PIOTR MICHOŃ

WORK, CARE, and GENDER

the science of (un)happiness

PUEB PRESS
POZNAŃ UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

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Suggested citation
Michoń, P. (2021). *Work, care, and gender: The science of (un)happiness*. Poznań: Poznań University of Economics and Business Press. https://doi.org/10.18559/978-83-8211-075-3

The book was published as a part of the project: *Welfare state and Inequalities of Subjective Well-Being – comparative study of European countries.* Funded by National Science Centre, the grant no: 2013/11/B/HS5/03618

eISBN 978-83-8211-075-3
https://doi.org/10.18559/978-83-8211-075-3

POZNAŃ UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS PRESS
ul. Powstańców Wielkopolskich 16, 61-895 Poznań, Poland
phone: +48 61 854 31 54, 61 854 31 55
www.wydawnictwo.ue.poznan.pl, e-mail: wydawnictwo@ue.poznan.pl
postal address: al. Niepodległości 10, 61-875 Poznań, Poland

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Introduction

"This book is not addressed to the learned, or to those who regard a practical problem merely as something to be talked about," with this sentence English philosopher Bertrand Russell began *The Conquest of Happiness* and it has become an inspiration for me and a starting point for my analysis. Staying true to Russell's ideas, I have written a book which I believe can be addressed to all (scholars as well) who are interested in happiness and how it can be achieved. I have placed my considerations on happiness in the area we all know: family, marriage, children and gender.

By using the word "conquest" Russell emphasizes that happiness is not what is simply given to a person, it does not appear, but must be achieved. Modern science suggests that Russell was only partly correct. Partly in this case is about half. Because, as modern research shows, circa half of human happiness is written in genes. There is something stored in our DNA that we largely cannot influence. But there is another half that allows us to increase our happiness and to be permanently above than genetically determined level.

Let's be honest: science is not always nice. Not infrequently, the results of scientists' work contradict what we believe. Paradoxically, proving that what we believe is false makes scientific research the most interesting. How do we react when research shows that enough sleep is sufficient to help you rest? Or that people in love are happy? Oh, "banal", "obvious", "normal", "everyone knows it", etc. However, when the results of the research contradict what we deeply believe, anger, disbelief and aversion appear. Scientists become eggheads and their work becomes "unrealistic". What do they know, second-rate alchemists? In this context, scientists dealing with everyday human life are in the worst situation. When a physicist formulates a thesis about the penetration of outer space, this poses no threat to most of us. Our world remains unmoved. In turn, when a psychologist, sociologist or economist prove something that is in contradiction with what we build our everyday life on (for example, striving for success, fame or higher earnings, it turns out to be a straight path to unhappiness, or that parenthood does not contribute to happiness), we react allergically: anger, discouragement, irritation. In this book,

based on the results of scientific research, there are several theses that do not go hand in hand with popular opinion and the so-called common sense. However, in order to make my message a bit more real, I partially gave voice to "people living a real life". Since many of the issues raised concern overly sensitive topics, I was unable to question people directly. That is why I used the analysis of Internet forums where anonymous people, deprived of restrictions related to revealing their identity, often write very openly about their experiences, impressions, opinions, etc.

Let's start with children (Chapter 1) and their spectacular rise in the hierarchy of importance. In the Middle Ages, often ignored (even Mary, the mother of Jesus, in the painting then was extremely restrained in showing feelings to her son) in the following centuries, mainly thanks to their work and caring for aging parents, they became simply useful. In turn, the end of the nineteenth century marked the beginning of changes that resulted in a modern approach to children. The child has only recently become the center of attention, and at the same time is perceived as a source of emotional excitement. It has become "economically worthless, but emotionally priceless," writes Viviana Zelizer. And at the same time, and this is the main message of the first chapter of this book, raising a child has become a "job to do". In scientific literature, in social policy, in books on education, etc. the "investment" perspective dominates, treating childhood as a warm-up before the real life. Deprived of its autotelic value, childhood often serves to give a person a proper start, even at the expense of…her happiness. And besides, there is no absolute standard that has to be achieved. There is no moment when we can say: my baby is ready for the adult life. There is no "good enough" level, because thinking about the future of children is dominated by a comparative perspective in which "good enough" equals "better than others". What this can mean for children and parents is discussed in Chapter 1: "Competition".

Man has always been bored, but only nowadays we are afraid of boredom, we avoid it and we are ashamed of it. It turns out that we prefer to inflict pain on ourselves rather than be bored. There are also situations when there is something embarrassing and inappropriate in admitting that we are bored. Sometimes boredom is like an uninvited guest who discomforts the eyes and irritates the nostrils with his presence at an official party. An untouchable who, when entering our home, effectively destroys the great image of what is best in us and in our lives. Boredom has a negative element to it, and it definitely does not fit in with the perfect; it's like the crooked teeth of a model on the catwalk, or a postoperative scar on a bodybuilder's body. This is why it is easier for us to talk about boredom at work than at home (although paradoxically, when at home we feel it more often). And it is especially difficult to admit that we feel bored while we are caring for our baby. The anonymity of the Internet allows you to get rid of the limitations in talking about real experiences: "I am also a bit bored by these games. I try to pretend to be curious, but I'm not good at it "(Magda M.). Chapter 2 of this book is devoted

to the boredom of mothers who spend a lot of time caring for their children, but also to the boredom that affects women more than men.

One of the sources of unhappiness that Bertrand Russell pointed out almost 100 years ago is fatigue. It often happens to a modern man. However, as the research results have been convincing us for several decades, the source of fatigue for men is primarily professional work, while the source of fatigue for women is the time and effort spent on paid work and domestic work. The observations made by such authors as Anne Oakely and Arlie Hochschield led us to believe that modern women are burdened with more responsibilities than men because of their dedication to earning money and caring for the home. As a result, they are more prone to fatigue, the excessive one, bringing more losses than benefits. In Chapter 3, I point out that, at least in rich countries, the picture of a "double shift" of women versus a "single shift" of men does not reflect reality. I ask whether it is justified to assume that the inequality between men and women in the domestic workload has negative consequences for the latter. There are many reasons for revision of the widespread views: the amount of time devoted to doing housework is decreasing (mainly because women do less housework than before), and the differences between men and women in the amount of time spent on housework has been also systematically decreasing (the main reason: see above); and as a result of the spread of part-time work, the amount of time devoted by women (not men) to gainful employment is also decreasing. As a result, the total amount of time devoted to work by women and men becomes very similar. At the same time, more and more studies show that women do not perceive unequal distribution of household chores as unfair and often treat it as justified. This is partly due to the fact that when assessing their situation, they compare themselves not only with their partner (which is pointed out by feminist authors) but they compare themselves primarily with other women. As a result, inequalities observed outside one's own household influence the perception of inequalities within one's own family. However, it is worth emphasizing once again that the observed changes concern only the richest countries and the problem of excessive burden on women remains valid in other countries, for example in Poland.

Nearly one hundred years ago, Bertrand Russell wrote that psychology recognizes avoiding interpersonal comparisons as one of the main conditions for a happy life. In order to be happy, do not compare with others. Comparisons with others, especially in an area that is extremely important to us, are a straightforward path to feeling inferior and dissatisfied. There will always be someone who is better, stronger, faster, or smarter than us. Especially nowadays, when the pool of people to be compared with is not limited only to our friends, family, neighbours or colleagues. Today, thanks to the Internet, we can compare ourselves with millions of people most of which we do not even know and have never met. This means that without the chance to verify the truth of what we see on Facebook or Instagram,

we are exposed to the negative effect of trying to equate to the ideal lives presented in the web. In Chapter 4, I point out the dangers of comparisons, to which mainly mothers are exposed. Ascribing to fulfilling the role of a mother significant importance in their lives, feeling social pressure to be a good mother, and also surrounded by ideal images of instamums, modern women are extremely exposed to experiencing negative consequences of comparisons with others.

Russell wrote that the work of conscience manifests itself in fear that someone will find out that we are doing something wrong or shameful. In this sense, the conscience of modern men is touched when he commits two kinds of sins: "acting like a woman" and "not being a real man." In both cases, it is about a crime against your gender role and identity. It is the "sin" of men resulting from not meeting social expectations that is the subject of Chapter 5. A person who does not behave in accordance with her gender role and identity is exposed to negative effects. She is ridiculed, laughed at, treated as a threat to the existing order. A man who behaves unmanly, for instance differently than it is customary in a given society, must take into account the fact that he will be "punished". Despite the social changes that have been observed in recent decades, it is invariably the primary role of men to earn money. He, like her, can take care of the child or do household chores, provided that, in the first place, he remains a breadwinner. By doing what is "masculine", men benefit from a high level of so-called identity utility. This, at least partially, explains why men are relatively more likely than women to experience a long-term decline in life satisfaction after losing a job. This is also the reason why men who perform "female" jobs (for example, male nurses) often try to confirm their male identity to others through behaviour or even hobbies (for example, motorcycling).

In Chapter 6 I write about persecution mania as a source of unhappiness in the context of housework standards. Why is it usually women who attach more importance tocleanliness at home? And at the same time why do they get more satisfaction from clean house? According to the cultural explanation, this is because they feel judged for it. A dirty kitchen is the housewife's guilt, but will anyone blame the man? When a child goes to kindergarten with leaky pants, which parent will it be to blame? Mother or father? Culture made women to have higher quality standards in terms of childcare and housework. And this in turn leads to behaviours like "I have yet to do this" or "I'd better do it myself." In addition, many of the activities performed by women are not appreciated and often go completely unnoticed. In addition to "ordinary" housework, which are often performed mainly by women, there is also another type of activity that remains unnoticed: organizational and emotional work. Women plan, organize, process countless amounts of information, synchronize the activities of family members, worry etc. They often play the role of the household manager. "Considering the energy I put into

organizing, it's very mentally stressful" (Sarah). In Chapter 6, I try to answer the question about the causes and consequences of this role.

In Chapter 7, I return to the discussion of men, and especially of committed fathers. In the past, when women went to offices and factories, they found themselves overburdened with: simultaneous money earning, looking after their children and the household. They were expected to follow the path of self-realization and financial independence without exempting them from being primarily mothers and housewives. Moreover, women were expected to fit into the model of a male employee who does not give birth to children, does not care for them, and does not have to combine domestic and professional tasks. The situation of men is similar today. With the difference, however, that their process of changes began from a different starting point. While the women's path was from the domestic sphere to offices and factories, the men are making their way in the opposite direction. Today, fathers are increasingly expected not to limit themselves to being breadwinners. Contemporary father is to be present in his child's life. He is expected to create, maintain and deepen an emotional relationship with offspring. He is to devote time to the children and be actively involved in their upbringing. At the same time, and this has not changed, it is perceived that the father's primary job is to money earning. Contemporary fathers, those who strive to fulfill their tasks, have found themselves trapped by diverse social expectations. It is also important in this context that being a good parent comes down to being…a mother. Just as working women were expected to behave like men, we expect fathers today to be like a mother.

Chapter 1

Competition: Investing in children

> *And then what about the society you're supposed to be adjusted to? Is it a mad society or a sane one? And even if it's pretty sane, is it right that anybody should be completely adjusted to it?*
>
> Aldous Huxley, *Island*

> *Humanity has its place in the order of things; childhood has its' in the order of human life. The man must be considered in the man, and the child in the child.*
>
> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile, or On Education*

In his influential work, *The Conquest of Happiness* (1930, 2006), philosopher Bertrand Russell (1872–1970) argued that the reason why so many people are unhappy lies in the mistaken notion that success and competition with others are necessary to achieving happiness. Success, Russell notes, is just one of the components of a happy life, and sometimes the price we pay for it is too high. Referring to American businesspeople, Russell (2006) holds that if a person not only desires success, but also truly believes that it is their duty to seek it, then they will remain too overwhelmed and too concerned to be happy. In Russell's opinion, each of us must realize that we are trapped on a treadmill—remaining in the same place however much we move. Activity does not see us move forward or upward. However, we can choose to exit the treadmill or remain on it. This prompts the following two questions: What about those who do not choose? What about the children whose parents make their decisions for them? This chapter explores these questions.

The child as an economic good: Return on investment

When a Mexican girl gets married, her family receives *chichitomen*—monetary compensation for the loss of a working family member—from the parents of the

groom. More specifically, *chichitomen* is a fee for the breast milk consumed by the bride as a baby (De Mente, 2009). In agricultural societies, children were important for economic reasons. The children of poor parents helped in the fields and the homes, taking care of the younger and older family members. Meanwhile, the children of wealthy parents inherited the estate and maintained the family name, while their marriages cemented the agreements between the families. Historically, children were deemed desirable and useful, especially firstborn sons. Children rarely constituted a burden on the family—perhaps with the exception of when there were already too many children (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1995).

The social approach to children has changed over time. For example, comparing the contemporary approach to children to that in the Middle Ages, Tuchman (2017) emphasizes the striking absence of interest in children in medieval art and literature. Indeed, the only child to frequently appear in medieval paintings is the baby Jesus; even then, his mother holds him stiffly in her arms and away from her body, any emotional sentiment remaining relatively restrained. In medieval art, the expression of maternal feelings was, at most, economical. This is also the case in medieval literature. Children tend to feature only when they die, usually by drowning or suffocation, or possibly when abandoned in a forest on the orders of a mad king seeking to avoid a tragic prophecy. In folktales, female characters usually seduce and betray, serve as martyrs in tragedies and objects of forbidden love in romances; rarely are they mothers (Tuchman, 2017). Even in the eighteenth century—in the days preceding the great change in the approach to the children—the child constituted a new member of the family workforce and a resource for parents in their old age. For example, in 1870, every eighth child in the US was employed (Zelizer, 2011). A significant change in thinking about children occurred at the turn of nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is during this period that the contemporary perception of the child emerged—that is as "economically worthless but emotionally priceless" (Zelizer, 2011). While children continued to be regarded in terms of their usefulness, the child became the object of feelings and emotions during this period. In short, the child transformed from a producer to a consumer (Zelizer, 2011).

