

Decision making of highly educated women about working after giving birth

A qualitative study

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Acknowledgements

When I started with the course research process of the master population studies, I had to think about a topic for my master thesis. Before searching a topic I already decided to do a qualitative research, because I wanted to master qualitative research methods as well. After turning over the leaves of different magazines and newspapers, I read an article in the Libelle about a highly educated woman who decided to quit her job to take care of her children. This was the beginning of a qualitative research about the decision making process of highly educated women about working after giving birth.

At this point I would like to thank some people who have contributed to this master thesis. In the first place I would really like to thank all the participants of this study, who were willing to share their stories with me about their decisions concerning motherhood and work. Secondly, I would like to thank my supervisor Prof. Dr. Inge Hutter for her support, help and comments on my master thesis. Furthermore, I am grateful to Dr. Ajay Bailey for his help and comments, especially during the design of the data collection part of my research, including the design of the in-depth interview guide. Finally, I want to thank my family and friends for their support. From them I specially thank Marcel and Jeroen for proofreading my master thesis.

Thank you all!

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Summary

Background: Highly educated mothers remain working more often after the birth of their children than lower educated mothers, but highly educated mothers are more frequently working less hours after the birth of their first child than lower educated mothers. From earlier research becomes clear that most women change the number of hours working per week after the birth of the first child. The most popular number of days working per week is three days. Earlier research about combining motherhood and work is mainly quantitative.

Research objectives: This qualitative study has three research objectives. The first objective is to identify the choice and decisions of highly educated women with regard to working after giving birth, and the reasons behind these choices and decisions. The second objective is to get insight in the role of the partner, the social environment, policy measures and the life course in the decision making process of highly educated women, concerning working after giving birth. And the third objective is to examine what the outcomes of the study say about gender performativity in the Netherlands with respect to motherhood.

Theoretical framework: The main theories used in this research are the process-context approach described by De Bruijn (1999), i.e. the theory of choice and the context; the theory of basic needs of Maslow (1970), the theory of planned behaviour by Ajzen (1991, 2001), i.e. attitudes toward act or behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control; and the life course theory described by Giele and Elder (1998).

Data and methods: For this research twenty in-depth interviews were conducted with highly educated mothers in Groningen and surrounding villages. Eleven interviews were carried out with working mothers and nine interviews with home mothers. The verbatim transcripts were analysed with the computer program ATLAS.ti using the grounded theory.

Results: After the birth of the first child most participants decided to change the number of working hours. A majority is working three or four days after the first childbirth. Most mothers who decided to quit their job around the birth of a second child, were also working part time after the first childbirth. Every participant has her own unique set of motivations for her decision concerning working after giving birth. This motivation is mainly based on their personal ideas and personal circumstances. The partner of the participants plays a role in the decision making process, because couples extensively discuss the different options before the woman takes a decision. The social environment of participants and existing policy measures hardly play a role, because the participants greatly value their own ideas and motivations. Furthermore, the interviews show that the past behaviour of the woman's mother plays a role in the decision making process. A lot of participants try to (not) combine motherhood and work at the same way as their mother did. And some participants would not work (too much) because of the past behaviour of their mother. The outcomes show gender performativity with respect to motherhood, because according to the hegemonic discourse fathers should work fulltime and mothers should work in a small part time job.

Conclusion: It can be concluded that the decision making process of highly educated women about working after giving birth is a choice of their own, which depends strongly on their personal circumstances. The partner, individual life events and the past behaviour of the woman's mother all play a role in the decision making process. Moreover, the social environment of highly educated women and existing policy measures hardly play a role in the decision making process concerning working after giving birth.

Table of contents

Acknowledgements	iii
Summary	v
Table of contents	vii
List of tables	x
List of figures	x
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Relevance.....	1
1.2 Research objectives	1
1.3 Research questions	2
1.4 Outline	2
2 Background	5
2.1 Female labour participation	5
2.2 Combining work and the care of children	7
2.2.1 Labour participation of mothers.....	7
2.2.2 Labour participation and childcare decisions.....	8
2.3 Policies concerning combining work and the care of children.....	10
2.3.1 Existing policy measures	10
2.3.2 ‘More chances for women’	11
2.3.3 Family policy	12
3 Theoretical framework	13
3.1 The process-context approach	13
3.1.1 Introduction.....	13
3.1.2 Theory of choice	14
3.1.3 The context.....	16
3.2 Theory of basic needs	17
3.3 Theory of planned behaviour.....	18
3.4 Life course theory	20
3.5 Gender performativity theory	21
3.6 The deductive model	22
4 Data and Methods	25
4.1 Definitions and operationalisation of concepts	25
4.2 Research method.....	29
4.3 Ethical considerations.....	29

4.4 Data collection	30
4.4.1 Study population	30
4.4.2 Participant recruitment strategy	30
4.4.3 Reflection pilot testing	30
4.4.4 In-depth interviews	31
4.5 Data analysis	31
4.5.1 Grounded theory	31
4.5.2 Data analysis using grounded theory	32
4.5.3 Use of quotations	32
4.6 Reflections	33
5 Results	35
5.1 Demographic characteristics.....	35
5.2 Behaviour concerning the care of children and work.....	36
5.3 Choices about combining motherhood and a paid job	38
5.3.1 Formation of a decision about combining motherhood and work	38
5.3.2 Thoughts at the moment of the decision	39
5.4 Personal ideas	40
5.4.1 Actual ideas about combining motherhood and work	40
5.4.2 Ideas about different forms of childcare	42
5.4.3 Ideas about combining motherhood and work before giving birth.....	44
5.5 Subjective norm	45
5.5.1 The partner	45
5.5.2 Family, friends and colleagues.....	46
5.5.2.1 The parents	46
5.5.2.2 Other family, friends and colleagues.....	47
5.5.3 Society.....	49
5.6 The ease or difficulty of (not) working	51
5.7 Past behaviour of the participant's mother	53
5.8 Motherhood	55
5.9 Motivations	56
5.9.1 Motivations of working mothers.....	56
5.9.2 Motivations of home mothers	58
5.10 Policy measures	60
5.11 Gender performativity with respect to motherhood	62
5.12 The inductive model	65
5.12.1 Work-care behaviour.....	65
5.12.2 Choices.....	66
5.12.3 Attitude toward act or behaviour	66
5.12.4 Subjective norm	66
5.12.4.1 The partner	66
5.12.4.2 Family, friends and colleagues.....	66
5.12.4.3 Society.....	67

5.12.5 Perceived behavioural control.....	67
5.12.6 Past behaviour of the woman's mother.....	67
5.12.7 Motherhood.....	67
5.12.8 Goals	67
5.12.9 Policy measures	68
5.12.10 The inductive model.....	68
6 Conclusion.....	71
6.1 Conclusions	71
6.2 Discussion.....	75
6.3 Recommendations	75
References	77
Appendices	81
Appendix A. In-depth interview guide (Dutch).....	81
Appendix B. In-depth interview guide (English)	86
Appendix C. Advertisement	91
Appendix D. Written informed consent	92

List of tables

Table 5.1 Overview of the number of children for home mothers and working mothers.	35
Table 5.3 Difference in living situation between home mothers and working mothers.	36
Table 5.2 The mean ages of the children of participants.	36

List of figures

Figure 2.1 The percentage of working women per age, 2001-2007.	6
Figure 2.2 The percentage of working women per age and per category of hours work per week in 2007.	7
Figure 2.3 The percentage of mothers per age of the youngest child by category of hours work per week, the Netherlands.	8
Figure 3.1 A schematic overview of the Social Theory of Coleman.	14
Figure 3.2 Maslow's hierarchy of needs.	17
Figure 3.3 A schematic overview of the theory of planned behaviour of Ajzen.	19
Figure 3.4 The deductive model.	22
Figure 5.1 The inductive model.	69

1 Introduction

1.1 Relevance

In *Libelle*, a Dutch illustrated magazine for women of May 2008 appeared an article concerning a highly educated woman, Sonja¹, who took discharge to take care of her children. This woman was psychologist, and after the birth of her first child she was going to work part time.

Sonja: “It was obvious that I would work again, because everyone did” (*Libelle*, May 2008, p. 53).

But it struck her that the equivalence with her colleagues had disappeared. All at once the more important clients did not go to her, but to a junior colleague who worked fulltime. She resigned from the company and after being unemployed for some time she found another job, but she realized that she preferred to stay at home to take care of her child. At that moment she was already pregnant from her second child. She decided that she would not come back at her work after the birth of her second child. Her family and friends reacted positive, but she feels that some people blame her choice. (*Libelle*, May 2008) The article about this woman is the inspiration to do a research about the choices and decisions of highly educated women with regard to working after the birth of their children.

The advisory report of the Committee on labour market participation (also known as Committee Bakker) is another inspiration for this research. In December 2007 the Committee on labour market participation got the task of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment to formulate suggestions which lead to a higher labour force participation in the Netherlands and suggestions which improves the functioning of the labour market. The Committee had to formulate suggestions about measures which lead to higher labour force participation and to an increase in the working hours per person. The objective of the Government is to increase the labour force participation up to 80 per cent. In June 2008 the Committee has published her advisory report. The main conclusion of the report is that the Dutch labour market stands on the eve of a fundamental change. In the following decennia there will be more work, but less people, and because of globalization the requirements on knowledge-level and adaptation capacity of the working population will increase. The suggestions of the Committee include: getting more people working now, improve the functioning of the labour market through the prevention of unemployment, and make it possible and attractive that people gradually work longer after the age of 65 years. The Committee pleads for a cultural change supported by new measures in the field of labour market and social insurance. The Committee says: “We must appreciate labour. Good employees and employers have been linked with that unbreakable” (Committee on labour market participation, 2008, p. 3).

1.2 Research objectives

This study has three research objectives. The first objective of this study is to identify the choices and decisions of highly educated women with regard to working after giving birth, and the reasons behind these choices and decisions. The second objective is to get insight in the role of the partner, the social environment, policy measures and the life course in the

¹ The name of the participant has been changed to secure anonymity.

decision making process of highly educated women, concerning working after giving birth. And the final objective is to examine what the outcomes of the research say about gender performativity in the Netherlands with respect to motherhood.

The outcomes of this research might be of interest for the Dutch government, especially the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, because these Ministries are trying to find policy measures which help increase the labour force participation of women. Through this research they can learn more about the underlying reasons of mothers to work or just to stop working to take care of the children. And about the role of the partner, the social environment, existing policies and the life course in the decision making process of highly educated women concerning working after giving birth.

1.3 Research questions

To achieve the objectives of this study the following main research question is developed:

What are the choices and decisions of highly educated women with regard to working after giving birth, and what is the role of the partner, the social environment, existing policy measures and the life course in this decision making process?

To answer the main research question the following sub research questions are designed:

1. What are the choices that highly educated women have and the decisions that they make, concerning working after giving birth?
2. Why do they make the decisions that they make, concerning working after giving birth?
3. What is the role of their partner in this decision making process according to themselves?
4. What is the role of their social environment in this decision making process according to themselves?
5. What is the role of existing policy measures in this decision making process according to themselves?
6. What is the role of their life course in this decision making process?
7. What do the outcomes of the research say about gender performativity in the Netherlands with respect to motherhood?

1.4 Outline

The research starts with the background. In the first section of chapter 2 the actual female labour participation will be described. In the next section the labour participation of mothers and earlier studies about the choices concerning labour participation and childcare will be discussed. Primarily studies about the Netherlands will be discussed, and also some international studies will be quoted. In the last section of chapter 2 main policies about labour market participation of women and childcare will be discussed. In chapter 3 the theoretical framework of the research will be described. The theoretical framework consists of theory about the process-context approach (De Bruijn, 1999), Maslow's theory of basic needs (1970), the theory of planned behaviour of Ajzen (1991, 2002), and the life course theory (Giele and Elder, 1998; Willekens, 1999). The theory about gender performativity (Butler et. al., 2000) will also be discussed shortly in this chapter, because this theory is needed as background for the last sub question. Chapter 3 finishes with the deductive model. In the first section of chapter 4 the concepts of the deductive model will be defined and operationalised. Furthermore, in the second section of chapter 4 the research method used for the study will be

discussed. In the following sections the study population, the ethical considerations, the data collection, the data analysis and the reflections on the research method will be described. Chapter 5 gives an overview of the results of the qualitative research. In this chapter the actual behaviour of the interviewed women concerning work and care of children will be described. Furthermore, the choices the participants made and their intentions will be summarized, followed by an overview of the determinants of intention (attitude toward act or behaviour, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control). The role of the past behaviour of the participant's mother, the role of motherhood, the motivations for the decision and the role of policy measures will also be described. What the outcomes of the research say about gender performativity with respect to motherhood in the Netherlands will also be discussed in chapter 5. Chapter 5 ends with the inductive model. The final chapter (6) concludes the research and gives recommendations for further research and policy implication.

2 Background

This is a qualitative study about the decision making processes of highly educated women about working after giving birth in the Netherlands. There are many quantitative studies about the labour force participation of mothers. Often research about the labour force participation of mothers is combined with research about childcare. In this chapter earlier research about the choices of mothers concerning work will be discussed. In section 2.1 the actual labour participation of women in the Netherlands will be discussed. Section 2.2 concentrates on the combination of work and care of children. Firstly, the labour participation of mothers in the Netherlands will be discussed. And in the second part of section 2.2 the focus lies on earlier research about choices and decisions concerning labour participation of mothers and combining work with the care of children. Also some research about childcare decisions will be discussed. In section 2.3 the actual policy measures concerning the combination of work and care of children will be described. This section concentrates on policies for combining work and the care of children from the emancipation note 'More chances for women' (Meer kansen voor vrouwen) (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2007). The family policy of the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports (2006) will also be discussed.

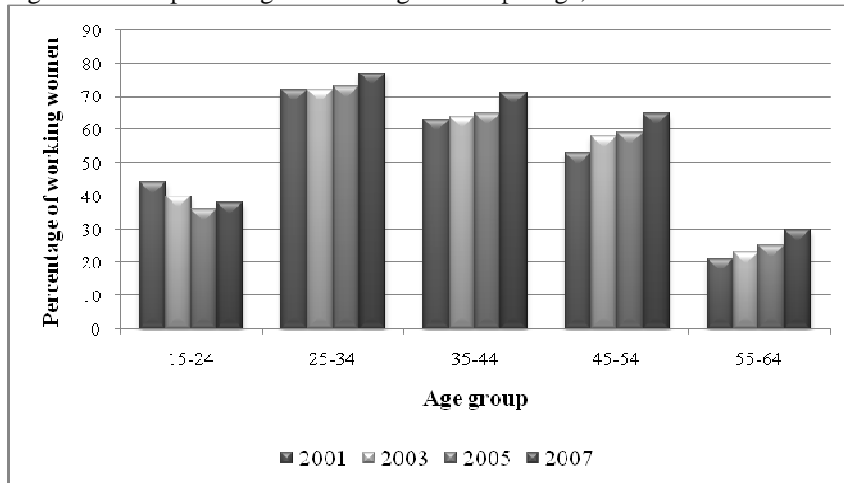
2.1 Female labour participation

The labour participation of women in the Netherlands increased gradually in the last decennia (mainly from the 1970's onwards). This is for an important part the consequence of an increase in the participation across the generations. The increase has contributed to the economic growth, but the average number of hours worked is not higher for the younger generations than for the older generations. (CPB, 2008) The Netherlands is the country with the most part time working women in Europe (Maassen van den Brink, 1994; Beets et. al., 1997; Van der Valk and Boelens, 2004; CPB, 2008; Beckers et. al., 2009).

In 2007 the number of the total potential working population, this are all persons aged 15 till 65 years, was 10,963,000 persons. A total number of 5,518,000 persons of the total potential working population are male and a total number of 5,446,000 are female. (CBS, 2008) The actual working population in 2007 exists of 7.6 million persons. About 3.4 million persons are not active on the labour market. Six out of ten persons who are not active on the labour market are women. (Beckers et. al., 2009) The net female labour participation in 2007 is 57.2 percent. The net participation is the share of the operative working population in the potential working population. People are participating if they have a job for twelve hours or more per week. The net male labour participation is on the contrary 75.1 percent in 2007. The net female labour participation in 2001 was 53 percent. That means that the net female labour participation increased with four percentage points between 2002 and 2007. (CBS, 2008; Beckers et. al., 2009)

From figure 2.1 becomes clear that the female labour participation of women aged 25 till 34 years is the highest. More than 75 percent of these women has a paid job for twelve hours or more in 2007. The participation of women aged 35 till 44 years is lower than the participation of women aged 25 till 34 years, because of the birth of children in this age category. In the period between 2001 and 2007 the highest increase in participation is in the group of women aged 45 till 54 years. The participation of this age group increased till 65 percent. The participation of women in the age category 55 till 65 years increased also considerable to 30 percent. As can be seen in figure 2.1, in comparison with the other age categories the participation of the highest age category is relatively small. (Beckers et. al., 2009)

Figure 2.1 The percentage of working women per age, 2001-2007.



Source: Statistics Netherlands (Working Population Survey 2001-2007), in Beckers et. al., 2009.

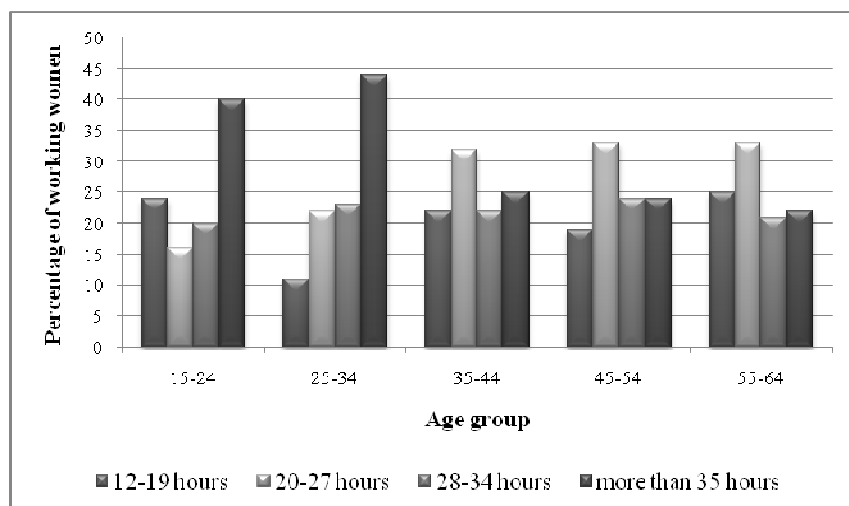
The labour participation of women does not only differ between age groups, but also between educational levels. Higher educated women work more often than lower and middle educated women (Van der Valk and Boelens, 2008; Beckers et. al., 2009). Almost 80 percent of the higher educated women have a paid job in 2007. On the contrary, 25 percent of the lower educated women have a paid job in 2007. The labour participation of middle educated women increased strongly between 2001 and 2007. (Beckers et. al., 2009)

The increasing labour participation of women is mainly due to an increase in part time work (Van der Valk and Boelens, 2004). In 2007 about 31 percent of the working women have a fulltime job. In 2001 this percentage was 35, which means that the number of fulltime working women is decreasing. The percentage of men who work fulltime is also decreasing in the period between 2001 and 2007, from 87 to 84 percent. As can be seen in figure 2.2, women with a fulltime job are often young women aged younger than 35 years. After the age of 35 years many women switch to a part time job. The main reason for this switch is the birth of children. In 2007 the percentage of women with a part time job of 28 till 34 hours is 22 percent. The percentage of women with a part time job of 20 till 27 hours is 16 percent for women aged 15 till 24 years. After the age of 35 years the percentage of women working 20 till 27 hours per week is increased till 32 percent. From figure 2.2 becomes clear that the category of 20 till 27 working hours per week is the most popular under women in the age categories from 35 years onwards. The number of hours worked per week does not only differ by age category, but also by educational level. Women who are higher educated work more hours than lower educated women. Especially women with a bachelor's or master's degree work more often fulltime. (Beckers et. al., 2009)

The employment (for one hour or more per week) of women in the European Union countries in 2007 was 58 percent. In the Netherlands the employment of women was 70 percent in 2007. The employment of women is the highest in the Scandinavian countries with 73 percent in Denmark and 72 percent in Sweden. East European and Mediterranean countries have the lowest employment in 2007, with 37 percent in Malta and 51 percent in Hungary. The percentage of working women in the Netherlands with respect to other European Union countries is relatively high. But when comparing the number of part time working women in the Netherlands with other European Union countries, the Netherlands has the highest percentage of part time working women. And this percentage has increased in the last five years, as became clear earlier. Also in Germany and Austria the number of part time workers

increased between 2001 and 2007. (Beckers, et. al., 2009) In 2006 the percentage of part time working women in the Netherlands was 60 percent. Other countries with a high percentage of women working part time are Germany (39 percent) and the United Kingdom (39 percent). In comparison, the percentage of part time working women in the Scandinavian countries is very low, for example in Sweden (19 percent) and Finland (15 percent). (CPB, 2008)

Figure 2.2 The percentage of working women per age and per category of hours work per week in 2007.



Source: Statistics Netherlands (Working Population Survey 2001-2007), in Beckers et. al., 2009.

2.2 Combining work and the care of children

2.2.1 Labour participation of mothers

In 2007 almost one third of the women decided to work less hours after the birth of their first child. Also 10 percent of the women stopped working. In 2001 the percentage of women who stopped working after the birth of their first child was 16 percent. That means that the number of women who stop working after the birth of their first child is decreasing. From the women who became mother of their first child in 2007 around 16 percent did not work before the birth of the first child and also do not work after the birth of the first child. And 40 percent of the mothers work the same or more hours as before the birth. (Cloin and Souren, 2009; CBS, 2008) In comparison with females, almost 90 percent of the males will work the same or more hours as before the birth of the first child in 2007 (Portegijs et. al., 2006; Cloin and Souren, 2009).

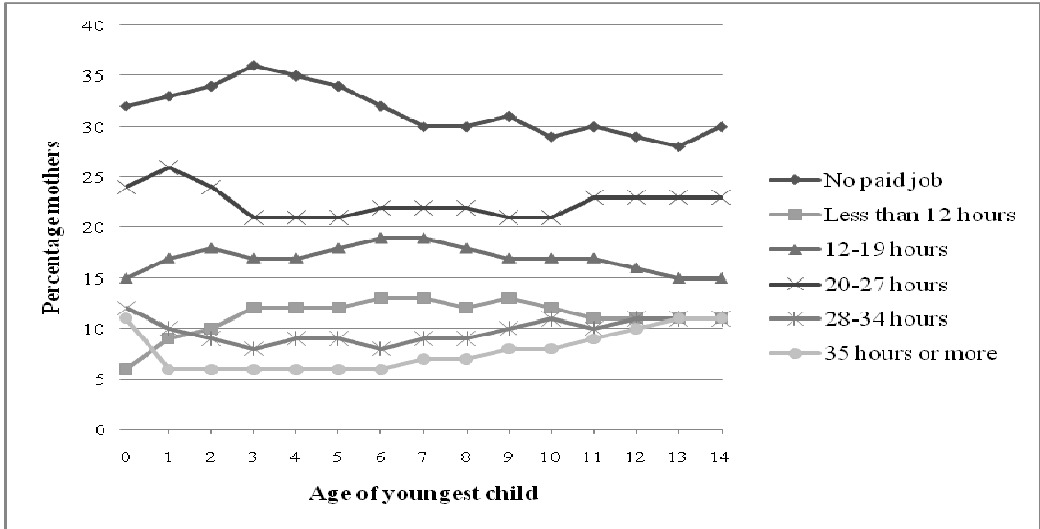
Just like highly educated women in general, highly educated mothers also have more often a paid job than lower educated mothers. In 2007 the percentage of highly educated mothers who are working is 79 percent. The percentage of middle educated mothers with a paid job is 66 percent and the percentage of lower educated mothers who are working is just 37 percent. (Beckers et. al., 2009) After the birth of the first child highly educated women remain working more often than lower educated women, but highly educated women are more frequently working less hours after the birth of their first child as before the birth in comparison with lower educated women. However, almost half of the highly educated women remained working the same number of hours or even more hours after the birth of their first child. (Mol, 2008; Cloin and Souren, 2009)

The birth of the first child has the most influence on the hours of work per week of mothers (Portegijs et. al. 2006; Mol, 2008; Cloin and Souren, 2009). According to Portegijs et. al.

(2006), after the birth of their first child nearly all mothers will work part time. The birth of a second or third child leads to less changes in the number of working hours per week than the birth of the first child. In this case the number of working mothers and the number of working hours of mothers decreases still something further (Portegijs et. al., 2006). Also when the children go to primary school or high school, the changes in number of working hours per week are scarcely (Mol, 2008; Cloin and Souren, 2009). These numbers will increase just a little, but the average number of working hours of working mothers does not increase (Portegijs, et. al., 2006).

In many young families a combination of fulltime and part time is popular. In that case the man works often fulltime and the woman works part time and takes care of the child(ren). (Van de Valk and Boelens, 2004) In figure 2.3 the percentage of mothers per age of their youngest child are shown by category of hours work per week. These percentages are based on data from the Working Population Survey (Enquête Beroepsbevolking) and are averages of the period 2000-2006. From figure 2.3 becomes clear that the number of mothers who do not have a paid job is increasing till the youngest child is three years old. In that case 36 percent of the mothers is not working. After the age of three years the percentage of women who do not have a paid job is decreasing till almost 29 percent when the youngest child is 12 years old. (CBS, 2008) The most popular category of hours work per week is 20 till 27 hours per week (Mol, 2008; CBS, 2008). On average, 24 percent of the mothers are working 20 till 27 hours per week. Another notable point is the percentage of mothers working fulltime. This percentage is very low, especially when the youngest child is younger than six years the percentage of fulltime working mothers is around 6 percent. (CBS, 2008)

Figure 2.3 The percentage of mothers per age of the youngest child by category of hours work per week, the Netherlands. ^{a,b,c}



a. The percentages of mothers are based on the total number of children per woman.
 b. Based on data from the Working Population Survey (Enquête Beroepsbevolking).
 c. The outcomes are an average of the period 2000-2006.
 Source: CBS, 2008.

