvement in the domestic sphere. In the traditional model of fatherhood, the man does not belong to the private sphere and is not expected to actively engage in household duties and care work. Involved fatherhood requires ignoring these traditional expectations, and what is more, crossing the traditional division of female and male parental roles, traditional models of masculinity and femininity that assume a substantial difference between men and women.

In considering the theoretical perspective of *doing gender*, it should be assumed that men and women fulfil the cultural beliefs of what it means to be a father and to be a mother (West and Zimmerman 1987). The project of gender equality expects men to take over some of the tasks traditionally designated to women and therefore requires changes in the masculinity models. Thomas Johansson and Roger Klinth, in their article on caring fathers and masculinity models, claim that "the image of a muscular man holding an infant in his arms has forever engraved itself in the collective Swedish memory as the symbol of paternity leave" (2008, 42). They refer to the classic picture of the first fatherhood campaign launched in 1976, in which a weightlifter Lei "Hoa Hoa" Dahlgren is holding a baby. This campaign is an example of an attempt to reconstruct the model of traditional masculinity by showing that there is no conflict in the figure of a masculine man taking care of a baby. The campaign's aim was to encourage men to take advantage of parental leave. Many studies analyse the experience of stay-at-home dads (Brandth and Kvande 1998; Chesley 2011; Doucet and Merla 2007; Doucet 2004, 2009). It seems that the first year of a child's life is crucial to building a strong emotional

bond between the parents and the child, as well for the gender organisation of family life. Andrea Doucet (2009) underlines the role of bodily experiences in the way men and women engage in parenting. Because of pregnancy, birthing and breastfeeding, women's experience is embodied and serves as a base for creating a close bond with a child. Since men do not have a chance to participate to the same extent as women in these initial experiences, their bond develops differently. Therefore, as Doucet (2009) claims, the crucial period is the first year of the child's life, because during this time, through physical contact, such as care work, feeding or playing, fathers can have a bodily experience of parenting. And this greatly impacts men's attitudes towards their parenthood, their gender roles and their relations with children.

Similar conclusions might be drawn from my interviews with fathers, especially those who took a long period of parental leave (in Sweden) or had other opportunities to spend more time with their children during the first years of their lives (mostly the case of Polish fathers). In talking about the first weeks after the delivery, men recognise how differently they experience parenthood in comparison with their female partners. The Swedish fathers in general are convinced that they need to stay at home with their newborn child and partner from the very beginning. A perfect example is Oskar, the father of a two-month-old boy, who, though he had not had an opportunity to be on parental leave before the interview, in his narrative underlined how important it was to build a strong bond with the child from the very beginning:

> *I think it is important for the father to be home as long as he can at the beginning*. I actually took my vacations, so I was home for eight weeks when he was born. That was very good, because I could, I can feel that we connected in a certain way and my brother, when he got his first child, he was abroad working, so we was home like, I think it was a week for the first month and he told me that he didn't connected with his child in the same way I feel that I am connected to mine. So that's a big … because the mother and the child connect through the breastfeeding in a much different way than the father and the child do. So I am trying to be around for as much as I can when he's awake, so he can recognise me and things like that.
>
> (Sweden, Oskar, 35 years old, 2-month-old child)

Such opinions were very common in the Swedish interviews, yet the fathers of older children usually referred to their own experiences, in particular the experience of being on a long parental leave. When the child is a little older and the parents had an opportunity to share the parental leave, for men, the experience of taking care of a child without assistance from women gives them a chance to become more *motherly* and more equal as a parent with regard to their female partners:

> I think that both the mother and the father should take relatively long time with their child, because you get to learn to know your child and the child gets to know you … better than if you just see them only during the weekend or … he's now used to being alone with me or my wife *and it's not a problem for him when she goes to work for example, he's left here with me.* And if she took all parental leave and I worked all the time, then of course I would spend time with him on evenings and on weekends, but my wife would be then too, so he would not spend a lot of time alone together with me and I think that is important.
>
> (Sweden, Daniel, 38 years old, 13-month-old child)

The strong bond between the father and the child, which is created through active engagement in care work and spending time with the offspring, is characteristic of the discourse of involved fatherhood. The reconstruction of the traditional model was based in part on the conviction that *caring* fathers are important for proper child development (Coltrane 2010; Lamb 2010b). This discourse was adopted in some of the pro-fatherhood campaigns conducted in Sweden in the 1970s (Bergman and Hobson 2002; Klinth 2008). Therefore, it might not be surprising that Swedish men often refer to this discourse, even though their personal experience may not necessarily lead itself to such conclusions, as demonstrated by Oskar (whose two-month-long experience of being a dad is not very long), a father who refers in his interview to some common beliefs and expectations about men's engagement in parental roles that are prevalent in Swedish society.

What is more, the use of a long parental leave even more fundamentally changes men's attitudes towards care work and parenthood. It usually revises previous expectations formed by cultural and social models of parenting. Since in the Polish system there are no incentives to encourage

men to take a long period of parental leave, and actually at the time that I conducted these interviews, the fathers had only two weeks of guaranteed paternity leave, they do not have similar expectations about the first months of their child's life, and most of them do not think about the gender-neutral parental leave positively. Yet there are some examples of Polish fathers who tried to parent in a way that was divergent from the models of parenthood promoted by the family policy system. One of these fathers is Grzegorz, who decided to resign from his work when his wife returned to work after having used her maternity leave. Consequently, Grzegorz spent nine months as a stay-at-home dad and took over most domestic and care responsibilities from his wife.

As he underlined at the beginning of his narrative, he was not aware of what he had been missing for the first months of his son's life, when he had been working long hours and had often travelled, and therefore had not participated in care work. He used to be a typical breadwinning father who helped his partner as she needed it. Yet the experience of being the main caregiver gave him a chance to reflect more carefully on parenthood and traditional gender roles. On the one hand, it showed him how important spending time with the child is to establish a strong relationship; he also learned that care work could be learned and that he, as a man, could provide the same care as his wife ("I guess my son now thinks that I'm rather the mum"). On the other hand, he also started to understand how his wife had been feeling when he had been working and she had been staying at home on maternity leave. Grzegorz noted the *negative sides* of stay-at-home parenting. He realised that being a full-time parent might be boring and very tiring—and for him, it was more difficult than regular paid work:

> It is the most tiring job I had. I used to have two full-time jobs and I was less tired than now. These diapers … are the worst. And at the beginning I paid a lot for phone bills, because I was calling all the time, just to talk to someone. You cannot talk to a child.
>
> To be honest, until I decided to resign from work and took care of Janek, I had no idea why my wife was so angry and what was going on when, for example, I was not home on time. And then, when my wife was late, for example, half an hour and was home at 6 PM, not 5:30 PM, I really felt these 30 minutes. Because I was waiting for her, expecting her to take care

> of Janek, I wasn't thinking she might be tired after work. I was tired. And me, for instance, before when I was back home from work, I was angry that she didn't prepare the dinner. And then I realised it is very difficult to prepare dinner.
>
> (Poland, Grzegorz, 29 years old, 21-month-old child)

He also started to better understand the gender and power relations prevailing in society and to recognise the positive role of gender-neutral parental leaves and daddy quotas, although, as he underlines, his approach to the state and economy was already rather liberal. He learned from his own experience that high involvement in care and domestic work can change both men's and women's attitudes towards the traditional organisation of family life. Grzegorz also identified this involvement as important to creating a stable and happy relationship in which both partners understand their situations and problems. Additionally, it helps to create symmetrical relations between the parents and the child:

> There is no such a division that … there is a small kid and in the traditional model my wife would stay with him at home for three years. Then I would take him to the swimming pool or do some other fun things and the mum would be at home with him and she would be regarded as boring. That was my case, when I was a child, I used to think that my dad was super, because once a week he took me for a bike trip. And during the week he was at work for 11 or 12 hours. And I thought that he was super and my mum was bad, because she was boring. And only now I know it was exactly the opposite.
>
> (Poland, Grzegorz)

I refer to the experience of Grzegorz to show how the experience of care work and the takeover of traditional female tasks by men can influence male attitudes towards family life models, gender roles, unpaid domestic work and parenthood. It is an instance of the realisation of caring masculinities values in practice. Grzegorz's example is also significant because it shows how difficult it is to escape from the prevailing models. Had their financial situation not been quite good and Grzegorz's wife not been earning a lot of money, he could never afford to resign from work for almost one year. Under such circumstances, he would probably have never had the realisations he shared with me during the interview.