Economic change was accompanied by socio-cultural processes. The perception of the role of parents has changed significantly with the development of psychology, psychoanalysis, and psychiatry. What seems obvious today was not considered in the past. For instance, Shorter (Bryson, 2013) has shown that, in the past, mothers were indifferent to the development and happiness of their children before the age of two. This was largely due to the high infant mortality rate. Indeed, historical data suggest that only one in two children survived to the age of five, while a third died in the first year. Consequently, emotional attachment to a vulnerable infant was associated with a high risk of suffering. Generally, children tended to receive the attention of adults once they had reached the age of five

or six—at which point their childhood ended and their life became that of a miniature adult. Of course, this too differed according to economic and class status: in rich families, in addition to reading and writing, children learned good manners and horse riding; boys were taught some form of martial skill, while girls learned to sing, dance, and play instruments. In poor families, children found work; girls often in domestic arenas, while boys found labor, martial, or apprenticeship roles.

Bryson (2013) provides an anecdotal fact illustrating the negligible role of children in past society: in Great Britain, an association for the prevention of cruelty to animals was established sixty years earlier than one for the protection of children. The changing value of children is reflected in the motivation and decision of people to adopt. In the nineteenth century, the main criterion determining the chances of adopting a child from an orphanage was their economic usefulness, which was associated with age. Adoptive parents expected a child to work on the farm and help in the household. As such, it is not surprising that an extra fee was required for children older than ten—that is, for a child old enough to be useful. Babies were thus very undesirable (Zelizer, 2011).

In contrast, today, a child's value is primarily understood through the lens of the positive emotional experiences they provide. As one parent admitted on an online forum:

> A child requires incredibly hard, constant work (also on myself). But the effects give a lot of satisfaction: first words, steps, hand drawn cards, their first day of kindergarten / school, especially their smile and simple "I love you mom / dad" :) It rewards all the difficulties, and there are many of them (Salinka, 2011).

Thus, the contemporary understanding of a child holds that despite their generating significant and tangible costs, they make an invaluable emotional contribution. Certainly, it is currently estimated that a child born in the US in 2013 will cost middle class parents nearly a quarter of a million dollars to raise to the age of 18. This sum covers housing, food, transport, childcare, as well as various other expenses such as haircuts and mobile phones (Money.CNN.com, 2014). In return, the parents expect that the child will be a source of positive emotions and joy for them.

Necessity of care

Children have always required care. During human evolution, the size of a child's head became too large for the birthing canal, creating difficulty during birth. This is estimated to have occurred about a million years ago, when the brain of an adult *Homo erectus* was approximately 700 cm^3 in volume (Fisher, 2004). Consequently, children were born earlier, thus requiring greater care. Humans, like the

offspring of other primates, are born immature and unprepared for independent living. However, human babies are relatively more dependent and less resourceful than the offspring of other primates because the human brain only develops in the postnatal period. In addition to the immaturity at the time of birth, our evolution has seen the prolongation of maturation and a distinct age category: teenagers. In regard to dental maturation, for example, humans develop grinders between the ages of six and seven, while chimpanzees develop these teeth at the age of three. Similarly, where humans become sexually mature at around the age of sixteen or seventeen, chimps become sexually mature at the age of ten. In terms of parental support, female chimpanzees provide food for their offspring until they are about four years old. In contrast, modern parents feed and support their children until they are adults and even longer until they can survive independently in society. This has been compounded by relative economic vulnerability of children in modern and highly industrialized countries. While a significant portion of children worked for a living in the nineteenth century, the current understanding of puberty is that it serves as a warm-up to "real" life.

As a consequence of biological immaturity, social units, societies, and polities as a whole have been responsible for children. In turn, socio-economic changes have resulted in a longer period of childhood dependency. In the past, children were essentially biologically immature adults, and had adult responsibilities—including hunting, labor, and eventually marriage and parenthood. Today, the transition from dependence to relative independence takes much more time. Although longer childhood continues to be treated only as a period in which to prepare for adult life. Although the well-being of children was at the center of popular interest in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was not synonymous with giving childhood an autotelic character or as a period important in itself. Attention was directed to the child as a future adult, not as an individual with their own rights and goals. Parents, teachers, and politicians looked to the future, treating childhood as a preparation for what they considered a useful "adult life."

As mentioned earlier, changes in the understanding of a child's happiness and good childhood began in the nineteenth century and deepened in the twentieth century. Originally, attention was predominantly placed on the physical survival of children and satisfaction of their basic needs. In this approach, optimal childhood was achieved when children survived, were educated, and free of illness and disability (Ben-Arieh, Casas, Frønes, & Korbin, 2014). It was then acknowledged that education and relative health do not provide the conditions necessary for a child to discover and fully utilize their potential. This prompted next stage in thinking about children, which began with the question: What will the children of today provide in the future? State policy and the attitude of parents thus came to dominate in an *investment perspective*. From this perspective, childhood is a period of investment, the return on which occurs during adulthood. Consequently, assuming an average

life expectancy of 80 years and adulthood at 18, almost a quarter of an individual's life is spent as a subordinate. In this approach, the child is an unfinished product intended to become a competent, useful, and—hopefully—happy adult. In the investment perspective, childhood serves to prepare individuals for adulthood and the child's happiness is put aside in interest of their future.

Evidently, this is how it works in practice, at least to some extent. The environmental conditions in which the child grows, their relationships with their parents or guardians, and their experiences influence every aspect of their development from the development of their brain to their ability to feel empathy (Phillips & Shonkoff, 2000). Early childhood is particularly important because it influences development of basic competencies, as well as the significant sensitivity of children to their experiences. In their review of studies in economics, neurology, and developmental psychology, Knudsen, Heckmann, Cameron, and Shonkoff (2006) noted the following. First, the process of shaping skills depends on both the genetic material of a human being and their individual experiences. Second, the learning of new skills is hierarchical; that is, the skills acquired at a higher level of the development hierarchy depend on the skills developed at lower levels. Third, cognitive, linguistic, social, and emotional competencies are interdependent. They are shaped in early childhood and contribute to an individual's ability to achieve a high position in the labor market. Finally, during the human life cycle, there are periods of heightened sensitivity to both positive and negative effects of the external environment. These periods are crucial in shaping an individual's skills.[1] Childhood constitutes one such a period. Moreover, investing in children's health has potential economic benefits. Children learn better and become more productive adults. In turn, neglected children are likely to suffer negative consequences of this throughout their lives. As such, it is difficult to overestimate the role that experiences collected in childhood can have in adulthood.

Scientists use the concept of "developmental cascades," which strongly influence the imagination, to describe the changes that take place during human development. The cascade effect was first noticed in psychopathology in noting that the numerous difficulties experienced by children allow for the prediction of specific problems in adulthood. As such, the notion of developmental cascades is intended to draw our awareness to how the competencies acquired in one period of life become the foundation on which to develop further competencies. In short,

[1] This principle stems from two characteristics intrinsic to the nature of learning: (*a*) early learning confers value on acquired skills, resulting in a self-reinforcing motivation to learn more; (*b*) the early mastery of a range of cognitive, social, and emotional competencies makes learning in later ages more efficient and thus easier and more likely to continue (Knudsen et al., 2006).

the knowledge and skills acquired in the first stage provide the development opportunities in the next stage.

I do not consider the investment in children as a goal of state policy in this chapter, as there is a plethora of research on this topic. Rather, this chapter focuses on the approach of parents to the happiness of their children. As evidenced by the arguments above, care for the development of a child is important for numerous reasons. Today, attention to child development is axiomatic. However, doubts arise when trying to reconcile investment in children with both their current and future happiness. For instance, some children hate school and it makes them unhappy; however, the education and socialization they receive at school are vital for their future. As such, three issues emerge. First, it is worth considering the consequences of the investment perspective on the perception of childhood. Second, it is necessary to evaluate the type and nature of investments made. Finally, it is necessary to assess the current and future consequences of investing in children.

Childhood as a subordinated period in life

Amy Chua, a professor at Yale University, penned *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* (2011), the content of which is devoted to the raising of children by so-called "tiger mothers," whom she credits the success of the majority of people of Chinese, Japanese or Korean origin in the US. Chua admits that she never let her children watch TV, play computer games, participate in school parties, sleepover at the houses of school friends, select their own extramural activities, receive poor or average grades, fail to excel in any school subject with the exception of physical education and art, or play an instrument other than the violin and piano (Chua, 2011). In short, children's lives are to be subordinate to the future. A child's time and effort should be dedicated to increasing their knowledge and skills. Consequently, the main goal of childhood is ensuring their success in adulthood, the key to which is the right job. As an online forum user claimed in a discussion over extramural activities for children: "It's not just fashionable to take care of a child's future. Such activities are needed, even necessary, the child develops better, more people get to know and shape many important features that affect one's adult life" (Dariaaa89, 2016).

When adults care for their children's education, health and, above all, increasing their chances of finding appropriate employment in the future, the goal of *becoming* a happy adult outweighs the prospect of *being* a happy child. This is the essence of the investment perspective: the costs of today, in the form of postponement of "being," will translate into benefits in the future. From this perspective, childhood is like the run-up taken by a high-jumper: when done correctly, the runner has the necessary momentum to jump high. However, even sports commentators do not pay attention to how the jumper runs—unless they do so in a way that deviates

from the norm; what matters is how high they jumps and whether they drop the bar. According to the UN's definition, childhood lasts until the age of 18. This is slightly less than a quarter of the life span of those living in rich countries. As such, it is important to recognize that the happiness of a child is valuable in itself, and not only because of its consequences for the future (Ben-Arieh, 2010).

Qvertrup (1999) argues that primarily focusing on the future actually represents a serious threat to the child. After all, such an approach justifies every child's life on the condition that they succeed as an adult. This in itself is normative and subject to change (Qvertrup, 1999). In this case, people have to postpone the "good life" for an uncertain future (Ben-Arieh, 2010). In the investment approach, it is assumed that by progressing through subsequent stages of development, children have certain basic needs that need to be satisfied at more or less the same time. As a result, children are not regarded as individuals; that is, as separate entities that have their own concerns, goals, aspirations, and, above all, the rights. For children, what matters is the here and now, not only what awaits them in the future.

"I know what's best for you": Parental ambitions for a child's success

A parent's good will, knowledge, experience, commitment, and willingness to support their child's development do not guarantee that the skills and knowledge with which the child enters adulthood will make them happy. Take for example, the philosopher and economist, John Stuart Mill (1806–1873). Born in 1806, Mill began learning Greek when he was only three years old, and Latin when he was eight. Before he turned twelve, Mill read the original works of most classical philosophers—including Diogenes, Lucian, Aristotle, Plato, Herodotus, and Isocrates—texts typically included in university syllabi at the time. He knew algebra and Euclidean geometry, and learned the works of most esteemed English and Scottish historians. As a teenager, he studied political economy and logic, considered complex mathematical problems, and continued reading the works of philosophers and economists like Adam Smith and David Ricardo. The little free time he had was devoted to the experimental sciences, chemistry and botany. At the age of fifteen, he began writing his most important works in the field of philosophy, history, psychology, and law. Works like *Political Economy* (1848), *On Liberty* (1859), and *The Subjection of Women* (1869), co-authored by his wife, Harriet Taylor Mill, continue to delight with their depth and clarity of the argument. Mill is a perfect example a genius born through sweat and hard work. However, according to his autobiography, at the age of twenty—before he became a respected authority—Mill experienced a "mental crisis" and depression. Mill pointed to his long years of intensive education—that is, the demanding analytical training to which he was subjected by his father—as the probable cause of his breakdown.

While Mill's story has a positive ending, it illustrates the scale of the threat a child can face when their parents place investment in their future first.

The demanding requirements of over-investing parents do not necessarily translate into a better future for their child, but may pose a threat to their happiness. The first study on the scale and effects of "tiger education," about which Chua wrote, was published in 2013. Parker and Wang (2013) demonstrate that "tiger education" is less common in Chinese American families than assumed, thus undermining the link between rigorous education and success. Indeed, the study found that "tiger" parents do not raise outstanding children any more than other parents (Parker & Wang, 2013). On the contrary, in comparison to children with a supportive or loose style of upbringing, those raised by tiger parents tend to be less successful at school and university, are more likely to experience pressure regarding their results, have less sense of family commitment, and are more prone to depression and a sense of alienation (Parker & Wang 2013). High standards, strict rules, heavy workloads, and being success orientated do not necessary translate into success upon entering adulthood.

When thinking about a child's development, adults tend to focus on such skills as reading, writing, deduction skills, as well as language and mathematical competency, as measured by the results of school tests, exams, and grades. However, primarily focusing on what is useful at school has a price. While reflecting the hierarchy of importance attributed to particular competencies, it diminishes the relevance of areas that are not covered or neglected by school syllabi. Education systems also have their own hierarchy, wherein mathematics and languages are usually found at the top, and art classes at the bottom. Meanwhile, the review of research conducted by Knudsen and others (2006) indicates that, *inter alia*, the development of cognitive competencies—upon which school education concentrates—depends on the simultaneous development of social and emotional skills. In order to achieve these skills, a child must learn to adapt to various circumstances and understand the perspectives of others, as well as recognize their goals, needs, or feelings. Social competencies are shaped by relationships with other people—especially one's peers.