2.2.2 Labour participation and childcare decisions

In the previous section became clear that nowadays many women combine their work with the care of children. The number of women who stopped working after giving birth is decreasing and the number of women who remain working, but less hours as before giving

birth is increasing. There are many different motives for the labour participation and childcare decisions. There are many economic studies about financial motives for labour participation and childcare decisions. In recent years studies about labour participation and childcare decisions are often focusing on more motives than financial motives alone (Portegijs et. al, 2006; Ooms et. al., 2007; Van Putten et. al., 2007). Results of these studies will be discussed in this section.

Ooms et. al. (2007) did an analysis of employment and childcare decisions of mothers with young children in the Netherlands. One of the conclusions of their research is that as the mother's potential hourly rate of pay is higher and the other household income lower, more mothers have a job. In that case, they also work more hours and make more often use of childcare (Ooms et. al., 2007). According to Vlasblom and Schippers (2005) is the transition from work to care of the children more costly for Dutch mothers than combining work and childcare. When a woman stays on the labour market, she keeps her skills, knowledge and networks up to date. The reverse happens when she stops working. If this woman wants to start working again, when her children are old enough, she would probably not find a job at the same level as before she stopped. (Vlasblom and Schippers, 2005) From another Dutch study, about the relations between opinions on childcare, the supply and costs of childcare and the relations between the use of childcare and the labour market participation, becomes clear that the price of childcare does not play a role in the decision of mothers to use childcare and participate on the labour market. Despite most mothers think the price of formal childcare is too high in the Netherlands. (Portegijs et. al., 2006) Maassen van den Brink (1994) also concludes that the effect of the price of childcare on the participation decision is not significant in the Netherlands. But mothers will be more inclined to work, and to work more hours, if the availability of informal childcare increases (Ooms et. al., 2007).

The decisions of mothers to combine work and care of children are not only influenced by financial motives. Characteristics of the mothers and their family, such as age and family composition, play a role too. (Ooms et. al, 2007). The number of children in the household also has influence on the decisions of mothers. The chance that a woman works is smaller when the household is bigger (Fong and Lokshin, 2000). Another important motive which plays a role in the decisions about working is the social environment of the mothers. According to Ooms et. al. (2007) are prevailing norms and values in the surroundings of the mother playing an important role. For example, where work is considered as usual and important, it is more likely that mothers work. This is a strengthening effect. Furthermore, mothers with many working mothers in their environment, will follow their example, which leads to an increase in labour participation. (Ooms et. al., 2007) Also Portegijs et. al. (2006) conclude that norms and values play an important role in the decision making process of mothers about labour participation and childcare. Another explanation for the differences in decision making of the mothers comes from the article of Van Putten et. al. (2007). They studied intergenerational effects of working mothers, and came to the conclusion that the number of hours worked by daughters of mothers who worked during the youth of the daughter is higher than the number of hours worked by daughters of mothers who were not working during the youth of their daughters. (Van Putten et. al., 2007)

According to Portegijs et. al. (2006) are the ideas about the care of children and the importance of work very important for the labour participation of mothers. Many women attach much value to a paid job, because of the networks, the possibilities to develop their skills and knowledge and their own income. But almost all women also want to take care of their children themselves. On the one side there are women who think that children have to be

reared by their own parents and who do not attach much value to a paid job. But on the other side there are women who attach much value to a paid job and think that their children can also spend some days in a formal childcare facility. But many women prefer informal childcare instead of formal childcare. (Portegijs et. al, 2006)

Policy measures concerning the combination of work and the care of children also affect the labour participation and childcare decisions of mothers. Baker et. al (2005) did research on the effects of policy measures which increased the public financing for childcare in the United States and Canada. They found strong evidence of a shift into new childcare use. But it has to be mentioned that one third of the new use appears to come from women who worked already and had formerly informal childcare. The impact on the labour supply is highly significant. They also uncover striking evidence that children who are going to childcare facilities are worse off, especially in the fields of behaviour and health. Finally, they found also evidence that families were more stretched after the introduction of the policy measures. (Baker et. al., 2005) A Dutch study about the effects of policy measures on labour participation decisions comes from Jongen and Van Vuuren (2004). They conclude that childcare subsidies lead to an increasing labour participation, and regulations of leave lead to a decrease in the number of hours worked. (Jongen and Van Vuuren, 2004)

2.3 Policies concerning combining work and the care of children

Demeny (2003) defines population policy as deliberately constructed or modified institutional arrangements and/ or specific programs through which governments influence, directly or indirectly, demographic change. The Netherlands do not have population policies, but there are population related policies, for example for health, wellbeing, economic growth, etc.; which also may have an impact on demographic behaviour. The Government is stimulating women to start working from the mid 1980's onwards. Different policy measures are taken by the Government in the last decennia. (Van Nimwegen, et. al., 2003) This section concentrates on the actual policies concerning the combination of work and the care of children. In section 2.3.1 an overview is given of the policies discussed in the article of Jongen and Van Vuuren (2004). Section 2.3.2 gives an overview of the latest objectives of the Government concerning the combination of labour and care of children. Also some changes in this policies of the last five years will be mentioned, based on the emancipation note 'More chances for women' (Meer kansen voor vrouwen) of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (2007). And in section 2.3.3 some important policy measures from the family policy of the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (2006) will be discussed.

2.3.1 Existing policy measures

Jongen and Van Vuuren (2004) discuss in their article actual policies about the combination of work and the care of children in the Netherlands. Firstly, they discuss policies about childcare facilities. The formal childcare is partly financed through the households themselves and their employers, but also for a large part through government subsidies. These subsidies are provided on municipal level and are financed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment based on the number of offered 'child places'. There is also childcare subsidy for single parents. And the costs of formal childcare are partly fiscally deductible, for households and for employers. The promotion of the labour market supply of women forms an important motive for stimulating childcare. (Jongen and Van Vuuren, 2004)

Secondly, Jongen and Van Vuuren (2004) give a review of policies about regulations of leave related to young children. The pregnancy leave (Zwangerschapsverlof) concerns the right to collective paid leave for the mother of 16 weeks. During this period 100 percent of the wages is paid. Moreover, the partner has the right of two days paid leave with the maternity leave (Kraamverlof). Parental leave (Ouderschapsverlof) gives both parents of a child younger than eight years the right on leave of 13 free weeks. This is a form of unpaid leave. Besides these regulations of leave there exists also regulations for care-related leave. The short-term care-related leave (Kortdurend zorgverlof) gives the legal right to a maximum of ten days care-related leave of absence per year, to be able to take care of a sick child living at home, a sick partner, or a sick parent. In this regulation the employer has to pay a minimum of 70 percent of the wages. And employees have the right on leave for a short period, with conservation of wages, through the calamity leave (Calamiteitenverlof) when work cannot be performed because of very particular, unforeseen, personal circumstances. (Jongen and Van Vuuren, 2004)

Thirdly, Jongen and Van Vuuren (2004) give a review of stimulation measures for employees and employers. One of these measures is the tax stimulation regulation paid parental leave. Another measure is the Career Break (Funding) Act (de Wet Financiering Loopbaanonderbreking), which concerns a financial allowance for employees who have agreed with their employer concerning taking leave for care or education. 'Leave saving' (Verlofsparen), finally, is a tax facility for employees to save salary or holidays (which can be converted in money) which can be taken out later during an unpaid leave period. (Jongen and Van Vuuren, 2004)

2.3.2 'More chances for women'

In 2007 the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science developed the emancipation note 'More chances for women' for the period 2008 till 2011. One of the main objectives of the emancipation note is the raise of the labour force participation of women in persons and in hours per week. To reach this goal working has to be made more attractive, and the combination of work and care has to be improved. (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2007)

One of the main points, concerning the combination of work and care, of the emancipation note is a flexible division of the day. This means that the working hours have to be more flexible. It has also to become easier for people to work, for example, one day a week at home. The Government has an example function in this case, so she promotes the introduction of flexible working hours and working at home. And the working hours and visiting hours, for example of the municipality or family doctor, must be coordinated better. (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2007)

Another main point of the emancipation note concerning the combination of work and care is the care of young children. Especially when children are very young, many parents do not want to use childcare facilities. The Government wants to make it possible for parents to raise their child themselves the first life year of the child through enlarging the Parental leave from 13 weeks to 26 weeks. This lengthening of the parental leave exists from 1 January 2009. Another measurement to make it easier for parents to raise their children by themselves the first life year of the child is to give self-employed females the right on a payment for 16 weeks. The Government also wants to do a study into facilities for studying mothers. (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2007)

The last main point of the emancipation note concerning the combination of work and care is that it has to be possible that children go to a childcare facility and that the parents do not have to be anxious when their children are at the childcare facility. Very important are pedagogical quality and security of the childcare facility, there must be sufficient continuity in the care, and children have to enjoy going to the childcare facilities. The Government wants to increase the quality of childcare facilities by adopting higher educated group leaders. The Government also wants that all children, who need early school education, can participate in early school education. Schools are since 1 August 2007 responsible for the connection with childcare facilities outside the schools. Finally, the Government wants to strongly enlarge the number of community schools (brede scholen). Community schools are day arrangements with an ongoing supply of relief, education, welfare and cultural activities. (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2007) The main goal of community schools is more development opportunities for children (Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, 2006).

2.3.3 Family policy²

In 2006 the note 'Family Policy' is published by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport. This policy has two main points. The first is family support through the creating of favourable limiting conditions. Parents have to be able to combine their task of raising children with the active participation in the society. The second main point is that the government has to intervene in situations which threaten the rights and the possibilities of development of the child. The main themes of this policy are education and support, education outside the family, values and standards, financial position of families, and labour: childcare, life-course policy, informal care and voluntary work. The last main theme is important in this case, because this main theme deals with the combination of work and care of children. Measures to make it easier for parents to combine care and work of the last years are upgrading the employers support for childcare facilities to 90 percent for employees, intensifying childcare facilities, better connection between school and outside school facilities for childcare, and the life-course policy. The life-course policy makes it possible for parents to go on leave to pay more attention to their family (Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, 2006).

Until the 1950's and 1960's a 'standard biography' of study, work, pension was predominant from a life course perspective. The destandardisation of the life course set in during the last quarter of the 20th century, caused by ongoing individualism, rising labour force participation of women and rising education (Van Nimwegen et. al., 2003). Periods of work get more often interchanged or combined with occupational resettlement or care for family. Through making it easier to combine work and occupational resettlement or care, not only active participants can be preserved also potential workers may be stimulated to participate on the labour market. This will help to create a broader economic basis to absorb the costs of population ageing. A career break makes it also possible to extend the working life, which will also lead to a broader economic basis. According to the government these career breaks have to come for people's own accounts, because this would stimulate people to go work again after a career break. Through this way of policy, the system of work and income will offer citizens more possibilities to follow their own choices and live the life they want to live (Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, 2005).

² This section is based on a paper by the author for the course population debate during the master programme Population Studies at the University of Groningen.

3 Theoretical framework

This chapter gives an overview of the theories used in this study to answer the research questions. The process-context approach, which has been elaborated in section 3.1, is taken as a general basis for this study. In the process-context approach demographic behaviour is seen as the outcome of a process involving a series of individual decision making and actions which take place in a certain context (De Bruijn, 1999). Maslow's theory of basic needs (1970) has been worked out in section 3.2. The theory of basic needs deals with goals and motivations, which play an important role in understanding behaviour. Section 3.3 deals with the theory of planned behaviour of Ajzen (1991), which explains human behaviour on the individual level. In section 3.4 the life course theory (Giele and Elder, 1998; Willekens, 1999) will be discussed. This theory adds a time dimension to the theory of planned behaviour. Section 3.5 deals with the gender performativity theory (Butler, 1990, 1993; Jacobowski, et al., 2006). This theory will be used as background for the last sub question. The main idea of this theory is that individual groups are influenced by hegemonic discourses. Finally, section 3.6 presents the deductive model which originates from the theories.

3.1 The process-context approach

3.1.1 Introduction

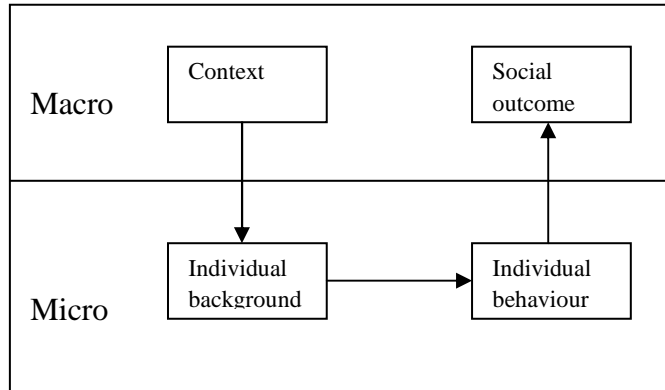
Demography concentrates mainly on the explanation of macro level elements. For example: population size, age-specific fertility or labour market participation. These subjects are mainly related to societal level. Since the analytical focus of demography lies on the macro level, the theoretical emphasis of demography should be on the micro level, according to De Bruijn (1999) in his study on demographic theory. Furthermore, phenomena at the macro level are considered as the results of actions on the individual level. (De Bruijn, 1999)

Coleman (1990, in De Bruijn, 1999) distinguishes in his social theory macro and micro levels. According to Coleman, social systems can be explained by a direct relation at the macro level which consists of three parts. The first part is the influence of the society on the individual; the second part is the influence of the individual background on the individual behaviour; and the third part is the influence of the individual behaviour on the society. (De Bruijn, 1999) "This approach entails the relevance of some analytical elements in the theoretical framework of Coleman:

- A theoretical approach to assess the context of individual behaviour (macro level);
- The mechanisms by which the context influences and structures individual action (macro-micro connection);
- A theory of individual behaviour (micro level);
- A transformation mechanism (micro-macro connection)." (De Bruijn, 1999, p. 19)

Figure 3.1 gives a schematic overview of the several analytical elements and their relations as mentioned above. This study is focussing on the choices and decisions concerning motherhood and work of highly educated mothers and their motives. Also the context plays a role in this research. Looking at the social theory of Coleman, the focus is on the first three analytical elements. The transformation mechanism is not important in this research, that is why this element is not further discussed.

Figure 3.1 A schematic overview of the Social Theory of Coleman.



Source: Coleman 1990 cited by De Bruijn 1999, p. 18.

In the following subsections (3.1.2 and 3.1.3) a theory of choice and the role of the context of individual decision making behaviour will be elaborated. These subsections are based on De Bruijn's (1999) approach on demographic theory. A short overview is given of the, for this study, relevant parts of De Bruijn's study '*Foundations of demographic theory: choice, process, context*' (1999).

3.1.2 Theory of choice

Although there are many different perspectives on decision making, there are usually three components of decision making distinguished. The first component is the set of alternatives which are open to choice. The second component is the evaluation of consequences of the alternatives, or the motivation to take a particular choice. And the third component is the selection of a particular alternative according to some rule or criterion. These three components are closely related to each other in the actual process of choice. (De Bruijn, 1999)

The set of alternatives which are open to choice refers to the problem space of the individual. This problem space exists of different alternatives and their outcomes. There may also be situations where only one option is perceived. In this case other options can be treated as morally and/or emotionally unthinkable. There are two different approaches which explain how decision makers set their problem space. The basic idea of the first approach is that a decision maker makes goals, with one goal as most important. This assumes that people form a 'definition of the situation' which agrees with their goals. The second approach claims that people learn from their environment and that their way of making choices depends on this. According to Bandura (in De Bruijn, 1999) this environment exist of an internal and external background. Bandura distinguishes four sources of information: personal experience, observational experience, instructions communicated by others, and emotional prickling. This approach is based on the ideas of the social learning theory which claims that most behaviour is learned by information obtained from observing others (De Bruijn, 1999). These two approaches are also interrelated: "while current motives or interest may influence people's problem space at a certain moment, in turn, the goals that are considered may depend on the people's definition of the situation" (De Bruijn 1999, p. 96).

As De Bruijn (1999) argues, in behavioural theories has been assumed that people act in a certain way, because it somehow better meets their goals or interests. Therefore in the study of human behaviour, motivation must be made specific in terms of goal achievement, the route to goal achievement and formation and origin. Goal achievement can be explained by Maslow's theory of basic needs, which will be discussed in section 3.2. The ways in which

people reach their goals are very important in understanding human behaviour, because the way in which a goal is reached can be different for every single person. This is because the social environment and the characteristics of each individual can be different. The formation and origin of motivation can be explained with the social learning theory of Bandura (in De Bruijn, 1999). From this theory becomes clear that motivation for behaviour is derived from personal experience, observational experience, instructions communicated by others, and emotional prickling. The primary mechanism of motivation is the cognitive representation of results of specific behaviour. This is what a person thinks about the consequences of a specific behaviour. Another key mechanism of motivation works through the intermediate influences of goal setting and the standards, which are determined by the person, by which performance is judged. When someone wants to reach a certain goal, observed negative differences between what this person does and what this person wants to reach, leads to dissatisfaction which serves as motivation for action. According to De Bruijn (1999), these two mechanisms of motivation refer to the motivation processes that are essential in understanding decision making behaviour. (De Bruijn, 1999)

As discussed by De Bruijn (1999), decision making has to be seen as a process. Decision making is not something what happens immediately. People have to think about the different options and consequences of these options before they take a decision. The duration of this decision making process can differ from a short moment in time to a greater proportion of someone's life. Before making a decision, people evaluate the different options. De Bruijn (1999) argues that this is often done by assessing the impact of alternatives or by assessing the alternatives themselves. "[Moreover] the style of decision making will depend on the socio-cultural environment, the stage in the life course, personal experience and the decision problem at hand" (De Bruijn, 1999, p. 109).

According to a lot of behavioural scientists, behaviour is most often based on customs and routines. Decisions are often taken by following these kind of 'rules', because of the existing ignorance and uncertainty about the consequences of an individual choice. There may also be social pressure and/ or sanctions, so people may feel forced to make a particular choice. And they know the value of the behaviour which arises from these rules. Furthermore, there are differences in decision making when a person is uncertain about the future and when a person does not matter about the future consequences of a decision. De Bruijn (1999) argues that the recognition of these 'rules' by researchers means that the decision making process exists of different phases. Janis and Mann (in De Bruijn, 1999) distinguished, for instance, five different phases in their work: appraising a challenge, surveying alternatives, weighing alternatives, deliberating about the commitment, and adhering despite negative feedback. (De Bruijn, 1999)

Another concept which contributes to choice theory is the concept of control. When taking the concept of control into account in choice theory, it becomes clear that decision making is less voluntary than thought before. With the addition of perceived control to choice theory, non-motivational explanation and understanding of behaviour is added to the theory, and the addition of perceived control also helps explain decision making under certain conditions of reliance, uncertainty and ignorance. (De Bruijn, 1999) The concept of control will be discussed further in section 3.3, where the theory of planned behaviour by Ajzen (1991) will be elaborated.

3.1.3 The context

Important in explaining individual decision making behaviour is the context, and more specific the social environment, because it can be expected that the decision of an individual is (at least) partly based on the information he or she gets from his or her social environment. According to De Bruijn (1999, p. 21), “the context is understood as a structure of *institutions* which embody information about opportunities and restrictions, consequences and expectations, rights and duties, incentives and sanctions, guidelines, and definitions of the world”. Institutions can be defined as a consistent ‘set of rules and relations’ between people in repeated situations. Some relevant institutions for this study can be, for instance, the society and the government. In addition decision making behaviour in different social contexts can be explained by behavioural-guiding and meaning-giving rules. Behaviour-guiding rules give, for instance, information about expectations, norms, rights and duties. Meaning-giving rules give information about the definition of actors, situations, events and cause and effect. De Bruijn (1999) argues that institutions serve as behavioural guides for individuals, because “they define specific situations and behavioural outcomes, they reduce uncertainty and the knowledge and cognitive skills required for successful action, and they avoid continual renegotiation, conflicts and unnecessary transaction costs” (De Bruijn, 1999, p. 123).

However as De Bruijn (1999) argues, people not only use these (sets of) rules, they also reproduce, design and change these (sets of) rules. Therefore, individuals and the context have an interactive relationship. Institutions are created in the past to prevent individuals for returning problems in their life. But the idea that institutions prevent individuals for certain problems, does not mean that it are always the best solutions. Institutions are also very dynamic, because on the one hand groups of individuals want to change institutions and on the other hand other groups of individuals want to preserve the institutions properly. Often only individuals and groups with power or authority can change (sets of) rules. Moreover, these rules are social constructs, because they result from the interaction between people. As De Bruijn (1999) states, the fact that individuals are well informed and active using, reproducing and implementing the institutional rules, indicates that they play an important role in changing and solving existing institutions, and creating new problems and the need for new institutionalised solutions. (De Bruijn, 1999)

The role of the context in individual decision making behaviour differs for every individual, because every individual has his or her own views of the institutions in the social environment. Furthermore, the relevance of institutions may change over the life course and over time. De Bruijn (1999) argues that the social environment can be interpreted as a multi-level structure, because some institutions only affect certain groups, while others have overall impact. But institutions which have overall impact may influence decision making behaviour otherwise in different places and over time. The distance between an institution and a decision maker has influence on the decision making behaviour as well. Institutions are working on every geographical level, from local to international level. According to De Bruijn (1999), institutions are usually classified into four related categories: social, cultural, economic and political. Institutions can also be classified into formal institutions, which are planned, and informal institutions, which are unplanned. (De Bruijn, 1999) In this study an example of a formal institution can be the policy measures which stimulate the combination of motherhood and work, and examples of informal institutions can be the family or the society.

3.2 Theory of basic needs

According to behavioural theories, people are assumed to be motivated to act in a certain way. Motivation plays an important role in understanding human behaviour. A general perspective on motivation is the theory of basic needs of Maslow (1970).

Maslow's theory of basic needs not only distinguishes five basic needs, but also ranges them by relative importance. The underlying idea is that if you fulfilled the lower needs, a higher need will become prominent. This does not mean that a need has to be satisfied totally before another need emerges. "In actual fact, most members of our society who are normal are partially satisfied in all their basic needs and partially unsatisfied in all their basic needs at the same time" (Maslow 1970, p. 54). The five basic needs of Maslow's theory of basic needs, in order from low to high, are: physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. (Maslow, 1970; De Bruijn, 1999) In figure 3.2 the hierarchy of basic needs is shown.

Figure 3.2 Maslow's hierarchy of needs



Source: University of South Carolina, 2009, <http://www.housing.sc.edu/rsl/recogresources1.html>

Physiological needs are normally taken as the starting point for motivation theory. These needs are biological and consist of needs for air, water, food and sleep. These physiological needs are the most influential of all needs. In the case that all needs are unsatisfied, and the person is then dominated by the physiological needs, all other needs may be pushed into the background or become nonexistent. (Maslow, 1970)

When the physiological needs are satisfied, other needs emerge and will be dominating the person. These are in the first place the safety needs (for example: security, stability, protection, need for structure). These safety needs can be fulfilled by, for example, living in a safe area, job security, insurance (medical, dental, unemployment, old age, disability) and having a saving account. Adults are hardly aware of their security needs, except in case of emergency. Children on the other hand are frequently showing signs of insecurity and the need for safety. (Maslow, 1970)

If both the physiological and the safety needs are satisfied, the love and affection and belongingness needs will emerge. People seek for belongingness and love needs to overcome the feelings of loneliness, strangeness, aloneness and alienation. Love and belongingness needs involve both giving and receiving love. (Maslow, 1970)

When the needs for physiological well-being, safety and love and belongingness are fulfilled, the needs for esteem can become dominant. Esteem needs consist of needs for self-respect, self-esteem and for the esteem of others. Esteem needs can be classified into two sets. “These are, first, the desire for strength, for achievement, for adequacy, for mastery and competence, for confidence in the face of the world, and for independence and freedom. Second, we have what we may call the desire for reputation or prestige, status, fame and glory, dominance, recognition, attention, importance, dignity, or appreciation” (Maslow 1970, p. 45). When these needs are satisfied, a person should feel self-confident and being useful and necessary in the world. But when these needs are frustrated, a person feels weak, helpless, inferior and worthless. (Maslow, 1970)

Maslow expects that, if all foregoing needs are satisfied, a new dissatisfaction and a restless feeling will develop soon. This is the need for self-actualization. This need for self-actualization “refers to man’s desire for self-fulfilment, namely, to the tendency for him to become actualized in what he is potentially” (Maslow 1970, p. 46). Because of the specific form of these needs, they will vary greatly between different individuals. (Maslow, 1970)

3.3 Theory of planned behaviour

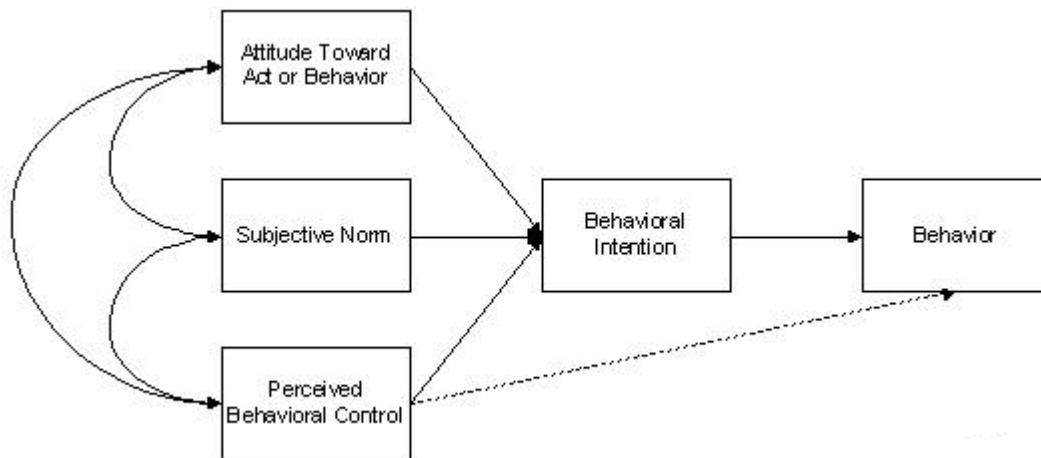
The theory which will help understand and explain the decision making behaviour of highly educated women with regard to working after giving birth is the theory of planned behaviour of Ajzen (1991, 2002). This theory is an enlargement of the theory of reasoned action of Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), which supposed that most human social behaviour can be forecasted from intentions alone, because it is voluntary. Ajzen included the concept of perceived behavioural control in the theory of planned behaviour, because not all behaviour is voluntary. The theory of planned behaviour, which tries to explain human behaviour in a specified context, became one of the most popular conceptual frameworks for analyzing human behaviour. (Ajzen, 1991, 2002) Figure 3.3 gives a schematic overview of the theory of planned behaviour.