Several sociological studies on stay-at-home dads draw similar conclusions. Also new neurological research shows that the childcare experience affects a man's brain. The study compares the parental brain responses to infant stimuli in three groups of parents raising their first baby: heterosexual primary caregiving mothers (PC mothers), heterosexual secondary caregiving fathers (SC fathers) and homosexual primary caregiving fathers (PC fathers) (Abraham et al. 2014). According to this research, PC fathers experience emotions more similar to those typically experienced by PC mothers than by SC fathers. The authors suggest that there is a neural network in the brain that is responsible for parenting and its activation results in a similar change of parental behaviour in women and men. This neurological research can explain why interviewed men often note that, thanks to the experience of parenthood, they discovered their "female" or emotional side. It seems that active involvement in parenthood and care work has a similar impact on men and women, but because of the cultural models of parenting, as well as the women's biological advantage of pregnancy and breastfeeding, men have fewer opportunities to activate the relevant part of their brains to the same extent as women do.

7.4 The *Naturalised* Differences in Parenting and Power

7.4.1 Fighting or Accepting Distinctive Parental Roles

The *naturalised* differences between men and women serve as an explanation for defining fatherhood and motherhood as contrasting phenomena, and as a consequence, they are the basis for the gender and power order in patriarchal societies (Connell 1987). The theory of *naturalised differences* is grounded in the biological differences between male and female bodies. Andrea Doucet (2009) underlines the need to analyse the parenthood experience of men and women in the context of embodiment. In her argumentation she refers to the works of Erving Goffman and Pierre Bourdieu. From the Goffmanian perspective, the bodily norms not only specify how an individual should behave in a particular social

setting (the *practical* dimension of the norms), but also allow judging and stigmatising of other people (the *moral* dimension of the norms). The bodily norms serve a similar function as gender beliefs, as analysed by Cecilia L. Ridgeway and Shelley J. Correll (Ridgeway and Correll 2004; Ridgeway 2009). And Bourdieu formulates the concept of *embodied habitus* that designates the acquired and generative predisposition of individuals. In the case of parenthood and family life, these concepts are particularly important, as Doucet notes:

> Regarding fathers moving as embodied subjects in female-defined settings, Goffman's work on space and embodiment is helpful in reminding us that relations between people are both practical and "moral." That is, men learn how to move through spaces in ways that are acceptable, normal, and in concert with public expectations. Furthermore, these movements are "moral" in that social judgments are made about whether, and how, men maintain or disrupt routine social and public interactions involving parents and children. (2009, 87)

Consequently, in social settings, in which two conflicting models of fatherhood are prevailing, fathers can find themselves in situations in which they disrupt the social order. What is more, they have to take a position on a *naturalised* difference that influences the way they fulfil and engage in their parental roles. In Chap. 5, the process of *naturalisation* of male and female parental roles is analysed on the level of definitions. Yet, the way parenthood is defined has an impact on men's actual behaviour. Thus, in everyday fathering, fathers have to face and deal with the *naturalised* differences between them and their female partners.

Based on the data from the qualitative interviews, two kinds of strategies adopted by men while facing social expectations are distinguished. On the one hand, men fight with these expectations and try to question the prevailing gender order that does not allow them to become highly involved in their parenthood. This is the case for men who transgress traditional gender roles and take over obligations that might be traditionally regarded as reserved for women. On the other hand, men can accept and agree with these expectations, and if they find themselves in a situation in which, to some extent, they disrupt the social order, they immediately

withdraw and accept the fact that, because of biological differences, they should curb their behaviour.

A good example of a father employing the first strategy arises in the narrative of Markus, who had to convince his partner that he could be as good as she is in caregiving. Since the following quotation represents clearly the problems he had to deal with at the beginning of using his part of the parental leave, it was not shortened:

> A: *She didn't trust that I could handle this.* When I was alone for the first time, the first day, I got lists and lists and lists and pages of lists: he's going to eat at this time, he's going to poop at this time, if he's wet, you need to change his diaper, there was everything! And it's still a little bit like that, but much less so. *Also I told her after a while "You need to stop this, I'm not stupid,"* but this is quite interesting how hard it was for her to let go. I mean she has been home with him … but also at the beginning when we were together and he was with me and screamed for some reason … half second later *she was there and basically tore him out my arms* and taking him. And I said: "What are you doing?" I mean babies cry and do it for different kinds of reasons, so I wasn't abusing him or anything, just … *I don't know, I wouldn't say it's a maybe not a mistrust, it was just—she couldn't really let go.* So being at home was actually really really good, because she didn't really have any chance not to let go, she needed to let me … *and after a while, after a couple of weeks she actually got confidence that I will not let him starve or hit him or let him freeze or forget him in the market* and things like that. So it was actually quite interesting.
>
> B: And how did you feel about that?
>
> A: Hhm, annoyed. *Really annoyed actually*. I was quite frustrated. And *at the beginning I didn't really understand it, so at the beginning I was like … "Oh he's crying" and then she came and took him, so I was like … oh ok that was nice.* And after a while … *it's actually not nice, this is actually really bad* [laugh]. And then I confronted her about it and she realised that this is what she's doing and it took a while to be able to actually act upon on my feedback.
>
> (Sweden, Markus, 29 years old, 5-year-old child)

Markus makes several remarks worth noting about the way relations between women and men are organised in the family sphere. He says that, at the beginning of his stay on parental leave, he had to deal with

his partner's stereotypical images of male parenting. He had to convince her that he was able to take care of their son when she was not around. The process of changing her beliefs was not easy and took some time. He is convinced that, thanks to his stay on parental leave, she was finally convinced of his caregiving abilities. He also had to realise that her initial behaviour was grounded in the stereotypical images of motherhood and fatherhood, and that these images actually do him a disservice too. In the following narrative, Markus tries to answer why he thought his partner was responding this way:

> She had a very intimate connection with him from breastfeeding and being with him all the time at the beginning and so on. I think it is more like that—difficult to let things go and it was normal for her to just … immediately attend to him if he was sad, even though I was holding him. *I think it was more about a positive feeling than a negative distrust*, it was more like … I don't think you can actually reflect on it, because when I told her this at the beginning, she was "No no no, I don't do that" and after a while when I could finally convince her that she was actually acting this way, she was like … *she felt pretty bad about it, because she didn't want me to think that she distrusted me*, it just felt like that. That was interesting actually. And then … *let's say I wouldn't be at home at all at the beginning, I think we would have very, hmm, unmodern and stereotypical gender roles at home nowadays where she would basically be a mum and I would be like reading my newspaper*, I don't read newspaper but … no I would do stuff I would like to do and she would take care of the kid, but *because we attacked at pretty early, I took a little bit of this role so it still works.*
>
> (Sweden, Markus)

He believes that the kind of distrust his partner felt towards him was a result of the strong bond she had created with their son during pregnancy and breastfeeding. This bond impacted how she was reacting to their son's emotions or mood. And these reactions were not directed against Markus, but were rather connected to her internalised convictions (*embodied habitus*) that it was she who was mainly responsible for taking care of the child. This example shows that questioning prevailing gender beliefs is not easy and requires a lot of work on both sides, the woman's and the man's. Markus underlines also the moment in which this questioning

should start—he is convinced that if they had not started to do this at the very beginning of the child's life, the organisation of their family life would likely have been based on traditional parenting roles.