In *To have or to be?* (1976), Erich Fromm distinguishes between two different approaches to life: the mode of *being* and the mode of *having*. According to Fromm, the choice of mode has important consequences for the individual, as it affects almost every area of their life. While *having* is mainly about things, *being* focuses on experience. The mode of being is not characterized by how busy one is or their outward activity, but their inner activity and the productive use of their abilities. The opposite of this mode of being is observed at school. Describing the mode of having with reference to education systems, Fromm observed:

> The school aims to give each student a certain amount of "cultural property," and at the end of their schooling certifies the students as having at least the minimum amount.

> Students are taught to read a book so that they can repeat the author's main thoughts. This is how the students "know" Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant, Heidegger, Sartre. The difference between various levels of education from high school to graduate school is mainly in the amount of cultural property that is acquired, which corresponds roughly to the amount of material property the students may be expected to own in later life. The so-called excellent students are the ones who can most accurately repeat what each of the various philosophers had to say. They are like a well-informed guide at a museum (Fromm, 2008, p. 81).

Meanwhile, in the investment approach, what is taught at school is awarded the highest status. Testing and selection in the education system results in a focus on the areas of knowledge that are subject to these methods, shaping admission to the best high schools or universities. For instance, soft and creative skills do not fit into this canon. Meanwhile, as Heckman emphasizes, the skills that we should develop are diverse in character. Success in life is often determined by non-cognitive skills such as persistence in pursuing a goal, self-control, risk avoidance, self-esteem, time management, as well as the ability to postpone gratification for later (Cunha & Heckman, 2007). Discussing this in reference to the school system and success, Robinson (2012) notes, "Some of the most brilliant, creative people I know did not do well at school. Many of them didn't really discover what they could do—and who they really were—until they'd left school and recovered from their education." To this, Robinson adds,

> Of course, at least as many people do well in their schools and love what the education system has to offer. But too many graduate or leave early, unsure of their real talents and equally unsure of what direction to take next. Too many feel that what they're good at isn't valued by schools. Too many think they're not good at anything (Robinson, 2012, p. 23).

In the film *Stoker* (2013), an emotionally unstable and disinterested mother, Evelyn (Nicole Kidman), says: "You know, I've often wondered why it is we have children in the first place. And the conclusion I have come to is…Because we want someone to get it right this time." Looking at her daughter, India (Mia Wasikowska), she adds, "But not me…Personally speaking, I can't wait to watch life tear you apart." Evidently, Evelyn Stoker is a bad mother—more than disinterested in her daughter's happiness, she desires her daughter's unhappiness. However, if adults force children to do what they deem appropriate, are they not doing the same? As noted, in any education system, some areas—like mathematics—are given a higher status. This is based on the simple assumption that mathematics will be required in the future, and that adults are aware of this and thus privilege the subject. However, the speed and scope of technological change had and continues to significantly transform both our everyday life and the way we work. At

this point, it is worth noting that a child born in 2015 will retire around 2085. We need to ask: What changes will take place during this period? What aptitudes and skills will be in demand in the future labor market? Currently, experts cannot predict how the labor market will look in 10 or 15 years, let alone 30 or 40. Indeed, we cannot be certain that there will be a labor market by the time today's children retire. The adoption of an erroneous assumption as to what skills, knowledge, and competencies will be useful in the future has could lead to a situation in which today's investments prove to be completely wrong.

In this regard, it is worth considering an important issue raised by the political philosopher, Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), who argued that the purpose of raising children entailed more than simply preparing them for professional work. Rousseau noted, "Living is the job I want to teach him. On leaving my hands, he will, I admit, be neither magistrate nor soldier nor priest. He will, in the first place, be a man" (Rousseau, 2011, p. 39). According to Rousseau, education should focus on character development, enabling the child to grow freely, and protecting them against evil hidden in the world around them. As he notes, "It is less a question of keeping him from dying than of making him live. To live is not to breathe; it is to act; it is to make use of our organs, our senses, our faculties, of all the parts of ourselves which give us the sentiment of our existence" (Rousseau, 2011, p. 47).

"Mine will be better than yours": Investment as gaining a competitive advantage

Apart from creating the conditions necessary for a "happy adulthood," sociologist Robert Merton (1968) provides a rational justification for investing in children, the so-called "Matthew Effect." This principle is drawn from the gospel of Matthew: "For to every one who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away" (Matthew 25:29, RSV). In this regard, Merton (1968) drew attention to the fact that graduates from the best high schools have a better chance of obtaining a place at the best universities than others who are only slightly less talented. Today, we live in what Robert Frank and Philip Cook (2010) call "a winner-take-all" society. Graduating from a prestigious university translates into a better chance of securing a better job in the future. Success during the initial stage of development improves the probability of succeeding in the next stages of life. If access to the best jobs increasingly depends on having a diploma from the best universities, then university education constitutes a gatekeeper. Only the best, most gifted and skilled young adults are admitted to leading colleges and universities. Since there are few places at the top, competition starts early. Sought after top prizes—such as money, prestige, and fame—mean that there is always a large number of people competing for a place

at the top, which is partially rooted in individuals overestimating their chance of winning.

Korean parents understand this selection process well. In Korea, the term *hagwon* is used to describe private academies intended to improve the school grades of its students and increase their chances of passing university admission exams. *Hagwon* sessions are held usually in the afternoons and evenings after students finish their school classes. In 2010, a court in Seoul decided that it was necessary to limit the hours of teaching in these academies, setting a uniform closing time at 10 p.m. The court's justified this measure on the basis of ensuring that schoolchildren received enough time to sleep and regenerate. Together with continuous testing, the extremely demanding university admission standards mean that parents invest enormous amounts of money into additional activities to ensure that their children have a relatively better chance when competing against others. Consequently, for eleven months of the year, Korean children often spend 16 hours a day learning in the hope of being accepted to one of the three most prestigious universities in the country. This has a clear cost: the extreme pressure placed on teenagers and the stress resulting from widespread competition has been advanced as the main reason why South Korea has the highest suicide rate for children between the ages of 10 and 19.

The case of Korea is illustrative of the potential consequences of an education system primarily based on competition. Under these conditions, acquiring knowledge and skills is motivated by the desire to gain a competitive advantage over others. As a result, mastery of knowledge and skill is still not enough: the child must be better than others. After all, seven candidates compete for a single place at a Korean university, and a significant amount of time is spent studying in order to defeat the six other candidates. As a Korean teacher noted, "I suggest to [my students] that they should quit hagwons and focus on school…But their parents get very nervous when they don't take classes at night. They know other students are taking classes. They have to compete with each other" (Ripley, 2011). According to *Time* magazine, approximately three quarters of students in Korea attended additional classes in 2010, with the number of people conducting classes in *hagwons* exceeding the number of schoolteachers in the country. In comparison, in Finland—a country that regularly performs better than South Korea in tests assessing children's competencies—only 13% of students participate in additional classes. As such, the Korean case shows that there is no such thing as a sufficient amount of knowledge and skills that children should acquire. That is to say, there is no specific goal, standard, or point at which we can say, "Yes, I have achieved what I had to achieve." Rather, the attainment of knowledge and skills is measured according to whether a child knows or can do more than their peers. In this approach, the fundamental question asks: is the score of my test higher than those obtained by others? Consequently, questions about the happiness of children or the essence of childhood have long ceased to be important.

"I invest in my children. Do you?": Pressure on parents

In *Tale of an Anti-Soccer Mom* (2012), *Huffington Post* contributor, Robin O'Bryant described her feelings of guilt regarding how she raised her children—a sentiment evoked by the peer-pressure of other mothers. Describing a typical interaction, O'Bryant wrote:

> "Hey Robin!" Tired Mommy says.
> "Hey! How are you? Where are the rest of your kids?" I ask.
> "Oh, soccer practice, gotta be back at the field in a few minutes. Then pick Princess up from dance. Then we have art tomorrow, and karate. And Boy Scouts. And piano lessons…and on and on and on it goes. I usually walk away from these conversations feeling guilty. Thoughts race through my head. My kids don't do enough."

Investing in the development of a child has acquired the characteristics of revealed truth—an assumed practice that has become a social criterion for distinguishing between "good" and "bad" parents. O'Bryant's discomfort is a common. Doubts emerge at every turn: am I doing enough for my child to give them a good future? Am I putting enough effort into their physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development? Finally, the question arises: is my child keeping up with others?

An online forum on the topic of investing in the future of children evoked the following comment:

> I have two children, a daughter of 4 and a son of 5 years; they both go to kindergarten. I have not decided to take any extra classes because children are just children, they should spend as much time in the air as possible without learning English, French, tennis, etc. And here I have a problem. My family is stigmatizing me…maybe I should send my children for some extra classes, but I feel reluctant…I would like to sit at home, spend time with my husband and children talking, having fun, playing games together, reading books, going out. My sister-in-law enrolled her children in all classes. Her daughter, barely a year older than mine, on Mondays and Thursdays, has swimming lessons, on Tuesdays and Fridays, English, horse-riding on Wednesday, and art classes and tennis on Saturday. My own sister has enrolled her children in two languages classes because [of the importance of] investing in the future…From the family members I still hear that I am depriving my children of chances for a decent future (Krycha z koziel wolki, online comment, 2009).

Such an admission is illustrative of the external pressure felt by many parents. Both these mothers—O'Bryant and the user, Krycha z koziel wolki—describe their experiences of uncertainty regarding their parenting and the overwhelmingly heavy external pressure regarding their choices for their children. Of course, both

women also continued to raise their children in the way they found appropriate in spite of this pressure, but the guilt and feeling of stigma is noteworthy.

In her article, O'Bryant describes the typical American "soccer mom"—also known as the Canadian "hockey mom," and more recently as the overbearing "helicopter mom."[2] These typically young or middle-aged mothers are kept busy by their duties of maintaining the household and taking care of their children, with the "soccer mom" always placing the best interests of her children at the forefront. While some might celebrate this devotion, these soccer and helicopter parents have increasingly been criticized for being overbearing and forcing their children to participate in too many classes and activities. Critics believe that such parenting and the overwhelming emphasis on securing future prospects actually reduces the period of childhood, depriving them of the opportunity to simply be children. As a guest user commented on a forum discussing this issue: "Mob does not understand, at the most afterwards, they will make their children admire those who develop talents, and after watching these others on television, wash the dishes" (Gość, online comment, 2016).

The pressure exerted on parents starts in the first months of their child's life. An online forum user noted that she was asked how her going to work might affect the development of her child, noting:

> The worst thing for me is the feeling of guilt—on the one hand I cannot imagine staying at home and being an exemplary housewife, wife, mother. I just have to work because it gives me a sense of worth, but on the other hand, I feel sorry for leaving a child and in such moments, I think about myself that I am a nasty woman (BellaM, online comment, 2010).

Previous research has partially confirmed that the employment of mothers can affect the development of their children. Children whose mothers worked soon after childbirth were shown to achieve worse results in tests measuring cognitive skills (Bernal, 2008; Brooks-Gunn, Han, & Waldfogel, 2002). However, numerous other studies have indicated that mothers working during the first years of a child's life does not increase the likelihood of risky behavior—such as drinking, drug use, or a tendency toward vandalism—in adolescence. Moreover, this negative impact is predominantly observed in cases where mothers returned to work during the very early period of childhood—that is, before the child is a year old (Baum II, 2003)—and when she works fulltime (over 30 hours a week) (Brooks-Gunn et

[2] The term "soccer mom" originates from suburban mothers who ferry their children to various extracurricular activities, notably soccer, which is popular with younger children in the US, and hockey in Canada. The more recent "helicopter parent" refers to parents who pay particularly close attention to their children's education and extracurricular activities.

al., 2002; Hill, Waldfogel, Brooks-Gunn, & Han, 2005). At the same time, this negative effect was observed in cases of mothers with a higher education and thus those with the greatest development potential (Gregg, Washbrook, Propper, & Burgess, 2005). As such, children may not be able to use their full potential, thereby threatening their development. The situation is different in case of mothers from the most disadvantaged social groups, with their employment shown to have a positive impact on the development of their children's cognitive skills (Ruhm, 2008). This is because the earnings of these mothers often significantly improve the material situation of the family, while reducing the stress associated with the difficulties of satisfying material needs. An additional explanation is the fact that the child uses the external forms of high-quality care to a greater extent, stimulating their development.

Conclusion

Often considered insane by his contemporaries and a martial genius by historians, Alexander the Great fulfilled his ambitions for power. However, according to Russell (2006), he was unable to fulfill his dreams because he raised his expectations every time he managed to achieve what he wanted. When it became clear that he was the greatest conqueror in the history, Alexander proclaimed himself god. But was he happy? His drunkenness, attacks of rage, impulsive nature, and eventual megalomania suggest that he was not. Alexander also constantly moved the goalposts of his ambitions. In contrast, the goals and aspirations of most children are determined by parents, both their own and those of other children.