The primary determinant of behaviour in the theory of planned behaviour is the behavioural intention. Intentions are the cognitive representations of a person’s readiness to perform a given behaviour. “Intentions are assumed to capture the motivational factors that influence behaviour; they are indications of how hard people are willing to try, of how much of an effort they are planning to exert, in order to perform the behaviour. As a general rule, the stronger the intention to engage in a behaviour, the more likely should be its performance” (Ajzen 1991, p. 181).

Another determinant which can be used directly to predict behaviour is the perceived behavioural control. This determinant is also one of the independent determinants of intention. Ajzen (1991) gives two reasons for the hypothesis that perceived behavioural control can be used directly to predict behaviour. “First, holding intention constant, the effort expended to bring a course of behaviour to a successful conclusion is likely to increase with perceived behavioural control. Second, perceived behavioural control can often be used as a substitute for a measure of actual control” (Ajzen 1991, p. 184). Actual control over the

behaviour exists of non-motivational factors as availability of required resources and chances. (Ajzen, 1991)

Figure 3.3 A schematic overview of the theory of planned behaviour of Ajzen.



Source: Ajzen 1991, p. 182

The theory of planned behaviour assumes three independent determinants of intention: the attitude toward act or behaviour, the subjective norm and the perceived behavioural control. The attitude toward act or behaviour is the belief that a person has itself on the outcome of the behaviour. The subjective norm is what the person believes that others think about the person's behaviour. And the perceived behavioural control is described as the observed ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour. Perceived behavioural control usually vary across situations and actions. (Ajzen, 1991)

The theory of planned behaviour acts with antecedents of attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control to explain human behaviour. The theory assumes that behaviour is a function of striking information, or beliefs, relevant to the behaviour. These beliefs are considered as the main determinants of a person's intentions and actions. There can be distinguished three kinds of striking beliefs: "behavioural beliefs which are assumed to influence attitudes toward the behaviour, normative beliefs which constitute the underlying determinants of subjective norms, and control beliefs which provide the basis for perceptions of behavioural control" (Ajzen 1991, p. 189).

Behavioural beliefs are beliefs about the likely consequences or other properties of the behaviour (Ajzen 2002, p. 665). In general, we form beliefs concerning an object by associating it with certain properties, i.e. with other objects, events, or characteristics. In the case of attitudes toward a behaviour, each belief links the behaviour with a certain result, or with other properties. We obtain at the same time an attitude toward the behaviour, because properties are already valued positively or negatively. (Ajzen, 1991) Normative beliefs are beliefs about the normative expectations of other people (Ajzen 2002, p. 665). These normative beliefs are involved with the probability that important referent individuals or groups approve or disapprove the implementation of certain behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Control beliefs are beliefs about the presence of factors that may further or hinder performance of the behaviour (Ajzen 2002, p. 665). This set of beliefs deals with the presence or absence of required resources and chances. These control beliefs may be partly based on past experience with the behaviour, but they will normally also be influenced by second-hand information. The more resources and chances individuals think they have, and the fewer obstacles they

have foreseen, the greater should be their perceived behavioural control over the behaviour. (Ajzen, 1991)

3.4 Life course theory

To answer the sixth sub question, about the influence of the life course on the decisions of highly educated women, concerning working after giving birth, the life course theory is needed. This theory explains the development of individuals based on experienced life events. A life course perspective underlines the importance of time, context, process and meaning on human development and family life. The life course theory adds a time dimension to the theory of planned behaviour of Ajzen (section 3.3), since the theory of planned behaviour offers a static relationship between the determinants of intention and the behavioural outcome. (Willekens, 1999)

Mayer and Tuma (1990, p. 3) defined the life course as “the study of social processes extending over the individual life span or over significant portion of it, especially the family life cycle (marriage and child rearing), educational and training histories, employment and occupational careers”. With the life course theory “demographic events can be linked to other aspects of life that are important to people and that affect their demographic behaviour” (Willekens 1999, p. 24).

The life course theory not only studies the occurrence or timing of the events in the life of an individual, but also tries to understand the way in which they shape their life based on a unique order of events and decisions (Willekens, 1999). The primary entities of the life course are life events. These events take place at a specific time. The timing is determined by the risk of experiencing the event, and the occurrence of events depends on former experiences. (Willekens, 1999)

Giele and Elder (1998) developed a life course paradigm by combining their own researches with each other. “Giele has been interested in how social system needs become articulated with individual goals through the connections between social structure and personality and how, in turn, individuals consciously try to change the larger society” (Giele and Elder 1998, p. 7). The research of Elder was concentrated at the micro level. Elder described four key factors that specify the shape of the life course: “historical and geographical location, social ties to others, personal control, and variations in timing” (Giele and Elder 1998, p. 8). Giele used in her research *‘Two paths to Women’s Equality’* the four elements of cultural background, social membership, individual goal orientation, and strategic adaptation. (Giele and Elder, 1998)

The life course paradigm of Giele and Elder (1998) exists of four parts: location in time and place, linked lives, human agency, and timing of lives. First, location in time and place refers to culture, history, and social structure. Second, the interaction of individuals with social groups and social institutions results in linked lives. Third, human agency have been incorporated in the active pursuit of personal objectives and the sense of self. Finally, timing of lives covers the chronologically arranged events of an individual’s life that combines personal, group, and historical markers at the same time. (Giele and Elder, 1998)

In this study the life course is important, because we are interested in the moment on which the decision has been taken and the role of earlier life events on the decision concerning working after giving birth. The life event of giving birth can be seen as an important motive to change the number of hours work per week (Portegijs et. al., 2006; Cloïn and Souren, 2009).

3.5 Gender performativity theory

The theory about gender performativity will only be discussed shortly, because this theory is not part of the theoretical framework. The gender performativity theory will be used as background for the last sub question: What do the outcomes of the research say about gender performativity in the Netherlands with respect to motherhood?

The term gender performativity is developed by Judith Butler, an American philosopher, in her books *Gender trouble. Feminism and the subversion of identity* (1990) and *Bodies that matter. On the discursive limits of 'sex'* (1993). In her book *Gender trouble* (1990) Butler says that gender is often limited to male and female. She does not agree with the statement that gender could only be male or female. According to Butler there may exist multiple forms of gender. Furthermore, she states that both gender and sex are culturally constructed. Usually sex is defined as the biological difference between male and female, and gender is defined as the cultural constructed difference between male and female. But Butler argues that sex is also a cultural constructed difference. (Butler et. al., 2000)

Subsequently she says that individuals acquire a gender by retrieving and repeating cultural norms regarding masculinity and femininity. These norms were already in circulation and because they are constantly repeated, they remain in use and are confirmed again and again. According to Butler this is a performative process. Butler argues that gender is attributed to a body, based on existing norms. Therefore she says that gender is something you do, not something you always are. Because cultural norms are also repeated in other contexts, they are subject to change. (Butler et. al., 2000)

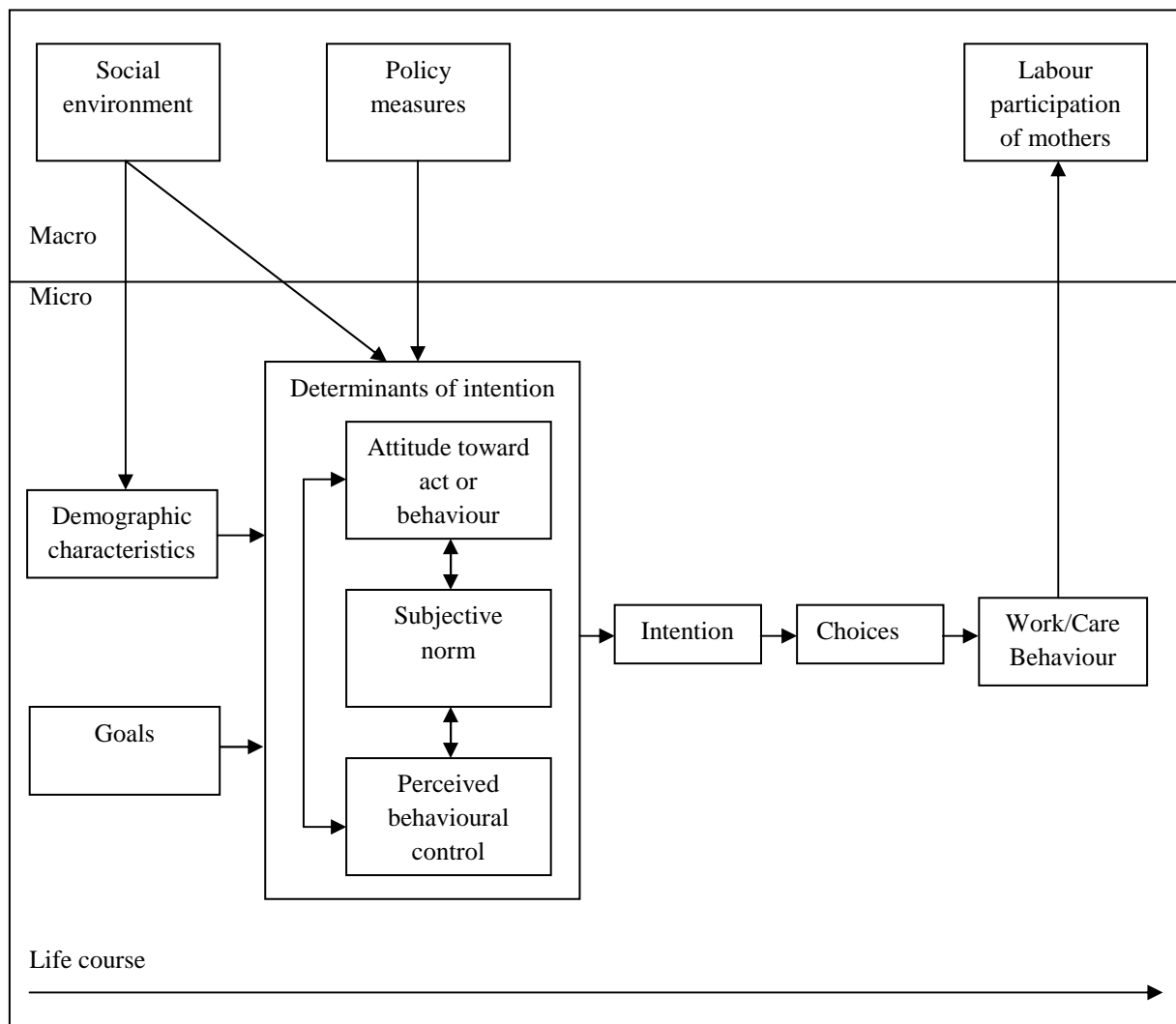
Butler shows in *Bodies that matter* (1993) how certain bodies within the ruling order are being considered (subjects) and how others are not being considered (abject beings) (Butler et. al., 2000). Subsequently, Butler states that individual groups are influenced by hegemonic discourses, which are the discourses of the people who have the power (Jacubowski et. al., 2006). The others, who are called abject beings by Butler, are excluded from the social community. Examples named by Butler are homosexuals and transvestites. The process in which an individual receives social existence, because he or she repeats and reaffirms existing norms, is called becoming a subject by Butler. So this process leads to subjects, but at the same time it leads to the exclusion of abject beings. Moreover, Butler states that subjects are produced by power, but subjects are also subject to that power and subjects themselves have power. According to Butler, subjection to power practices is also necessary when becoming a subject. And because people seek recognition in the social order, they conform to existing norms of masculinity and femininity and heterosexuality. (Butler et. al., 2000)

This study concerns gender performativity with respect to motherhood in the Netherlands. As discussed in the background (chapter 2), the labour participation of women only has risen significantly from the 1970's onwards. Before the 1970's in the Dutch society the view existed that men and women had different roles. According to this view men had to work outside the home, while married women should not work outside the home. Married women had to take care of the children. (Beets et. al., 1997; Plantenga, 1993) In the last decennia a lot has changed. Nowadays women are encouraged to work as well, as discussed in chapter 2. But what about the actual gender performativity with respect to motherhood? Is it still the woman who largely takes care for the children and therefore has or wants to work less hours? Or is the husband or partner also going to work less hours after a childbirth, so he can take care of the children as well? These questions will be answered in this study.

3.6 The deductive model

Based on the theoretical background presented in this chapter, the deductive model is constructed. In figure 3.4 the deductive model is shown. The general basis for the deductive model is the social theory of Coleman (1990), which links macro levels (population) and micro levels (individual). This theory explains individual behaviour (micro) with the individual background (micro) which is based on the context (macro). The individual behaviour leads to a social outcome (macro). In this research the context exists of the social environment and the policy measures. Although the context influences behaviour, the main focus is on the micro level.

Figure 3.4 The deductive model



On the micro level, the theory of planned behaviour of Ajzen (1991, 2002) is incorporated to explain the individual decision making behaviour of highly educated women. This theory distinguishes three determinants of intention: the attitude toward act or behaviour, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control. The subjective norm includes what the partner and others think about the behaviour. The determinants of intention influence each other and influence the intention to perform a certain behaviour. The intention to perform a certain behaviour influences the actual behaviour, through the choices a woman has. In this research

the outcome of the decision making process is threefold. First, the highly educated woman can have a fulltime job after giving birth. In this case she works the same or more hours per week as before pregnancy. Second, the highly educated woman can have a part time job after giving birth. In this case she works less or the same hours per week as before pregnancy. In the third case, the woman has no job after giving birth. In this case she stopped working after pregnancy or she had no job before pregnancy. The behavioural outcomes on the micro level lead to a social outcome at the macro level: the labour participation rate of mothers.

The individual decision making behaviour of highly educated women is always based on the context (social environment and policy measures), the demographic characteristics and the goals of the individual. The demographic characteristics are also influenced by the social environment.

The theory of planned behaviour is a static theory, which explains behaviour at one moment in time. To add a time dimension to the deductive model, the life course theory is incorporated. The life course theory will be used to explain the role of earlier life events in the decision making process of highly educated women, concerning working after giving birth.

4 Data and Methods

In this chapter the selected research method and the data are described. In the first section of this chapter the concepts of the deductive model are defined and operationalised. In section 4.2 the research method ‘in-depth interview’ is described. This section also deals with the reasons why this method is used in this research. In the third section some ethical considerations of the study are mentioned. The data collection, including the study population, the recruitment of participants, a reflection on the pilot testing and the actual data collection with in-depth interviews, are reported in section 4.4. The data analysis with use of grounded theory is discussed in section 4.5 and the chapter ends with some reflections on the participant recruitment and the data collection.

4.1 Definitions and operationalisation of concepts

The concepts of a conceptual model are the basis of the list of questions of a qualitative research (Wengraf, 2001). In the first place, these concepts are conceptualised. “Conceptualisation is the process of specifying observations and measurements that give concepts definite meaning for the purposes of a research study” (Babbie 2007, p. 149). After conceptualisation the concepts are operationalised. “Operationalisation is an extension of conceptualisation that specifies the exact procedures that will be used to measure the attributes of variables” (Babbie 2007, p. 149). In case of a qualitative study the concepts are operationalised through making a list of questions for the in-depth interview guide³. Some of these questions are supported with probes. “A probe is a follow-up question that aims to elicit information to fill in the blanks in a participant’s first response to a question” (Liamputtong and Ezzy 2005, p. 63). In the following part of this section the definitions and operationalisation of the concepts are presented. Questions that are relevant for more than one concept are mentioned once.

Highly educated women

Definition: “the higher education includes the higher profession education (HBO⁴) and the scientific education (WO⁵)” (CBS, 2009).

Operationalisation: highly educated women are women with a bachelor or master’s degree (HBO or WO).

Demographic characteristics

Definition: “variables within a population, such as age, gender, income level, marital status, ethnic origin and educational level (CBS, 2008).

Operationalisation:

- What is your age?
- What is your living situation?
- What is your religion?
- What is your educational specialisation?
- What is your profession?
- What is the age of your husband or partner?
- What is the profession of your husband or partner?
- How many children do you have?

³ See Appendices A (Dutch version) and B (English version) for the in-depth interview guide.

⁴ Hoger beroeps onderwijs.

⁵ Wetenschappelijk onderwijs.

- How many children do you want?
- How old are your children?
- What are the first names of your children?
- Do you have brothers or sisters?
- Do they have a relationship?
- Do they have children?

Goals

Definition: goals are described by Maslow as needs which will be fulfilled hierarchical. When lower order needs are fulfilled, higher order needs will become important. (Maslow, 1970)

Operationalisation:

- Why did you stop working or remain working after the birth of your children?

Attitude toward act or behaviour

Definition: the belief that a person has itself on the outcome of the behaviour (Ajzen, 1991).

Operationalisation:

- What are your ideas about combining work and the care of children?
Probe: childcare (formal, informal)
- How differs your actual idea about combining work and the care of children from the idea you had before you became mother?

Subjective norm

Definition: what the person believes that others think about the person's behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). "The subjective norm refers to the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behaviour" (Ajzen 1991, p. 188).

Operationalisation:

- How does your partner think about combining work and care of children according to you?
Probe: did he change the number of hours work per week after the birth of your children?
- How do others in your social environment think about combining work and care of children according to you?
Probes: parents, family, friends, colleagues.
- Which view do you get from the society concerning combining work and the care of children?
Probes: negative, positive
- What do you think about this societal view?
- Do you think the view of the society has influence on your own decision?

Perceived behavioural control

Definition: "people's perception of the ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour of interest" (Ajzen 1991, p. 183). "Perceived behavioural control can, and usually does, vary across situations and actions" (Ajzen 1991, p. 183).

Operationalisation:

- Was it easy to remain working after the birth of your children?
Probes: after the birth of the first child, after the birth of the second child, etc.
- Was it easy to stop working after the birth of your children?
Probes: after the birth of the first child, after the birth of the second child, etc.
- Are you satisfied with your decision?

Intentions

Definition: the cognitive representations of a person's readiness to perform a given behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). "Intentions are assumed to capture the motivational factors that influence a behaviour; they are indications of how hard people are willing to try, of how much of an effort they are planning to exert, in order to perform the behaviour" (Ajzen 1991, p. 181).

Operationalisation:

- What did you think at the moment when you took the decision?
- Would you do the same if you have to take a decision about combining work and care of children at this moment? Why (not)?

Context

Definition: "the (institutionally) structured environment from which individual actors deduce information about options and constraints for behaviour and the values attached to these" (De Bruijn 1999, p, 251).

Operationalisation: in this study the context are the social environment of the highly educated women and the existing policy measures.

Social environment

Definition: "the social environment refers to the social context in which we live. It covers the social groups to which we belong, the neighbourhood in which we live, our employment environment, etc. The social environment exists of groups to which you feel socially connected" (Ruysbroek and Droomers, 2008).

Operationalisation:

- What was the role of your partner in the decision according to you?
- What was the role of others in the decision according to you?
Probes: parents, family, friends.
- Are there persons in your environment who did the same?
Probes: family, friends, colleagues.
- Are there persons in your environment who take a totally different decision?
Probes: family, friends, colleagues
- When you were a child, did your mother have a job? Can you tell something about that period of your life?
- How does the labour career of your mother influenced the choices that you have made?

Policy measures

Definition: "population policies are deliberately constructed or modified institutional arrangements and/ or specific programs through which governments influence, directly or indirectly, demographic change" (Demeny, 2003).

Operationalisation:

- Can you tell something about the policy measures, which make it easier to combine work and the care of children, which you know?
Probes: pregnancy leave (16 weeks), parental leave (26 weeks), childcare subsidy, flexible division of the day, work at home.
- What is your opinion about these policy measures?

Behaviour

Definition: "any activity (or non-activity), either intended and foreseen or unintended and unforeseen. Thus, it also includes not only motivated action, but also the outcomes of, for instance, biological processes of change" (De Bruijn, 1999, p. 251).

Operationalisation: in this study behaviour refers to the different decisions of highly educated women concerning combining work and the care of children. The different outcomes are working fulltime, working part time or not working.

Job

Definition: “an explicit or implicit employment contract between a person and an economic entity in which has been fixed that work will be performed against a (financial) reward” (CBS, 2009). People are participating on the labour market if they have a job for 12 hours or more per week (CBS, 2008; Beckers, 2009).

Operationalisation:

- A fulltime job is a paid job with 35 or more working hours per week.
- A part time job is a paid job with 12 till 34 working hours per week.
- No job means that the woman does not have a paid job or has a paid job for less than 12 hours per week.

Choice/ Decision making

Definition: “the encompassive process of orientation (information search), and valuation, selection and implementation of behavioural alternatives. This mental activity is not restricted to ‘logical’ and reasoned thought, but also includes moral, ethical, emotional considerations” (De Bruijn 1999, p. 251). Decision making is synonym with choice, according to De Bruijn (1999).

Operationalisation:

- Do you have a job on this moment? Can you tell something about your job?
- What is your profession?
- How many hours do you work per week?
- How are you combining your work and the care of your children currently?
Probes: childcare (formal, informal)
- When have you taken the decision about working after the birth of your children?
Probes: before the birth of your first child, after the birth of your first child, after the birth of your second child, etc.
- Do you think that there are things which are changed at your job after you became mother?

Life course

Definition: “the study of social processes extending over the individual life span or over significant portion of it, especially the family life cycle (marriage and child rearing), educational and training histories, employment and occupational careers” (Mayer and Tuma 1990, p. 3). De Bruijn (1999, p. 252) defines the life course as “life development related to the sequence of experiences and events in various life careers, and the concurrent development of the individual’s mental representation”.

Operationalisation:

- What are your future plans?
Probes: when the children go to primary education, when the children go to high school.

Gender performativity

Definition: the main idea of gender performativity is that individuals acquire a gender by retrieving and repeating cultural norms. Furthermore individual groups are influenced by hegemonic discourses. These are the discourses of the people who have the power (Butler et. al., 2000; Jacubowski, et al., 2006).

Operationalisation:

- What does it mean to you to be mother?
- Do you have the feeling that people in your surroundings see you differently now as before you have got children?

Probes: partner, parents, family, friends, colleagues.

4.2 Research method

In order to answer the research questions of this study a qualitative research method is necessary. For this research in-depth interviews are used, which are also called semi-structured interviews. These are interview guides with a semi-structured list of open questions (Wengraf, 2001). In-depth interviews are used for this research, because the stories of highly educated women about their decisions concerning work after giving birth are needed to answer the research questions. A deeper insight in the decision making behaviour of these women is needed and the personal context (partner, social environment, policy measures) of the participants is also taken into account. Another reason to conduct in-depth interviews is the sensitivity of the research topic. Participants may feel uncomfortable to talk about it in a focus group, for example. Focus groups are also not the most suitable research method for this study, because this research is about the decision making behaviour of the participants. In focus group discussions the opinions of the participants are the most important issue. (Liamputtong and Ezzy, 2005; Babbie, 2007)

The in-depth interviews are conducted with highly educated women who took discharge after the birth of their children and with highly educated women who remained working after the birth of their children. Before the data collection it was estimated to conduct a maximum of 20 interviews (preferably 10 interviews with women who are working and 10 interviews with women who took discharge after giving birth), depending on the moment of theoretical saturation. Until there will be no more new information recovered.

4.3 Ethical considerations

By conducting in-depth interviews for a qualitative research, some ethical considerations have to be taken into account. First, it has to be guaranteed that the participation in the research is voluntary. Second, the participants have to be guarded against harm. Before the in-depth interviews with the participants will be conducted, it has to be guaranteed that their names would not be published in any report and that the in-depth interviews are confidential and anonymous. (Babbie, 2007)

Before conducting the in-depth interviews participants have to give their written informed consent to participate in the research. An informed consent is “a norm in which subjects base their voluntary participation in research projects on a full understanding of the possible risks involved” (Babbie 2007, p. 64). In the written informed consent⁶ information about the topic of the research and the rights of the participant are given.

Another ethical consideration which has to be taken into account in every research is that errors, limitations and shortcomings of the research should be reported, because this could influence the outcomes of the research (Babbie, 2007).

⁶ See Appendix D for the written informed consent.

4.4 Data collection

4.4.1 Study population

The study population of this research has to satisfy a number of criteria. First, highly educated women are interviewed, because they continue work more often than lower educated women. A second criterion is the number of children the women have. Women who have two or more children are interviewed, because from the background became clear that the majority of women take the decision to change the number of hours work per week around the birth of their first child. In this research it will be explored if women really take the decision around the birth of their first child and why this is the case. A third criterion is the age of the children. Women with young children are interviewed, because otherwise the moment on which the decision is taken, is too long ago. People can tell easier about recent events than about events which happened a long time ago. The fourth criterion is the place where the women live. Women who live in the city of Groningen and surrounding villages are interviewed, because the city of Groningen has higher profession education and scientific education facilities. By the recruitment of participants who live in the city of Groningen and surrounding villages, urban and rural living places are both covered.