The story of Markus is a successful story of a family that dealt with the restricting power of gender beliefs on men's engagement in care work. Yet, not in every case is it possible to overcome the biological differences between men and women. The perfect example is Anders, the Swedish dad who participated in the home birth and was really motivated to overcome the *naturalised* differences between a mother and a father:

> A: During the first months of the first child, my girlfriend has problems with the breastfeeding, so she had to wake up at night and sit in a very special way with pillows and stuff like that, so my role was to wake her up, help her with all the pillows, help up with taking a baby to a toilet (…) and then giving him to her and then also had to read to keep her awake [laugh], so I read her some books. And the breastfeeding during first month is quite often, so this was like every hour or something. And we always slept together with kids in one big bed, so he slept with us and he got nursed by my girlfriend, *so I was a really big part of nursing for the first half year.*
>
> B: And do you think there is a big difference between motherhood and fatherhood?
>
> A: No. For the first child it was really … *it felt really equal*, just because of this I woke up at the same time and did half of the work with nursing … it really felt equal. With our second child it was a little bit different, because then nursing went much smoother and she could just do that while sleeping and then our second son he slept with her instead, not with me, *it was a bit odd, I felt a little bit more outside then.*
>
> (Sweden, Anders, 31 years old, 2-year-old and 3-year-old children)

These two aforementioned cases are examples of an intentional strategy employed to deal with the *naturalised* differences between parents. The *naturalised differences* have important consequences for the way individuals engage in their parental roles and whether they behave according to their *embodied habitus* or rather experience it as uncomfortable and distressing. However, the experience of Anders suggests that there are some limits to how much parents can diminish the differences between female and male parenting. In some situations men cannot fully become

mothers, for example, because of their inability to breastfeed. It suggests that the redefinition of fatherhood should be done not entirely in comparison with the mother's experience, but rather with the sole experience of care work and engagement in mind.

On the other hand, there are fathers who fully accept the social models of parental behaviour that are based on the *naturalised* division between motherhood and fatherhood, and approach them as completely normal and *natural*. This strategy is more visible in the Polish interviews. Polish men speak more openly about their acceptance of the traditional model. Even the fathers who are fully aware of the cultural impacts on their parenting do not often feel compelled to confront these cultural dictates. Conversely, they adopt an easier strategy to follow the cultural dictates:

> I think that as members of a particular society we have in minds certain patterns that we have to follow. I mean the father plays football with children and the mother cooks dinner. So *I mean it is difficult to escape from this model.*
>
> (Poland, Michal, 30 years old, 30-month-old twins)

Michał's approach is characterised by a high level of reflexivity. He knows that, as individuals living in a particular society and culture, we are socialised to enact particular behaviours that are often ascribed to us on the basis of our sex. But for him, there is no reason to challenge and change them; rather, he thinks we should accept them. This attitude is not surprising as we take into consideration the highly genderising context of parenthood in Poland, which results in awkward social situations. The Polish men, who do not behave according to the gender norms, are exposed to critical remarks from other people, not only significant others, but also from complete strangers:

> I think that now, *in the age of our daughter the mother is more important for her and it was proved several times in stressful situations.* For example the first time we went to the swimming pool, I entered the water with her, my wife stayed outside and she [the daughter—KS] was very stressed and she started to cry. I was trying to calm her down and at some point one woman came and she told me: "with the whole respect, but as you may know, the mother is needed here." And *she was right.* Gabrysia was eight months old at that

> time, of course so she was very little, a small baby, but *it shows that in a stressful situation a child's instinct leads her to the mother.*
>
> (Poland, Marcin, 30 years old, 2.5-year-old child)

In this situation the reaction of a bystander results in a deeper reflection about gender roles and parenthood; Marcin did not question the remark he heard, but took it seriously and refers to it to explain the *naturalised* difference between men and women. This example shows that Polish men, who more or less consciously adopt some *female* care practices with their children, face disapproving or negative reactions from society.[1] They also often note that they are not treated as equal parents:

> A woman is not only biologically determined to have a different role [than a man—KS], but also the society makes her … feel guilty and thus she has to control everything. For example just recently we happened to have an interesting situation in the nursery. So for the few days in a row I brought to and took our son from the nursery and the teachers didn't have contact with my wife and they didn't tell me anything. Then after a while, my wife came to pick him up and they told her, her not me, although the situation has already lasted for a while, that she should give bigger portion of food to Staszek for the second breakfast,[2] because he is hungry. And of course *I felt offended that they hadn't told me. And I even told them that they should have told me. And they rightly noticed that my wife is a person who makes decisions about our son's feeding. And after all this is true.*
>
> (Poland, Dominik, 28 years old, 9-month-old child)

In this situation the teachers in the nursery did not treat the mother and the father equally. Although they thought that the child should get more food, they decided to wait to inform the mother of this rather than tell the father. Dominik's reaction to this is similar to the reaction had by Marcin in the swimming pool situation—although at first he felt that he was treated unfairly, upon reflection, he concluded that they were right. These two situations show that social expectations can have an enormous

[1] I call these reactions negative since they question men's behaviour, yet I am aware that they are usually a result of a wish to help—especially from older women, who believe than the man simply does not know how to take care of a child.

[2] In Polish nurseries parents often have to provide their own food for their children.

impact on men's parenting behaviour. What is more, if men at some point cross the *naturalised* borders between male and female parenting, the reactions of others has the power to restore the *right* order of gender relations.

In the context of *naturalised* difference, the experience of mothering and fathering is distinctively different for women and men. It is grounded in social expectations, gender beliefs about parenthood and prevailing family models. The comparisons between Sweden and Poland provide an opportunity to see how men deal with it. It seems that Swedish fathers are more eager to question the naturalised *difference*; they are aware of their cultural dimension. As Helen Bergman and Barbara Hobson (2002, 123) underline, Swedish fathers have *discursive resources* that help them to confront other people with their claims to actively engage in parenting. The discursive resources should be understood as the recognition in law and policy of men's right to care work, which *legitimises* men's engagement in traditionally female tasks. For Polish men, the situation is more difficult—because of the lack of *discursive resources*, they do not know how to face the critical societal reactions to their *non-traditional fathering*. And although, in the Polish literature, there exist a few analyses regarding the growing presence of the new model of fatherhood debated in the mass media (Arcimowicz 2011; Fuszara 2008; Sikorska 2009; Wójcik 2013), some of the Polish fathers in my interviews seem to be lost. They do not want to follow the traditional path of being a father and want to share care work with partners, but sometimes, they do not know how to do this. The fathers with a high level of reflection are aware that there is a lack of fatherhood models that support men's engagement in family life and legitimise their greater involvement in the domestic sphere:

> It is paradoxical, because only women are present in the media and therefore a parental role is only imposed on women. On the one hand, it is bad, because only women are expected to be parents, not men, and on the other hand men don't have any support … *that you feel that maybe you'd like to do something, but the media don't say anything about that, so maybe this is stupid*, you know. All in all, it is not nice to both sides; I mean it's not good for women either.
>
> (Poland, Bartłomiej, 35 years old, 3-year-old child)

7.4.2 Care Work and Domestic Duties: Power in a Household

> I'd like to work less to spend more time at home, but on the other hand as I am thinking about it, I don't really know … I mean it also shows some difference between men and women. I used to say that if I had to stay at home and take care of all domestic duties, I would do that. *But then when there is such a situation, in which I can actually do this, then it turns out that I don't really want this.*
>
> (Poland, Dominik, 28 years old, 9-month-old child)

In dealing with the issue of *naturalised* difference between fatherhood and motherhood, it is useful to analyse the power relations in particular social settings and consider the right of *choice* that individuals have and exercise during their lifetimes. Glenda Wall and Stephanie Arnold (2007) note that the issue of employment is often framed as a choice for women, but not for men. As a result, we concentrate on the question of whether women should or should not work and wonder about the impact of women's employment on child well-being. The care work and the conflict between parenthood and career become a woman's issue, not a man's issue. This has consequences for how family life is organised and in what kind of practices men and women engage within the household.

The statistics, presented in the first part of this chapter regarding men's and women's participation in the labour market, clearly show that men's paid work is unquestioned and parenthood has no impact on men's career path. In fact, in many cases, parenthood reinforces men's employment (Kuhhirt 2012). The unequal situation of men and women in the labour market might be analysed in terms of men's domination over women and is related to the power relations within the household. In her studies on married/cohabiting couples with employed women, Caroline Gatrell (2007) shows how men try to enhance their parental role. She refers to the concepts of *situational* and *debilitative power* proposed by Carol Smart and Bren Neale (1998). Situational power is the kind of power that women have over men within the household—a woman is usually the one who manages domestic work and has full knowledge about the children, especially during infancy. The woman knows when and how to

feed them, how to take care of them in sickness, how to dress them up and so on. I would add to this the cultural norms and patterns of behaviour, which, based on the *naturalised* differences, put a woman in a privileged position as a main caregiver. This kind of power is easy to recognise. Also fathers in my interviews indicated its existence, for instance, in the story of Markus about his girlfriend's mistrust or the one of Dominik, whose son's nursery teachers withheld information from him about his son's feeding issues.