The history of the last two centuries is marked by profound changes in the thinking about children and their value. Children are no longer considered in terms of their economic utility, but valuable in their own right. Childhood has been extended and has been recognized as a highly significant period of life due to the influence of psychology and economics. Acquiring specific social, cognitive, and emotional skills facilitates learning and makes it more effective in adulthood. At the same time, children who manage to acquire specific knowledge and skills gain self-confidence, thereby reinforcing their motivation to make further efforts for their own development. In this context, it is hardly surprising that investment in children is considered to be vital. However, as this chapter has discussed, the adoption of an investment perspective has particular consequences. Notably, it treats childhood as a period that is less important in itself and subordinate to ensuring happiness in adulthood. Rousseau wrote, "Nature wants children to be children before being men. If we want to pervert this order, we shall produce precocious fruits which will be immature and insipid and will not be long in rotting" (Rousseau, 2011, p. 90). Childhood should not be treated as an inferior to adulthood

or a period valued only for its usefulness to adulthood, particularly insofar as this can result in developing some skills at the cost of others. In other words, the investment approach poses the danger of prioritizing knowledge and skills useful in school and at work, while other, soft skills—such as the arts—are dismissed as irrelevant. Moreover, acquiring knowledge should be an aspect of holistic human development and it becomes only a necessity, a pragmatic need, for which there is a promise of a good life. The investment approach also contains an element of competition, in which winner takes everything. However, even children perfectly equipped to deal with adult life are not necessarily happy adults.

Chapter 2

Boredom: The boredom of domesticity

> *The basic reason why it's so hard to get lucky is that the universe has not been designed for the convenience of human beings.*
>
> Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow*

> *You need them to do something useful and challenge them. They need someone to look after.*
>
> Aldous Huxley, *Island*

Russell (2006) believed that striving to be aroused, delighted or excited was deeply rooted in humans. As such, boredom is something that distinguishes us from other species. After all, only a being who does not want to be bored can feel boredom. According to Russell, boredom resulted from the invention of agriculture, which deprived humans—especially men—the pleasure and excitement of hunting every day. The transition from hunting to farming became a source of boredom of which people were previously ignorant. Russell (2006) describes boredom in vivid detail: "In old days, after supper, when the wife and daughters had cleared away the things, everybody sat round and had what was called 'a happy family time'. This meant that paterfamilias went to sleep, his wife knitted, and the daughters wished they were dead or at Timbuktu." Echoing this sentiment, the psychologist and philosopher Erich Fromm (2016) wrote: "Chronic boredom—compensated or uncompensated—constitutes one of the major psychopathological phenomena in contemporary technetronic society, although it is only recently that it has found some recognition" (2016, p. 271).

Fear of boredom

Although people today do not get bored like those in the past, they appear to be much more afraid of boredom. Evidence that boredom was not as overwhelming

in the past as it is today is reflected in the changing use of the term "boredom." Before the eighteenth century, the concept of boredom—an unpleasant emotional state—was generally unknown in Europe (Bizior-Dombrowska, 2010). In English, the term "boredom" only became popular in the nineteenth century (Stearns, 2003). The term has since come to express something greater: the realization that bored people are not doing something that pleases them, and that doing something that we enjoy is appropriate and desirable. Finding sources of excitement has become increasingly intense. Boredom, as Russell (2006) emphasized, is the unfulfilled desire for events—not necessarily pleasant ones—that will allow us to distinguish one day from another. People are looking for a change and new things in order to not always experience the same thing repeatedly, as if stuck in a loop.

Of course, boredom is unavoidable to some extent. As Russell (2006) noted, "All great books contain boring portions, and all great lives have contained uninteresting stretches." However, people can avoid boredom. Bored individuals lack of the energy, interest, or patience to devote their attention to their activities or duties. The key factor here is that boredom is rooted in a lack of interest. The fatigue felt in boredom does not result from a lack of energy, but from the inability to use or focus that energy appropriately. Essentially, boredom is a mental rather than physical state. Someone who has devoted themselves to solving a difficult but addictive task for a long period of time can be mentally exhausted but not bored. In some respects, boredom is a kind of conflict between the desire to continue a certain activity and to stop it. Bored people lack internal motivation and experience monotony. In this case, an escape—not always conscious—constitutes a shift of their attention to something else, either physical or mental (for example daydreaming).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Tsuru Arai—the first Japanese woman to earn a Ph.D.—conducted an experiment on mental fatigue in which she practiced mentally multiplying two four-digit numbers every day over the course of several months. She then subjected herself to an examination: performing mental multiplication for 12 hours each day over a period of four consecutive days. Arai noted that the multiplication became more difficult with each passing day. In 1946, the experiment was repeated on three students with similar results, the participants noting that repeating the same practice for many hours each day was boring. Indeed, one of the participants stated that she would not repeat this four-day challenge even if she was paid US$ 10,000 (Huxtable, White, & McCartor, 1946, cited in Kurzban, Duckworth, Kable, & Myers, 2013).

People evaluate boredom as an unpleasant emotional experience—although not as unpleasant as anger, sadness, or frustration. When an individual feels bored, they tend to feel an overwhelming lack of interest in the activity they are doing, requiring a conscious effort and greater energy to focus on the task at hand. Since we evaluate our own situations, boredom—as a measure of a lack of stimulation—is highly subjective and varies from one individual to another. The level of

intensity and the types of stimuli needed to feel interest differs across individuals. Moreover, both the level and type of factors affecting our interests change with age.

Russell (2006) noted that boredom, as something that affects our behavior, has been given less attention than it deserves. However, boredom has long bored scientists. Reviewing the literature devoted to boredom, Smith (1981) noted the paucity of studies on the subject—with less than one article published on an annual basis. An academic interest in boredom emerged with the observation that a bored employee is less productive and more likely to make mistakes. Scholars examined those working on the assembly line, as well drivers and security personnel. Costs were counted and solutions sought. Researchers were sent to offices, factories, stores, and lecture halls. However, they were disinclined to look at households, at mothers dealing with children, or those performing domestic duties. The male dominated and economically valuable workplace came first.

Sources of boredom

As early as 1926, Davis published an article on boredom in the *British Medical Journal* suggesting that state resulted from repetition, fatigue, depression, and a sense of compulsion, as well as that it might be countered by daydreaming. Boredom is an emotional reaction to an environment that does not change or which changes in a repetitive and highly predictable manner (Davis, Shackleton, & Parasuraman, 1983, p. 1). Boredom is caused by something repetitive, monotonous, predictable, too well known. It is also caused by the lack of a possibility of "escaping" from that which is unchangeable. This is aptly illustrated by studies on prisoners and animals kept in captivity (Meagher & Mason, 2012).

The source of boredom is the performance of activities that provide extremely low stimuli to an individual's brain, particularly those that are highly repetitive and monotonous. As noted, what people find boring differs from one individual to another. Fromm (2016) argues that there are three types of people: those capable of creative responses to stimuli, those in need of constantly changing "flat" stimuli, and those who do not even try achieving excitement. It is important to note that the perceived monotony of the performed activity is subjective. What constitutes a source of excitement for some can be boring to others. For example, watching a basketball game evokes emotions in those who are emotionally involved—such as the supporters of one of the teams—and enjoyed by those who can appreciate the nuances and charm of the game. Those who have no interest in the game will find the same scene boring. The same applies to an individual's performance of unpaid work. It is worth nothing that even if an individual enjoys doing something and does it often or for a long period of time, it can become less enjoyable and increasingly boring. Consequently, boredom is often indicated in the context of

people working on assembly lines, teachers who have to repeat the same lecture, or when individuals have to listen to people who always talk about themselves.

Harris and Segal (1985) examined soldiers stationed on a peacekeeping mission on the Sinai Peninsula. Marines on a peacekeeping mission in a distant land may not be the most obvious subject of boredom. However, while many soldiers claimed significant interest in their activities and a high degree of productivity, others claimed to experience boredom almost immediately after arriving on the peninsula. Different experiences resulted despite their identical environmental conditions. As such, boredom is not simply determined by circumstances or individuals. Although young people, extroverts, those with high mental potential and skills, those prone to seeking excitement or novelty, and those who are pathologically bored experience boredom more often, the state emerged from a combination of internal and external factors. That is, boredom emerges from individual features, preferences, attitudes, knowledge, and skills on the one hand, and factors like repetition, monotony, and level of difficulty on the other.

Some have admitted finding parenthood boring. As one parent noted, "I like to play with my son, but pretending to be a teddy bear for half a day or arranging the same puzzle for the hundredth time sometimes surpasses me" (Wioleta, online comment, 2018). Another admitted, "You may try walking her. Then rocking her. Then bouncing her. Then putting her in the swing thing. Then talking to her. Then singing to her. Then putting her skin-to-skin on your chest…You do this 24 hours a day. For months. Maybe years!" (Lawall, online comment, 2018). Even tasks once or sometimes found enjoyable became tedious to some parents due to repetition. As one user admitted on an Internet forum, "Walking with a child in a pram is for me the most boring act associated with [parenthood]—I hated it" (Inceni, online comment, 2014). Although, she later noted, at least it offered some reprieve from other aspects of parenthood: "I really liked walking with a child…because it was a rest from moaning and crying at home, because the child slept" (Inceni, online comment, 2014). As such, it is worth noting that while a specific activity—such as walking—may not be exciting in itself, it can become so when it is accompanied by something desirable, such as a break in monotony.

Boredom often depends on our level of knowledge and competence, although sometimes it arises in activities in which we have no interest but no motivation to change. As one user commented online, "[although] I can, I hate [cooking] because for me it is boring and a waste of time" (zauważyłam ze dla niektórych, online comment, 2010). Boredom is often the result of not using one's potential, such as by doing nothing in particular or performing tasks that are very easy. Boredom can also be caused by difficult tasks with which we attempt to cope unsuccessfully. When we cannot understand something, interest in this activity quickly decreases. At the same time, the source of non-pathological boredom is often rooted in the need to perform tasks that we do not wish to do and refrain from those that we do.

These dynamics have been reflected in the comments of parents who find raising children boring. As one online user commented, "I cannot find joy in playing with children. It bores me mercilessly. How do you do it? Do you pretend you are really enjoying the same puzzles ten times or playing a bear and a doll?" (Sosrodzice, online comment, 2018). As noted, boredom also arises when people do not utilize their skills, do something requiring only a low level of attention, or when devote their attention to something that happens only rarely. This is often reflected in the accounts of bored parents. Indeed, one parent commented, "I do not know what to do with an infant for more than 20 minutes, and especially how to devote full attention to it for such a time…personally I was dying of boredom in the company of a tiny child and it tired me much more than any job" (Peter Wimsey, online comment, 2017). Synonyms of boredom include apathy and lethargy, which have negative associations, including the feeling of time slowing down. In this regard, a parent noted of the time spent with their young child:

> Our play is about hitting everything around with the rubber hammer, or he walks around me and I make sure that we both survive. When I play with him in his playpen, I often realize that I hang motionless with my eyes staring blankly at the distance for long minutes (Driving nuts, online comment, 2017).

The consequences of boredom

Boredom—that is, an unmet desire to perform a satisfying activity—is often the reason behind people's complaints. Indeed, it is estimated that 18%–50% of people living in rich countries frequently feel bored. As noted earlier, philosophers and psychologists often indicate that humans are active, goal-oriented beings. However, having a goal does not prevent boredom (Millgram, 2004). Even if the purpose of cleaning is the resulting clean house, and the purpose of playing with blocks is spending time with one's child, an individual can still feel bored performing these activities. As a parent commented online, "I'm bored too…I cleaned up (how much can be cleaned when nobody is messing around), I baked cake, I did shopping, I read a bit, my friend came for coffee but she already left" (Nienia, online comment, 2009).

Boredom had been found to be strongly related to a lack of sense of direction, depression, and anxiety (Muhammad et al., 2012). Like pain, boredom can draw an individual's awareness to the fact that they are in a disadvantageous situation. People feel helpless, their thoughts wander, and even their perception of time can change. When bored, individuals tend to regard what they do as pointless (van Tilburg & Igou, 2012). This sentiment is evidenced in the comments of

parents—one online user commenting: "Now the baby is sleeping, the washing machine is finished, I'm in a tracksuit, *The Millionaires* are on TV, just like in some bad Brazilian soap opera" (Mandolin, online comment, 2009).

As such, boredom can have a negative impact on people's physical and mental health. Indeed, it has been shown to increase people's propensity to eat unhealthy food, stimulate impulsive shopping, or other procrastination mechanisms (such as listening to music). Boredom also affects our decisions. Recent studies have provided evidence of a nervous mechanism that motivates us to avoid boredom (Dal Mas & Wittmann, 2017). Moreover, although there is no conclusive evidence, it has been widely observed that performing monotonous tasks increases stress, particularly when they need of continuous attention (Thackray, 1981). In other words, performing a repetitive task that still requires a high degree of concentration induces a high degree of stress or tension.

The boredom of domesticity

Those who perform domestic duties and take care of a child perform specific tasks on a daily basis—often operating in a highly predictable and arranged environment in which challenges are rare. All people seek to avoid a lack of stimulation. Indeed, a scientific experiment found that participants preferred experiencing an unpleasant electric shock rather than being left with only their own thoughts for stimulation for a period of 15 minutes (Wilson et al., 2014). Interestingly, in a previous study, these same participants had claimed they were prepared to pay to not experience an electric shock. Subsequent experiments have similarly demonstrated that people are willing to inflict pain in order to avoid boredom. In one such study, participants watching a monotonous or "boring" film were more likely to inflict pain on themselves via electric shock than those watching a sad or emotionally neutral movie (Nederkoorn, Vancleef, Wilkenhöner, Claes, & Havermans, 2016). Such results do not indicate that people like to inflict pain on themselves, but that it became a desirable means of breaking the monotony and thus providing stimulation. Other studies have shown that we are willing to pay to avoid boring tasks, and that the anticipation of boredom makes us willing to reach deeper into our wallets (Dal Mas & Wittmann, 2017). Boredom increases our motivation to provide both positive (for example, pleasure from eating chocolate) and negative (for example, pain from electric shock) stimuli (Havermans, Vancleef, Kalamatianos, & Nederkoorn, 2015).