4.4.2 Participant recruitment strategy

The participants are recruited by means of advertisements on the notice-boards of playgroups⁷, childcare facilities and primary schools in the city of Groningen and surrounding villages. People could react on the advertisements through e-mail or phone⁸. When the first participants reacted on the advertisements, they were asked after the interview if they knew other possible participants. This is a way of snowball recruitment. These methods are used to recruit participants, because it are quick ways to find participants. Another possibility which has been reflected is the use of a list from a professional organization for highly educated women. But a problem could be that women who stopped working are not a member of the organization anymore. Another optional strategy which has also been reflected is through an advertisement in a magazine for women like Libelle or a magazine of a professional organization for highly educated women, but this strategy will cost too much time.

4.4.3 Reflection pilot testing

In April 2009 one test-interview was conducted with a highly educated woman with three children. Her children are older than the children of the study population, but besides she told a lot about the topic. The duration of the test-interview was about 30 minutes. This was shorter than expected, but the participant answered fast. The researcher thought that the question ‘what are the first names of your children?’ would not add anything to the interview, but the participant was glad that this question was asked. Furthermore, the question ‘why did you not stop working after the birth of your children’ was asked. In this way it looks like it is common to stop working after giving birth, but that was not the intention. So this question is changed into ‘why did you remain working after the birth of your children?’ The participant thinks it was difficult to answer the question about policy measures, but she does not use these policy measures because her children are older. The meaning of caring in the interview guide was not clear for the participant. Whether it is only taking care of your children, or does it also include the household part. But it is both, taking care of your children and the household.

⁷ Peuterspeelzalen.

⁸ See Appendix C for the advertisement.

Based on this test-interview, the interview guide was improved. This test-interview is not included in the research, because this participant did not fit the study population. One criterion is that the children are young, but the children of this participant are all aged 15 years or older.

4.4.4 In-depth interviews

The actual in-depth interviews are conducted in June and July 2009. Eight participants reacted on the advertisements, which were placed on the notice-boards of playgroups, childcare facilities and primary schools. The other participants were recruited through the snowball sampling technique. A total number of 20 in-depth interviews were carried out, eleven interviews with mothers who are working and nine interviews with mothers who are not working at the moment of the interview.

The interviews were done at the participants own house. One participant wanted to meet at her workplace. The researcher tried to make appointments at moments when the children of the participants were not at home or were asleep, but sometimes there were children staying at home while conducting an interview. In some situations this led to a few diversion. For example, because the children wanted to ask things to their mother or made noise. The durations of the interviews ranged from about 25 minutes to almost one hour.

The interviews were recorded with a digital voice recorder and later on transcribed into verbatim transcripts. Unless some children are talking sometimes on the background, the quality of all the records was good enough. The researcher tried to transcribe the interviews as soon as possible after conducting the interviews, because then the information was still fresh in memory.

4.5 Data analysis

4.5.1 Grounded theory

For the analysis of the verbatim transcripts of the in-depth interviews grounded theory will be used. Grounded theory is developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967 in their book *The discovery of Grounded Theory*. “Grounded theory is an inductive approach to the study of social life that attempts to generate a theory from the constant comparing of unfolding observations” (Babbie 2007, p. 296). In other words, theories are based on the careful consideration of empirical data. (Liamputtong and Ezzy, 2005; Babbie, 2007)

The process of textual data analysis with the grounded theory exists of different steps. Strauss and Corbin (1991) distinguish three main steps: open coding, axial coding and selective coding. The first step is open coding, this means that paragraphs, sentences or words are labelled with codes. After coding the interviews, some codes can be grouped together into subcategories or categories. The next step is axial coding, this is connecting subcategories with categories. In the third step, selective coding, main themes are derived from the categories. In this step categories are compared into themes. These themes form the basis for the new conceptual model. This new conceptual model is called the inductive model, because this model is based on the collected data. (Strauss and Corbin, 1991; Liamputtong and Ezzy, 2005) The inductive model will be compared with the deductive model of chapter 3 in the finalizing chapter.

4.5.2 Data analysis using grounded theory

After transcribing the interviews into verbatim transcripts, the resulting verbatim transcripts are imported into the computer program ATLAS.ti version 5.2. All transcripts together form one hermeneutic unit. A distinction is made between working mothers and home mothers through putting the phrases 'working mother' or 'home mother' behind the number of the interview in the name of the document. In this way it is easy to make a distinction between interviews with a working mother and interviews with a home mother.

The analysis is carried out as discussed in section 4.5.1 with the three main steps of open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Firstly, interview one was coded by hand and after a check it was coded in ATLAS.ti. There are different ways to give a word, sentence or paragraph a code in the computer program. Especially in the beginning, codes are created through the option 'open coding' and sometimes with the option 'coding in vivo'. Open coding means that you can give a fragment a chosen codename. Coding in vivo means that you give a fragment a name which is based on terms used by the participants. The third option is 'coding by list', this option can be used for repeated codes. After coding the first interview, subcategories and some categories were developed on paper, and afterwards in ATLAS.ti. Next the other interviews were coded, firstly the interviews with working mothers and subsequently the interviews with home mothers. In the meantime the subcategories and categories were complemented. After coding all the interviews a verification was done, to check if everything was included in the codes, subcategories and categories.

The following step is the axial coding. This is done through printing all codes with the amount of appearance, the subcategories and the categories. By hand the subcategories were grouped together into categories. The initial deductive model is also kept in mind by grouping the subcategories together into categories. After the open coding there arose 33 subcategories and categories. After the axial coding there were still 15 categories. Categories could be, for instance, 'attitude toward act or behaviour', 'motherhood', or 'partner'.

The last step in the analysis is the selective coding. In this step the 15 categories from the previous step were grouped together into nine themes. For instance, the categories 'partner', 'others in the environment', 'policy measures' and 'societal view' are grouped together into the theme 'subjective norm'. The structure of chapter 5 will be based on these nine themes. And these nine themes will also form the basis for the inductive model, which will be discussed in at the end of chapter 5.

4.5.3 Use of quotations

In chapter 5 the results of the in-depth interviews will be summarized. These results are regularly illustrated by quotations from the in-depth interviews. The number of the interview from where a quotation has been obtained is put in brackets after the quotation. These numbers are accompanied by the capital letter A or B. Capital A stands for an interview with a working mother and capital B stands for an interview with a home mother.

The in-depth interviews are conducted in Dutch. Initially the quotations should be translated into English, but as becomes clear from the following two examples, information is lost when translating the quotations. From the Dutch quotations could be picked up more information than from the translated English quotations. The Dutch quotations are also more natural than the translated English quotations.

“En ik vind het ook leuk dat de vader dan... ze zien hun vader evenveel als hun moeder, dus het is niet alleen een moederding, opvoeden en zorg, maar dat het ook een vaderding is. Want wij zijn evenveel thuis ongeveer, dus dan ja...” (IDI 7A)

“And I think it is also nice that the father then... they see their father as much as their mother, therefore it is not only a mother thing, raising and caring, but also a father thing. Because we are approximately equally at home, so then yes...” (IDI 7A)

“Het is niet zo van ik wil per se 3 dagen werken, dus jij moet je maar aanpassen. Nee, dat doe je in overleg. Hij vindt het ook heerlijk, belangrijk dat er goed evenwicht is. Dus we zijn samen zoekende hoe we het het beste kunnen doen.” (IDI 10A)

“It’s not like I necessarily want to work 3 days, so you have to adjust. No, you do that in consultation. He also finds it wonderful, important that there is a proper balance. So we are seeking together how we can do best.” (IDI 10A)

Therefore, the quotations, used to illustrate the text of chapter 5, are in Dutch in this study. We are aware of the fact that people who do not master the Dutch language cannot read the Dutch quotations. Consequently, the content of the quotations will be incorporated in the text.

4.6 Reflections

After placing the advertisements on the notice-boards of playgroups, childcare facilities and primary schools it lasted about one week before the first interview was conducted. After the first interview it went rapidly. More women reacted on the advertisement and others were reached through the snowball sampling technique. But just eight of the 20 participants reacted on the advertisement, this is a little disappointment. The interviews were conducted in June and July, a possible explanation for the limited reactions on the advertisement could be that the mothers were too busy with preparing for the summer holidays and activities on the schools, like school trips. However, through the snowball sampling technique enough participants were found for the research. An advantage of snowball recruitment is that possible participants hear from others that it is nice to participate, wherefore they are more willing to participate.

Moreover it was also easier to find highly educated working mothers than highly educated home mothers. A possible explanation for this is, when comparing the number of highly educated working mothers and home mothers, that there are just more highly educated working mothers than highly educated home mothers, as also became clear in chapter 2.

While you are conducting an interview, you have to keep in mind several things: you have to listen very good, you write down notes, you have to react on the answers of the participants with probes, and you have to keep in mind a logical order. Especially in the beginning this was a difficult task, but after conducting some interviews you become better in touch with the interview guide and the interviewing itself.

Every interview was exciting, because you do not know who you are going to interview and every interview will be different. Every woman has her own story about combining work and the care of children. There were also differences in how talkative a participant was. Most participants had to tell a lot about the topic, but there were also some participants who were not easy talking. This was sometimes difficult, but not everyone has so much to tell about the topic.

As discussed before, in some situations there were children in the room while conducting an interview. The researcher tried to avoid this through making appointments at moments while children were at school or sleeping, but this was not always possible. But it will be clear that the most ideal situation for an interview is when there are no children in the room where the interview is conducted.

Conducting an interview will become easier when the participant feels familiar with the interviewer. It could be an advantage that the researcher is a woman, because in the study only women are interviewed. The participants may feel more comfortable to talk about the topic with another woman than with a man. A possible disadvantage is that the researcher does not have children, because, for instance, some participants said that you have to be a mother otherwise you do not know what it means to be a mother.

“Dat [het moederschap] snap je pas als je zelf moeder bent.” (IDI 20B)

The participants were all very enthusiastic about the research topic and willing to give a lot of information. They were also interested in how other mothers combine work with the care of children.

5 Results

In this chapter the results of the in-depth interviews are presented. In the first section of this chapter the demographic characteristics of the participants are described. The actual behaviour concerning work and care of the interviewed mothers is discussed in section 5.2. The choices these women have made and their intentions are discussed in section 5.3. This section deals with the thoughts of the participants about the decisions as well. The following sections are dealing with the different determinants of intention. The attitude toward act or behaviour or the personal ideas of the participants about combining work and care of children are discussed in section 5.4. The subjective norms are described in section 5.5. This section deals with the subjective norms which are related to the partner, the parents, other family, friends and colleagues, and society. Section 5.6 deals with the perceived behavioural control. After describing the determinants of intention, the role of the past behaviour of the mother of the participant (section 5.7), the role of motherhood (section 5.8), the motivations for the decision to work or to become stay-at-home mother (section 5.9) and the role of policy measures (section 5.10) are discussed. In section 5.11 is discussed what the outcomes say about gender performativity with respect to motherhood in the Netherlands. This chapter finalizes with the inductive model, which is derived from the in-depth interviews, but based on the deductive model as well.

5.1 Demographic characteristics

As already mentioned in section 4.4.4 a total number of 20 in-depth interviews were carried out, eleven interviews with working mothers and nine interviews with stay-at-home mothers⁹. The participants in this research had to satisfy a number of criteria. The first criterion was that they have to be highly educated. Twelve participants graduated in scientific education (WO), eight participants graduated in higher profession education (HBO). From the twelve women who graduated in scientific education seven are working and five are unemployed. And from the eight women who are graduated in higher profession education four are working and four are unemployed.

The second criterion was the number of children the women have. Women with two or more children are interviewed. Nine participants have two children, and another nine participants have three children. There are just two women interviewed with four children. Table 5.1 shows the differences in the number of children for home mothers and working mothers.

Table 5.1 Overview of the number of children for home mothers and working mothers.

		Home mother	Working mother	Total
Number of children	2 children	4	5	9
	3 children	3	6	9
	4 children	2	0	2
	Total	9	11	20

⁹ In the remainder of this master thesis stay-at-home mother will be abbreviated to home mother.

The third criterion was the age of the children. Women with young children are interviewed. The ages of the children varied from five months to fourteen years. Table 5.2 gives an overview of the mean ages of the children of the participants.

Table 5.2 The mean ages of the children of participants.

	First child	Second child	Third child	Fourth child
Number of children	20	20	11	2
Mean age	6.55	4.24	2.93	1.75

The last criterion was the place where the participants live. Women who live in the city of Groningen and surrounding villages were interviewed. Eight participants are living in the city of Groningen and twelve participants are living in surrounding villages of Groningen. From the eight women who are living in the city six are working mothers and two are home mothers. And from the twelve women who are living in surrounding villages five are working and seven are not working.

There are also some other interesting demographic characteristics of the participants which should be mentioned. In the first place the age of the participants. The youngest participant was 31 years at the moment of the interview and the oldest participant was 44 years at the moment of the interview. The mean age of the participants is 37.7 years. But there is a difference between working mothers and home mothers. The mean age for working mothers is 36.1 years, which is lower than the mean age for home mothers, which is 39.7 years.

Another interesting characteristic of the participants is their living situation. Fourteen participants are married and six participants are cohabiting. Table 5.3 shows the difference in living situation between home mothers and working mothers. It is notable that eight of the nine home mothers are married, so just one home mother is cohabiting.

Table 5.3 Difference in living situation between home mothers and working mothers.

		Home mother	Working mother	Total
Living situation	Married	8	6	14
	Cohabiting	1	5	6
	Total	9	11	20

5.2 Behaviour concerning the care of children and work

How are participants who are working combining their motherhood with their work? And what is the actual situation of home mothers concerning the care of their children? Answers to these questions can be found in this section. Firstly, the actual behaviour of working mothers concerning the care of children and work will be discussed. Secondly, the actual situation of home mothers concerning the care of children will be summarized.

The number of days working mothers are working weekly varies between two and five days, but most participants are working three or four days per week. One participant is working fulltime and a few participants are working two or two and a half days per week. Their partners are all working four or five days per week. Half of the working mothers have a partner or husband who works four days per week and the other half of the working mothers

have a partner or husband who works fulltime. Women with a partner or husband who works fulltime are working less hours than women with a partner who also works part time.

Working mothers have a very closed planning for combining work and care of their children. Their partners play an important role in this. The tasks are well (but in most cases not evenly) divided between both partners. They have their own days when they have to bring and pick up the children to and from school or daycare. When the partner or husband is working part time, he also takes care of the children for one day a week. In the following quotation one of the working women tells how she combines care of the children and work with her husband.

“Ik werk 2 dagen, dus op maandag, dinsdag en woensdag ben ik gewoon thuis en haal en breng ik de kinderen... En op donderdag brengt mijn man de kinderen en neem ik ze tussen de middag mee naar huis en na school gaan ze naar de oppas. En op vrijdag heeft mijn man vrij, dus dan brengt hij ze en haalt ze. Die doet dus de zorg op vrijdag.” (IDI 2A)

In addition grandparents and grandparents-in-law are asked for help in some cases. In a few cases the mother of the participant looks after the children for one day per week, but in most cases grandparents and grandparents-in-law are only asked for help in case of emergencies.

Children of working mothers are often going to a formal childcare facility, like daycare or facilities for preschool and after school childcare. Some working mothers do not use formal childcare facilities. And one of them never made use of daycare at all. The most common number of days children are going to a formal childcare facility is three days per week. As will be discussed in section 5.4.2, most participants also argue that three days is the maximum number of days they will bring their children to daycare. The children of some participants are going four days per week to a formal childcare facility. But it has to be said that their children are only going for a part of the day to daycare on some days. There are also several working mothers who have a private babysitter for their children for one day per week. In some cases this is also combined with one or two days to daycare. The babysitter is in a few cases the mother of the participant and in the other cases a guest parent.

Most working participants have a lot of freedom in working hours. They have the possibility to bring their children to school before they have to work or pick them up from school after work. A lot of these working mothers have the possibility to work at home as well. Therefore, they can work in the evening or weekends. Also some other working mothers mention that they have the possibility to finish their work in the evening when the children are sleeping.

“...en ik heb ook redelijk de vrijheid om weer redelijk op tijd thuis te zijn om te zorgen dat we wel op tijd kunnen eten. En ja, dat betekent dus dat ik 's avonds gewoon weer moet werken. Dan ga ik 's avonds weer achter mijn computer zitten.” (IDI 1A)

The home mothers who participated in the research all spend a lot of time with their children. But they are also busy with household chores. The majority of home mothers have a partner who has a stressful job. These women are almost doing the upbringing of the children on their own on weekdays. Some of these women also mention that it would not fit if they should have a job as well. One of the home mothers explains that her husband works a lot and because of that it would not fit if she would work as well.

“Natuurlijk mijn man die werkt echt heel veel uren, die is meestal van 7 tot 19 de deur uit, dus als ik 's ochtends de spits moet doen en 's avonds de spits, dan nou ja liggen

de kinderen een keer om 19 uur in bed zullen we maar zeggen. En doe je er zelf niet zoveel aan.” (IDI 19B)

Some of the interviewed home mothers do voluntary work, for example at school or playgroup of the children. One of these women says she does voluntary work, because it makes her feel less guilty since she does not has a paid job.

The work situation of the participants before motherhood and how they have made the decision to continue working or to take discharge after the birth of their children will be discussed in the following section.

5.3 Choices about combining motherhood and a paid job

Every woman who becomes mother has to make a decision about working after giving birth. This could be a conscious choice, but in some cases this may happen unconsciously. This decision making process could come back when a woman will be pregnant again. For many participants this was not an easy decision. For some participants it took a lot of time to make a decision about working after giving birth. The next subsection (5.3.1) starts with an overview of the work situation of the participants before they became mother. Followed by a discussion of when they have made a decision and which decisions were made. Subsection 5.3.2 discusses the thoughts of the participants about the decisions.

5.3.1 Formation of a decision about combining motherhood and work

The majority of the participants in this research worked fulltime before their motherhood. Most working mothers had a fulltime job before they became pregnant of their first child. Only a few working mothers already had a part time job before they became pregnant of their first child. Some of them worked three days per week and others worked four days per week. Notable is that many home mothers had a fulltime job before their motherhood. Only one home mother never worked at all.

From the working mothers who had a fulltime job before their first pregnancy, a majority decided to change the number of working hours per week. All of them made this (first) decision when they were pregnant of their first child or after the birth of their first child. Half of these women decided to work three days per week and the other half of them decided to work four days per week. A few women who worked fulltime beforehand and decided to change the number of working hours per week, changed this again after the birth of the second child, from three to two or two and a half days per week. The other women say they did not think about changing the number of working hours again after a second or third birth. One mother who changed the number of working days from five to four days after the birth of her first child, argues that she even did not have the choice to work less than four days per week. She has to work at least four days, otherwise she could not do her job, according to her employer. Only one mother who worked fulltime before her first pregnancy decided to continue working fulltime.

“Maar het was sowieso vanaf het moment dat ik zwanger was, van de eerste, had ik al gekozen dat ik fulltime ging werken.” (IDI 1A)

Most part time working mothers, who already worked part time before their first pregnancy, decided to continue working the same number of hours as before motherhood. They already worked part time and thought it was all right to keep working part time. They all mention they have thought about it before the first pregnancy. One of the mothers who already worked part

time before pregnancy decided to change the number of working days after the birth of her second and third child (a twins). Beforehand she worked four days, but after the birth of her twins she decided to work three days.

The step from a fulltime job to unemployment is often experienced as a much larger step than the step from a fulltime job to a part time job. Therefore it could be expected that women who have stopped working did not make the decision immediately. One of the home mothers says in the following quotation that she initially decided to work part time after the birth of her first child. A year after the birth of her second child she stopped working.

“En toen heb ik parttime gewerkt tot de tweede geboren was en toen ook nog. Een jaar na zijn geboorte ben ik gestopt met werken.” (IDI 17B)

From the home mothers, who worked fulltime before their first pregnancy, a majority decided to work less hours after the birth of their first child. The number of working days per week after the first birth differs from two to four days. Some of these women decided to take discharge after the birth of their second child, one of them when she was pregnant of her second child and one of them after the birth of her third child.

The other home mothers who worked fulltime before their first pregnancy, decided to stop working during the pregnancy of the first child or after the first childbirth. One of them mentions that she thought about start working again after the birth of her first child, but then she became pregnant again, so she stayed at home.

As mentioned before, only one of the home mothers did not work at all. She became a mother right after finishing her education and due to personal circumstances she decided to stay at home. This woman says she thought about start working after the first and second birth, but decided that being at home was the best choice.

5.3.2 Thoughts at the moment of the decision

The majority of the participants, both working mothers and home mothers thought they took the right decision at the moment or moments of the decision(s). Most of them feel happy with the decision taken. When asked if they would take the same decision about combining motherhood and work again, a majority of the participants also mention that they would take the same decision again (under the same circumstances). As explained by one of the interviewed home mothers:

“Ja, ik denk het wel. Ik heb er geen spijt van en ik sta er ook nog steeds achter, dus ja, ik denk het wel.” (IDI 18B)

Some working mothers say that they do not really know how they thought about it, because they were not conscious of a decision about motherhood and work. They just continued working the same number of hours as before their pregnancy. However, as a working mother simply continues working for the same amount of hours and she feels happy with that situation, the decision taken was reasonably the right one.

“Nee, want... omdat het eigenlijk niet een... ik heb het niet opnieuw ter discussie gesteld. Ik had 4 dagen en dat bleef ik gewoon doen.” (IDI 7A)

One working mother, who thought at the moment of the decision that it was a good decision, says she was afraid of what the future would bring her in terms of work. As she explains in the following quotation.

“Ik denk dat ik dat toch wel prima vond. Van nou ik vind dat wel lekker. Ik had wel een beetje vrees voor wat voor werk ik dan moest gaan doen. Zo van als ik maar niet overal invalwerk hoeft te gaan doen en dat bleek al heel snel dat dat niet zo zou zijn. Dat ik gewoon met iemand een deelbaan kon krijgen. Dus daar was ik wel heel blij mee, toen had ik zoiets van oh prima, gezellig.” (IDI 2A)

A few home mothers say they had mixed feelings about their decision. On the one hand they were happy at the moment of their decision, because from that moment they could always be there for their children. But on the other hand they felt the pressure of friends and society. Society expects from mothers that they ought to work. As pointed out by a home mother:

“Ja het is gek, want van de ene kant... vriendinnen die wel werken, heb je altijd het idee dat je je moet verantwoorden dat je niet werkt en als je vriendinnen hebt die niet werken, van een kant dan is het van haha, weet je, het scheidt een band dat je allebei niet werkt, tegelijkertijd knaagt... je voelt je toch ook wel een beetje een spijbelaar als je niet werkt.” (IDI 8B)

Only one participant says she felt terrible at the moment of the decision, because she had to decide to stop working. But in her case it was not her decision to stop working, she was forced due to personal circumstances. She also mentions that under different personal circumstances she would have definitely continued working.

5.4 Personal ideas

According to Ajzen (1991, 2002) the attitude toward act or behaviour is one of the three determinants of intention. As discussed in section 3.3, this is the belief that a person has itself on the outcome of the behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). In this section the personal ideas of the participants about combining work and care of children are discussed. Differences between the actual ideas of the participants and the ideas they had before they became mother are also discussed in this section.

5.4.1 Actual ideas about combining motherhood and work

According to a majority of the participants, both working mothers and home mothers, the decision about combining work and care of children is a choice of your own. For many participants this is very important because a decision is made under personal circumstances, therefore this decision could be different for every single person. What is the best for children or for parents cannot be generalised, as this will differ for every child and parent. When children and parents are happy with a particular choice, they have made the right decision.

“Nou ik vind niet dat ik daar wat voor andere mensen over moet zeggen. Dat vind ik... de zorg zoals wij die nu op dit moment doen, bevalt ons het beste, nu op dit moment. En dat is ook door omstandigheden ingegeven. Maar als een moeder meer wil werken en dat goed combineert met de zorg, dat zij en de kinderen daar tevreden en gelukkig mee zijn, of minder wil werken en dat combineert op een manier dat ze daar tevreden mee zijn, dan moeten ze dat vooral doen.” (IDI 11A)

Especially working mothers think that it is normal to continue working after giving birth. Most of them also have not thought about quitting their work at all. Several working mothers

also say that if you are graduated at a higher educational level, you ought to work. A study requires a lot of time and money, so you also have to do something with it, as they argue. Some home mothers also mention that it is normal to continue working, but due to personal circumstances they decided to take discharge.

Many working participants think the partner has to play an important role in raising the children. Otherwise it is not possible for them to have a nice job at the level they want. They believe children should be raised by both parents. When the tasks are divided, both the father and the mother could have a nice job and the children will learn that it is normal that also the father takes care of the children.

“En ik vind het ook leuk dat de vader dan... ze zien hun vader evenveel als hun moeder, dus het is niet alleen een moederding, opvoeden en zorg, maar dat het ook een vaderding is. Want wij zijn evenveel thuis ongeveer, dus dan ja...” (IDI 7A)

Several working mothers say it is also important that women keep working, because children will learn that it is normal that women are working. As also pointed out by a working mother:

“Het is misschien wel een goede bijkomstigheid dat mijn kinderen wel zien dat ik niet de hele tijd met een kopje thee op ze zit te wachten, ik ben aan het werk en heb mijn eigen leven.” (IDI 3A)

But a small majority of the working mothers also mention that combining the care of children with work is to seek for equilibrium. Just a few working participants mention that they are properly combining the care of their children and their work. Some other working participants experience this combination as a ‘split’. On the one hand they want to be there for their children, but on the other hand they also want to do well at work. As explained in the following quotation.