The second type of power, debilitative power, is harder to define and recognise; yet it is often wielded by fathers against mothers. Gatrell gives an example of such power—"fathers may claim unencumbered quality time with children, but may abrogate to mothers the responsibility for all child-related domestic chores" (2007, 356). In other words, this is a *choice* men have: they can decide to what extent they want to engage in parenting and what kind of parental practices they want to take over from women.

The category of choice is often used by family researchers to show men's involvement in domestic and care work (see Duch-Krzystoszek 2007; Miller 2011; Plantin et al. 2003; Wall and Arnold 2007). Tina Miller analyses the category of choice together with the category of *constraints* that can restrict or deny men's potential as they become fathers. Also in both my Swedish and Polish interviews, the problem of situational and debilitative power and of men's choice is evident. This power impacts how domestic and care duties are shared by the couple. Some men consciously choose what kind of practices they want to engage in or more precisely what kind of parenthood practices they would rather avoid:

> At some point *I just stopped changing diapers*. I felt uncomfortable with it. I mean I can do anything, but when the diet is changing, it is … Yeah, really, if my wife is not around then of course I have to do that, but when she's near I just can't. All other things we are sharing. I try to support my wife, as much as I can.
>
> (Poland, Wojciech, 26 years old, 21-month-old child)

In this case Wojciech fully accepts the dominant role of his wife in taking care of their son. He declares that he shares all responsibilities with his wife, but at the same time, he underlines that he chose not to change

diapers because it was disgusting for him. He uses his debilitative power to avoid practices he is not keen on and has no problem admitting this.

Yet another strategy in exercising debilitative power is to choose what kind of practices men want to engage in. The example of Grzegorz, but also other men, shows that the experience of staying home with a little child can change a man's attitudes towards parenthood. In the previous quotation, Grzegorz admitted that he had not been aware of the difficulties involved in dealing with all domestic and parental duties. He also notes men's power to avoid parental responsibilities:

> And on the other hand, men are neglecting their families. They are not eager to take care of them, they think it's not fun. And you have to make it enjoyable. You have to think about some activities, because if you stay at home with the kid and the wife, it's not fun at all. For example you have to take your kid to the swimming pool or for a bike.
>
> (Poland, Grzegorz)

The strategy he employees to deal with the boredom that might be associated with parental obligations is to find the activities that make parenthood more enjoyable. This fits into the model of fatherhood in which men are more responsible for the more "fun" aspects of parenthood. In such a model, in the division of parental obligations, men are responsible for play, taking care of children during weekends and outdoor activities, whereas women have to take care of the most tedious, and unavoidable, duties in the household such as doing laundry, cooking, cleaning up, feeding and taking care of ill children (see Johansson and Klinth 2008; Szlendak 2011, 445–446). As a consequence, the power relations are still sustained, but through a different strategy.

Interestingly, in my interviews, many Swedish fathers note that, even though they try to be fully engaged in care and domestic work, the traditional model in which women are mainly responsible for the children and the household still prevails. Some of them felt that they had to explain to me why this was so:

> We usually shop together, we go out on weekends for a big shopping, otherwise my wife picks up, you know, the dinner stuff on the way from work, because she gets out of work earlier than me. *So it is just practical, I didn't*

> *think about that like it is … like really sexist and stuff, but … no it is just practical*, it doesn't have anything to do with being man and woman at all. It is just … you know … just how it is.
>
> (Sweden, Fredrik, 34 years old, 5-year-old and 8-year-old children)

This quotation is interesting because I simply asked how the domestic duties are shared in their household and it was Fredrik's own remark that it might look "sexist." It indicates that, in the Swedish context, the focus on gender equality and men's engagement in the domestic sphere is so strong that people might actually feel uncomfortable if they discover or have to admit that they follow the traditional model of parenting. On the other hand, the traditional model is also deeply rooted in people's attitudes, and therefore, men and women tend to engage in different parental activities. A good example is provided by Anders, a father who actively engages in his parenthood (above, I mentioned his involvement in breastfeeding) and tries to fight with the *naturalised* differences. Together with his partner, he seeks to share domestic and care duties, yet worries that even though he really tries to participate in everything and does not want his partner to be overwhelmed with the parental duties, her responsibility is still greater:

> A: So do you feel that she does more at home?
>
> B: Yeah, she does more, but more important is that she feels that she has a lot of more responsibility for it, so even if I help her out with washing the clothes, she still thinks it's her responsibility and *that's hurting us in the end.*
>
> (Sweden, Anders)

On the other hand, men cannot always use their power to fulfil their parental roles in the way they want. In the previous part I described the process of negotiation between Markus and his girlfriend, who did not trust that he could properly take care of their son. She has situational power and Markus had problems with gaining access to the spheres that are traditionally reserved for women. This case shows that the debilitative power of men has its limits, especially in situations when it is used to violate the traditional gender order. One way to deal with this is for men to actively adopt traditionally female duties, for instance, by taking a long period of parental leave. Another essential thing seems to be the woman's attitude towards her partner:

> As men, we are like a bull in a china shop. We don't feel this baby during the pregnancy, we don't have this maternal instinct and therefore we don't really know how to take care of such a little child. And this is one of the reasons why we are so reserved. We don't want to hurt the baby. So for me it was very important the knowledge I got during the birthing classes (…). This knowledge made me calm and I was the first who gave the bath. I changed diapers. I didn't have any problems (…). But I think *that the role of a woman is also very important. If she helps her husband or partner, supports him and is aware that it is for him mentally difficult taking into account the fact that as men we often have no models or bad models*, you know? (…) So I believe that if you are in this comfortable situation that your wife allows you … trusts you, then … It is of course the obligation of the father, maybe not obligation, but at least a conscious decision.
>
> (Poland, Oskar, 40 years old, 9-year-old and 6-year-old children)

Men need to learn how to fulfil care duties and how to engage in the private sphere. Many of my interviewees underlined that they had no good examples of fathers in the course of their life. Their parents' generation is often negatively evaluated, in both the Swedish and Polish societies. The contemporary fathers usually look to their friends or other people of their age as they seek some inspiration for how to be a dad. Therefore, on the one hand, they learn parenthood by participating in different professional courses for new parents or by reading books about parenting. On the other hand, the encouragement from women plays an important role in men's preparation for becoming an involved father. The woman is a person who often acts as a teacher for her male partner. What is more, women usually expect their partners to be involved. In the Swedish interviews men often underlined that the decision to have a child was made with an agreement that they would share the parental leave equally:

> It was obvious that I would take at least half a year of the parental leave. *My wife told me that this was her condition* and if I didn't agree, we wouldn't have kids at all. And I guess this is fair.
>
> (Sweden, Lars, 41 years old, 10-year-old, 7-year-old and 5-year-old children)

The Polish mothers in the interviews also underline that they set out some conditions to force their partners to be more involved in their parenthood and be more present at home:

> There are such situations, in which we have to do something with our son, for example, go to the doctor for vaccination, and he [the partner—KS] sometimes says he doesn't have time, he has to stay longer at work, because he has some deadline or something. And on the one hand, I understand, because he's a responsible person and he wants to control everything, *but I told him that if there is something to do in connection to our son, then, no matter what, he must be present*. That was our agreement and so far we didn't have any problems with it.
>
> (Poland, Anna, 30 years old, 12-month-old child)

Is this strategy in fact a resignation from the situational power women have over men within the household or rather one of the means of wielding it? The above quotes suggest that a man can often engage in his fatherhood only to the extent that his partner allows. Furthermore, it also suggests that the woman has the power to force the man into being more involved than he actually wants to be. Bonnie Fox (2001, 2009) in her analysis of motherhood underlines that, in contemporary times, becoming a mother means not only new responsibility for taking care of the child, but also greater responsibility for the household and her partner, who needs help in being a good father. As a result, women take responsibility not only for their own parenting, but also for the parenting of their partners, and this should be seen as a new *hidden* burden imposed on women (see also Gatrell 2007; Sevón 2011).