Neither men nor women find routine housework pleasant. Although utilizing an unrepresentative sample, a study conducted by a top global company found that the most disliked household chores were cleaning the bathroom, washing dishes, laundry, washing the floor, vacuuming, removing rubbish, and ironing (sendwork,com,

online comment, 2018). Coltrane (2000) observes that the most boring activities are those that take most time, such as preparing food, cleaning the house, shopping for food and everyday necessities, washing dishes and cleaning after meals, as well as the washing and ironing of clothing. Such repetitive tasks are not only time intensive, but also have to be done on a regular basis and can seldom be postponed (Coltrane, 2000). Consequently, housework is often associated with terms like repetitive, mundane, burdensome, and boring. While some do derive satisfaction from performing household chores, the majority of people try to avoid them (Milkie, Bianchi, Mattingly, & Robinson, 2002). In this context, the tasks over which we have control and can approach with greater flexibly are more satisfying.

Men generally perform fewer household or domestic tasks than women. Indeed, domestic chores—including cleaning, cooking, and grocery shopping—are understood as "traditionally feminine." However, this is slowly changing. Indeed, a growing amount of research is demonstrating that contemporary men are more involved in domestic work than their fathers. Of course, this is tempered by the fact that men still tend to select activities with the potential to give them more satisfaction. For instance, a study conducted in the Netherlands by Van Berkel and De Graaf (1999) indicates that when men are involved in housework they predominantly do the shopping or cooking and avoid unattractive tasks like cleaning or washing.

Indeed, cooking appears to be the area of housework that most often taken over by men. For example, contemporary British men spend more than 30 minutes a day in the kitchen—more than double 12 minutes spent by men in 1961 (Wallop, 2009). Researchers have also noted that men's cooking seldom exhibits the elements of boring, routine work. It is also presented as a kind of entertaining, creative activity characterizing a modern lifestyle: the ability to cook in one's free time, away from economic, time, and physical limitations is cast as a "masculine" form of cooking that differs from "feminine" cooking (Hollows, 2003). Meanwhile, women often remain responsible for the preparation of daily meals, while men tend to cook more occasionally—such as on weekends, at barbecue, or on special occasions (Beagan, Chapman, D'Sylva, & Bassett, 2008). As one women commented online, "[my husband] cooks and enjoys it, but less often than me, usually on weekends" (alicja, online comment, 2018). Another similarly commented that, "My husband cooks well but rarely because he is very busy, he usually cooks on Saturday or Sunday" (mika_152, online comment, 2013).

Women are often perceived as responsible for the health and well-being of the family, especially the children, and thus try to meet external standards regarding the quality and quantity of meals (Beagan et al., 2008). A woman is more likely to experience the tension between cooking for pleasure and adapting to the expectations of family members and their health or personal requirements. Indeed, women often lack the ability to decide what, when and how to cook. Rather, they plan and prepare food in accordance with the preferences and needs of their children

and partners, as well as their plans of the day—such as when they return from school or work (Short, 2006).

Of course, many women enjoy cooking, and draw immense satisfaction from being able to feed and look after their families. As one online user commented, "I love to cook and if there is anyone to eat it and anyone to look after my children, I could spend half a day in the kitchen" (~lipunia, online comment, 2013). However, combining cooking and childcare is difficult. While cooking can be one of the most interesting household tasks, it is exhausting when we are pressured by time (Short, 2006) or the need to meet the expectations of others. Research shows that men enjoy cooking more often because they do not have to perform other tasks—like babysitting and cleaning—at the same time, have more control over when and how they cook, and are more focused on entertaining or relaxing than satisfying the needs of others (Szabo, 2013).

Since it is unpleasant, boredom can motivate other behavior or activities aimed at reducing—that is, we seek challenges, stimulation, and reasons to be involved. In 1997, Phil Shaw, a resident of Leicester, decided to combine an "I have to" activity—ironing— with the "I want to" activity of rock climbing to produce a competitive sport called "extreme ironing." An association responsible for setting the rules of the new sport was established, and the first official world championship took place in Munich, Germany, in 2002. In 2003, John Roberts and Ben Gibbons successfully ironed on the slopes of Mount Everest, some 5,440 meters above sea level (BBC, 2003). An extreme ironing World Cup saw the task performed in a broken car, in a rushing river, and even under water. The Internet offers an array of pictures of so-called "iron-men" ironing on monuments, bridges, and even cows (BBC, 2002). Some even ran a marathon with an ironing board and iron. Boredom motivates us to seek out new avenues of activity that provide a of sense and purpose (Fahlman, Mercer, Gaskovski, Eastwood, & Eastwood, 2009). This is because boredom evokes a sense that what we are doing is pointless, thereby prompting us to regain a sense of meaning. Some philosophers, such as Fromm (2016), have argued that avoiding boredom constitutes an attempt to escape the unpleasant impression of the senselessness of our own actions. Consequently, a task deemed significant is seldom found boring.

The boredom of childcare?

Stearns (2003) argues that boredom was initially associated with children who grew frustrated and restless performing activities deemed important and desirable by adults. However, contemporary parents often indicate that their children are the source of their boredom. This is illustrated by the following comments by parents on online forums:

> I get bored with these plays. I try to pretend to be interested, but I am not doing well ;) Once she grows up, I will have to try a little more (Magda M, online comment, 2016).
> I see that I'm not alone: oh, nothing to worry about. The natural course of things is that an activity repeated 100 times may get boring…No matter how much you love your children and love to spend time with them (Anastasia, online comment, Szczeslive, 2016).
> I love my five-year-old girl, but when we have to play together, she makes up scenarios and I do not like it either…And what a sea of patience you must have when learning the numbers and playing cards, or once you count the dots on the dice for the hundredth time when we play board games (Pat, online comment, Szczeslive, 2016).

The quotes above are only a snippet of what mothers write about on Internet forums. They often describe being depressed due to routine fatigue, guilt, low self-esteem, and the conviction that being bored when spending time with their child is unconscionable. It is as if an eleventh commandment states: "do not entertain the thought that being with a child is boring." It does not matter if you are reading *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (1969) for the eighteenth time in a row, or have been playing shopkeeper all morning or waiting for your 3-year-old child to finish their breakfast: parents are expected to enjoy and appreciate every moment in their child's lives. This can give rise to frustration. As one parent bemoaned online: "Don't get me wrong—I love 4-week-old…and he's terribly cute, but… all-day breastfeeding, burping and nappy-changing is BORING, BORING, BORING. I have given birth to a poo-making machine" (beanlet, 2010).

In studies on boredom, respondents are usually asked whether they feel as if they do not know what to do with their time (van Tilburg & Igou, 2012). Such questions are probably ill-suited to parents. However, other statements are applicable to parents, including: "I cannot stop thinking about things that I would rather do," "That's why I devote time now has no major purpose," "I feel like doing something completely different," "I feel like doing something purposeful," and "I want to change what I'm doing to something more challenging, exiting." Although there are no exact estimates, boredom during housework and childcare seems to be quite common. While mothers often indicate that fulfilling certain duties, such as laundry or cleaning, does not present a problem for them, they often feel as though they are done as a routine and little to no enjoyment. However, most find it difficult to admit that they experience boredom when playing with their child or children—it is easier to describe chores like ironing, cleaning, and peeling potatoes as boring than it is childcare.

Speaking of their child with anything other than joy is perceived as shameful. Parents are often afraid to admit that they do not enjoy playing "blind man's bluff" or "where is a baby," as if this is an admission of insufficient love for their child. This is partly due to the widespread belief that a parent's negative emotions—conscious and unconscious—are harmful for the child. As a result, no matter how

many hours you spend playing shop or reading the same bedtime story, the norm is to call it "precious time with the child" and "great fun." Parents are often told to "Enjoy it, they grow up so fast." As one mother explained,

> Everyone tells you that this is the "precious infant time" and, "She doesn't stay small forever." I get it. When I go back to work in a couple of months, I'm going to hate current me. I'm going to want to punch current me in the face. But, OH MY GOD, am I bored (Lawall, 2018).

The scale of this sentiment is reflected by the large quantity of online forums, blogs, and websites offering tips on how to deal with boredom and platforms to commiserate. These contain comments like the following:

> Oh, you know how you spend most of the day with the young and have only yourself to entertain, it's no wonder you have enough. I think it affects us all. And the guys who have a stepping stone in the form of work return to their little pets and can fully reset themselves on the carpet reminding themselves of the carefree times of their childhood :) (Monia, online comment, 2016).
>
> And as for my husband, I have the same impression as you, that once he gets into playing with children, it's fun for him…But they are supposedly big children;) (AnZ, online comment, 2016).

Instead of conclusion

After replacing his partner in the day-to-day care of his child, Guardian writer, Stewart Heritage, wrote that, "A week of this and I would be a permanently undressed alcoholic who subsisted on a diet of chips and biscuits, but my wife has kept it together for months. Amazing!" This apparent awe of his partner was rooted in her ability to deal with boredom, Heritage admitting, "I love my son but, wow, babies are boring. How does my wife do it?" (Heritage, 2015).

Chapter 3

Fatigue: Double shift

> *For the gods keep hidden from men the means of life. Else you would easily do work enough in a day to supply you for a full year even without working; soon would you put away your rudder over the smoke, and the fields worked by ox and sturdy mule would run to waste. But Zeus in the anger of his heart hid it, because Prometheus the crafty deceived him; therefore he planned sorrow and mischief against men.*
>
> Hesiod, *Works and Days*

> *The principle of equality does not exist in any human society or animal—every organic being has its own distinctiveness; at every step we find superiority and inferiority.*
>
> Zofia Emilia Daszyńska Golińska, *Woman's question and marriage* (April 4, 1924)

On the subject of fatigue, Russell (2006, p. 69) observed that, "Purely physical fatigue, provided it is not excessive, tends if anything to be a cause of happiness; it leads to sound sleep and a good appetite, and gives zest to the pleasures that are possible on holidays. But when it is excessive it becomes a very grave evil." In highly developed countries, mental fatigue constitutes the most troublesome type of fatigue—predominantly affecting the wealthy, rather than blue- and white-collar workers. When excluding the wealthy, fatigue is most commonly associated with strenuous work. People worry about what they do. If this is the case, a change in their life philosophy and mental discipline can lessen such fatigue. Meanwhile, as Russell (2006) noted, the majority of people do not control their thoughts very effectively. For instance, men take their work home, where they spend hours reflecting on problems they were unable to solve during the day. Consequently, many men suffer from insomnia and do not rest and recover well enough to generate the fresh perspective necessary for problem solving (Russell, 2006, p. 76). As such, Russell (2006) cautions us to recognize that our actions are seldom as important

as we think, and that our successes and failures ultimately do not matter. Indeed, he noted, "If were a medical man, I should prescribe a holiday to any patient who considered his work important" (2006, p. 75). Of course, Russell's advice is not particularly helpful to those living in economically developed countries. The philosopher seeming to think that people do not want to stop working and consider their situation because there would be nothing to distract their thoughts from the unhappiness of our lives if they did so.

Nonetheless, Russell (2006) made an interesting observation about the relationship between the way in which we think and feel at our work and fatigue. In his opinion, anyone who does unemotional intellectual work—such as mathematical calculation—is able to sleep without difficulty at the end of the day, such rest protecting them from fatigue. Russell supports this argument with reference to academic research, noting that carefully collected statistical data reveal that performing a certain activity for a sufficiently long time will invariably result in tiredness. (Here is he slyly notes that this academic discovery comes as no surprise to anyone.) As a matter of common sense, Russell emphasizes that even significant worries do not last forever. Problems that seem to permanently overshadow our happiness will pass in time. Nonetheless, worrying is an expression of fear, and every form of fear results in fatigue. In this regard, Russell noted:

> One of the worst features of nervous fatigue is that it acts as a sort of screen between a man and the outside world. Impressions reach him, as it were, muffled and muted; he no longer notices people except to be irritated by small tricks or mannerisms; he derives no pleasure from his meals or from the sunshine, but tends to become tensely concentrated upon a few objects and indifferent to all the rest (Russell, 2006, p. 81).

To sum up Russell's view, we can say that fatigue is a source of unhappiness rooted in having to do too much work, as well as the associated negative physical and mental effects. Moreover, unlike our ancestors, we often feel tiredness produced not just by physical work, but mental work as well.

The division of household labor

Writing about the feminine issues in Poland, Zofia Daszyńska-Golińska (1924) observed that, "in terms of earnings, women's life itself shaped the feminine matter. Capitalism with its technique and division of labor, without looking at any issues, massively draws women into factory work." However, emphasis was placed elsewhere in the second half of the twentieth century, with many observers pointing to a disturbing phenomenon: paid work has not liberated women from having to undertake the leading role in housework. There is a plethora of descriptions for the

proscribed role of women, including housewife, domestic goddess, and angel of the house. It was assigned to her a servant role and it was very early. Indeed, the *Oxford English Dictionary* indicates that the term "handmaid"—a girl who lends her hand to help—was first recorded around 1300, and that the word "handwomen"—an adult maid—was used around 1382. In contrast, the term "handman"—a male servant—only appeared at the end of the fifteenth century, some two hundred years after the word "handmaid".

Household tasks like cleaning, ironing, cooking, and childcare have traditionally been fulfilled by women in their capacity as mother, wife, daughter, sister, and maid. Although the average time spent on these activities has decreased with technological innovation, working women continue to bear the main responsibility for housework and childcare. As a result, Anne Oakely (1976, cited in Hakim, 2010) noted that the British housewife faced an 18-hour day when raising a child under the age of five. With reference to the US context, Arlie Hochschield coined the term "second shift" (or second change) in reference to women's double burden of paid work and unpaid household work (Hochschild & Machung, 2003).