“Ik zou eigenlijk 2 levens willen hebben. Eentje zonder kinderen waarin ik gewoon helemaal voor mijn werk ga. En eentje met kinderen waarin ik alleen maar voor mijn kinderen er ben. Dat zou ik het leukste vinden. Maar oké, dat lukt niet. Dus ik voel wel altijd dat ik in een spagaat zit. Als je veel met je kinderen bezig bent en daar veel tijd voor hebt dan denk je ‘ja eigenlijk had ik nu nog wel wat tijdschriften moeten lezen, of had ik even wat moeten opzoeken of een dienst moeten doen’. Of dat soort dingen. En als het heel druk is op je werk dan denk je echt ‘oh dit moet af, maar eigenlijk wil ik nu naar huis’. Het is nooit goed.” (IDI 4A)

A majority of the home mothers thinks that it is important that a mother will always be there for her children. One of them says that she thinks this is very important for a child, because it gives the child security and stability. And she thinks children need security and stability to grow up and become nice adults who know who they are. A few working mothers have a slightly different opinion. They say that a mother only has to be there for her child when her child needs her. When the children have a school trip or a musical, for example. One of them thinks the number of hours a mother is working has no influence on the upbringing of the children, a mother has to be there for her child when her child needs her.

“Je moet er zijn op het moment dat ze het nodig zijn. En of je nou veel of weinig werkt, volgens mij heeft dat er geen invloed op, want iemand die in mijn beleving altijd thuis is... en je kan op een gegeven moment knettergek worden van die kleine draken, die het bloed onder je nagels vandaan halen, waardoor je de hele dag op je kind aan het snauwen bent. Ben je dan een goede moeder? Ik denk het niet, want je bent alleen maar aan het snauwen.” (IDI 1A)

Some working participants with a fulltime or a more comprehensible part time job explicitly mention that the combination of care and work depends on the job a woman has. These women say that you need a flexible job when you want to combine it with the care of your children, especially when you want to work four or five days. They also think that it is important that you have the possibility to work at home.

“Want als ik een gewone baan had van 9 tot 6 zeg maar, en dat je elke dag reistijd hebt, dan zou het mij niet lukken om 4 dagen te werken. Dus qua werk moet je... je werk moet flexibel zijn vind ik. Dat je thuis kan werken of dat je je eigen tijd kan indelen, daardoor lukt het en daardoor loopt het lekker. Als dat niet zou kunnen, dan zou ik minder werken.” (IDI 7A)

Personal ideas, on the use of different forms of childcare, were broadly discussed by the participants during the interviews. Therefore the ideas about childcare seem to be important in combining the care of children with work. In the next section personal ideas on the use of different forms of childcare will be discussed.

5.4.2 Ideas about different forms of childcare

Most families with a working mother make use of childcare. Especially when both parents have a more comprehensible part time job or fulltime job they make use of childcare. As became clear in section 5.2, the majority of working women make use of formal childcare facilities. There are only a few working participants who do not make use of daycare at the moment of the interview. One of them never made use of daycare at all. And some home mothers made use of daycare before they quitted their job.

When asking the participants about their personal ideas concerning the combination of motherhood and work, they all mention their ideas about different forms of childcare. A majority of working mothers has a positive view on formal childcare facilities, like daycare and facilities for preschool and after school childcare. One of the most often mentioned advantages of formal childcare is that children learn to go around with other kids, especially at young ages. Several working mothers also say that their children became more independent, because they went to daycare at young age. As explained by one of the working mothers:

“...als ik ook kijk van hoe mijn kinderen zich ontwikkelen, en vooral dan natuurlijk de oudste, die is natuurlijk al wat groter, daar zie je meer bij. Maar hoe die zich ontwikkelt ten opzichte van, nou ja goed ook nichtjes die ze heeft ook van mijn zwagers kant, die eigenlijk thuis hebben gezeten, ook geen, nou ja goed wel broertjes en zusjes, maar wel allemaal jonger, dus geen echte interactie nog, dat komt natuurlijk nou op de leeftijd die ze nu allemaal hebben. Merk ik toch ook wat voor stappen mijn dochtertje zelf maakt, ook door die crèche ook door die interactie met andere kinderen, hoe zo sociaal ze is en dat ze eigenlijk niet bang is voor mensen. En niet verlegen en gewoon alles heel snel oppakt. Dat ik toch ook denk van ja het is toch ook gewoon een stukje educatie voor haar, dus ik zie heel veel voordelen.” (IDI 16A)

But as some working mothers and some home mothers mention a child has to like to go to daycare. Otherwise it is better for the child to have a babysitter at home or that the mother stays at home. One of the home mothers says that her child was crying every time when she brought him to daycare. And because of that she felt terrible when she was at her job. This also made her decide to take discharge when her second child was born.

An advantage of childcare facilities which is just named a few times by working mothers is the professionalism of the daycare. Personnel at a daycare are all trained to take care of the children. One of the mothers says that especially when a child is very young she thinks it is important that the people who take care of her child are trained to do that.

However, the participants also named disadvantages of childcare facilities. Several home mothers and a few working mothers say that daycare is more stressful for a child. Some of these participants also have experience with their children and daycare. These participants say that their children were always very tired when they came back from daycare. Daycare is also more stressful for older children, as pointed out by a home mother:

“...en ik merk nu bijvoorbeeld, maar goed dat zou ik van te voren niet geweten hebben, nu zij op de basisschool zit, die dagen zijn ook wel heel erg lang en als ze dan nog naar de buitenschoolse opvang moeten, dan wordt wel heel veel van de kinderen gevraagd, vind ik hoor.” (IDI 19B)

Another disadvantage of childcare facilities which is mentioned by some participants is the price of childcare. They think that the price is too high. Particularly when the partner has a highly paid job, these families do not get compensation for childcare. A few home mothers also say that children do not get the attention they need, because the leaders have to distribute their attention over all the children who are at the daycare.

The majority of the participants think that the maximum number of days that children should go to daycare is three days. In that case the children are at home for four days. Several working mothers and one home mother also say it is important that children are at home most of the week, because they are afraid that the relationship between parents and children will be less strong when children are spending a lot of time at daycare.

Another form of childcare is a babysitter or a guest parent. Many home mothers and a few working mothers make or made use of a babysitter or guest parent. These mothers advocate a private babysitter, because of the flexibility of a babysitter and the amount of attention children would get from a babysitter. In the following quotation a home mother points out that she advocates a private babysitter, because her child was part of the family of the babysitter.

“Ik vond het met mijn oudste zoon ideaal dat hij niet naar de crèche is gegaan expres, maar een vaste oppasmoeder. Daar zat hij, hoe oud was hij toen ik weer moest werken, 3 maanden. Toen hij 3 maanden was, is hij er heen gegaan. Nou dat was zijn tweede mama. Daar is hij tot zijn 4^{de} geweest. En ik was er erg gelukkig mee dat hij in een gezin gewoon zat en niet in een crèche. En dat hij mee kon doen met boodschappen doen en met tafel dekken en dat hij gewoon in een gezin zat.” (IDI 15B)

The grandparents or grandparents-in-law are particularly favourite babysitters for several participants. In some cases a grandparent or grandparent-in-law looks after the children for one day per week. But most of the participants think they should only ask their parents or parents-in-law to babysit in case of emergencies. For example when a child is sick, the child cannot go to daycare. In that case the grandparents or grandparents-in-law are the perfect babysitters, according to some participants. Some home mothers and working mothers say explicitly that they do not want the grandparents or grandparents-in-law as babysitters for their children. One of them says grandparents should be there for fun things, not to look after children.

“...nee opa’s en oma’s moeten er zijn om leuke dingen mee te doen, maar niet om kinderen op te vangen...” (IDI 20B)

5.4.3 Ideas about combining motherhood and work before giving birth

Moreover, the participants were asked if they think their actual ideas about combining motherhood and work differ from the ideas before giving birth. Half of the participants say that there are no big differences between their current ideas and ideas before giving birth. The majority of the working mothers, who argue that there are no big differences between ideas, say they also had a clear view of how they want to combine motherhood with work before giving birth. Some working mothers knew beforehand that they would continue working in a more comprehensible part time job after giving birth and that the care of the children would be shared with their partner.

“Ik denk dat ik in die zin hetzelfde er in sta als voor die tijd. Dus kijken of je het allebei met 4 dagen werk... tot nu toe lukt het ons om het zo te organiseren, zoals we het van te voren ook bedacht hadden voordat we gingen kijken of we kinderen zouden kunnen krijgen.” (IDI 13A)

Some other working mothers do not call for a top career. Also before giving birth they knew their motherhood would be very important in their life, and a career would be placed on a lower level of importance.

“Maar wel altijd gedacht van ik ben niet iemand die alles te gelijk kan. Een topcarrière en een groot gezin, dus dan zal ik keuzes moeten maken om mezelf gelukkig te voelen. Ook omdat ik sociaal belangrijk vind, sporten vind ik belangrijk. Ik ben niet iemand die altijd maar door gaat, dus ik wil ook nog wel een keer gewoon rust of niks of gewoon thuis. Dus dat betekent bijna automatisch, voor mij dan, dat ik niet fulltime ga werken.” (IDI 5A)

A few working mothers mention that they do not had ideas about combining motherhood and work beforehand. They argue that you do not know anything at all when you become mother.

“Als je een kind krijgt, je eerste kind, je weet toch van niks. Je weet gewoon helemaal niks.” (IDI 3A)

Several home mothers say their current ideas about combining motherhood and work are very different than the ideas beforehand. They thought they would continue working after giving birth. They thought the combination of work and care would be easy, but in reality the combination proved to be much heavier. As pointed out by one of the home mothers as well.

“Ik denk dat je dat... ik denk in zijn algemeenheid dat je misschien geneigd bent om dat te, nou onderschatten klinkt misschien een beetje onvriendelijk, maar dat je meer het idee hebt wat algemeen een beetje... van ‘dat doe je gewoon even’. Werk doe je even en je kinderen verzorgen doe je ook even, maar het is niet even.” (IDI 18B)

Particularly home mothers say they are spending more time with the children than expected before giving birth. According to these women you have actually no idea beforehand of how much time you will spend with your child(ren).

“En ook eh... dat merk ik nu ook wat opvoeden, wat dat eigenlijk aan tijd kost. Daar vergissen zoveel mensen zich in.” (IDI 20B)

5.5 Subjective norm

The second determinant of intention in Ajzen's (1991, 2001) theory of planned behaviour is the subjective norm. The subjective norm is what the person believes that others think about the person's behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). From the interviews becomes clear that others could be the partner, family members, friends and colleagues, and society. Therefore the subjective norm of the participants is discussed in the following subsections for the partner (5.5.1), family, friends and colleagues (5.5.2), and society (5.5.3).

5.5.1 The partner

The decision making process about working after giving birth seems to be something which is done together by both partners. This seems to be a decision which they make together. Several participants, both working mothers and home mothers, mention that they have discussed extensively with their partners about the combination of their work and the care of their children.

“Dat hebben we wel uitgebreid besproken en hij heeft zoiets van ‘als jij dat heel graag wil, dan moet je dat doen’.” (IDI 13A)

The majority of the participants in this research think that their partner or husband shares their view about combining the care of children and work. One of the working mothers says that continue working was just taken for granted in their situation. They both studied for a long period and did not think about stop working at all. Another participant mentions that she thinks her husband would change his mind if she would change her opinion about the combination of the care of children and work.

“Hetzelfde, ja. Die denkt er hetzelfde over en in die zin dat hij natuurlijk... ja hoe moet ik dat nu zeggen. Hij denkt er hetzelfde over, maar als ik er anders over zou denken dan past hij zich daaraan aan, omdat ik degene ben die mijn baan daarvoor op heeft gezegd.” (IDI 17B)

Particularly working mothers say that their partners think it is important to play a role in the upbringing of their children. According to most working mothers, their partners want to share the care of the children with them.

“Oh nou, we zijn alle twee heel erg blij dat we echt de zorg gesplitst hebben. Dus dat we alle twee eigenlijk evenveel zorgen voor de kinderen. Dat is tot nu toe ook zo geweest en ons streven is wel om dat zo te houden.” (IDI 10A)

In the section about actual personal ideas (5.4.1) became clear that a small majority of the working mothers mentioned that combining the care of children with work is to seek for equilibrium. Some of them think their partners also experience the combination of the care of children and work as to seek for equilibrium. One of the working mothers says they are searching together for the best combination of work and care of the children.

“Het is niet zo van ik wil per se 3 dagen werken, dus jij moet je maar aanpassen. Nee, dat doe je in overleg. Hij vindt het ook heerlijk, belangrijk dat er goed evenwicht is. Dus we zijn samen zoekende hoe we het het beste kunnen doen.” (IDI 10A)

When the partner of the participant shares the same opinion about the combination of work and care with the participant it could be expected that the partner should also agree with the

decision made by the participant. The majority of the participants also believe that their partner or husband thinks the decision about working after giving birth is a decision of the woman herself. As pointed out by a working mother and a home mother:

“Hij staat er wel achter dat ik blijf werken en dat ik wil blijven werken. En dat vind ik ook wel belangrijk, want je moet het wel samen doen. En als hij daar niet achter zou staan, dan zou dat denk ik toch ook spanning geven.” (IDI 6A)

“Dat is mijn eigen keuze geweest. En hij staat achter mijn keuze, maar het is mijn eigen keuze geweest. Het is niet dat hij gezegd heeft van het moet of niet of wel.” (IDI 19B)

Moreover, primarily home mothers say that their partner supported them in their decision. Some home mothers also mention that their partner or husband is very happy with the decision made, because at home there is peacefulness and stability for the children. And there is always somebody at home for the children. This is especially pleasant for partners who do not have the possibility to work less hours.

5.5.2 Family, friends and colleagues

5.5.2.1 The parents

A lot of working mothers say their parents are supporting them in their decision. Some of them say that their parents think they are not the person to stay at home with the children, they also have to work to be happy.

“Ja mijn ouders... ja eigenlijk ook eh... ja die zeggen ook ‘jij bent iemand die moet blijven werken, jij kwijnt weg als je thuis zit’.” (IDI 16A)

One of the working mothers mentions that her parents like it very much that she and her husband are combining the care of their children with their work, but can work much less than they did. And that they can spend much more time with the children than the participant's parents did.

“En die vinden het wel super om te zien dat wij veel minder werken dan zij destijds. En dat we veel meer samen met onze kinderen doen. En dat we, ja, veel meer tijd doorbrengen met de kinderen. Dus die juichen dat alleen maar toe, die zeggen ‘jeetje mina wat gaaf dat dat zo kan’. Het is voor hen wel een eyeopener, van ‘ja jeetje in onze tijd was dat helemaal niet zo’.” (IDI 4A)

A few parents of working mothers have difficulties with the way their daughter is combining her motherhood with her work. These working mothers are working too much hours according to their parents. One of the working mothers says that her mother did not agree with the fact that she is working three days per week. But her mother did also not agree with the fact that her other daughter is not working. The mother of this participant worked two mornings per week, so that was her ideal number of working hours per week, according to the participant.

Some working mothers also say that their mother is very proud of them, because they are combining their motherhood with their work. One of them explains that her mother did not work when her children were small and that her mother really missed that.

“Ik weet dat mijn moeder het wel heel leuk vindt, omdat zij dat nooit gedaan heeft op deze manier. Maar wel werken altijd wel gemist heeft, ze is gaan werken pas toen wij de deur uit waren, toen wij al weg waren. Dat was wel echt iets wat zij gemist heeft en ze ziet dat het mij goed doet.” (IDI 5A)

According to most of the home mothers, their parents are supporting them in their decision to stop working as well, especially when the children are still very young. Some home mothers mention that their parents have old-fashioned ideas about combining the care of children and work. Most parents also grew up with the idea that mothers have to be at home to take care of the children and fathers have to work.

“Nou die hebben zich daar eigenlijk nooit mee bemoeit, maar begrepen het wel. Ze vonden het eigenlijk in die zin prima, omdat ze toch wel wat ouderwets ingesteld zijn en het maar zielig vonden dat de kinderen naar de crèche gingen. Dus ik heb daar eigenlijk alleen maar begrip van gehad, ja.” (IDI 17B)

One of the home mothers says her parents wanted her to continue working, because they think it is important that mothers continue working. But on the other hand, they also think it is important that the children are happy.

“Die vinden het belangrijk dat het met de kinderen goed gaat. En die vinden het ook wel heel belangrijk dat we blijven werken.” (IDI 9B)

A few parents, especially fathers, have difficulties with the fact that their daughter is not working. These parents think it is no longer acceptable to be at home with your children as a woman. And they think it is a pity to stop your career for some time.

“Maar ik denk dat mijn vader die vindt het wel jammer. Die heeft zoiets van nou het is tegenwoordig niet meer echt van deze tijd. Het is niet zo... ja je zet je carrière stop.” (IDI 12B)

5.5.2.2 Other family, friends and colleagues

The majority of the friends with children of working participants are working part time. The number of working days is differing between two and four days. A few working mothers with a more comprehensible part time job mention that a lot of their friends are having a more comprehensible part time job as well. Unlike the fact that all working mothers have friends who are working part time, there are just a few working mothers who have friends with a fulltime job. One of them says that her friends who are working fulltime are much more career oriented than she is.

“Ik heb een paar vriendinnen die werken fulltime... Maar die zijn veel meer carrièregericht dan ik.” (IDI 3A)

Most working mothers also know mothers who are not working. But most of them could only think of one home mother. A majority of the working mothers who know at least one home mother says this person is a family member, like a sister, a sister in law or a niece. A few working mothers also mention they know some home mothers from their children's primary school.

Home mothers have a lot of part time working friends with children as well. They also have friends with more comprehensible part time jobs and smaller part time jobs. Most home mothers do not have friends who are combining their motherhood with a fulltime job. One of

the home mothers who has a friend who works fulltime, says her friend does not understand that she does not work. Her friend would be totally unhappy if she would not work.

“Ik heb ook een heel goede vriendin... en die werkt dus wel fulltime, heeft zelf ook twee kinderen. En die zegt gewoon rond uit tegen mij, en dat kan ik ook wel van haar hebben, van ‘mens ik zou simpel worden als ik alleen maar thuis eh... dat jij dat vol houdt überhaupt, dat snap ik niet’. Dan denk ik van ‘nou ja goed, oké prima, dat kan ik ook respecteren’.” (IDI 18B)

The majority of the home mothers know other home mothers as well. In some cases these home mothers are friends or family members of the participant, but in other cases these are just mothers met on the playground of their children’s primary school. One of the home mothers mentions she has a couple of friends who also took discharge after the birth of their children. But those children are older than her children and some of these friends decided to start working again.

As discussed earlier, all working mothers have friends who are also combining their motherhood with work. Therefore, most working participants believe that their friends also think it is normal to combine the care of children and work. But some working mothers mention that their friends and/or family members say they are working too much. Especially mothers who are working four days or more are often told that they are working very much. Not only friends say that they are working too much, also mothers on the playground of their children’s primary school say that four days are very much.

“Ik krijg wel vaak te horen van ‘jeetje werk jij 4 dagen’. Dat krijg ik dan van moeders te horen. Mensen vinden het over het algemeen veel dat je en moeder bent en 4 dagen wilt werken. Dat is een reactie die ik veel krijg.” (IDI 7A)

One of the working mothers with three children notices that some people think that three children and working is too much. Furthermore, this participant says she did not get these kind of comments when she had just two children.

“Nou, ik merk sinds de derde dat een heleboel mensen echt zoiets hebben van ‘jemig hoe doe je dat, ik moet er niet aan denken 3 kinderen en nog werken’... Maar toen met 2 kinderen, toen was het eigenlijk wel heel normaal, ik kreeg helemaal geen verbaasde reacties of zo, oftewel van jeetje wat knap van je of zo. Maar nu met 3 hoor ik dat wel heel vaak...” (IDI 6A)

A few working mothers say their colleagues think they are working too much. Especially older, male colleagues who have a wife who stayed at home to take care of the children, sometimes make comments about the number of days these working mothers are working.

“Af en toe krijg ik wel opmerkingen van collega’s, mannelijke collega’s, van middelbare leeftijd zeg maar. Hun vrouwen zitten al vanaf het begin thuis met de kinderen, opvoeden enz. en die hebben ook nooit gewerkt.” (IDI 6A)

Many home mothers believe that a lot of friends think it is possible to combine motherhood and work, because these friends are actually combining their motherhood with work.

“Nou ja, ik denk dat het merendeel denkt dat het goed te doen is, want het merendeel doet het.” (IDI 14B)

Furthermore, some home mothers notice that other home mothers also experienced difficulties when combining the care of their children with work and therefore stopped working. But in

general, home mothers get various reactions to the fact that they are not working. Some friends simply respect their decision to be at home for the children, other friends do not understand why they stopped working and think it is a bad decision for their career.

“Nou ik heb vriendinnen die zijn heel ambitieus, die vinden het eigenlijk ook heel dom dat ik voor deze positie kies. Die hebben zoiets van ja, nou ja achteruitgang en stilstand en die vinden het echt zwaar onhandig. Ik heb ook vriendinnen die hebben er wel begrip voor.” (IDI 12B)

In addition, the participants were asked if they think the opinions of family members, friends and colleagues do have influence on their decision about combining motherhood and work. The majority of the participants did not think the above described opinions of their family, friends and colleagues have influence on their decision. An often named reason for this is that they greatly value their own choice.

“Nee, dat is gewoon echt een keuze van mezelf geweest.” (IDI 17B)

A few participants do actually think the opinions of their family and friends have had some influence on their decision, because they have talked about the combination with family and friends. One of the home mothers says her family and friends made it more difficult for her to make the decision to stop working, because they tried to stimulate her to continue working.

“Misschien is het wel dat het van invloed is geweest dat je niet meteen gezegd hebt bij het eerste kind zo van ‘hè hè, poeh poeh nou het is toch wel ingewikkeld om het te combineren’. Om dan maar te zeggen van ‘ik hou er maar helemaal mee op’. Daar is mijn omgeving dan wel stimulerend in zo van ‘nee maar je blijft toch wel een beetje werken, je houdt er toch niet helemaal mee op’.” (IDI 9B)

5.5.3 Society

Furthermore, the participants were asked which view they get from society about combining motherhood and work and how they think about this societal view. According to most participants, in society the view exists that women, and also mothers, are ought to work. In particular, home mothers mention that they get the view from society that it is easy to combine motherhood and work. A few home mothers also mention that they get the view from society that everything has to be perfect. As one of them explains, you should have a social life, a good career, sports, and a fantastic relationship. And she thinks that is not possible with 24 hours in one day, but it is what society thrusts you.

“Je moet een sociaal leven hebben, sporten, een goede carrière, nog een studie er bij, en een fantastische relatie en nou weet je dat moet je kunnen hebben. Terwijl ik denk van nou ik krijg dat gewoon niet voor elkaar in die 24 uur op een dag. Maar dat is wel, vind ik, wat de maatschappij je opdringt. Ja dat vind ik wel.” (IDI 12B)

Another home mother says that you almost have no choice, because the view exists in society that you are not part of society when you are do not have a paid job.

“En ja, eigenlijk vind ik dat je bijna geen keuze meer hebt in die zin van maatschappelijk wordt het wel opgedrongen dat je er niet bij hoort als je niet werkt.” (IDI 19B)

Some mothers argue that the societal view is varying. On the one hand mothers are ought to work, but on the other hand it is accepted that mothers are at home for the children. The

societal view about combining motherhood and work depends partly on the point of view of the government. The current government is not really stimulating the combination of motherhood and work, according to some working mothers. Several participants say that the government introduces policy measures to stimulate the combination, and subsequently reverse these regulations. Therefore these participants say that they do not know what the government actually wants to accomplish.

“Ik vind dat vanuit de overheid, dan komen er weer regelingen ter bevordering en die worden dan weer gedeeltelijk teruggedraaid. Dus wat dat betreft vind ik de boodschap niet zo heel goed, ik vind niet dat het uitgedragen wordt dat het heel positief is om te gaan werken, vooral als je meer wil werken.” (IDI 2A)

One of the working mothers mentions that part time jobs of about twenty hours are accepted in society, but if a mother wants to work more hours, this is not really accepted. Another working mother says that Dutch women think the care of children is very important. Dutch women want to be with their children and want to see them growing up, therefore a career is not as important as motherhood.

Several participants argue that in society there exists a discussion about combining motherhood and work between working mothers and home mothers. Working mothers think home mothers should not stay at home and home mothers think working mothers are working too much. Some participants mention they are surprised that this discussion exists, because they think it is important that a mother can make her own choice about the combination.

Another view which exists in society is the view that men have to work fulltime. As mentioned by several participants, especially the men themselves think that a man has to work fulltime and that it is not possible to work four days per week. Often the businesses do not accept the wish of the men who want to work four days instead of five days, as well. However, the Dutch government has made rules (Parental Leave) to make it possible for men and women to work less hours when they have children. Therefore, these participants do not agree that men could not work less hours. Particularly working mothers think that this view about fathers has to be changed. That it should be normal that fathers are working four days per week.

“En dat het ook normaal is dat vaders minder gaan werken, want daar zit het vaak nog op vast. Kijk als vrouwen 4 dagen willen gaan werken, dan zegt iedereen van ‘nou dat is best wel veel’, maar dat zeggen ze volgens mij meestal juist omdat die mannen maar 5 dagen blijven werken en maar 5 dagen blijven werken. Dus dan denk ik van ‘ja, als die ook eens 4 gingen, dan zou het al heel anders worden’.” (IDI 2A)

A majority of the working mothers thinks that the view of society did not play a role in their decision about combining work and motherhood, because they attached more value to their own choice than to the societal view. Only a few working mothers argue that because of the societal view they started to think about how to combine motherhood and work. One working mother says that society made it possible for her to work part time, because it is accepted in society to work part time.