In the context of my comparative research of Swedish and Polish societies, the relevant question is why some Polish fathers try to cross the *naturalised* difference and adopt some parental duties from their partners and why Polish mothers expect men to be more involved and not to follow the model of traditional fatherhood. The situation of the Swedish fathers is clear—they are encouraged by the state to share parental leave, they live in a society in which gender equality is a very important value and there is a general agreement that gender stereotypes are harmful to both men and women. Therefore, they cannot admit that they believe in distinctively different roles for the mother and the father.

In the Polish context, fathers who cross the gender roles and enter the area of parenting that culturally has been reserved for women have to deal with critical reactions from society. The state institutions see them mostly in the role of the main breadwinner or eventually of the additional caregiver whose obligation is to help the woman. Yet in some families, the partnership model has been introduced. One of the reasons is that the issue of gender inequality is present in the Polish debate. Therefore, men who are familiar with this issue approach their parental roles with more reflection. Besides, the model of new fatherhood appears in mass media, as well as in political discussions. It is promoted with the new idea of *involved parenthood* that has recently been gaining in popularity. But my research suggests an additional explanation. Paradoxically, the lack of sufficient support from the state in care work results in a situation in which parents have no choice but to interchange most of the parenting duties:

> So far there is no such a thing that would be reserved only for a mum or a dad. With great likelihood in our case the thing is that we cannot afford for such a comfort, because I guess it is a comfort when you can divide who is responsible for what. *This interchangeability is partially linked with our attitudes that we are not squeezing into some roles, but also because we are forced by the situation.* Simply, both grandmas are far away, so we are deprived of this source of help. Nurseries, I guess you're going to ask about it later, but you know it's hard. And we don't earn lots of money and nannies … we could never afford to hire a nanny and that is why what helped us a lot was my way of working—that I can work at home and I just stay at home most days.
>
> (Poland, Konrad, 32 years old, 2-year-old child)
>
> Having two kids at once, twins …, and no relatives around means that we actually have to share everything. And *we try to make this proudly called partnership happen in our life, we just cannot do it differently.*
>
> (Poland, Igor, 33 years old, 31-month-old twins)

The middle-class household usually cannot afford to live on one wage; therefore, in many families, the decision to have one person leave the labour market until the youngest child is placed in kindergarten or goes to school is not even taken into consideration. It seems that, under such circumstances, the debilitative power of men is diminished—they are

forced by external conditions to adopt domestic and care duties from their partners. Yet it can be assumed that still, within the family, they have a right to choose what practices they adopt, and thereby they have a chance to avoid *unpleasant* practices and concentrate on the more *fun* aspects of parenting. The situational power of women prevails, but they are additionally burdened with the obligation of taking responsibility for their partner's fathering.

7.5 Chapter Summary: Fatherhood and the Gender Order

The relation between involvement in care work, domestic duties and participation in the labour market seems to be the most important contemporary aspect of parenting. It is also important in the context of changing models of fatherhood. Both men and women are gendered beings and, through the life course, learn how to behave according to social expectations that are based on body norms. Since these norms are firmly internalised in *embodied habitus*, the experience of challenging them can be difficult. The central problem here is that the role of these norms is to sustain a particular gender and power order in society. In this context parenting is seen as an area of constant struggle for domination and gaining the right to achieve the family–work balance. The unequal situation of women and men in parenthood is most evident when we look at the statistics regarding the participation in the labour market and engagement in unpaid work. Men's domination in the public sphere is unquestioned in both Polish and Swedish societies. Women's situational power prevails within the household.

The model of involved fatherhood is often presented as one of the means by which society may reconstruct the patriarchal organisation of social life. And in fact the experience of fatherhood might have a transformative effect on male identity. Sometimes, it helps men to discover the more sensitive and emotional parts of their identities. It can also help men to appreciate the importance of and difficulties involved in domestic and care work. Yet, the way men engage in the domestic sphere and in parenting is closely related to gender norms and models of masculinity

and femininity prevailing in the particular social settings. The *naturalised* difference between motherhood and fatherhood seems to have a great impact on fathering. Anne Lise Ellingsæter (2010) even indicates that there is a conflict between the policy that encourages men to be active caregivers and the policy promoting a long peiod of breastfeeding. Yet although in the Polish interviews breastfeeding is often presented as one of the main obstacles to a man's engagement in taking care of the child during the first year of its life, statistics show that Polish mothers do not breastfeed for a long time. As per statistics, in 2013, only 11% of babies were exclusively breastfed in the fifth month.[3] It means that there is room for men to share feeding with mothers. It indicates that the *naturalised* differences often serve as an excuse for men's lack of engagement and are a mechanism in sustaining the gender order. Yet the experience of interviewed fathers confirms that it is not impossible to overcome these differences. It just requires, both from men and women, knowledge, some level of reflection and a readiness to question traditional parental roles. It is also important to have institutional mechanisms in place that can help to discourage thinking and acting in terms of gender roles and *naturalised* differences.

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[3] There is a lack of regular and nationwide statistics about breastfeeding in Poland. I refer here to estimated data provided in the report of the Centre of Lactation Science from Warsaw, Poland (Nehring-Gugulska and Sztyber 2013).

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8

Conclusions: Fathers, Gender and the Welfare State

8.1 Gendered Men and the Welfare State

Fatherhood is a historical phenomenon. The definitions of fatherhood and the obligations arising from it are changing over time in accordance with the changing gender order and evolving models of masculinity and femininity. The salience of gender beliefs that specify the kind of practices men and women should and should not engage in is still strong in contemporary Western societies, especially when it comes to the organisation of family life. In the context of male parenting, there are several issues that became particularly evident over the course of my analysis.

First, there is the issue of men's gender—although in social sciences and in everyday life, we tend not to recognise men as gendered human beings, the analysis of fatherhood experience shows that men have to deal with gender beliefs and that male behaviour is firmly grounded in the models of hegemonic masculinity existing in a particular society. This is not only the case in the family sphere, which is regarded as one of the most gendered social institutions, but it also occurs in the public sphere, especially in the labour market, where individuals are recognised as men and women and are consequently treated according to traditional gender

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beliefs. The distinct treatment of men and women in the labour market is mostly caused by the different social expectations connected to male and female parenthood. Under such circumstances, the distinction between the public and private spheres seems to be useful only on the analytical and theoretical levels and does not exist in "real life," where these two spheres are closely intertwined. The gender inequalities in the public sphere are rooted in the sexual division of labour and the prevailing assumption that women's engagement in care work is more important than their engagement in paid work. And conversely—for men, paid work remains at the forefront of their social responsibility, even when they have children.

Second, the analysis of fatherhood shows that there is an inherent duality of parenting practices in contemporary Western societies. Parenthood is simultaneously a biological and a social phenomenon. The differences between mothering and fathering are legitimised by the biological differences between men and women. The current cultural definitions of motherhood and fatherhood are *naturalised*, referring to the theory of Raewyn Connell, in the process of negation and transformation of human bodies. They should be seen as elements of the *naturalised* differences between hegemonic models of masculinity and femininity. Yet the strength of the *naturalised differences* varies depending on social and institutional contexts. The comparisons of Swedish and Polish fathers clearly show that their various visions of parenting are largely connected to the perception of the differences between male and female roles and predispositions. These visions impact the level of life practices—for example, how men engage not only in care work, but also in other types of domestic work, and how they perceive their and their partners' careers and participation in the labour market. The more profoundly one believes in the *biological* predispositions of women to take care of children, the easier it is to stick to the traditional division of work in the domestic sphere, and the more rigid the distinction between male and female obligations becomes. Whereas the less salient one's belief in *naturalised differences is* the more likely one is to accept values of gender equality and to adopt the model of involved fatherhood. Yet I treat the models of traditional and involved fatherhood as two ends of one continuum. I suggest that neither Swedish nor Polish fathers function in a system that is based on one model of male parenting. In fact, in both societies, men have to face problems resulting

from the clash of these two "ideal" models. Men can adopt different strategies to deal with what is considered *natural differences*; they can accept and behave according to the model of traditional fatherhood or they can adopt an active strategy to challenge this model in various social situations. Each of these strategies has drawbacks.