Studies on the family life at the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries reveal a fairly common pattern: despite the continuous increase of professional activity, women remain relatively more burdened by domestic work than men, and are typically left to do the more unpleasant tasks like cleaning and laundry (Baxter, 2002; Bianchi, 2011; Bianchi, Sayer, Milkie, & Robinson, 2012; Bittman, Matheson, & Meagher, 1999; Folbre & Bittman, 2004; Hook, 2017; Kan, Sullivan, & Gershuny, 2011). In developed countries, women spend an average four hours and twenty minutes a day on household work, while men spend two hours and sixteen minutes. This difference is even greater in developing countries, with women spending four and a half hours a day compared to the one hour and twenty minutes spent by men (United Nations, 2015). Since everyday tasks are time consuming, they limit the possibilities of further paid work and rest. Consequently, inequality in the division of household duties can have far-reaching consequences for the economic independence of women and their general well-being.

Sources of inequality

The literature is dominated by three theoretical approaches to explaining differences in the division of housework between partners. The first of these involves the hypothesis of specialization in the household and the availability of time. Becker (1981) believed that if one of the partners in the household have greater opportunities to earn—usually the man—while the other would be more efficient at doing household chores—usually the woman—it would be irrational for the former to do the housework at the expense of performing paid work. The greater

the difference between the wages of partners, the less profitable sharing household chores will be. Hours spent on paid work significantly reduce the ability to engage in daily tasks at home. Thus, in countries where the average wages for women are relatively higher in relation to those of men, couples in which the woman works are more likely to value her job (Fuwa, 2004).

The second theoretical perspective is that of gender ideology and performing gender. According to this approach, marriage, parenthood, and other relationships represent situations in which men and women have the ability to behave in a way that confirms their masculine and feminine identity—that is, to demonstrate the elements of their gender identity (Greenstein, 2000). Performing gender is understood as confirming one's gender identity, and indicates that the division of work in a family is not related solely to skills, time, or talent in performing specific activities. Rather, the decisive factor is whether a given activity is perceived as "masculine" or "feminine." Men avoid doing what is perceived as a task for women in their society, while women will try to confirm their identity by performing "women's" activities and avoiding "masculine" activities.

When choosing gendered behaviors, both men and women try to remain within the framework of what is perceived as masculine and feminine. Since housework is commonly associated with women, they tend to remain responsible for fulfilling such tasks. Coltrane (2000) noted that the acceptance of certain activities as more "feminine" results in women having a more positive attitude toward performing these activities, and a more negative attitude among men. Women's attitudes are strengthened further in everyday life because they do most of the homework (Coltrane, 2000). Thus, the observed differences in the attitudes of women and men are the result of a self-reinforcing process.

Interestingly, research shows that even in single-sex couples, traditionally female tasks were usually attributed to a more feminine partner, while masculine tasks were traditionally attributed to a more masculine partner. For example, two-thirds of homosexual respondents thought that the more "feminine" partner in a homosexual relationship should be responsible for buying vegetables, cooking, cleaning, and laundry. In turn, the more "masculine" partner was assigned the task of taking care of the car and performing work outside (American Sociological Association, 2016). As such, even in pairs in which the biological sex of the partners was the same, gender differences can be used to determine what is right, desirable, or expected in terms of the division of household labor. In other words, information about gender influences our understanding of what people should do.

The third theoretical explanation for the unequal division of housework is rooted in the theory of exchange and relative negotiation power between men and women. In this approach, it is assumed despite valuing household chores, they are not enjoyable to perform. As such, the majority of individuals prefer not to

perform household chores. As such, the negotiating power of the partners dictates the division of responsibilities—the individual with more power or leverage can force the other to do the housework. In this approach, money speaks: in households with two breadwinners, men do less housework than their partners because they earn more (Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer, & Robinson, 2000; Bittman, England, Sayer, Folbre, & Matheson, 2003). Davis and Greenstein (2004) indicate that if wives are less economically dependent on their husbands, the probability that a man will undertake a larger part of the housework increases.

Trends in the division of household labor

Unpaid household work constitutes an extremely valuable source of wellbeing for a family. Indeed, its estimated value ranges from 17% to 31.6% of the entire European Union's GDP, while the value of unpaid childcare ranges between 2.5% and 5.4% (Giannelli, Mangiavacchi, & Piccoli, 2012). However, recent studies have revealed significant changes in both the division and scope of labor. First, the differences between the sexes in the amount of time spent on unpaid work has been systematically decreasing. Historical research indicates that between 1900 and 1965, the number of hours of unpaid work at home by women of a working age decreased by six hours per week, and a further 12 hours between 1965 and 2005. During the same period, men increased their involvement in domestic work by an average of 13 hours (Ramey, 2008). However, it is worth noting that this rate of change differs according to country and period. For instance, in Norway, the difference between the amount of time spent by men and women on unpaid work decreased from 106 to 50 minutes a day between 1990 and 2010. Meanwhile, the difference in the amount of work undertaken by men and women decreased by only ten minutes in the US between 2003 and 2013. Moreover, changes in the relative amount of time spent on household chores differs according to the task itself—while men are more inclined to spend their time shopping, they are rarely involved in cleaning (United Nations, 2015).

Second, the overall amount of time spent on performing housework in pairs is systematically decreasing. Parental care constitutes an exception to this trend, which has actually increased over recent decades. For example, between 2000 and 2010, the average time spent on unpaid housework by women decreased by an average of six hours a week in Spain (Gimenez-Nadal & Sevilla, 2014). In the United States, women reduced the time spent on food preparation by almost two hours a day, while men extended the time by ten minutes, between the mid-1960s and 1990s (Hamermesh, 2007). In Great Britain, there was a five-hour drop in the weekly number of hours of unpaid household work between 1992 and 2004 (Harkness, 2008). This was because women spent less and less time performing

housework. The literature provides two likely explanations for this: the "buying out" hypothesis discussed in the next section, and the use of modern, time-saving household technology.

"Honey, I've bought my time": The buying out hypothesis

Formulated by Robert Torrens (1780–1864) and developed and popularized by David Ricardo (1772–1823), the comparative advantage theory explains why both countries and individuals should benefit from exchange. Ricardo notes that even if we produce some goods ourselves or make certain services cheaper than the market price, this may be less efficient. An individual may be able to perform a task effectively—perhaps even more so than others—but find that paying someone else to perform this task is more efficient based on the notion of the cost of lost benefits. Instead of devoting time to that task, the individual can devote their time to performing well-paid work. Consequently, they will have ensured that the task has been completed and that they have earned enough money to cover, if not exceed the cost of paying someone to undertake the task. The value of the activity undertaken in the time saved by paying someone else to perform certain tasks is not necessarily monetary. For instance, by employing someone to clean up, an individual buys the most valuable resource: time. While an individual can do this work themselves, they can also buy time to enjoy other activities that they value—such as time spent with their family and hobbies.

For a long time, widespread opinion held that technological development would eliminate the need for household labor. However, the number of domestic helpers working in Europe at the beginning of the twenty-first century remains similar to the level recorded at the end of the nineteenth century (Lutz, 2002). Of course, in order to pay someone else to perform such tasks, individuals have to earn relatively more money themselves. As such, it is commonly assumed that "buying out" pertains to the wealthy—to those who can afford to employ others to maintain their gardens, cook, clean, drive, care for their children, and even monitor their diet and fitness. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, having household servants was an expression of bourgeois prestige. Today, the reasons for utilizing outside help in the home are different: families with two working parents and with single parents often need support to cope with their professional and domestic responsibilities. Employing others has ceased to be a privilege and become a necessity.

It is worth noting that, perhaps counterintuitively, those who buy the most time-saving services can actually feel less fortunate. This is because buying services only has a positive impact when it reduces the time-related pressures on an individual and strengthens their sense of control over their own lives. Indeed, many

people are not unhappy because they feel objectively overburdened, but because they feel as if they have no control over their time. Similarly, perceived over reliance on paid services can weaken an individual's sense of control over their lives, making them feel unable to do perform daily tasks.

The increasing entrance of women into the workforce had two important ramifications on their lives. The housework that their mothers performed throughout the day now had to be done within the few hours remaining after they had returned home from the office or factory. The time spent on household chores has become more expensive—both in terms of its monetary value (for example, an alternative to cleaning can include taking overtime or participating in a training course) and non-monetary value (paid work reduced the amount of time that could be spent on desired activities). At the same time, paid work provided women with an independent income. This income is partly spent on purchasing goods and services that substitute for housework performed by women in the past. For instance, the majority of clothes are now bought from stores, rather than being homemade or mended. Women who earn more spend relatively less time for housework. For them, outsourcing housework is not only financially achievable, but also necessary. Essentially, the subjective value of women's time is relatively higher than it was in the past.

Domestic and economic considerations reflect the need to outsource household labor. As noted earlier, it is estimated that even in very rich countries, the value of unpaid household work can constitute between one third and three-quarters of the GDP. In this case, the change of unpaid work into a paid work opens the door for increasing economic growth and revenue. In some countries, such as France, the policy for the development of paid home services has also become a tool for increasing employment (Windebank, 2007). The market has taken over some household tasks more than others. For instance, Bittman and others (1999) show that cooking—one of the most time consuming tasks—is increasingly being outsourced. In 2016, the average American family spent almost half (43%) its income on food in bars, restaurants, fast food outlets, and vending machines (Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), 2017). Saving time and effort related to cooking has also led to the growing popularity of pre-made meals that only require reheating in the microwave or oven. With the inclusion of non-alcoholic beverage, for every US$ 5 Americans spend on meals, three do not require further preparation (BLS, 2017). Historical data reveal a clear trend: in the US, the consumption of food prepared outside the home (for example, in restaurants, fast food outlets, and schools) increased from 18% of all calories consumed in 1977–1978 to 32% at the end of the twentieth century (Guthrie, Biing-Hwan, Frazao, 2002).

Conducted in Australia, the research of Bittman and others (1999) indicates that the scale and trends in housework outsourcing differ from one activity to another, with childcare and food preparation representing the fastest growing

sectors. While the latter leads to the reduction of time spent on housework, the time devoted to children by parents actually increases in terms of active care. The outsourcing of gardening has also increased, albeit to a lesser extent. There is no evidence that the outsourcing of cleaning will increase. Indeed, in the case of laundry, the reverse is happening: washing has become more of a "home" activity than it was before.

To some extent, the outsourcing of household duties is the result of a country's particular social policies, especially in regard to childcare, as well as the care of the sick or elderly. Different countries employ different policies. For example, under France's Chèque Emploi-Service Universel (CESU) program, the state subsidizes the use of paid home services. However, both the number of households that benefited from this program and the extent to which is reduced the pressure on women who used paid domestic help was found to be rather marginal (Windebank, 2007). The probability of household work outsourcing increases with the an individual or family's income. However, as Heisig (2011) notes, it is not enough to look at the amount of income; it is also necessary to look at the cost of hiring paid assistance, which are largely dependent on the structure of remuneration in the labor market. In this context, it seems particularly important to consider the role of cheap labor predominantly provided by immigrant women in highly developed countries (Heisig, 2011).

In addition to considering such outsourcing from the perspective of the "buyer," there is another dimension of buying time that needs to be addressed. Hiring someone to clean or do our laundry usually implies the transferring of this task to a low-paid service contractor. In reality, a woman who buys back the time she would have spent on housework by outsourcing it, typically does so by employing another individual—usually a woman—on the basis of an unfavorable employee contract. In reviewing available studies, Lutz (2002) indicated that at the turn of the century, some 2.4 million people were employed illegally or semi-legally in German households, with one in eight German households paying for household labor. Over 90% of all those working as domestic help are women, mainly from poorer backgrounds or countries, who typically live in households with five or six people in one apartment. Often employed by several households, their duties usually included cleaning, laundry, cooking, childcare, caring for the elderly and sick, as well as helping during family celebrations and corporate events. In comparison to nineteenth century servants, women working as domestic help are older and often married. They also do not work as servants in order to support themselves during the transition between education and marriage, but to meet the material needs of their families (Lutz, 2002). In this case, it is difficult to talk about social solidarity—especially when we ask ourselves who looks after the children of domestic helpers, and whether they can afford to buy back their time.

Washing machine, dishwasher, time: The role of technology

In a relatively short time, household devices have become available to the majority of people in developed countries. In the 1920s, a fridge cost about US$ 250–300 (the equivalent of US$ 1,660 in 1963); just 26 years later, it cost just US$ 170 (Vanek, 1978, cited in Cardia, 2008). The same is true of washing machines, vacuum cleaners, and electric heaters. The vacuum cleaner appeared on the American market in 1913, the washing machine in 1916, refrigerator in 1918, freezer in 1947, and microwave oven in 1973. Nonetheless, despite the huge impact of these appliances on household life, the most significant was tap water. In 1890, only one in four of American households had running water, while only 8% had electricity. By the mid-twentieth century, some 83% of houses had water, while 94% had electricity (Cardia, 2008).

Such household appliances were marketed toward women from the outset. As one 1908 vacuum cleaner advert proclaimed,

> If you are in doubt what to buy for Mother, Wife, Sister, or Friend, remember that a Bissel "Cyco" Ball Bearing Carpet Sweeper never fails to please, and is a constant reminder of the giver for ten years and more. It reduces the labor about 95%, confines all the dust, brightness and preserves the carpets, and will outlast forty brooms (*Success Magazine*, 1908).