“Ja ik denk het wel, want het is wel makkelijker gemaakt om parttime te werken.” (IDI 4A)

Many home mothers also argue that the view of society did not play a role in their decision to stop working, because if they would like to meet the societal view, then they should work.

Some of them also say that it is a kind of resistance to society, because they do not meet the societal view about combining motherhood and work. Several home mothers mention that they think they have to justify their decision to stop working. As one of them says in the following quotation, she thinks that the satisfaction with her choice is under pressure.

“Nou de tevredenheid over je keuze zeg maar, die staat daar wel mee onder druk. Ondanks dat ik wel heel tevreden ben over mijn keuze.” (IDI 12B)

Unless a lot of the participants argue that the societal view did not play a role in their decision making process about combining motherhood and work, several participants think it is important that the government stimulates women to combine motherhood with a paid job. For example, because it might be difficult for some women to start working again after a period at home. Moreover, one of the home mothers argues that it is good to stimulate the combination of motherhood and work, but it is very important that every mother can make her own choice about this combination.

“Ik denk dat het uitermate gepromoot wordt om als vrouw te blijven werken. Ook vanuit de overheid, ook vanuit vergrijzing etc. En ik denk dat dat prima is, maar ik denk dat je daar niet in moet doorslaan en dat iedereen wel zijn eigen keuze moet kunnen blijven maken. Je kan dat niet voor iemand anders kiezen.” (IDI 9B)

And making your own choice is an important issue for a lot of participants. They argue that the decision about combining motherhood and work is and must remain a choice of your own.

“...ik vind persoonlijke keuzevrijheid dat vind ik gewoon, dat is gewoon zo'n groot goed.” (IDI 18B)

5.6 The ease or difficulty of (not) working

The third determinant of intention of Ajzen's (1991, 2001) theory of planned behaviour is the perceived behavioural control. Ajzen (1991, 2001) describes this as the observed ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour. The participants in the research were asked if they think it was easy to continue working or to stop working. The working mothers respond differently to this question. Some of them say it was easy to continue working after giving birth. They just found it very nice that they may return to work after a pregnancy leave of about three to four months. One of them says that only the first day, when you have to bring your child to daycare, it is difficult, but subsequently it is normal to bring your child to daycare.

“Ja, eigenlijk wel. Ik vond, je hebt dan 3 maanden verlof, dat vond ik heerlijk, echt vrij, lekker... ja gewoon lekker eh... vakantie vond ik het. Maar toen had ik ook wel weer zin om te gaan werken. Ik vond het niet moeilijk, ook niet... ja de eerste dag als je zo'n kindje naar de crèche brengt is wel even van dat je denkt van och... hè zo'n klein kindje. Maar het is zo weer over en dan is het heel normaal en dan gaat het goed en ja, dan is het prima.” (IDI 7A)

Some other working mothers found it difficult to leave their child(ren) at daycare, especially when their children were very young. When children also have difficulties at daycare and are crying a lot, it becomes even more difficult for some working mothers to leave their children at daycare as well.

“Ik weet, mijn oudste zoon, die vond het heel verschrikkelijk, die was 3 maanden. Mijn andere kinderen waren uitgerend bij elkaar waren die ook 3 maanden toen ze voor

het eerste naar de crèche gingen. Dat vond ik echt heel moeilijk natuurlijk in eerste instantie vind je dat heel moeilijk, vooral als ze heel klein zijn. Maar je ziet ook dat het vrij snel gewoon heel goed gaat en dat ze daar aan wennen.” (IDI 3A)

The majority of the working mothers says it was more difficult to continue working after the first childbirth than after the birth of their other child(ren). When you have your first child, there is changing a lot and you also do not really know what you can expect. Some working mothers mention that at the birth of a second child you already know what you can expect, because you know the daycare, and you know the leaders of the daycare. So at the birth of a second child it could be easier to continue working, because you are familiar with the daycare.

“De tweede is dan weer makkelijker, want dan ken je de crèche goed, je kent de leidsters goed, je weet allemaal hoe het werkt. Dus dat is eigenlijk alleen maar makkelijker.” (IDI 7A)

Another working mother says that after the birth of her second child she already had a certain rhythm in combining the care of her children and her work. Therefore it was easier to continue working then after the birth of her first child.

“Ja, dan [na de geboorte van de tweede] zit je al zo in dat ritme, dan is dat toch anders. Dus dan is het wel prima, dan weet je oké het loopt allemaal goed. Dus ja dat was prima.” (IDI 10A)

All working mothers liked it to go back working after their pregnancy leave. A reason named for this is that it is nice to have some other activities then only take care of the children.

“Toen de zwangerschapsverlof voorbij was, toen in het begin was ik wel heel blij dat ik even weer wat kon doen, dat ik een beetje uit het flesje geven, luier verschonen en da da zeggen, dat ik daar een beetje uit was en dat ik weer aan de slag was. Dat vond ik heel leuk.” (IDI 16A)

But, as also mentioned in other sections of this chapter, the majority of the working mothers puts their work on a second place. Their children are the most important in their lives.

In contradiction to the working mothers, most home mothers are thinking the same about the easiness of quitting their job after giving birth. In general, for the home mothers it was easy to take the decision to stop working. Only one of them says it was very tough for her, because she had to stop working since her child was very sick. The other home mothers say it was easy to be at home for the children. Most of them took the decision with a lot of pleasure and really like it to be at home with the children. One of the home mothers says that she did not have the need to do something else as well.

“...zeker na de geboorte van de eerste, vond ik dat, ik vond het allemaal zo geweldig. Dat eerste jaar had ik ook helemaal niet de behoefte om meer dingen te doen dan gewoon in ons kleine gezinnetje te leven. Nee toen had ik er geen behoefte aan om andere dingen te doen.” (IDI 14B)

A few home mothers point out that the only difficulty they experienced was the pressure of society to work. Especially in the beginning they felt they had to explain to other people why they were not working. One of the home mothers also mentions that due to this societal pressure there is also some pressure on her satisfaction concerning the decision to stop working.

“Nou de tevredenheid over je keuze zeg maar, die staat daar wel mee onder druk. Ondanks dat ik wel heel tevreden ben over mijn keuze. Ik zou het ook niet terug willen draaien of wat dan ook. Maar de waardering zeg maar aan, wat ik heb... het gevoel wat mensen aan mij geven, de maatschappelijke... die voelt laag.” (IDI 12B)

5.7 Past behaviour of the participant’s mother

As discussed in section 2.2.2. Van Putten et. al. (2007) studied intergenerational effects of working mothers and concluded that there is a relationship between the number of hours worked by their daughters and whether or not the mother worked during the youth of her daughter. From the eleven interviewed working mothers a small majority have (had) a mother who was working during their youth. Most of them experienced this as positive. They found it quite normal that their mother continued working when they were young. A few of them say there was always a neighbour or someone else who could take care of them and their brother(s) and/ or sister(s), when their mother was working. Another working mother explains in the following quotation that she was very proud of her mother, because her mother was working.

“Ik vond het... ik was trots op haar, want toen was het... nou er waren niet veel moeders die werkten en ja ik vond dat ze dat goed deed. Ze had ook echt altijd haar eigen portemonnee, ze had een eigen rekening op haar eigen naam. En als ze dan, stond ze wel eens in een winkel en dan kocht ze een veel te dure jurk en dan zei ze ‘zo dit gaat even met mijn andere pasje’. En dan dacht ik van ‘zo die kan... ja dat kan ze zelf, ze heeft haar eigen financiën op orde’. Ja daar was ik heel trots op.” (IDI 11A)

Some other working mothers with a mother who was working during their youth, say that they found it annoying that their mother was working. One of them mentions that the relationship with her mother was not as strong as the relationship with her father, because her mother was never at home. Another working mother, who finds it annoying that her mother was working when she was young, says she was jealous of friends, because their mother was at home after school.

“Ik heb zelf het ervaren als... wel natuurlijk een stukje, een beetje dat ik als voorbeeld had dat mijn moeder ook werkte, helemaal toen in die generaties waren moeders vaak thuis. Ik keek wel vaak heel jaloers naar vriendjes en vriendinnetjes waarvan de moeder gewoon thuis was na de school met een kopje thee. Nou ja, dat had ik niet thuis.” (IDI 16A)

The other working participants have a mother who was not working during their youth. These working mothers experienced this as positive. They like it that their mother was always at home or always there for them. One of them says she is grateful for her mother, because her mother was always at home for her and her brothers.

“Ik ben haar er dankbaar voor dat ze thuis was voor ons, om ons op te vangen en ja.” (IDI 13A)

One of the working mothers with a mother who was not working points out that when you are a child you think that it is quite normal that your mother is always at home, but when you get older you will get more appreciation for that situation.

“De thee stond letterlijk klaar en ik weet ook nog wel als ze er dan opeens niet was, dan vond ik dat helemaal niet leuk. Ik was er ook wel heel erg aan gewend dat mijn moeder er was. Maar ik vond het ook gewoon natuurlijk. En het gebeurde heel veel

ook in die tijd dus, en je zag het ook bij vriendinnetjes. Maar ja, het was onze situatie, en als je klein bent dan vind je dat wel gewoon. Maar achteraf denk ik 'ja ik vond het wel heel fijn, ja'." (IDI 5A)

From the nine home mothers a small majority have (had) a mother who was working during their youth. Some of them experienced this as positive. The mothers of some of these participants started working when their children were about ten years of age. Therefore, these participants do not had problems with the fact that their mothers were working. Another home mother with a working mother says her mother worked part time. So her mother was always there to bring her to school or to pick her up from school. This mother worked when her children were at school. The other home mothers with a working mothers experienced the work of their mother as annoying, as explained by one of them in the following quotation.

"Maar tegelijkertijd, mijn moeder werkte, ze was lerares. En die was er ook behoorlijk moe van. Dat is ook mijn voorbeeld van de werkende moeder. En dat heeft me ook lang ervan weerhouden om te gaan werken." (IDI 8B)

The mothers of the other home mothers did not work during the youth of the participants. Most of them remember this situation as very positive, because there was always someone at home. As mentioned as well by one of the working mothers with a mother who was not working, one of the home mothers points out that she got the appreciation for the situation afterwards.

"Toen ik klein was, ja zij was al gestopt voordat mijn broer geboren werd, mijn oudere broer. Dus voor mij was dat altijd heel logisch dat ze thuis was. Dus ik had daar eigenlijk ook altijd heel weinig waardering voor dat ze er altijd was. En ik kom oorspronkelijk uit een dorp en daar was het ook nog wel wat gebruikelijker dat de moeders dan thuis waren. En ik had toen wel een vriendinnetje die haar ouders waren niet thuis, die had ook wel al vanaf haar 7^{de} een sleutel om haar nek hangen, en die was altijd heel graag bij ons, want die vond het altijd zo super. Dan denk ik van 'ja als je er in zit dan heb je daar niet de waardering voor', dat heb ik dus achteraf pas gekregen, die waardering daarvoor." (IDI 12B)

Furthermore, participants were asked whether they think the work and care behaviour of their mother has had influence on their decisions about combining the care of children and work. The majority of the participants think the work and care behaviour of their mother has had influence on how they actually combine or not combine the care of their children with work. Only a few participants argue that the work and care behaviour of their mother does not has any influence on their decisions or that they are not aware of any influence on their decisions.

A lot of participants who had a positive experience with the work and care behaviour of their mother say the work and care behaviour of their mother has a positive influence on their own decision. Several working mothers with a mother who was also working previously, say that the fact that their mother was working has influenced their own decision, because they are trying to combine it in the same way. A few working mothers with a mother who did not work during their youth, say that the fact that their mother was not working has influenced their decision, because they think it is important to be there for your children. Their mother was at home during their youth, so they think it is normal that you have to be there for your children as a mother. They are combining the care of their children with a job, but they keep in mind that the interests of their children are the most important.

“Ik denk dan wel met name door mijn eigen opvoeding, toch wel. Ik had dus wel altijd een moeder die er veel was. En ik vind het in die zin.. voelt het voor mij ook wel natuurlijk om meer thuis te zijn dan mijn vriend. En ik denk wel dat dat te maken heeft ook met hoe ik opgevoed ben. Daar heb ik wel eens over nagedacht, ja.” (IDI 5A)

Many home mothers who have had positive experiences with the care and work behaviour of their mothers, mention that the fact that their mother was not working or had a small part time job has had a positive influence on their decision to quit their job, because they think it is very important that you will always be there for your children. These women liked it that their mother was always at home. Some of them also think that the relationship between mother and child will be stronger when the mother stays at home.

In some cases participants had an annoying experience with the care and work behaviour of their mother. The mothers of these participants were all working during the youth of their children. These participants argue that the fact that their mother was working and was very often away from home has influenced their decisions concerning motherhood and work negatively. Due to the fact that their mothers were often away from home and therefore had little attention for them, they think ‘I really do not want this’. These women have made a very conscious decision to be at home or to work part time, so they can spend enough time with their children.

“Dus ja, ik denk toch wel het voorbeeld van mijn moeder dat ik echt dacht van ‘zo wil ik niet worden’. Ik wil ook gewoon... als mijn kinderen niet gelukkig zijn, dan wil ik er voor ze kunnen zijn en dat ook door hebben dat ze niet gelukkig zijn.” (IDI 8B)

Some participants mention that their mother is their standard of how to combine or not combine the care of children with work. Unconsciously you take some ideas from your parents, about the care of children and combining this with work.

“Je krijgt bepaalde ideeën mee, onbewust, en je merkt gewoon dat je die overneemt.” (IDI 1A)

5.8 Motherhood

The decisions of the women in this research about working after giving birth of their children are primarily based on their motherhood. These women would not have the choice to continue working or to quit their job after giving birth if they did not have children. Their motherhood is a very important aspect of their life. All participants like their motherhood very much and they say it is very special. They realize that they are very lucky to have healthy children and that it is a gift to have children. As one of the participants states in the following quotation.

“Toen had ik ook vriendinnen die heel graag zwanger wilden worden en maar niet zwanger raakten en ik dacht van ‘goh het is toch ook eigenlijk een geschenk als je een kind mag krijgen’.” (IDI 8B)

According to some participants, motherhood is also very special because you can see your own personality in your children. That you can recognize yourself in your children. Several participants say it is very special to see children grow up. The development of children, how they learn things and talk about the things they have learned.

“Ik vind het gewoon heel erg leuk om te kijken wie ze zijn en wie ze worden en dat ik hun mag helpen en begeleiden daarin, zeg maar.” (IDI 5A)

Motherhood is also very special, because you get much love and happiness from children. They make you happy, because they are happy. It is not surprising that almost all participants make clear that their children are the most important in their life. Their children are the number one and the healthiness of their children is their first importance. One participant says that she felt in love with her child and that her husband was not the most important person in her life anymore. This also means that work is not as important for mothers as their children. Mothers do not want to miss anything in the lives of their children.

“Het is de grootste emotionele gebeurtenis denk ik in je leven, die je kunt ervaren, het krijgen van kinderen.” (IDI 14B)

Many participants say that motherhood is an addition to their life. They think their life would not be complete without children. They would not have wanted to miss their motherhood.

“En ja zonder kinderen zou ik wel een beetje saai vinden geloof ik.” (IDI 2A)

“...het maakt je gezin of het maakt jezelf als mens completer vind ik, het maakt je relatie completer en het is eh... ja het is gewoon heel mooi.” (IDI 18B)

One woman says her motherhood was the biggest reversal in her life. Before her motherhood she was working a lot, she called herself a career maker and hated part time workers. But after she became mother this changed completely.

“...eerst dacht ik dat werken toch wel een hele impact op je leven heeft, maar moederschap is echt overtreffend daarin.” (IDI 12B)

Motherhood is also a difficult task with a lot of responsibility, according to several participants. One woman says that it is her responsibility to bring up her children so that they will become decent persons. And if that means that she has to reduce her working hours and spend more time at home with her children, she will do that directly, because she thinks it is her duty. Some other participants say that it takes a lot of energy to bring up children well, because you have to find a balance in the amount of accompaniment you will give.

“Nou het is volgens mij de meest moeilijke taak, maar ook de meest... waar je ook de meeste voldoening uit krijgt.” (IDI 13A)

5.9 Motivations

An important aspect of the decision making process, are the motivations why highly educated women take a particular decision about working after giving birth. In this section the motivations to continue working and the motivations to take discharge are discussed. Both working mothers and home mothers have a number of reasons why they have made the decision to continue working or to take discharge after giving birth. In section 5.8.1 motivations of working mothers are discussed. Reasons of home mothers to quit their job after giving birth are described in section 5.8.2.

5.9.1 Motivations of working mothers

From the interviews with working mothers (11 interviews) becomes clear that the most often mentioned motivation of working mothers to continue working is that they simply like their job.

“En werken vind ik leuk. Ja en waarom ben je blijven werken, ja ik vind het gewoon leuk.” (IDI 1A)

A few working mothers say that their work is also their hobby.

“Ik vind mijn werk, vind ik de beste vorm van vrijetijdsbesteding die ik kan verzinnen.” (IDI 11A)

A lot of the participants who are working say that they never thought about remain working or stop working when they got children. This was not a question for these women, because they think it is normal that women work, also women who have children. Some of these participants thought about the number of working hours. For the others, who say that they never thought about quitting their work, this was also not a question. They have never thought about working less hours after giving birth.

“Maar het is nooit een vraag geweest of ik zou stoppen met werken of dat ik veel minder zou gaan werken of wat dan ook, nee dat is nooit een issue geweest.” (IDI 13A)

Another important motivation for working mothers to keep working is that they have followed education at higher profession educational level or scientific educational level. Good education requires a lot of time and money, so in that case you are not going to stay at home. A majority of the working mothers would not be satisfied when they would be fulltime mother. These highly educated working mothers have higher expectations of their life than only raising their children. As one of the working mother explains in the following quotation.

“Maar alleen thuis en alleen de zorgtaak, dat... daar kan ik het niet uithalen. Dat is voor mijn niet genoeg, ik heb meer nodig. Ik heb ook eerst een HBO studie gedaan, afgemaakt en daarna naar een universiteit gegaan. En ik vind dat je er uit moet halen wat er in zit, voor jezelf. En nou dat probeer ik op deze manier te organiseren, om dat maatschappelijk in mijn werk te doen en thuis naar mijn kinderen toe.” (IDI 13A)

Except being involved in society, these women also think it is important to be engaged in your profession and continue your own professional development.

“...ik vind het leuk als er een beroep gedaan wordt op een andere kant die ik heb, een andere kennis, en andere vaardigheden die ik heb, dan zeg maar.. mijn kinderen doen ook een beroep op mij, maar dat spreekt een ander deel van mij aan zeg maar.” (IDI 5A)

The majority of the working mothers denote that they would not like to be fulltime mother. They think they are a better mother when combining motherhood with their work. One of the working mothers points out that she would be much nicer towards her children if she is working:

“Het was voor mijzelf, de keuze om helemaal niet te gaan werken, was er eigenlijk niet, omdat ik van mezelf merkte van dat ik veel leuker ook ben naar de kinderen als ik werk. Ja ik kan helemaal... ik vind het heel leuk met de kinderen thuis, maar ik kan ook op momenten als ik voor mezelf niks qua, qua uitdaging heb, gewoon een intellectuele uitdaging, als ik dat niet heb, ja dan voel ik me helemaal gevangen. Dus ja ik moet gewoon wat doen voor mezelf. Dus dat was eigenlijk de keuze van dat ik dacht van ik blijf werken.” (IDI 16A)

Furthermore, half of the working mothers are working because they want to have other contacts. One of them mentions that she thinks it would be lonely to be at home, because everyone is working in her social environment. Another motivation which also plays a role in the decision to continue working after giving birth in some cases is the financial situation of the family. A few participants say that they like to be (at least partly) financial independent.

“En ik vind het ook bijzonder prettig dat ik mijn eigen inkomen heb, dus dat ik wat dat betreft onafhankelijk ben, of in ieder geval voor een deel.” (IDI 10A)

A number of motivations, which are given by the participants, are directly linked with their jobs. One of these motivations is the freedom in working hours. A lot of working mothers denote that freedom in working hours is an important motivation to keep working. It is possible to continue working after giving birth, because of the freedom in working hours. Before they go to their work they can bring their children to school or daycare, or they can pick up the children from school or daycare after work.

Another motivation which is related to freedom in working hours is the possibility to work from home. Most participants who have freedom in working hours have the possibility to work from home as well. If they did not finish their work at their job, they can finish at home. Some mothers also have one or more days per week when they work from home. As explained by a working mother who also works at home:

“...maar dan kan ik zelf mijn tijd indelen en ik kan ook 's avonds werken of in het weekend werken. Dus ik deel mijn eigen tijd in en daardoor kan ik het goed combineren. Ik kan ook naar school brengen of 's middags ophalen, dan moet ik 's avonds wel weer verder werken, maar dat vind ik dan... dat vind ik prima. Door een flexibele baan kan ik het goed combineren.” (IDI 7A)

The working hours of the partner or husband of the participant also plays a role in the decision making process about working and the number of working hours after giving birth. A majority of the participants with a fulltime or large part time job of four days have a partner who works part time. The partners of those participants are working four days. These women also mention that this motivated them to keep working four or five days per week.

5.9.2 Motivations of home mothers

From the interviews with home mothers (9 interviews) becomes clear that they do not have one single reason why they have taken discharge after giving birth. Most women have several reasons why they did not continue working. An important reason for the majority of the home mothers to become home mother is the busy fulltime job of their partner. Many women told that they experienced difficulties in the care of the children due to the fulltime job of their husband or partner. These women are largely alone in the care of the children. They have to dress their children, give them food, bring them to school and pick them up from school without help of their husband or partner. This is not combining well with a job.

“Aan de andere kant, mijn man is nog steeds heel veel weg. Vorige week ging hij op maandag weg en dan komt hij op zondagmiddag terug. Dus als ik dan... Stel je voor dat ik dan werk, dan is dus gewoon... alles is dan voor mij. 's Morgens de kinderen weg brengen, ze ophalen, ze naar bed brengen, het koken, het schoonmaken en het natuurlijk ook leuke dingen met ze doen, naar de zwem... Ja dat is....pfff.... Krijg dat allemaal maar rond. Dat kan natuurlijk allemaal wel, als dat noodzakelijk is kan dat allemaal wel en... maar ja dat is het niet.” (IDI 14B)

Another often mentioned motivation to be home mother is that these women think it is important to be there for the children always. According to a majority of the participants there would be more peacefulness and stability in the family when there is always someone at home. And that is very important, because children have to raise up to become happy, stable adults, who can contribute something to society. A motivation which can be linked to the motivation that it is important to be there always for the children is that their children are the number one for the participants. The majority of home mothers mention that their children are the number one and they do not want to miss anything in the lives of their children, because children are growing very fast.

“En met name denk ik ook het idee dat ze gewoon ook ontzettend snel opgroeien, ze worden heel snel groot. Ik bedoel zo heb je ze als baby en zo gaan ze op een fietsje naar de school en hebben ze hun eigen wereld en hun eigen vriendjes en vriendinnetjes. Dus ik had ook echt zoiets van nou ik wil jullie eigenlijk helemaal niet... ik wil eigenlijk helemaal niet ergens anders zijn, terwijl jullie daar in de wieg liggen en je razendsnel ontwikkelen.” (IDI 18B)

The motivations discussed above could also lead to the motivation that combining motherhood and work is not pleasant. Several participants mention that they did not feel happy when combining their motherhood with a job. Especially when they have more children the combination of motherhood and work becomes more difficult. One home mother points out that she felt guilty when she was at work but has to go home because her child was sick, and on the other side she felt guilty when she sometimes had to work an extra day in a week, wherefore her children had to go to daycare for an extra day.

Two other often mentioned reasons for being at home are related to the place where the participants live. A lot of participants moved one or more times after giving birth. In some cases they had to move over a large distance, wherefore they had to quit their job. In most cases the families moved to another place because of the job of the husband or partner. Moving from one place to another also leads to disturbance in the family, because the children have to go to another school and the members of the family have to make new friends. Another reason which is related to the living place of the participants is the fact that they cannot rely on family when for example a child is sick, because their family does not live nearby.

“We kwamen ook niet uit de regio, dus we hadden ook geen sociale... geen opa’s en oma’s in de buurt of zo, om op te passen.” (IDI 14B)

The financial situation of the family also plays a role in the motivation to stop working. The majority of the participants say that there is no financial need for them to work. They all have a partner who has a well paid job, so they have the possibility to be home mother.

“En bovendien was het veel voordeliger voor ons als hij die extra dag zou werken dan dat ik die dag zou werken, want ik zou relatief zoveel minder verdienen dan hij.” (IDI 8B)

Motivations which are related to the former job of the participant are less often cited. Some participants say that one of the reasons to take discharge was because they did not like their job anymore. Furthermore the contracts of a few participants were not renewed, so they lost their job, but it has to be mentioned that afterwards they decided not to apply for a new job.

A few home mothers have a sick child. These children need a lot of care, therefore these mothers are not able to work. One of them says that she would really want to work, but it is just not possible. Another not common motivation to be home mother is breastfeeding. A few participants mention that they wanted to give breastfeeding for a long period to all their children. As one of them says in the following quotation, when you also have to work while giving breastfeeding, you have the stress of expressing breast milk as well.