The third issue concerns gender and power relations. The structure of domination within the domestic sphere is legitimised by the external power system, which means that the gender order in the household is linked with the power structures of the whole society (Atkinson 2014). From the perspective of fatherhood studies, it is important that this order is legitimised by the biological definitions of what it means to be a woman and a man in a particular social context. My research suggests that, in both societies, the new model of fatherhood exists and that men engage in care work. Yet there is uncertainty about the extent to which men engage in care work. The unquestioned position of men in the labour market is observed in all Western societies, even in ones that have adopted the most extensive gender equality policies. The division of domestic work is still not fair; women are overwhelmed with the double burden and, at the same time, expect their male partners to be more involved in domestic duties. Care work is still seen as primarily a women's obligation in which men participate only as additional carers or helpers. It shows that the role of the father is still seen mostly in terms of breadwinning, despite the fact that most women work to the same extent as men and that one wage is often not enough to live on in a middle-class household.[1] The question then becomes what the new model of involved fatherhood really means and if its allegedly growing popularity is contributing to the reconstruction of power relations between men and women or if, rather, it should be seen as a new, subtler, way of sustaining male domination. As Glenda Wall and Stephanie Arnold note:

> Although there are indications that fathers are spending more time with their children than they did 30 years ago, their involvement in caregiving, especially with young children, is still a fraction of that undertaken by

[1] It is true that since men still earn more than women, they might think of themselves mostly in terms of the main breadwinner. Yet I would claim that participation in the labour market is not only about an individual's earning capacity, but also about time spent on paid work and total time spent on paid and unpaid work. Therefore, the breadwinning should only be seen as one aspect of male parenting.

> mothers. There are a number of complex and interrelated reasons why this happens, including policy shortcomings, workplace culture, and the wage gap between men and women. The persistence of many traditional cultural understandings of motherhood and fatherhood also figure into this mix, and there are a growing number of recent researchers who are questioning the extent to which the culture of fatherhood itself has indeed changed and are examining this culture more closely. (Wall and Arnold 2007, 509)

The argument here is that, to understand the prevailing male domination within the household, it is necessary to refer to the category of *choice*. The level to which men engage in the parental role, which might be indicated by a man's eagerness to take a long parental leave or his refusal to change diapers due to the unpleasant smell, is, on the one hand, a result of the dominating models of fatherhood and social expectations, but on the other hand, it is often an individual man's decision. Even in societies where the new model of fatherhood is socially desirable, men usually have *discursive resources* that allow them to justify the withdrawal from some care obligations. If the man earns money, helps his partner with some of the domestic duties and takes the children for a walk on Sunday, he is usually regarded as a perfect father. The choices made by men restrict the choices available to women. The woman is expected to take on the primary care of a child at the very beginning, and if her partner cannot or refuses to use a part of his parental leave, she is expected to take parental leave alone, even if she does not want to or if it affects her career. The conflict between parenthood and paid work is more overt for women, who often deal with a greater sense of guilt, than men, that their career hurts their children (Graff 2014; Korolczuk and Hryciuk 2012). These feelings of guilt never appeared in my interviews with fathers, probably because a devotion to one's career is more acceptable for fathers than for mothers.[2] In such circumstances, the power of men, which should be defined here

[2] In the case of fathers, another type of guilt appears. It is connected to the recognition that women are mainly responsible for the domestic and care work. In my interviews many men contritely note that their partners are more overwhelmed by unpaid work than they are. Yet this type of guilt does not result from the man's devotion to his career in the labour market and was not linked with feelings of being *a bad father* (Plantin et al. 2003; Stueve and Pleck 2003). This difference in the sense of guilt between men and women should be seen as grounded in traditional gender beliefs.

as the privilege to make satisfactory decisions not burdened with feelings of guilt, still prevails.

In this context, the fourth issue becomes particularly important—the role of the welfare state system in sustaining or reconstructing traditional parental roles and expectations of men and women. Since family life is a part of a broader system of power relations, it is not surprising that the state and its social policy instruments can influence and control men's parenting. Yet to properly design family policy, there is a need to recognise the existing power order. Here we return to the category of gender:

> Men in mainstream welfare state research were viewed as gender-neutral citizens who happened to be men (…). Gendering of welfare states entails incorporating the experiences of men—not only as earners, but also as fathers, and as heterosexual or homosexual partners. (Hobson and Morgan 2002, 8)

Gender determines the way people behave, think about themselves and others, how they organise their lives and so on. If the state does not recognise the gender of their citizens, it usually cannot design its policies in a way that meets people's needs. This is particularly important in the case of family policy. The family as one of the most gendered institutions should not be viewed as gender neutral from the perspective of policy-making. In Chap. 4, I refer to Jaana Vuori (2007), who distinguishes two types of parenthood discourses that might be adopted by the welfare state. Both recognise citizens as gendered individuals, but not in the same way. In the exclusive mothering system, the instruments of family policy are addressed to women as the main caregivers within the household. Their aim is to allow women to combine family life with paid work. Men in such a system are excluded from the domestic sphere and they are not expected to engage in parenthood to the same extent as women; whereas in the shared parenting discourse, both men and women are recognised as parents and potential caregivers. What is more, in such a discourse, the traditional gender order is perceived as unfair and self-sustaining, and thus, there are additional mechanisms that aim to encourage men to actively engage in parenting.

Since in Western societies the two models of fatherhood are coexistent, fathers usually have to deal with conflicting expectations from different

people. The shared parenthood discourse adopted by the welfare state provides powerful discursive resources for men and women to question traditional parental roles based on a clear distinction between men and women, and, at the same time, contributes to the reconstruction of the unequal gender order. Yet if the system recognises only women as parents, then the discursive resources serve the ones who want to sustain the patriarchal order. Men and women who transgress gender roles and do not want to follow the traditional model are exposed to critique and often face problems that in a society not organised by traditional gender beliefs would never appear. For example, the man is criticised by family members for taking six months of parental leave, whereas the woman must listen to comments about how she is not a good mother if she decides to take less parental leave. Therefore, there is a need to redesign the existing family policy systems in a way so that they fit the changing gender roles.

A problem that sometimes arises is whether the society is ready for a system that interferes in family life and *forces* men to adopt traditional female tasks from their partners. In 2013 the former Polish government of central-right orientation seemed to be caught in this dilemma when introducing six months of gender-neutral parental leave.[3] On the Congress of Fathers organised by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in Warsaw in December 2013, Minister Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz clearly stated that, in his opinion, Polish society is not ready for interventionist mechanisms such as the father's quota. He also defended the family's right to *choose* how parents want to divide parental roles. A similar opinion was expressed by President Bronisław Komorowski when the new leave was introduced (see also Korsvik and Warat 2016). We have to ask, though, whose right to choose were they defending? The research on fatherhood and family life would suggest that it is not the right of the family or of women, but the right of a man to choose to what extent he wants to be engaged in care work. Therefore, according to sociological analyses, the part of parental leave reserved for men is one of the most effective mecha-

[3] In 2015 the power was taken by the conservative party "Law and Justice." The new government is not caught in such a dilemma any more since it thinks about family in very traditional terms; thus, it should not be expected that the government would introduce any pro-fatherhood instrument in the family policy. It would rather concentrate on sustaining the traditional model of family based on men's breadwinning and women's withdrawal from the labour market.

nisms for turning men into engaged fathers, because it limits men's power based on their right to choose. In my opinion, based on my interviews with Polish parents, Polish fathers are ready for this instrument. Some of them would like to have reserved months for themselves; some, particularly those who are owners of companies, understand how the only-maternity leave undermines the position of women in the labour market.

Obviously, the changes do not occur immediately. The experience of the Nordic countries suggests that there is need for a generational change and the achievement of the common acceptance of involved fatherhood and gender exchangeability in parental obligations takes time. Yet the change does not occur without external, institutional help. The unequal power order has prevailed for centuries, and thus, it is highly doubtful that it will be changed without establishing formal equalising mechanisms that are based on a critical analysis of the gender relations supported by domination and subordination. Thus, the role of the welfare state is to set conditions that will make this change possible. The pro-fatherhood mechanisms influence the behaviours of men, but at the same time set parameters for a partnership model that for the next generations might be seen as *natural*, just as in patriarchal societies, the gender division of work is seen as *natural*.