The advertisement above is typical of the era. First, it indicates that it will be easier for a woman to perform these duties. Second, the use of technology will make the task itself more pleasant while reducing the amount of time it takes to complete. Certainly, the development of such household technology has reduced the amount of time allocated to household chores.

In her classic article, Joann Vanek (1974) asserted that for almost half a century, women who did not work professionally did not reduce the amount of time they spent on housework. In the period surveyed by the Vanek, a large number of American families moved from the countryside to the city, which resulted in more family members eating outside the home. Moreover, the average number of children per family decreased. At the same time, there was a real "household industrial revolution": electrification, sewerage, and the increasingly widespread use of home appliances. As such, it was to be expected that the time spent on performing domestic duties would decrease. However, for a long time, this was not the case.

This has been termed the "Cowan Paradox" after Ruth Schwartz Cowan (1985), who demonstrated that although modern technology reduces the hardship and nuisance of housework, it does not reduce the time spent on it. While such appliances enable one person to perform tasks that once took several people on their own,

and do so quicker (Ramey, 2008), the frequency of these activities increased in the same period. For example, laundry was a time-consuming and labor-intensive task. Indeed, in the 1860s, Mrs. Ćwierczakiewiczowa (sorry for not Polish reader but this is an original name—P.M.) even propagated a "new, tried and tested way of washing underwear that saves time" comprised of several treatments that had to performed over three days. Similarly, ironing—achieved "with the press from two boards squeezed with screws" or using a box iron—was a tedious and difficult task (Kowecka, 1989).

Technology has changed this significantly, with tasks becoming shorter and less onerous. This begs the question of why the time spent on household chores has not been significantly reduced. A possible explanation lies in the transfer of time between different activities; while the total time devoted to family responsibilities remains unchanged, the proportion of time spent on particular activities has changed. That is, "savings" made in one area—like food preparation—are used up in another, such as shopping or childcare. Another explanation involves a combination of factors, including: increased standards of cleanliness, requiring, for example, more frequent laundry; increased standards of quality, such as meal preparation; the increased awareness of diet and hygiene for individual well-being; the reduced availability of services, thus extending the time spent on transport; as well as the emergence of new forms of housework. Higher standards of hygiene results in, for example, more frequently and better washed clothes. As one of the users of an online forum describes:

> Compared with friends and family, I wash very often, but I guess it cannot be otherwise. In dirty, no one will walk, and segregation will not to skip, thanks to this I do not have damaged clothes, fuzzy sweaters, grey white or faded black, I have a separate washing powder and fabric conditioner for each color, I stick to the recommended temperatures, etc. (kamw1807, online comment, 2010).

If this is the case, then household appliances—such as the washing machine, tumble dryer, lawnmower, and food processor—are used to increase the quality and quantity of household chores and products, rather than shorten the duration required for these tasks.

The amount of time spent on the house and the division of household labor in the family have proven resistant to the impact of new technologies (Bittman, Rice, & Wajcman, 2004). It has also been noted that innovations like the microwave oven and dishwasher do not reduce the amount of time spent on housework in general, or in the amount of time spent on food preparation and cleaning afterwards—at least not for women. Paradoxically, appliances like the dishwasher and freezer have contributed to reducing the time spent by men on household chores, with only the lawn mower resulting in an extension (Bittman et al., 2004). Moreover,

household appliances usually have a gendered association in terms of who uses them. As a result, the purchase of appliances such as a tumble dryer in a family in which the woman is usually responsible for doing the laundry does not lead to changes in the division of tasks.

Who works more, women or men?

Aguiar and Hurst (2007) have investigated how the way in which people used their time changed in the US between 1965 and 2003. They found that a clear increase in the amount of time spent on rest: an average increase of between six and eight a week among men, and between four and eight for women. In the case of men, the observed changes were predominantly due to spending less time on paid work, while women managed to reduce the hours usually spent on housework (as noted, the latter was often achieved through the utilization of paid household help or "buying out" time). If we calculate the observed increase in the amount of rest time as full days and assume 40-hour work week, then the average American had between five and ten weeks more holiday during 2003 than in 1965 (Aguiar & Hurst, 2007).

As noted, women spend more time on unpaid work in the household, while men spend relatively more time on paid work. American Time Use Survey data show that men spend an average of 56 minutes more time at work than women per workday. This is partially due to the fact that women work part time more often than men. However, even among individuals who work full time—that is, those who work 35 hours a week or more—men work longer than women, with men typically working an average of 8.4 hours per day compared to the 7.8 hour workday of most women (BLS, 2017). Similarly, Eurostat data shows that among people employed full-time, the labor week of a man in the European Union was approximately 1.6 hours longer than a that of a woman in 2017 (40.9 and 39.3 hours per week, respectively). This difference is even greater when those who are self-employed are taken into account, with men averaging a 42.2 hour work week, and women one of 39.9 hours. Women in part-time work were found to spend an average of 21 hours a week on paid work, and men 19.6 hours. A comparison between all types of employment in the EU shows that women work an average of 33.7 hours and men an average of 40 hours—a difference of 6 hours per week (Eurostat, 2018).

There is an abundance of scholarship on the gendered differences in work hours, as well as on the varying amounts of time allocated to specific household chores. However, researchers have rarely paid attention to differences in the total amount of working time, both paid and unpaid. In the context of fatigue and gender differences discussed in this chapter, the total amount of working time is paramount—particularly insofar as it determines how much time an individual can

spend resting. Indeed, the amount of rest an individual can enjoy is an important point in the discussion on gender equality. Assessing the fairness of the division of household labor depends upon the perception of the amount of free time enjoyed by an individual and their partner (Nordenmark & Nyman, 2003). Moreover, prolonged periods of fatigue or physical pain are associated with a reduced level of happiness. An individual's emotional state is linked to their physical state: pain, hunger, discomfort, and lack of sleep influence happiness. Research has also demonstrated that work—both paid and unpaid—incurs less affective well-being in individuals than leisure activities or voluntary work (Kahneman & Krueger, 2006; Kahneman, Krueger, Schkade, Schwarz, & Stone, 2004; Krueger, 2008). A study conducted by Whillans, Dunn, Smeets, Bekkers and Norton (2017) aptly illustrates this: each week, study participants were given US$ 40 just before the weekend. In the first week, participants were instructed to buy something material that they desired. The second week, they were instructed to spend the money on something that saves time, such as paying someone else to mow the lawn for them. Examining the emotional state of the study participants, the researchers found that the weekend on which they "bought their time" resulted in reduced stress and greater life satisfaction.

A 2015 UN report notes that women in developed countries spend an average of six hours and 45 minutes on paid and unpaid work each day, while men spend six hours and 12 minutes. With regard to those who work professionally, women work an average of eight hours and nine minutes a day, while men work seven hours and 36 minutes (United Nations, 2015). Thus, there is an average difference of just over half an hour between the sexes in total working time in highly developed countries (United Nations, 2015). Similarly, estimates for 27 developed countries indicate that women work on average 446.4 minutes a day, while men work 422.7 minutes (Burda, Hamermesh, & Weil, 2013). However, there are clear differences between countries. In some countries—including New Zealand, Australia, and Canada—men and women devote the same amount of time to housework and paid work; in others—such as Sweden, the UK, and Norway—men spend more time working than for women (Eurostat, 2006). With regard to the UK, Hakim (2010) has shown that men spend marginally more time on paid and unpaid household chores. It must be noted that while men spend significantly more time performing paid work than women, women often reduce the number of hours spent on paid work after starting a family, particularly after the birth of their first child. Moreover, the birth of a child often prompts men to extend their working hours in order to raise their income. Only childless couples in which both partners work fulltime reflected a greater number of total working hours among women than men. An equal or more balanced workload between men and women, or even tilting the scale on the side of the former, is primarily seen in countries where the roles of both sexes intertwine in the professional and family spheres. In developed, non-Catholic

countries, the workload of women is equal to that of men (Burda et al., 2013). However, these differences persist in societies that continue to adhere to the clear separation of the masculine and feminine spheres (Gauthier & DeGusti, 2012, Gimenez-Nadal & Sevilla, 2014; Monna & Gauthier, 2008).

In addition to changes in the normative sphere, there tends to be a correlation between a reduction of differences between the sexes, reduction of total working time, and an increase in national wealth. Generally speaking, the richer the EU country, the smaller the differences between the sexes (Burda et al., 2013; Michoń, 2015). In contrast, women in poorer European countries spend relatively more time on paid work. For instance, women in countries like Bulgaria, Romania, and Poland typically spend about 40 hours a week on paid and unpaid work, while the majority of women in countries like the Netherlands, UK, and Sweden work part-time (Michoń, 2015). A nation's wealth correlates to the amount of time spent on both paid and unpaid work—as national wealth increases, total work hours decrease while the amount of time for rest increases among both men and women. In the case of men, this typically involves reducing the amount of time spent on paid work; in the case of women, this predominantly involves reducing the amount of time spent on housework (Aguiar & Hurst, 2007; Aguiar, Hurst, & Karabarbounis, 2013).

The perceived fairness of labor division

What are the consequences of the division of household labor? It seems reasonable to expect that an individual who does more work may consider the division unfair, thereby reducing their well-being. Indeed, scholars have provided an abundance of evidence demonstrating that perceived inequality has a negative impact on individuals. For instance, psychologists have shown that the evolution of cooperation has made it important that individuals evaluate the effort they make and reward they receive, as well as the effort and reward of others. Conducting an experiment with capuchin monkeys, Brosnan and De Waal (2003) demonstrated that unequal treatment leads to negative reactions from the injured individual. In this experiment, two capuchin monkeys received a reward for completing the simple task of returning the stone thrown into their cage by the researchers. At the beginning, each monkey received a slice of cucumber in exchange for the stone, and were thus both equally involved in the game. However, when one of them received grapes—a delicacy—instead of cucumber, the other refused to cooperate, even throwing the cucumber slice back at the researchers in protest. As such, the cucumber—once an acceptable reward for completing the task—was no longer accepted as sufficient reward. The study thus demonstrates a greater concern for being treated equally than satisfaction with the reward itself.

For more than one hundred thousand years before the paleolithic revolution—that is, the advent of agriculture—our ancestors belonged to relatively small groups of hunter gatherers. Small and without accumulated material goods, pre-agricultural societies were fairly egalitarian communities. In such communities, sharing with others was crucial for survival. The rules were very clear: today, I will share with you; tomorrow, you will share with me. People remembered who received what and how much effort they put in order to achieve common goals. They also developed an aversion toward those who, in their opinion, received more than they deserved.

According to the theory of equity, we feel uncomfortable when we experience or notice inequality between ourselves and others (Adams, 1963). Perceived inequity occurs when we perceive ourselves as receiving less (or more) than what we give. In marriage, for instance, if one partner benefits more from the relationship than they contribute, the other individual will experience inequality. A sense of discomfort occurs both when the benefits obtained are smaller than the contribution—that is, the result of the comparison is unfavorable to us—as well as when the benefits exceed the contribution, in which case the comparison is favorable. Empirical research indicates that the perception of inequality negatively affects marriage—in addition to increasing anxiety and the risk of depression (particularly in women), this perception often leads to conflicts in the partnership and triggers thoughts of separation (DeMaris, Mahoney, & Pargament, 2010; Greenstein, 2009; Grote & Clark, 2001; Lavee & Katz, 2002; Rantanen, Kinnunen, Mauno, & Tillemann, 2011).

According to Kaufmann (1995), "a fair distribution of household duties is a utopia, it is possible only to a certain level, it will never be just and fairly considered by both people, moreover, they will do everything to ensure that the distribution is not equally and fair" (Kaufmann, 1995, p. 12). However, empirical studies have contradicted this assertion. Indeed, earning more than one's partner, popularizing views on gender equality, or having alternatives to a marriage serve to strengthen the perception of the unfairness of their workload among women who do most of the housework (Braun, Lewin-Epstein, Stier, & Baumgärtner, 2008; Greenstein, 1996; Öun, 2013). However, it must be noted that the majority of surveyed couples perceived the division of housework as fair (Young, Wallace, & Polachek, 2013). Indeed, surveys of women relatively more burdened with housework found that only 20%–30% considered their workload to be unfair (Mikula, 1998).

As such, although many would assume that the majority of women would feel angry or dissatisfied about unequal workload in the household, this is not the case. This has been explained by the so-called "paradoxes of fair division": despite both men and women declaring their desire to strive for equality, they perceive the division of labor to be fair when they experience it (Dixon & Wetherell, 2004). Researchers have also demonstrated perceived inequality in household labor does

not reduce the subjective well-being and quality of a marriage if the woman—that is, the partner with the greater share of household labor—is satisfied with the state of affairs (Braun et al., 2008; Treas, van der Lippe, & Tai, 2011). In turn, sensitivity to the unequal division of labor among both men and women is stronger in countries in which gender equality is strongly promoted (this is especially true of Nordic countries) (Öun, 2013). Thus, gender-oriented social policy increases awareness of inequality, especially among those who potentially benefit from it. A sense of inequality and unfairness is also stronger in women who work longer hours (Jansen, Weber, Kraaykamp, & Verbakel, 2016; Ruppanner, 2010).

Nonetheless, there are several reasons why the existing (unequal) division of household labor regarded as fair. To some extent, the division of household labor reflects how partners perceive their roles: the more traditional or conservative the attitude, the more unequal the distribution of household responsibilities. According to the theory of distributive justice (Thompson, 1991), women do not perceive the division of labor as unfair if it the division for several reasons.