“Ik heb alle 3 de kindjes een jaar lang borstvoeding gegeven. En dat ging heel erg goed en daar heb ik ook een super leuke tijd van gehad. Maar dat moet je wel zelf doen. Anders kun je nog een keer zeggen van ‘nou papa, jouw beurt, druk jij er maar een fles in’. Als je borstvoeding geeft dan is dat niet. En als je dan een dag gaat werken dan heb je op je werk ook nog eens de stress van het kolven.” (IDI 9B)

It has to be said that every home mother and working mother who participated in this research has a different unique set of motivations for taking discharge or continue working after giving birth, due to personal circumstances.

5.10 Policy measures

As discussed in section 2.2.2, Jongen and Van Vuuren (2004) concluded in their study about the effects of policy measures on labour participation decisions that childcare subsidies lead to an increasing labour participation. Furthermore, they concluded that regulations of leave lead to a decrease in the number of hours worked per week. To study the role of policy measures in the decision making process concerning motherhood and work of the highly educated women who participated in this research, they were asked which policy measures they know and how they think about these policy measures.

The first regulation which comes to mind of many participants is the compensation for childcare. Most participants think this is an important regulation to make it possible for mothers to continue working. However, this regulation is only useful for families with an average income. Families with a much higher income do not benefit from this regulation, because they do not qualify. Therefore it is not worthwhile to work, according to some home mothers. One of the working mothers says she is in fact working to pay the daycare for her children.

“Ja, ze zeggen door de toelage voor kinderopvang. Nou is dat zo als je inderdaad in de midden moot zit, als je gewoon het modaal inkomen hebt. Dan is dat zo, maar als je ruim boven het modaal inkomen zit, dan niet meer. Dan is het eh, ja goed... ik werk voor het betalen van de crèche eigenlijk, daar komt het bij mij op neer.” (IDI 16A)

According to one of the home mothers, it is a good thing that parents have to pay for childcare facilities, because she thinks it is normal that parents have to pay for good care. She says that if parents want good care for their children, they have to pay for it.

“Dus ik vind als jij goede zorg wilt voor je kind, dan mag jij daar gerust voor betalen. Ja, dan hoeft het niet gratis, zeker niet, want dat werkt niet. Nee, daar mag je best voor betalen, want dan krijg je ook goede krachten.” (IDI 20B)

Another often named regulation is the supply of childcare facilities. A lot of participants think the government is improving the supply of childcare facilities. Furthermore, through regulations, like extended opening hours of the daycare and the duty of primary schools to offer preschool, between school and after school childcare, it became easier for mothers to

continue working as well, as discussed by one of the working mothers in the following quotation. She points out that the number of daycare facilities is increasing as well.

“...volgens mij komen er meer crèches en meer naschoolse opvang. Tenminste dat is de bedoeling. Zo is bijvoorbeeld sinds dit jaar ingevoerd dat alle scholen daarvoor verplicht toe zijn om naschoolse opvang te regelen, tussen de middag opvang.” (IDI 6A)

A few participants still think there is need for more flexible childcare facilities. One participant mentions that the waiting lists for daycare still exists in some places, therefore there should be more childcare facilities. Some participants also think that employers should offer childcare facilities.

Especially mothers who make or made use of the guest parent regulation named this regulation. With the guest parent regulation parents get a compensation for the costs of a guest parent. Therefore they can pay the grandparent(s) or a babysitter for taking care of the children. However, the government has already reversed this regulation. Several participants mention that they do not agree with the decision of the government to return this regulation. One of the home mothers says that it is a bad case, because it is nice for a child if the grandparents can take care of him or her.

“Nou, ik vind het een hele kwalijke zaak dat ze de opa en oma regelingen allemaal weer aan het terugnemen zijn. Want het is natuurlijk het leukste als het kind bij opa en oma kan zitten.” (IDI 15B)

According to a working mother it is not good that the government has reversed the regulation, because grandparents who are taking care of children, deserve something for this.

“En dat zijn ze nu aan het terugdraaien. Dus in dat opzicht maken ze het minder aantrekkelijk. De overheid, ze willen dat weer terugdraaien, dat opa's en oma's gewoon maar moeten oppassen zonder daar geld voor te krijgen, en daar ben ik het niet mee eens, want ik vind ook ja zij doen ook wel iets voor je.” (IDI 1A)

Regulations of leave are in most cases only named by participants who made use of it. In some cases regulations of leave were given as a probe in the interview. One of the participants mentions that she thinks these regulations of leave do not really contribute to combining motherhood with work.

“Ja, maar ik vraag me af of dat [verlofregelingen] nou zo... of dat nou echt bijdraagt, ik geloof het niet. Nee.” (IDI 11A)

A few participants made use of parental leave. For instance, one of the mothers made use of parental leave after the birth of her first child. She had one day per week parental leave for one year, and afterwards she decided to work less hours as before her first pregnancy.

A lot of participants mention that men have a very short period of leave for the delivery of the baby. A father has only two days maternity leave. Many participants think this is a bad thing, because the distribution of care is skewed right after delivery through this short period of leave for fathers.

“Net zoals dat vaders geen eh... of sorry 2 dagen verlof hebben na een bevalling. Dat is natuurlijk om te huilen.” (IDI 5A)

One of the working mothers says that she can imagine that a father has two or three weeks leave for the delivery of the baby, but not two days. She does not understand this, because after a childbirth a man just becomes father and his wife still has to recover from the delivery.

“Maar ik kan me voorstellen dat een man dan ook 2 tot 3 weken bevallingsverlof heeft en niet 2 dagen. Dat staat niet in verhouding. Dat vind ik heel raar, want ja je bent vader geworden en de hele boel staat op de kop en je vrouw ligt daar helemaal in de kreukels in bed en na 2 dagen mag je weer.” (IDI 13A)

Some participants also think that the government should change the image of fathers taking care of the children. According to these participants, men are often continuing working fulltime, while women are going to work part time or quit their job after the birth of one or more children. One of them also thinks that the government should stimulate employers to make it possible for men to work four days per week.

Several participants argue that they have no problems with the current policy measures. A working mother argues that you will only think about it if you have problems with combining motherhood and work. Another working mother thinks we should not complain in the Netherlands. One of the home mothers says that she understands why the government has this policy measures, but that they should let the people free in their choice.

In some cases working mothers benefit from policy measures, like the compensation for childcare and the supply of childcare, which made it possible for them to continue working. On the other side several home mothers argue that childcare is too expensive, and they do not qualify for compensation for childcare. Because of that, the compensation for childcare does not stimulate them to start working again. In general it seems that policy measures do not play an important role in the decision making process about motherhood and work, because most participants attach much value to their own ideas and motivations for the decision made.

5.11 Gender performativity with respect to motherhood

After describing the results of the in-depth interviews one sub question remains unanswered. That is the following question: what do the outcomes of the research say about gender performativity in the Netherlands with respect to motherhood? To answer this question, gender performativity with respect to motherhood will be discussed in terms of the occurrence of gender roles and inequalities between gender roles. These gender roles can be defined as the role of mother and the role of father in this research.

As Butler argues in her work, gender is formed and confirmed by norms, which are repeated again and again. Furthermore, she argues that people will behave themselves in the role in which they think that they are appropriate (Butler, 2000). As discussed earlier, before the 1970's it was the norm that married women stayed at home to take care of the family, of the children, while men worked outside the home (Beets et. al., 1997; Plantenga, 1993). It can be argued that in the period before the 1970's working mothers were seen as abject beings, because in the hegemonic discourse mothers, especially married mothers, should not work. For instance, until the 1960's it was decided by law that women were ought to leave the labour market when they got married (Beets et. al., 1997). Nowadays it is difficult to determine which mothers are subjects and which mothers are abject beings.

After the first childbirth women get a new role in their life, the role of mother, next to their role as wife or partner and their role as employee or entrepreneur. In addition also men get a new role in their life, the role of father, next to their roles as husband or partner and employee

or entrepreneur. Often there exist inequalities between mother and father roles from the first childbirth onwards. As one of the home mothers mentions, from the first childbirth onwards there are inequalities between mother and father, because the maternity assistant was focused on the mother. In this specific case the father was not involved in the care of the child by the maternity assistant.

It can also be argued that the government has influence on the inequalities between the roles of mother and father, because of differences in pregnancy leave for mothers and fathers. Mothers have 16 weeks pregnancy leave, while fathers only have two days maternity leave (Jongen and Van Vuuren, 2004). Many participants mention that this period of maternity leave for fathers of two days is too short. This short period of maternity leave for fathers leads to an inequitable distribution of the care of the child right after the delivery, as becomes clear from the following quotation.

“Net zoals dat vaders geen eh.... of sorry 2 dagen verlof hebben na een bevalling. Dat is natuurlijk om te huilen. Dat soort dingen zou je naar mijn mening heel snel kunnen veranderen. En daar begint ook een soort gelijkheid. Als je vanaf het allereerste moment van de geboorte dat wat meer samen zou kunnen oppakken. Want heel snel ontstaan dan de patronen. Als je als vrouw ook heel veel alleen bent met het kindje, dan schiet je helemaal in die rol.” (IDI 5A)

Mothers and fathers themselves also provide inequalities between mother and father roles. In most cases, the mothers who participated in this research took a very conscious decision about working less hours or quitting their work. As discussed earlier, only one of the working mothers works fulltime and a few mothers are working four days, but a majority is working three days or less than three days per week. These women do not want to work more hours per week, because they also want to be there for their children. They want to see how their children grow up, and do not want to miss too much of their children. These women deliberately choose for their children instead of a top career.

“Dan zou ik te veel van mijn kinderen missen. Dus dat is ook van invloed geweest om parttime te gaan werken.” (IDI 6A)

As became clear in section 5.9.2, an important reason for home mothers to become fulltime home mother is the busy fulltime job of their partner¹⁰. They have stopped their own career, in order to make it possible for their husband or partner to make career. In this case, the husband or partner is able to focus on his career, while the woman looks after the children. This is a very traditional way of distributing the tasks. The following quotation gives an example of a home mother who has made a deliberate decision to stop working, so her husband could focus on his career.

“...of zal ik nou zeggen van nou ik kies ook voor mijn tweede kind bewust, ik ga nou eerst een tijdje voor mijn kinderen zorgen en daarna... En ook in overleg met mijn man uiteraard, die wel fulltime werkt en het ook steeds drukker krijgt met de opbouw van zijn eigen praktijk.” (IDI 18B)

Several participants have also argued that men themselves think that men have to work fulltime and that these men say that it is not possible to work four days per week. These

¹⁰ It has to be mentioned that this reason is always combined with other reasons in the decision making process to become fulltime home mother.

participants mention that this view exists in society as well. This view ensures that inequalities remain between father and mother roles. The following quotation gives an example of the views people have about gender roles of mothers and fathers. This working mother says that many people think four days work is too much for a mother. She thinks this is because men often continue working five days. Therefore, she thinks it would make a difference if men would also work four days.

“En dat het ook normaal is dat vaders minder gaan werken, want daar zit het vaak nog op vast. Kijk als vrouwen 4 dagen willen gaan werken, dan zegt iedereen van ‘nou dat is best wel veel’, maar dat zeggen ze, volgens mij, meestal juist omdat die mannen maar 5 dagen blijven werken en maar 5 dagen blijven werken. Dus dan denk ik van ‘ja, als die ook eens 4 gingen, dan zou het al heel anders worden’.” (IDI 2A)

A majority of the working mothers with a more comprehensible part time job or a fulltime job states that they sometimes hear from other people that they are working too much. One of them says that especially other mothers say that she is working too much.

“Ik krijg wel vaak te horen van ‘jeetje werk jij 4 dagen’. Dat krijg ik dan van moeders te horen. Mensen vinden het over het algemeen veel dat je en moeder bent en 4 dagen wilt werken. Dat is een reactie die ik veel krijg.” (IDI 7A)

Another working mother states that also customers asked her if she would not go home to take care of her children.

“Ik weet wel dat ik heel vaak met scheve ogen door anderen ben aangekeken, van werk je 100 procent en hoe doe je dat. Ook door de klanten. Dat als ik soms klanten had van de oude stempel, die zeiden moet je niet naar huis voor je kinderen zorgen. Dan denk ik van ‘nee’.” (IDI 1A)

From these examples of existing views in society about working mothers and fathers can be argued that mothers with more comprehensible part time jobs and fulltime jobs are not completely accepted in the Dutch society. In general people think that four or five days work per week is too much for mothers. Also fathers who work less hours to take care of their children are not completely accepted. The view that fathers should work fulltime still exists. On the other side, nowadays it is no longer just accepted that mothers stay at home for the children. In section 5.5 became clear that most home mothers get the view from society that mothers have to work too. In the following quotation a home mother says that she almost had no choice, because the view exists in society that you are not part of society when you are not working.

“En ja, eigenlijk vind ik dat je bijna geen keuze meer hebt in die zin van maatschappelijk wordt het wel opgedrongen dat je er niet bij hoort als je niet werkt.” (IDI 19B)

A majority of the home mothers also has experiences with people who think that mothers have to continue working instead of staying at home. For instance, one of them says that some friends do not understand why she stopped working and think it is a bad decision for her career.

“Nou ik heb vriendinnen die zijn heel ambitieus, die vinden het eigenlijk ook heel dom dat ik voor deze positie kies. Die hebben zoiets van ja, nou ja achteruitgang en stilstand en die vinden het echt zwaar onhandig. Ik heb ook vriendinnen die hebben er wel begrip voor.” (IDI 12B)

It can be concluded that mothers who are working four or five days are not completely accepted in Dutch society, but mothers who stay at home to take care of the children are also no longer accepted. Furthermore, part time working men are also not completely accepted in society. This shows that in accordance with the hegemonic discourse in society fathers should work fulltime and mothers should work in a small part time job, with a maximum of three days.

But the ideal situation in terms of gender equality would be that mothers and fathers work the same number of hours and take care of the children equally, which is the case in a few families. In these few cases the participant and her husband or partner are working both four days per week. These families are trying to distribute their tasks evenly and think that it is important to distribute the tasks evenly, because they think children have to learn that fathers also take care of children. It is not only the mother who is taking care of the children, also the father does. In these cases there is equality between mother and father roles, because they are both working the same number of hours per week and try to take care of the children equally. In the following quotation one of the working mothers describes that she and her partner both work four days and are one day at home for the children. Furthermore they are trying to distribute the tasks at home evenly.

“Van eh... proberen gewoon allebei maatschappelijk dat er uit te halen wat er in zit, maar ook dat te combineren met de zorg voor je kinderen. Dus er ook voor je kinderen moeten zijn. Dat geldt dus eigenlijk voor hem ook, 4 dagen werken en één dag die zorgtaak. We hebben sowieso een huishouden waarin we allebei ongeveer evenveel doen, dus we koken ongeveer allebei evenveel, maar schoonmaken, de was, dat soort dingen, dat doen we eigenlijk allemaal... dat doen we allebei. Het is niet dat de ene taak heel zwaar bij de ander ligt, nee. Daar springen we gewoon in bij van wat de situatie op dat moment verlangt. We hebben geen traditionele rolverdeling.” (IDI 13A)

5.12 The inductive model

The analysis of the in-depth interviews with the grounded theory method results in an inductive model. This model is derived from the results of the in-depth interviews, but based on the deductive model as well. In this section partial conclusions will be given mainly based on sections 5.2 till 5.10, in which the stories of the participants about the decision making process concerning working after giving birth can be found. After discussing the partial conclusions the inductive model will be presented.

5.12.1 Work-care behaviour

Most working mothers are working three or four days per week, but there are also some mothers who are working less than three days per week and one mother who works fulltime. Women with a husband or partner who works fulltime are working less hours than women with a partner who also works part time. In general most working mothers make use of daycare facilities for approximately three days per week. In some other cases a private babysitter takes care of the children instead of daycare. The home mothers are fulltime taking care of their children. And on weekdays often alone, because most of them have a husband or partner who has a stressful job.

5.12.2 Choices

Most working mothers who were working fulltime before their first pregnancy decided to work less hours after the first birth, only in a few cases women have changed the number of hours working per week again after the birth of a second or third child. Furthermore, women who already worked part time before their first pregnancy in general decided to remain working the same number of hours as before the first childbirth. In general, home mothers did not decide to quit their job immediately. Most home mothers worked fulltime before the first pregnancy. After the first childbirth a majority decided to work part time and around the birth of the second child they decided to quit their job. But there are also some participants who quitted their job after the birth of the first child.

Generally, the participants are satisfied with their decisions, both working mothers and home mothers. But some home mothers have had mixed feelings about their decision. Also some working mothers were not conscious about a decision concerning the combination of motherhood and work at all.

5.12.3 Attitude toward act or behaviour

It can be concluded that 'own choice' and 'personal circumstances' are very important concepts which can be linked to the personal ideas of both working mothers and home mothers. They think it is very important that a mother can make her own choice about combining motherhood and work. Furthermore this decision always depends on the personal circumstances of a mother, which are different for every mother. In addition, working mothers often mentioned that highly educated mothers ought to work, because it is normal to work and because of their educational level. They also think the partner has to play an important role in raising the children. But combining motherhood and work is also a search for equilibrium. Home mothers, on the other hand, think it is important to be there always for your children.

Generally working mothers have a positive view about daycare, for instance, because children learn to go around with other kids and the professionalism of the daycare. Home mothers are less positive about daycare, because of the stress for the child, the price of the childcare and the amount of attention a child will get. Especially home mothers are more positive about private babysitters, because of the flexibility and the amount of attention a child will get from a babysitter.

5.12.4 Subjective norm

5.12.4.1 The partner

It can be said that the subjective norm related to the husband or partner plays an important role in the decision making process of highly educated women about combining motherhood and work. The partner is the person with whom most participants extensively discussed the possible choices about working after giving birth. According to the participants their partner is the one who supports their choice absolutely, but most participants also belief that their partner thinks the decision about working after giving birth is a decision of the woman herself.

5.12.4.2 Family, friends and colleagues

The role of the subjective norm related to family, friends and colleagues seems to be low, because the majority of the participants argued that their family, friends and colleagues have

not played a role in their decision making process. They are aware of the opinions of their family, friends and colleagues, but they attach more value to their own choice. Therefore, the concept of ‘family, friends and colleagues’ will not be added to the inductive model.

5.12.4.3 Society

The role of the subjective norm related to society seems to be low as well, because most participants stated that society has not played a role in their decision making process. Home mothers also do not comply at all with the existing societal view. But some home mothers said that their satisfaction with the decision is under pressure due to the societal view. As proved earlier, the participants attach more value to their own choice than to the view of the society. So, the concept of ‘society’ will also not be added to the inductive model.

5.12.5 Perceived behavioural control

In general home mothers agreed that it was easy to stop working. They took the decision with a lot of pleasure and really liked it to be at home with their children. Among the working mothers opinions are divided. Some working mothers said it was easy to continue working, others say it was difficult, because you have to bring your baby to daycare. But it has to be mentioned that it was easier to continue working after the birth of the second or third child compared to the birth of the first child.

5.12.6 Past behaviour of the woman’s mother

It can be concluded that the past behaviour of the woman’s mother plays a role in the decision making process of highly educated women. In most cases this is a positive role, because the participants liked the way their mother combined or not combined motherhood with work. Therefore, they try to combine or not combine motherhood and work in the same way as their mother did. In some cases the past behaviour of the woman’s mothers played a negative role. In these cases the mothers of the participants were working a lot during the participants youth and therefore had little attention for them. Therefore these participants decided to work less hours or to work not at all. The concept of ‘past behaviour of the woman’s mother’ will be included in the inductive model.

5.12.7 Motherhood

It can be said that the concept of ‘motherhood’ has to be included in the inductive model, because there would not be a decision about combining motherhood and work if these women did not have children. Therefore, it can be stated that the decisions about working after giving birth are primarily based on the motherhood of the women in this research.

5.12.8 Goals

Both working mothers and home mothers have a unique set of reasons why they are working or why they are at home. These reasons can be classified in terms of Maslow’s theory of basic needs. As argued by Maslow (1970) most people are partly satisfied and partly unsatisfied in all their basic needs at the same time. In this research love and belongingness needs and esteem needs seem to play a particular role in explaining why highly educated women make a particular choice concerning working after giving birth.

It can be stated that in the decision making process of women who decide to stop working love and belongingness needs play an important role, because their children are most important for these women. They think the welfare of their children is more important than

their own career. They do not need a career to be happy currently. Actually they have chosen for their children instead of their own career.

Furthermore, it can be said that in the decision making process of women who decide to continue working esteem needs play an important role next to love and belongingness needs, because these women want to achieve more in their lives than only raising their children. They also want to be useful and necessary in the society. But their children are very important as well.

5.12.9 Policy measures

In general it seems that policy measures do not play an important role in the decision making process about motherhood and work, because most participants attach much value to their own ideas and motivations for the decision made. Most participants think it is good that policy measures, like compensation for formal childcare facilities, extension of the formal childcare and arrangements for leave, exist. But the existing policy measures would not stimulate them to work more hours or to start working again. Therefore the concept of 'policy measures' will not be included in the inductive model.

5.12.10 The inductive model

Based on the partial conclusions discussed above, the inductive model is constructed. The inductive model is shown in figure 5.1. When comparing this inductive model with the deductive model of section 3.6 it can be seen that a number of additions have been made. Also some concepts are left out of the model.

One of the main similarities with the deductive model is the use of the theory of planned behaviour of Ajzen (1991) with its determinants of intention, the intention to perform a certain behaviour and the actual behaviour concerning motherhood and work. More in detail, the determinants of intention consist of the attitude toward act or behaviour, the subjective norm, and the perceived behavioural control. In the inductive model some important concepts are added to these determinants of intention. First, from the partial conclusions became clear that the concepts 'own choice' and 'personal circumstances' are important additions to the concept of 'attitude toward act or behaviour'. Secondly, it became clear that the subjective norm mainly consists of the partner in this study, therefore the concept 'partner' is added to the concept of 'subjective norm'.

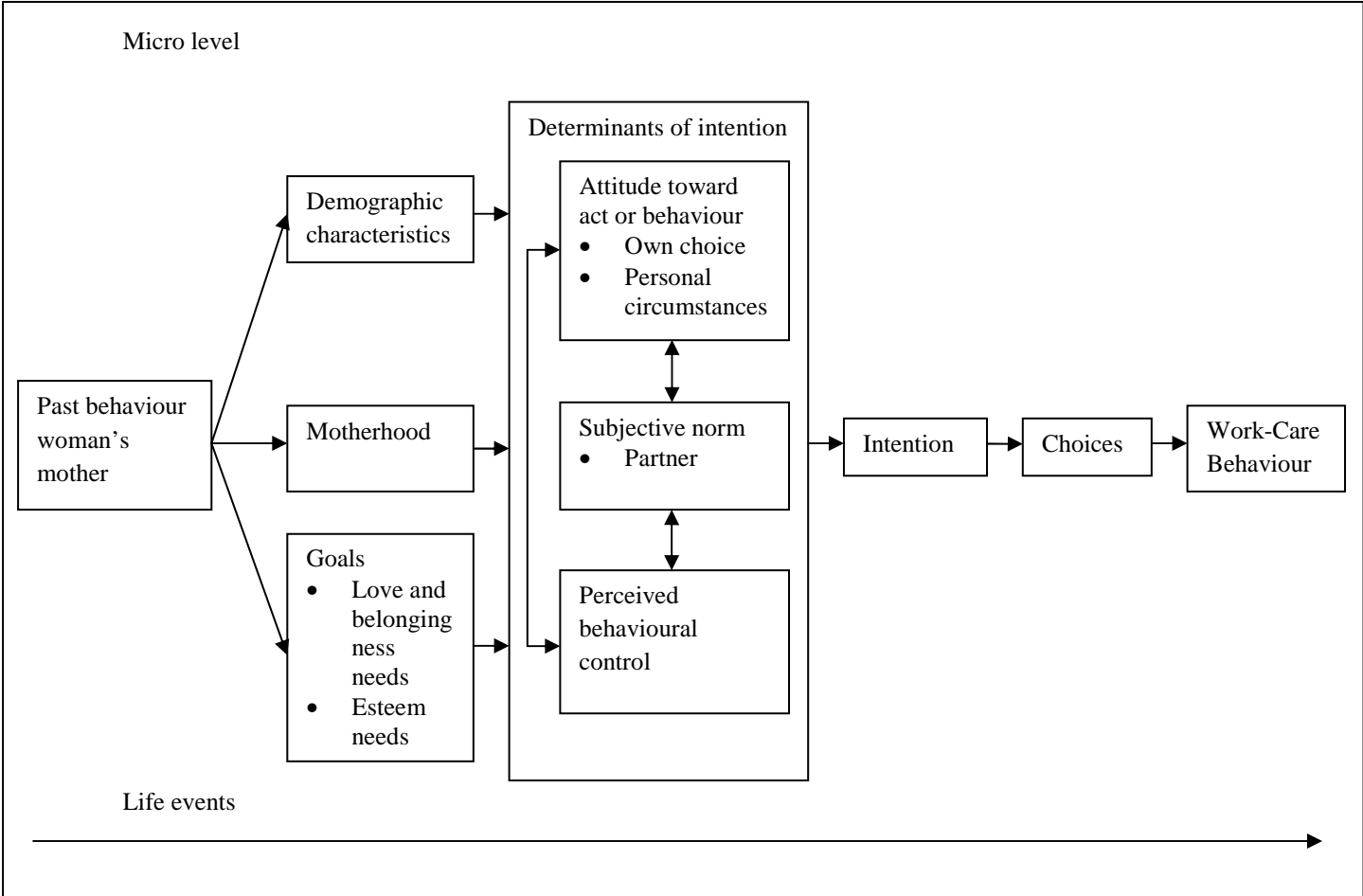
Furthermore, the concept of 'past behaviour woman's mother' is included in the inductive model, because from the in-depth interviews became clear that the past behaviour of the participant's mother plays an important role in the decision making process through the other concepts of demographic characteristics, motherhood and goals.