8.2 Why Is the Change Needed?

Why is a change in the gender order and in fatherhood models needed? Is it not better to promote the traditional model of family, which in the mid-twentieth century guaranteed high-fertility rates? Based on sociological and feminists studies, the answer is negative.

First of all, the traditional model of family, which is based on a man's participation in the labour market and a woman's unpaid work in the household, is historically and geographically a very limited phenomenon. It appeared as a result of the processes of industrialisation and urbanisation, but in fact was restricted only to middle-class families that could afford to support themselves on one wage. The subsequent increase in women's participation in the labour market and the independence from men could not be stopped, not only because women liked to work

outside of the household, but also because this was often necessitated by external conditions—low wages of men, single motherhood and poverty. This is especially evident in the case of black women in the United States, who did not identify with the feminist movement of white, middle-class women who fought for women's right to paid work (hooks 1991; Hull et al. 1982). Black women had already been in the labour market, and since they usually worked very hard for very low wages, they would be happy to have the choice to not work. A similar situation is described by Elisabeth Dunn in her book *Privatizing Poland* (2004)—after the communistic transformation, working-class women wished rather to see themselves as mothers than be labour market participants. Their hard and low-paying jobs were not seen as a source of satisfaction. Women's participation in the labour market is very often a necessity and cannot be seen as a whim of bored women who are dreaming about getting power. Women's double burden prevails in every contemporary Western society. Men's involvement in care and domestic work should then be seen as the only way of achieving a just society.

Additionally, the traditional family model is not the only model that exists today. The institution of the family has been rapidly changing for the last decades in Western societies. The married heterosexual couple with children is no longer the only acceptable form of family. Many children are born outside of marriage, are often raised in single-parent households, their parents are divorced and have other children with other partners. There is an increasing number of countries in which homosexual couples have the right to adopt children. And even if they do not have this right, they still, in many cases, raise children together from previous relationships (see Slany 2002; Mizielińska et al. 2014). New models of family life are constantly appearing and it is no longer adequate to think about parenthood solely in terms of heterosexual couples living together and adopting traditional parental roles. Under such conditions a political system that does not recognise men as parents and caregivers does not provide equal rights to its citizens. What is more, based on the biological differences between the sexes, it puts men in a privileged position in the labour market and within the domestic sphere.

Second, the prevailing gender order restrains individuals by imposing on them a gender bias. "Women's responsibility for the home limits

employment and advancement, and men's responsibility for breadwinning limits relationships with children" (Hook 2010, 1481). In the context of fatherhood, the gender bias is closely connected to the hegemonic masculinity model, which defines what it means to be a real man. It also defines what it means to be a good father. This is a form of a gender trap for men. Even though the model of fatherhood is changing, being a good father still means, in the popular understanding, being the main breadwinner. The father's activity in the labour market is unquestioned and highly desirable. The father's role is redefined, but to some extent, it still refers to the traditional fatherhood model based on orthodox masculine values. Even if fathers are engaged in care work, they still seek to reconstruct parts of their caregiving in order to give fatherhood a more masculine expression. So, taking over traditionally female tasks might be connected with giving them a new, more masculine, character. But there is a need to reformulate the role of the main, male breadwinner in contemporary times. As Derrick M. Bryan (2013) argues, expectations that fathers be the main economic providers can actually do more harm than good in fulfilling the parental role, especially for low-income fathers, who tend to compare themselves to their working female partners or ex-partners. In my interviews men often underlined the transformation of their identity they experienced in becoming a father. They discovered a more emotional part of themselves, started to be more sensitive to other people's, especially children's, harm, and often started to feel ashamed that they had once been so insensitive. This shows that the concept of masculinity is crucial to the process of redefining the father's role. The declining model of orthodox masculinity allows for a widening of the range of fathers' behaviours without undermining the male identity. Thus, the system of caring masculinities values adopted by the welfare state might actually help men in fulfilling their parental roles according to new expectations and the new gender order.

The problem with hegemonic masculinity, which is based on male domination, is that it is often connected with considerable costs for men, women and children. One of the most serious problems is male violence against children, women and other men that prevails in most Western societies. Research clearly shows that men are the main perpetrators of violence, not only violence against women, but also against other men.

At the same time, men are more likely to be victims of violence than women ("The Role of Men in Gender Equality European Strategies & Insights" 2013). This violence is often a result of suppressed emotions that boys and men are taught not to express. Eric Anderson, in his theory of inclusive masculinity, claims that orthodox masculinity is connected with sexism, compulsory heterosexuality and homophobia. Societies where the model of orthodox masculinity dominates tend to be characterised by a lower tolerance for homosexuals, and men in such societies are less eager to engage in activities considered feminine. Consequently, the division between the female and male spheres is difficult to overcome. And families that are not based on the traditional model are not accepted and, very often, not legally recognised. This is particularly visible in the comparison of Swedish and Polish societies: homophobic remarks appeared in the Polish interviews, mostly made by men who were not eager to transgress traditional gender roles. In the Swedish context, where the boundaries between female and male parenting are more blurred, nobody made such remarks. It, of course, does not mean that, in Sweden, there is no homophobia; it presumably exists, yet it is not socially acceptable to express it publicly. Thus, the reconstruction of masculinity, not in terms of physical domination, but in terms of sensibility, emotionality and ability to care, should be seen as an important step towards creating a more just and equal society, not only in terms of gender equality, but also in terms of equality for people with different sexual orientations or diverse lifestyles.

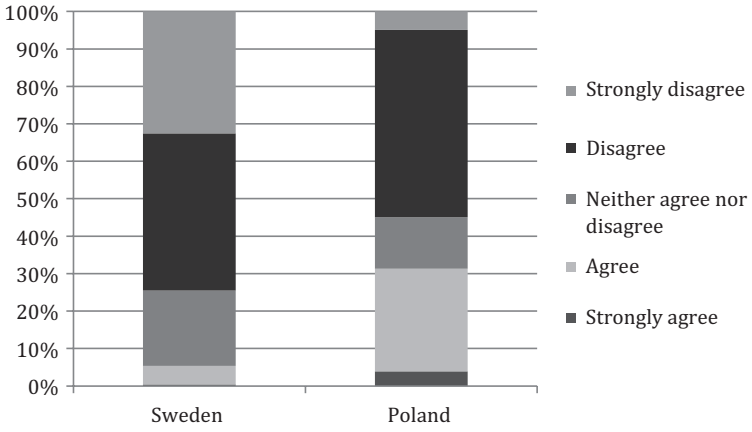
Third, there is the demographic problem of low fertility rates (total fertility rate, TFR) in most European countries. This problem is particularly evident in the case of Poland, in which, during the last 15 years, the TFR decreased from 2.07 to 1.22 in 2003, and since then has not risen above 1.4 (see Kotowska et al. 2008). In Sweden, although the TFR is lower than the replacement rate (2.1), it is still one of the highest in Europe (1.91 in 2012).[4] The low fertility rate in Poland is connected to the instability of the labour market. Women find themselves in a particularly dif-

[4] Yet it should be noted that statistics show that the fertility is higher among women who migrated to Sweden than among native Swedish women, although, as Gunnas Andersson claims, "it is hard to see whether these rates seem to be correlated with the TFR of Sweden or with the TFR of specific countries of origin" (Andersson 2004, 748).

ficult situation. After the fall of communism, their position in the labour market deteriorated, mostly because of a lack of structural mechanisms to guarantee women's work and because of an insufficient number of places in childcare institutions. A woman, still expected to be primarily responsible for children, is not as desirable as a man in the liberal labour market from the perspective of the employers (Ingham et al. 2001; Kotowska et al. 2008). Consequently, the problem of the work–family balance is more often perceived as only a women's problem (on the "motherhood penalty," see Abendroth et al. 2014).

The data from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) show that there is a difference in how Swedish and Polish people see having children. In 2012, the question was asked: "Do you agree with a statement that having children interferes too much with the freedom of parents?" (Graph 8.1). More than 30% of Poles agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, in comparison with less than 6% of Swedes. What is more, more than 30% of Swedes strongly disagreed with it.

This suggests that having children in Poland is a more difficult task than in Sweden. I would claim that the problem stems from an inadequate family policy and the lack of mechanisms to encourage men to



Graph 8.1 Having children interferes too much with the freedom of parents. *Source*: ISSP 2012. Prepared by the author

actively engage in parenting. Ann-Zofie Duvander, Gunnar Andersson and Karsten Hank (Andersson et al. 2004; Duvander and Andersson 2006) in their research on fertility and continued childbearing note that greater paternity engagement correlates to a greater chance that a couple decides to have a second or third child. The length of the parental leave taken by men is not without significance. One of the reasons for this situation is that men's engagement in parenting is positively correlated with women's situation in the labour market. And women who feel secure in their occupational position are more likely to decide to have another child. Also greater involvement of men in parenting usually means their increased participation in domestic work; consequently, the double burden on women is reduced.

The experience of the Nordic countries, which have one of the highest fertility rates in Europe and at the same the strongest gender equality policies, suggests that one of the ways to combat low fertility rates is to encourage men to share the care work with their partners and to be more involved in the domestic sphere.

8.3 How to Turn Men into Involved Fathers?

The model of involved fatherhood should be seen as an emancipatory project for patriarchal society. First of all, for men, who, thanks to the reconstruction of hegemonic masculinity, would be able to choose between various standards of behaviours acceptable in their societies. Second, for women, who would be released from the double burden and whose situation in the labour market would improve. Finally, for children, who would acquire a second highly involved parent. The question is how to achieve this goal and make men be more involved in family life and parenthood.

Jennifer L. Hook (2006) notes that society should look more carefully at the structures that impede men's engagement in unpaid work. She claims:

> Contemporary change (or lack thereof) in men's unpaid work behaviors presents an interesting puzzle. Researchers have observed that at the indi-

> vidual level, we have had little success in explaining men's unpaid work behaviors. Men have not responded to women's increased employment as we may have predicted, and there are similar distributions of unpaid work across nations with diverse national employment practices and policy configuration. (Hook 2006, 654)

Yet her cross-national analysis shows that men's engagement is closely connected to external contexts, in particular women's participation in the labour market and policies that support men's family work. The second element, in my opinion, is particularly important. Most men do not regard domestic work as one of their primary obligations. Even though they actively participate in it, it is most often perceived as a primarily female obligation in which men's engagement is needed and welcomed, yet voluntary, and as something that must be appreciated.

This is noticeable in interviews with Polish fathers, in which men see unpaid work, including care and domestic work, as a women's area of obligations. On the one hand, they understand that they should help their female partners with this, especially if they are working out of the household, yet they do not regard it as "their" obligation and do not necessarily feel responsible for these duties. They concentrate more on their "male" duty to financially support their families. In the case of Swedish men, they never openly admit that they see unpaid work as a woman's area, yet they often mention that *the woman knows better*. Women are often regarded as better oriented towards the child's needs and therefore more engaged in care work. What is more, there is a common assumption that the woman *just knows better* about caring for the household and planning for shopping. Another issue is women's domination in the domestic sphere and the reluctance to relinquish this to their male partners. Such phenomenon has even its own name—*maternal gatekeeping* (Allen and Hawkins 1999). Such situations were described in the Swedish interviews, in which some men, aware of the gender order, experience distrust from their partners in regard to taking care of their children. All of this is grounded in gender beliefs that proscribe our ways of thinking about male and female unpaid and paid work. To overcome these beliefs requires a considerable effort on the part of both women and men. The problem is how to help individuals to actually make this effort.

Changing people's behaviours is not a quick process. It often requires generational change. Yet changing the power order is particularly difficult. The dominating group is not eager to lose its privileged position, and therefore, the process of change often does not go deep enough to reconstruct the prevailing power order. In regard to the gender order, the emancipation of women had an impact on society, but it did not dismantle the hierarchy of domination and equalise the positions of women and men. After years of agitating for gender equality, it seems obvious that it is not enough to concentrate only on women within the public sphere; a redefinition of men within the domestic sphere is needed. The most crucial issue is the redefinition of the value of care work and masculinity models in terms of interdependence and relationality. In patriarchal society, the lower status of women was interconnected with the lower status of activities the women were engaged in. Consequently, domestic and care work, which in the process of industrialisation was not fully commodified, is not as valued as paid work in the labour market. Thus, unpaid work is lower in the status hierarchy than paid work. And this is the core of the prevailing gender inequality. Women's struggle to participate in the labour market should be seen as a struggle to be engaged in activities of higher status. Thus, it is not surprising that there is no similar struggle of men to participate in not highly valued unpaid work. It suggests that to change the prevailing gender order, it is necessary to equalise the social value of unpaid and paid work, to make it more attractive for men.

This reconstruction is not impossible. Although many parents indicate that they find care and domestic work boring activities, the truth is that not everyone has the opportunity to have very interesting paid work. And on the other hand, unpaid work might be a source of satisfaction for many people (see Kershaw 2006). What is more, from the perspective of society and social relations on the individual level, care work is very important and necessary. The significance of care work has already been recognised as the European welfare states realised that there was a need to relieve women of the burden of care work by creating the day care institution for children and care institutions for the elderly. Yet the problem was not solved in such a way because care work was not redefined as valuable. In fact, its inferior position is underlined by the political efforts to make

women more engaged in the labour market. What is more, the obligation of providing care is not put on men, but it is still a female duty, a fulfilment of which is assisted by the state. Therefore, there is an urgent need to properly recognise the significance of care and redefine it in terms of every individual's duty. Paul Kershaw turns attention to the idea of redefining the category of citizenship so that it would be based not only on economic participation in the labour market, but also on engagement in caregiving activities:

> Care must become an obligation of men's citizenship because their relative irresponsibility for this work engenders the added risk of economic insecurity and dependence that many women encounter as unpaid mothers and wives or as poorly paid domestics and child care providers. (Kershaw 2006, 342)

This approach suggests that real gender equality cannot be achieved without concentrating on men's behaviour and the hegemonic masculinity models.

Another issue is that, as Hook notes, men's reference group for appropriate domestic work are other men, not women (Hook 2006, 643). For this reason there is a need to promote the models of behaviour for men that would include engagement in care and domestic work. The welfare state, which through family policy mechanisms forces men to participate in the private sphere, has a particularly important role here. It can set new patterns of behaviour acceptable for men and slowly change the gender beliefs. In such a social setting it would be easier to raise a new generation of boys and girls who would be more eager to transgress traditional gender roles and who would perceive unpaid work as an obligation of every individual, regardless of sex.

8.4 Further Research

Since the book concentrated on a small section of society—urban, middle-class, heterosexual households, there is a need for further research, especially in Poland, where research on male parenting is missing. I would suggest that in the Polish context in a few years, it would

be necessary to carefully examine how the introduction of the gender-neutral parental leave in 2013 impacted men's involvement in the family sphere and if it has had any impact on fertility rates. It would also be worth studying Polish men who decided to take long periods (at least two months) of parental leave and examining how they are functioning in a society in which parenthood is regarded as a women's issue. It is also necessary to investigate Polish men who are not functioning within the "traditional" families, that is, single fathers and how they deal with care work; divorced fathers, who organise themselves by developing stronger fatherhood movements (most of them are very conservative and antifeminist); and homosexual fathers, about whom we know little—there are not even statistics about the numbers of homosexual-father households in Poland.

Another important aspect of fatherhood is connected to migration. More and more people migrate alone or with whole families. It would be interesting to research how they deal with fatherhood models in the new social and institutional contexts of the host countries. This is particularly important in the case of Sweden, where there are a lot of migrants from more conservative and traditionalist countries. How do these families address gender equality values and are they more eager to cross traditional gender roles in other social settings? The same question could be posed about Polish men who often migrate to the Nordic countries.

Yet fatherhood is not the only important phenomenon from the perspective of changing masculinity models and gender roles. In my opinion, there is a great need for research on men who engage in care work or work in feminised occupations. As I argue, the redefinition of care work is crucial to the reconstruction of the male dominant gender order. At the same time, in times of ageing societies, there is a growing demand for workers in the health and social care sector. Increasing male participation in traditionally female areas of work is a fact. How do these men find themselves in these employment sectors? How does care work affect their male identity and does this impact hegemonic masculinity models?

Obviously, the topics of further research on men and masculinities might be multiplied. Here, I have indicated the most important, from

my perspective, directions and questions that should be posed in order to better understand men's role in the changing gender order. I hope my book might be regarded as one step in this direction.

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