From the partial conclusions became clear that the women in this research would not have made a decision about working after giving birth when they would not be mother. Therefore the concept of 'motherhood' is included in the model.

The concepts of 'love and belongingness needs' and 'esteem needs' are important additions to the concept of 'goals', because the partial conclusions emerge that especially love and belongingness needs and esteem needs from the theory of basic needs of Maslow (1970) play a role in the reasoning of highly educated mothers concerning working after giving birth.

In the deductive model the concept of 'life course' was included. In the inductive model this concept has weakened to 'life events', because it cannot be stated that the whole life course of these women plays a role in the decision making process concerning working after giving birth. However, it can be concluded that life events like the birth of the first child, the birth of the second child and the educational history play a role in the decision making process.

Figure 5.1 The inductive model



The concept of 'social environment', which is included in the deductive model, is not included in the inductive model. This concept is housed in the concept of 'subjective norm'. In the deductive model the concept of 'social environment' consists of family, friends and colleagues and society. The concepts of 'family, friends and colleagues' and 'society' are not included in the inductive model, because from the partial conclusions became clear that the role of these concepts was very low in the decision making process.

Based on the partial conclusion concerning the role of policy measures, the concept of 'policy measures' is also not included in the inductive model. There is no clear relationship between the policy measures and the decision making process.

6 Conclusion

In this finalizing chapter the conclusions and recommendations of this study will be discussed. This study has three research objectives. The first objective is to identify the choices and decisions of highly educated women with regard to working after giving birth, and the reasons behind these choices and decisions. The second objective is to get insight in the role of the partner, the social environment, policy measures and the life course in the decision making process of highly educated women, concerning working after giving birth. And the final objective is to examine what the outcomes of the research say about gender performativity in the Netherlands with respect to motherhood. In section 6.1 the answers to the research questions will be provided. Section 6.3 gives recommendations for further research about the topic.

6.1 Conclusions

What are the choices that highly educated women have and the decisions that they make, concerning working after giving birth?

The majority of the highly educated women, who participated in this study, were working before their first pregnancy. Most participants worked even fulltime before their first pregnancy. Generally, highly educated women have different choices concerning working after giving birth. They can decide to continue working the same or more hours, they can decide to work less hours, or they can decide to quit their job after the birth of their children. But it has to be mentioned that many working participants argued that they did not think about stop working at all. So these women did not have the choice to stop working. This option was not under discussion for these participants.

Around the birth of their first child most participants made a decision about combining motherhood and work. Almost every working participant was going to work part time after the first birth. In most cases they decided to work three or four days. Only a few working mothers decided to change the number of working hours per week again after the birth of a second or third child.

Home mothers make the decision to stop working not immediately in most cases. A majority of the home mothers decided to work part time after the first childbirth and decided to quit their job around the second childbirth. But some mothers actually took the decision to quit their job around the birth of their first child.

Why do they make the decisions that they make, concerning working after giving birth?

The participants of this study named a lot of reasons why they are working or why they are at home. Every participant has her own unique set of reasons for her decision(s) concerning working after giving birth.

Common reasons of working mothers to continue working are: they like their work, they never thought about quitting their job, they have followed higher education, they want to continue to develop themselves professionally, they think they are a better mother when combining motherhood and work, and they want to have other contacts. Also freedom in working hours and home working are given reasons to continue working. As discussed in the partial conclusion in section 5.12, these reasons can be classified in terms of Maslow's (1970) theory of basic needs. The reasons of working mothers can be mainly categorised in

the hierarchy of basic needs as esteem needs, because these women want to be useful and necessary in society. They set higher goals for themselves compared to home mothers. But love and belongingness needs are important as well. For instance, the reason that they think they are a better mother when combining motherhood and work can be categorised as love and belongingness needs.

In addition, common reasons of home mothers to quit their job are: their partner has a busy job, so they are largely alone in the care of the children, it is important to be there always for your children, they do not want to miss anything of their children, and the combination of motherhood and work is not pleasant. Also reasons related to the place of living are often named, like moving and they cannot rely on family. And there is also often no financial need for them to work. A sick child could also be a reason to stop working. These reasons of home mothers can be mainly categorised in the hierarchy of basic needs as love and belongingness needs, because for these women their children are the most important. Actually these women have chosen for their children instead of their own career.

What is the role of their partner in this decision making process according to themselves?

Most participants have stated that their partner is the person with whom they extensively discussed the different options about working after giving birth. A majority of the participants is also sure that their partner shares their view about combining motherhood and work. Therefore, they feel supported by their partner in the decision that they have made. From the interviews became clear that most participants also believe that their partner thinks the decision about working after giving birth is a decision of the woman herself. It can be concluded that the partner plays an important role in the decision making behaviour of these highly educated women about combining motherhood and work, because in general they discuss it together.

What is the role of their social environment in this decision making process according to themselves?

The social environment of the participants in this study consists of family, friends and colleagues, and society. All participants know a lot about the opinions of family, friends and colleagues concerning the combination of motherhood and work. Generally, they think that their family and friends think it is possible to combine motherhood and work. The parents of the participants are also supporting the decisions of their daughter in most cases. However, working mothers sometimes hear from family and/ or friends that they are working too much, and home mothers sometimes hear from family and/ or friends that it is a pity that they are not working. The participants also told a lot about the societal view concerning working after giving birth. According to most participants, in society the view exists that mothers should work.

As discussed in the background, from earlier research became clear that norms and values in the surrounding of the mother play an important role in her decision about working after giving birth. The results of this study are not consistent with this earlier research. The majority of the participants thinks that their family, friends and colleagues and society did not play a role in their own decision about combining motherhood and work, because they greatly value their own choice. They know how family, friends and colleagues and society think about combining motherhood and work, but they do not use the opinions of others to make a decision.

What is the role of existing policy measures in this decision making process according to themselves?

When asking participants about their knowledge of existing policy measures, commonly named policy measures are the compensation for formal childcare facilities and the extension of the formal childcare facilities through extended opening times and the community school. Guest parent arrangements and arrangements for periods of leave are only named by participants who made use of these arrangements.

From the background became clear that policy measures could have influence on the decision making behaviour. Especially compensations for childcare lead to an increasing labour participation of mothers, according to Jongen and Van Vuuren (2004). Based on the interviews, it can be concluded that policy measures do not play an important role in the decision making process concerning working after giving birth of the participants of this study. Most participants think it is good that policy measures exist, but the existing policy measures would not stimulate them to work more hours or to start working again. Generally, the participants attach much value to their own ideas and motivations for the decision made.

What is the role of their life course in this decision making process?

The interviews show that different life events play a role in the decision making process of highly educated women concerning working after giving birth. In the first place, the births of the children play an important role. There would not be a decision about combining motherhood and work if the woman would not have children. For working mothers the most important moment on which a decision is taken is after the birth of the first child. From the results becomes clear that a majority of the working mothers decided to work part time after the first childbirth. Furthermore, around a second or third childbirth less changes in working hours are made by working mothers. On the other side, home mothers often made the decision to stop working not immediately. After the birth of the first child a lot of them were working part time. And around the birth of a second child they made the decision to stop working.

As discussed in the theoretical framework, the life course also includes educational histories and employment and occupational careers (Mayer and Tuma, 1990). The interviews with working mothers show that an important reason to continue working is their educational level. These women followed higher education and invested a lot of time and money in their education. As argued by many of them, if you have followed higher education you also have to work. Therefore, it can be said that the educational history of working mothers plays a role in the decision making process.

The interviews did not show that the whole life course plays a role in the decision making process, but the interviews did show the role of individual life events in the decision making process. Therefore, it can be concluded that individual life events play a role in the decision making process concerning motherhood and work.

What do the outcomes of the research say about gender performativity in the Netherlands with respect to motherhood?

Unless it is normal that women work as well nowadays, often mothers are working less hours per week than fathers. In most cases fathers are also working fulltime, while mothers are working part time or are not working at all. The interviews show that most participants do not want to have a top career. The children of these participants are much more important than a

top career. These participants themselves have chosen for their mother role. Furthermore, the interviews show that a lot of men think that men have to work fulltime and that it is not possible to work part time. The participants argued that the government has influence on inequalities between gender roles as well, because of the differences between pregnancy leave for mothers and maternity leave for fathers. Besides, mothers who are working four days or more per week often hear from other people that they are working too much. On the other side, mothers who are at home hear from other people that they ought to work.

Based on these examples of inequalities between the role of the mother and the role of the father, it can be concluded that the best way of combining motherhood and work, following the hegemonic discourse, is that fathers work fulltime and that mother work in a small part time job, with a maximum of three days. Mothers who are working four or five days are not completely accepted in the Dutch society. Mothers who stay at home to take care of the children are no longer accepted as well. Furthermore, part time working fathers are also not completely accepted. But it has to be mentioned that a lot of participants made a conscious decision to work in a small part time job or not to work at all. Therefore, these women themselves also ensure the pre-existence of inequalities between the role of mother and the role of father.

What are the choices and decisions of highly educated women with regard to working after giving birth, and what is the role of the partner, the social environment, existing policy measures and the life course in this decision making process?

The main research question can be answered based on the sub questions discussed above. In general highly educated women are working before their first pregnancy. Moreover, highly educated women are often working fulltime before the first childbirth. The interviews show that highly educated women have different choices concerning working after giving birth. In the first place they can decide to continue working the same number of hours as before pregnancy. Secondly, they can decide to work less hours as before pregnancy. Or thirdly, they can decide to quit their job around the birth of one of their children. Despite the fact that mothers who decided to continue working often mentioned they did not think about the option of quitting their job at all. After the first childbirth highly educated women are generally going to work part time. This also applies to women who decided to quit their job around the birth of their second child. Women who remain working are often working three or four days per week.

The interviews show that the partners of highly educated women play an important role in the decision making process concerning working after giving birth, because couples discuss extensively which decision would be most appropriate in their personal situation. But the interviews show that the final decision about the combination of motherhood and work is taken by the woman herself. Furthermore, it can be stated that highly educated women greatly value their own decision. The interviews clearly show that women think it is very important that women can make a choice of their own about the combination of motherhood and work. The personal circumstances were also viewed as a very important aspect of the decision making process. Personal circumstances differ for every single woman, therefore every single woman makes a different decision about working after giving birth.

Besides, the interviews show that the social environment of highly educated women and existing policy measures hardly play a role in the decision making process. This is derived

from the fact that these women greatly value their own ideas and motivations for a particular decision. The life course of highly educated women also hardly plays a role in the decision making process, but it can be stated that individual life events play a role. For instance, the birth of a child and the educational history of participants play a role in their decision making process concerning working after giving birth. In addition, another factor, which plays a role in the decision making process, was found. This is the past behaviour of the woman's mother. The interviews show that the past behaviour of the woman's mother plays often a positive role in the decision making process, because women try to combine or not combine motherhood and work in the same way as their mother did. In this case women liked the way their mother (not) combined motherhood with work. Sometimes this role was negative, because their mothers were working too much during the women's youth and therefore had little attention for them. Consequently, these women are working less hours or are working not at all.

Finally, it can be concluded that the decision making process of highly educated women about working after giving birth is a choice of their own, which depends strongly on their personal circumstances.

6.2 Discussion

This discussion deals with some points which have to be taken into account with respect to the results of this study. Firstly, it has to be taken into account that the in-depth interviews are carried out with participants who live in the city of Groningen and surrounding villages. When the same research would be conducted in another part of the Netherlands, for instance in the west of the Netherlands, it could be expected that the results would be different.

Secondly, the in-depth interviews are carried out with highly educated women. The husband or partner of the participants are not interviewed. Conducting interviews with the husband or partner will create a more complete picture of the decision making process of both women and men about working after giving birth.

Thirdly, participants were also selected on the age of their children. The advertisements were placed on the notice-boards of playgroups, childcare facilities and primary schools to reach participants with young children. The decisions they have taken about working after giving birth are known right now, but it is not known, for instance, which decisions these women will take when their children go to secondary education.

Finally, it has been concluded that the social environment of highly educated women and existing policy measures hardly do not play a role in the decision making process of these women about working after giving birth. But it has to be taken into account that this conclusion is mainly based on the opinions of the participants themselves. The results might have been different if more questions were asked about the role of the social environment of the women and existing policy measures.

6.3 Recommendations

Based on the discussion some recommendations for further research will be given in this section. Followed by some recommendations for policy implication. Firstly, it would be interesting to conduct the research also in other parts of the Netherlands. Especially in the middle of the country and the west of the country, because it could be expected that more mothers are working in these parts of the Netherlands. Furthermore, a larger study which also includes interviews with the husband or partner of the women would be interesting. Just like a

study which includes different educational levels, to compare differences in the decision making process of women who are differently educated. Finally, this study showed the role of the past behaviour of the woman's mother in the decision making process about working after giving birth. The role of the past behaviour of the woman's mother seems to be given less attention in literature. Therefore, further research is recommended to learn more about these intergenerational effects.

In the nearby future the population will be aging. This aging of the population will lead to a smaller operative working population. The government tries to reduce the scarcity of the operative working population amongst other things by making it more attractive for women to work. They are trying to do this with the policy measures which are discussed in chapter 2. But this study has concluded that existing policy measures hardly play a role in the decision making behaviour of highly educated women concerning the combination of motherhood and work. Moreover, this research concluded that highly educated women greatly value their own choice and that the decision making behaviour concerning working after giving birth depends on their own personal circumstances. Therefore, we would recommend the government to listen to the women which policy measures they need to make it easier to combine motherhood and work. For instance, some women mentioned that they like the Scandinavian system, with one year paid leave after the birth of the first child and after that year continue to work fulltime.

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Appendices

Appendix A. In-depth interview guide (Dutch)

Introductie

Ik ben Linda Tammenga. Ik studeer Demografie aan de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen en ik ben bezig met mijn afstudeerscriptie over de besluitvorming van hoogopgeleide vrouwen met betrekking tot werken na de geboorte van hun kinderen. Ik ben geïnteresseerd in de redenen waarom vrouwen wel of niet blijven werken na de geboorte van hun kinderen en hoe die beslissing genomen wordt. Daarom houd ik interviews met hoogopgeleide vrouwen in de provincies Groningen en Drenthe.

Ik wil je ten eerste bedanken dat je mee wilt werken aan een interview over dit onderwerp. Alle informatie die je hier geeft zal vertrouwelijk worden behandeld, je blijft anoniem. Jouw naam zal dan ook niet worden genoemd in het onderzoek. Het interview zal alleen voor mijn eigen onderzoek worden gebruikt. Vragen die je niet wilt beantwoorden, hoeft je niet te beantwoorden. Voordat we beginnen met het interview, wil ik je vragen om schriftelijk toestemming te geven voor het interview. Het interview zal worden opgenomen op tape en duurt ongeveer een uur. Heb je vooraf nog vragen? Anders kunnen we beginnen met een aantal algemene vragen.

Algemene onderwerpen

1. Hoe oud ben je?
2. Hoe is je levenssituatie? Getrouwd/ samenwonend?
3. Heb je een religie? Welke?
4. Welke opleiding heb je gedaan?
5. Wat is jouw beroep?
6. Hoe oud is je man/ partner?
7. Wat is het beroep van je man/ partner?
8. Hoeveel kinderen heb je?
9. Hoeveel kinderen zou je graag willen hebben?
10. Hoe oud zijn jouw kinderen?
11. Hoe heten jouw kinderen?

12. Heb je broers en/ of zussen?

13. Hebben zij een relatie?

14. Hebben zij kinderen?

Werk en zorg

1. Heb je op dit moment een baan? Zou je iets meer kunnen vertellen over je werk?

2. Hoeveel uren in de week werk je?

3. Hoe combineer jij op dit moment je werk en de zorg voor je kinderen?

Probe:

- kinderopvang (formeel, informeel)

4. Waarom ben je gestopt met werken?

Waarom ben je blijven werken?

5. Wanneer heb je de beslissing genomen?

Probes:

- Voor de geboorte van het eerste kind;
- Na de geboorte van het eerste kind;
- Na de geboorte van het tweede kind;
- Etc.

Eigen attitude

6. Wat betekent het voor jou om moeder te zijn?

7. Wat zijn jouw ideeën over het combineren van werk en de zorg voor kinderen?

Probe:

- Kinderopvang (formeel, informeel)

8. Hoe verschillen jouw huidige ideeën, over het combineren van werk en de zorg voor kinderen, van de ideeën die je hierover had voordat je moeder werd?

Partner

9. Wat is de mening van jouw partner over het combineren van werk en de zorg voor kinderen, volgens jou?

Probe:

- Heeft jouw partner het aantal uren dat hij werkt in de week veranderd na de geboorte van jullie kinderen?

10. Wat was de rol van jouw partner in de beslissing om te stoppen met werken/ te blijven werken, volgens jou?

Perceived behavioural control

11. Was het makkelijk om te blijven werken na de geboorte van jouw kinderen?

Probes:

- na de geboorte van je eerste kind,
- na de geboorte van je tweede kind,
- etc.

12. Was het makkelijk om te stoppen met werken na de geboorte van jouw kinderen?

Probes:

- na de geboorte van je eerste kind,
- na de geboorte van je tweede kind,
- etc.

13. Ben je tevreden met de beslissing?

Intentie

14. Wat dacht je op het moment van de beslissing?

15. Zou je hetzelfde doen als je nu een beslissing zou moeten nemen over het combineren van je werk en de zorg voor de kinderen? Waarom (niet)?

Sociale omgeving: anderen

16. Hoe denken anderen in jouw omgeving over het combineren van werk en de zorg voor kinderen, volgens jou?

Probes:

- Ouders;
- Familie;
- Vrienden;
- Collega's.

17. Hoe is de beslissing om te stoppen met werken/ te blijven werken beïnvloed door de meningen van anderen in jouw omgeving?

Probes:

- Ouders;
- Familie;
- Vrienden.

18. Ken je mensen in jouw omgeving die hetzelfde hebben gedaan?

Probes:

- Familie;

- Vrienden;
- Collega's.

19. Ken je mensen in jouw omgeving die het juist heel anders hebben gedaan?

Probes:

- Familie;
- Vrienden;
- Collega's.

20. Heb je het gevoel dat mensen in jouw omgeving anders tegen je aan kijken sinds je moeder bent?

Probes:

- Partner;
- Ouders;
- Familie;
- Vrienden;
- Collega's;
- Werkgever.

21. Vind jij dat er dingen zijn veranderd op jouw werk nadat je moeder bent geworden?

Probes:

- Opdrachten die je eerst wel kreeg, gaan nu naar andere medewerkers.

Moeder

22. Toen je zelf jong was, ging jouw moeder toen aan het werk? Kan je me iets vertellen over die periode van je leven?

23. Hoe heeft de arbeidscarrière van je moeder de manier waarop jij je taken combineert beïnvloed?

Maatschappij

24. Welk beeld krijg jij vanuit de maatschappij over het combineren van werk en de zorg voor kinderen?

Probes:

- Negatief;
- Positief.

25. Ben je het hier mee eens? Waarom (niet)?

26. Denk je dat het maatschappelijk beeld invloed heeft op de beslissing die jij hebt gemaakt?

Beleidsmaatregelen

27. Zou je iets kunnen vertellen over beleidsmaatregelen die jij kent, die de combinatie werk en zorg voor de kinderen makkelijker maken?

Probes:

- zwangerschapsverlof (16 weken),
- ouderschapsverlof (26 weken),
- kinderopvang subsidie,
- flexibele verdeling van de dag,
- thuis werken.

28. Wat vind jij van deze beleidsmaatregelen?

Levensloop

29. Wat zijn je plannen voor de toekomst?

Probes:

- Wanneer de kinderen naar de basisschool gaan?
- Wanneer de kinderen naar de middelbare school gaan?

Afsluiting

Zijn er nog andere dingen over het onderwerp waar je het over zou willen hebben?

Wat verwachtte je van het interview? Zijn er vragen die je wel verwachtte, maar die ik niet heb gesteld?

Heb je nog vragen?

Hartelijk bedankt voor het interview, het was zeer interessant.

Appendix B. In-depth interview guide (English)

Introduction

I am Linda Tammenga. I am studying Population Studies at the University of Groningen. I am conducting interviews as part of my research project on decision making of highly educated women about working after giving birth. I am interested in the reasons behind these decisions and the way these decisions are taken.

I would like to thank you that you want to participate in an in-depth interview concerning this topic. I would like to mention that everything that you say is confidential. The interview would only be used for my own research. Your name will not be mentioned in the research. You do not have to answer questions you do not want to answer. Do you agree with tape-recording the interview? The interview takes about one hour. Do you have questions beforehand? Otherwise we can start with some general questions.

General topics

Firstly I like to know something about you and your family.

1. What is your age?
2. What is your living situation?
3. What is your religion?
4. What is your educational specialisation?
5. What is your profession?
6. What is the age of your husband or partner?
7. What is the profession of your husband or partner?
8. How many children do you have?
9. How many children do you want?
10. How old are your children?
11. What are the first names of your children?
12. Do you have brothers or sisters?
13. Do they have a relationship?

14. Do they have children?

Work and care

1. Do you have a job on this moment? Can you tell something about your job?
2. How many hours do you work per week?
3. How are you combining your work and the care of your children currently?
Probes:
 - Childcare (formal, informal)
4. Why did you stop working or remain working after the birth of your children?
5. When have you taken the decision about working after the birth of your children?
Probes:
 - before the birth of your first child
 - after the birth of your first child
 - after the birth of your second child
 - etc.

Attitude

6. What does it mean to you to be mother?
7. What are your ideas about combining work and the care of children?
Probe:
 - childcare (formal, informal)
8. How differ your actual ideas about combining work and the care of children from the ideas you had before you became mother?

Partner

9. How does your partner think about combining work and care of children according to you?
Probe:
 - Did he change the number of hours work per week after the birth of your children?
10. What was the role of your partner in the decision according to you?

Perceived behavioural control

11. Was it easy to remain working after the birth of your children?
Probes:

- after the birth of the first child,
- after the birth of the second child,
- etc.

12. Was it easy to stop working after the birth of your children?

Probes:

- after the birth of the first child,
- after the birth of the second child,
- etc.

13. Are you satisfied with your decision?

Intention

14. What did you think at the moment when you took the decision?

15. Would you do the same if you have to take a decision about combining work and care of children at this moment? Why (not)?

Social environment

16. How do others in your social environment think about combining work and care of children according to you?

Probes:

- parents
- family
- friends
- colleagues

17. What was the role of others in the decision according to you?

Probes:

- parents
- family
- friends

18. Are there persons in your environment who did the same?

Probes:

- family
- friends
- colleagues

19. Are there persons in your environment who take a totally different decision?

Probes:

- family
- friends
- colleagues

20. Do you have the feeling that people in your surroundings see you differently now as before you have got children?

Probes:

- partner
- parents
- family
- friends
- colleagues
- employer

21. Do you think that there are things which are changed at your job after you became mother?

Probes:

- Tasks which you have got before, are going to other employees.

Mother

22. When you were a child, did your mother have a job? Can you tell something about that period of your life?

23. How does the labour career of your mother influenced the way you combine work and care?

Society

24. Which view do you get from the society concerning combining work and the care of children?

Probes:

- negative
- positive

25. What do you think about this societal view?

26. Do you think the view of the society has influence on your own decision?

Policy measures

27. Can you tell something about the policy measures, which make it easier to combine work and the care of children, which you know?

Probes:

- pregnancy leave (16 weeks),
- parental leave (26 weeks),
- childcare subsidy,
- flexible division of the day,
- work at home.

28. What is your opinion about these policy measures?

Life course

29. What are your future plans?

Probes:

- when the children go to primary education
- when the children go to high school

Closure

Is there anything else about the subject that you would like to share with me?

What did you expect from the interview, are there questions you expected but I did not ask?

Do you have any questions left?

Thank you very much for the interview, it was very interesting.

Gezocht!

Hoogopgeleide moeders

Ik ben een studente van de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen en studeer demografie. Momenteel ben ik bezig met mijn afstudeerscriptie over de besluitvorming van hoogopgeleide vrouwen met betrekking tot werken na de geboorte van hun kinderen. Ik ben geïnteresseerd in de redenen waarom vrouwen wel of niet blijven werken na de geboorte van hun kinderen en hoe die beslissing genomen wordt.

Daarom wil ik graag interviews gaan houden met moeders die:

- Een HBO of WO opleiding hebben afgerond;
- En 2 of meer kinderen hebben.

Zou u mee willen werken aan mijn onderzoek, stuur dan een mail naar L.Tammenga@student.rug.nl of bel naar het onderstaande nummer. Of kent u iemand die misschien mee zou willen werken aan dit onderzoek, geef het dan door.

Ik hoop op een reactie van u.

Alvast bedankt!

Groeten,
Linda Tammenga
L.Tammenga@student.rug.nl
06-46428360

Appendix D. Written informed consent

Toestemmingsverklaring

Ik,, verklaar hierbij dat ik toestemming geef om deel te nemen aan een onderzoek, uitgevoerd door Linda Tammenga.

Ik ben me ervan bewust dat deelnemen aan dit onderzoek vrijwillig is. Ik kan er voor kiezen een vraag niet te beantwoorden en ik kan op ieder moment besluiten om het interview te beëindigen.

Het onderwerp van het onderzoek is: de besluitvorming van hoogopgeleide vrouwen met betrekking tot werken na de geboorte van hun kinderen.

Het interview zal ongeveer een uur duren en zal worden opgenomen op tape.

De gegevens zullen vertrouwelijk worden behandeld. Respondenten zullen niet individueel kunnen worden geïdentificeerd.

De onderzoeker zal vragen beantwoorden over onduidelijkheden met betrekking tot het onderzoek.

Onderzoeker Deelnemer
Datum: - - 2009 Datum: - - 2009