First, she will not find it unfair if the division is reflective of the socialization process, as well as her personal values and attitudes to family labor. In other words, if a woman was raised to believe that housework is a "feminine" duty, she would not consider the unequal distribution of labor unfair. Thompson (1991) believed that women strive to achieve a warm and affectionate relationship, and feel no need to strive for equal division of labor when they succeed in establishing such a relationship. The actual contribution of men to housework is unimportant if women feel supported and comfortable in their relationship. This has been demonstrated by several empirical studies. Women whose partners are involved in the performance of what is usually considered "women's" housework are more likely to perceive the division of tasks as "fair" than women whose partners do less traditional work (Coltrane, 2000, 2010; Dixon & Wetherell, 2004). Similarly, women who feel "appreciated" for their contribution seem to consider the unequal division as fair. This is particularly evident in the case of women who adhere to traditional attitudes, the majority feeling a sense of satisfaction when their household functions well (Mikula, 1998). Numerous studies also indicate that inequality of division has a negative impact on satisfaction with the relationship; however, this predominantly applies to women with egalitarian attitudes (Lavee & Katz, 2002).

As Thompson (1991) indicated, the more positive attitude women have toward doing housework is also partially explained by socialization. Housework is still primarily regarded as a female task. Coltrane (2000) has noted that the acceptance that certain activities are more "feminine" makes women more receptive toward them, and men more resistant. Moreover, the positive attitudes of women in this regard are reinforced by their performing most of the housework on a daily basis (Coltrane, 2000). Certainly, a study of Dutch couples revealed women have more

positive attitudes toward cleaning, cooking, and childcare than men. In addition to giving them more satisfaction, performing these activities resulted in women setting higher standards for themselves, as well as feeling an increased sense of responsibility (Poortman & Lippe, 2009). It is worth noting that people in a relationship tend to act according to their own attitudes rather than those of their partner (Poortman & Lippe, 2009). In other words, higher standards of cleanliness in the home or a greater sense of responsibility among women do not result from men not participating in housework.

Second, a woman will feel that the division of labor is justified on the basis of comparisons with others. In other words, women tend to make comparisons within their own gender: women compare themselves with similar women and how much housework they do. Mikula (1998) notes that it is a relative rather than absolute workload that affects the perceived justice of labor division in a family. As such, while one might assume that perceptions of the fairness of labor division are determined through a woman comparing her burdens with the perceived burden of her partner, the latter constitutes only one of several points of reference (Major, 1993). When a woman compares situation to those of other women similar to them, and finds that her situation is relatively good ("but I am lucky, others have worse"), then she will not perceive the unequal division of household labor as unjust.

Third, a woman will not find the division unfair is she perceives it as legitimate and appropriate. As one woman explained:

> My husband works at home, he does not have household duties (but if I ask him he does it)—but it results from our division—he earns money, I take care of the house. He helps a lot with kids and spends time with them. This is our deal, and it's just fine for us. I'm not complaining and I will not :) (Czerwińska Agata, online comment, 2015).

As reflected in the quote above, a husband's lack of involvement in or contribution to the housework is usually attributed to his limited time due to his job. As another woman noted, "I do not do any other work…I have no work to do outside, my only work is to cook and take care of the home" (PBC, F, 57, in Beagan et al., 2008). Fatigue constitutes another justification of men's smaller role in housework—"He's really tired when gets home from work, so he puts his dishes away and goes to lie down" (ENS, in Beagan et al., 2008). Women also justify the existing division by indicating their husband's unavailability ("[he] cannot pick up the child from kindergarten because then he is in the office"), or their responsibility to look after their family's health ("I cook because this way I provide all healthy meals"). This is often motivated by their desire to avoid conflict.

Individuals in a relationship usually exchange goods, and the satisfaction they achieve depends on how they evaluate the outcome of such an exchange. When

considering the perception of fairness of the division of household labor, we must remain aware of the fact that such perceptions are entirely subjective, and not necessarily reflective of the objective reality. Moreover, the assessment of one of partner may differ from that of the other, with both thinking they contribute more than the other. A subjective and often imprecise opinion on the extent to which their partner contributes can be a key criterion for assessing the fairness of task division. Indeed, regardless of what the other person actually does, the perception of these activities plays a primary role in feeling justice or fairness. That is to say, in feelings of injustice, the objective reality is less important than the subjective perception.

Men usually overestimate their participation in housework, while women underestimate the contribution of their partners (Kamo, 2000). There are several explanations for this. First, men—especially those who support the idea of gender equality—may want to realize these ideals in their relationship and thus perform more housework. On the other hand, men with traditional values have a reduced motivation to do housework. This is particularly true when men are unable to fulfill their traditional role as breadwinner as a result of unemployment, for instance. Second, both men and women may have a tendency to overestimate their contribution to domestic work when they perform such tasks against their wishes or beliefs. For instance, when an individual is resentful of performing a task, they often feel as if the task is more time consuming than it actually was. Therefore, it is likely that conservative men tend to overestimate the time devoted to performing "female" tasks. Meanwhile, with increasing numbers of women performing paid work, expectations that men partake in housework are growing. However, because men have been reticent in taking on more household responsibilities, women may feel a greater sense of unfairness and thus underestimate the contribution of men. Third, partners may feel that their contribution to housework is greater than it actually is simply because they are not fully aware of what the other person actually does. For instance, not knowing that the husband helped the children clean their rooms and homework may result in the wife feeling he is uninvolved in household matters. Of course, the same mechanism works in the opposite direction (indeed, I believe that this is the more common dynamic). Knowledge about what the other person does increases with the amount of time that partners spend together. A greater awareness of what one's partner does also encourages greater appreciation in a relationship. As Hochschild (2012) noted, when partners clash, it is rarely over who does what and more often about expressed and received gratitude. Finally, partners can over- or underestimate the contribution of the other in housework due to differing degrees of efficiency. In other words, a more effective partner may underestimate the contribution of a partner who works at a slower pace.

Men's double shift?

"Women still do more chores at home than men, study finds" (*Huffington Post*, September 9, 2017), "Dirty secret: Why is there still a housework gender gap?" (*Guardian*, February 17, 2018), "Stop the presses! Canadian women do more housework" (*Maclean's*, June 1, 2017)—these are just a few news headlines regarding the unequal division of household labor. Of course, time is a limited resource—what is spent on performing some activities cannot be used for another. Hours spent on the unpaid work of laundry, cleaning, and cooking, ironing cannot be used for paid work. As noted, studies conducted in highly developed countries indicate that women perform more unpaid work than men, even in couples where both partners work full time. These studies reveal the following general rule: the participation of women in unpaid work decreases in accordance with their income and both her and her partner's level of education.

As this chapter has shown, there are significant changes impacting the inequality between women and men, as well as their well-being. This can be summarized in four points. First, differences between the sexes in terms of the domestic workload are decreasing. This is mainly because women do less housework than before, and, to a much lesser extent, because men perform more housework. However, it is worth noting that men have systematically increased their share in activities like cooking, cleaning, and, most noticeably, childcare. Second, trends concerning unpaid work differ from one area to another. For instance, the amount of time spent on childcare has increased, while time spent on household duties has significantly decreased overall. Of course, taking care of and spending time with children has become increasingly desirable, and constitutes an element of investing in the child's future. Third, when we consider the differences between the sexes through the lens of the total time spent on paid and unpaid work in highly developed countries, we note that they are relatively small. This is because men spend much more time on paid work than women, are less likely to work part-time, more likely to work overtime, and less likely to use holidays. As such, men and women have a similar total workload in terms of total hours, with men having a slightly larger workload in some countries. Moreover, if such trends—including the reduction in the amount of time spent on household chores and shortening of work hours, predominantly for women—continue in the future, men may have a larger general workload than women. Finally, despite the observed inequalities in the division of housework, both women and men rarely deem the perceived division as unfair.

According to the Christian cosmology, we lived in a paradise from which we were banished for disobedience. Working to ensure one's livelihood became necessary to avoid grim consequence: "in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life" (Genesis 3: 17). In his essay *Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren* (1930),

John Maynard Keynes predicted technological innovation would bring about the end of the need to work and a solution to scarcity by 2030. Earlier, in *Praise of Laziness* (1932), Bertrand Russell described an extraordinary four-hour workday:

> In a world where no one is compelled to work more than four hours a day, every person possessed of scientific curiosity will be able to indulge it, and every painter will be able to paint without starving…Young writers will not be obliged to draw attention to themselves by sensational pot-boilers…Men who, in their professional work, have become interested in some phase of economics or government, will be able to develop their ideas without the academic detachment that makes the work of university economists often seem lacking in reality. Medical men will have the time to learn about the progress of medicine, teachers will not be exasperatedly struggling to teach by routine methods things which they learnt in their youth, which may, in the interval, have been proved to be untrue.

Chapter 4

Envy and comparisons

> *...for a man grows eager to work when he considers his neighbor, a rich man who hastens to plough and plant and put his house in good order; and neighbor vies with his neighbor as he hurries after wealth. This Strife is wholesome for men. And potter is angry with potter, and craftsman with craftsman, and beggar is jealous of beggar, and minstrel of minstrel.*
>
> Hesiod, *Works and Days*

> *All such comparisons are pointless and foolish; whether the Queen of Sheba or our next-door neighbor be the cause of discontent, either is equally futile.*
>
> Bertrand Russell, *The Conquest of Happiness*

When people predominantly focus on themselves, others serve as a reference point. As Russell noted (2006, p. 45), "What people fear when they engage in the struggle is not that they will fail to get their breakfast next morning, but that they will fail to outshine their neighbors." Russell goes on to warn against thinking in terms of comparisons. Rather, he advises, we must learn to think that life is valuable regardless of how much better, handsome, or intelligent we are. Russell argues that we should learn to enjoy pleasant experiences by performing our duties and avoiding comparisons with those we think—often erroneously—have been better treated by fate.

"I do not know how she does it": The myth of the perfect mother

Childcare represents an ideal example of human activity that naturally evokes interpersonal comparisons, particularly insofar as there are no objective standards or measures determining the quality of care. What constitutes a "good" mother or father? While we might have an ideal, it is a subjective one. Uncertainty leads many to seek out the standards to which they believe they ought to be held, although they

often look in the wrong place. For instance, so-called "instamothers"—mothers who curate seemingly perfect parenting and childhood on the photo sharing platform, Instagram—appear to set and shape the standards of "ideal" motherhood. Since it is impossible to define clear, absolute, and objective evaluation criteria, seemingly perfect women in such images often constitute an important reference point for self-evaluation. Instamoms are always patient, forgiving, and gentle with their children. When a toddler does not want to do something, they use seemingly sophisticated persuasion strategies instead of simply bribing or threatening them. Reflecting broader fashions, they feed their children using only natural and organic produce, free of saturated fats and gluten. They always seem to be up-to-date with their household chores—seemingly without breaking a sweat. They are always dressed well, their hair and make-up flawless. Essentially, the present a life of motherhood that looks simple and natural, as if achieved with ease and without serious self-sacrifice.

As a result, some of the women who follow these instamoms on social media appear to suffer from lower self-esteem, feeling that they are not good enough and need to try harder. Significantly, they begin to ask questions like "why do I not get as much joy from motherhood as other women?" and "where are all these magical moments in my life?" Comparisons with these instamothers are common because many women are uncertain as to how they ought to fulfill their maternal role, seeking validation as a mother from other people and through social comparisons. Given the significance of motherhood to female identity, such comparisons have a direct impact on happiness.

The essence of comparison

Decades of academic research demonstrates that the vast majority of people have a strong desire to compare themselves to others. First proposed by Leon Festinger in 1954, social comparison theory advances that individuals are driven for accurate self-evaluation—a desire Festinger believed was as strong as hunger or thirst. Using brain scans, researchers have concluded that we compare ourselves spontaneously, unintentionally, and effortlessly. This process is beyond our control up to a point, and occurs even when people consider such comparisons illogical (Gilbert, Giesler, & Morris, 1995). Reflection on the legitimacy of such a procedure ("should I compare myself with this person at all?") and the results of such comparison are secondary.

People make comparisons in order to fit in or differentiate themselves from others. Often, we use comparisons to ensure that we fit in with and become or remain part of a larger group, thereby satisfying our need to belong. Others are used as a reference point, our comparisons offering greater knowledge about ourselves

and allowing us to evaluate our achievements, appearance, and personality among other things, shaping our self-esteem. We compare ourselves by making decisions and seeking inspiration. As Festinger (1954) indicated, comparing ourselves with others is a human need, much like hunger or thirst: without food, we grow hungry; without water, we grow thirsty; without clothes, we feel cold. Essentially, failing to satisfy basic needs results in unpleasant or painful experiences; satisfying these needs produces pleasure and relief (Lieberman & Eisenberger, 2009). This same principle applies to some social needs. Most people want to think well of themselves. However, jealousy resulting from comparing ourselves to other can impact how we think about ourselves, producing an effect similar to physical pain (Takahashi et al., 2009). While it is easy to understand why we react negatively to hunger, it is harder to explain the negative reaction to the unfavorable social comparison. Scholars believe that this may be due to the relationship between adults—mainly mothers—and a new-born child. Unable to meet their basic needs, babies depend entirely on the bond created with their caregiver. Given the dependency on social relations for survival, the importance of social needs—ensured through mechanisms like comparison—is engrained in us as children (Lieberman & Eisenberger, 2009).

Early social comparison theory indicated that comparisons with others impacts an individual's well-being. However, Festinger (1954) believed that this only occurred when an individual compared themselves to someone similar, and that comparisons with those in other social circles or of unobtainable statuses had not influence. Certainly, a shift worker comparing their income to that of someone like Bill Gates or Jeff Bezos would be a frustrating and illogical exercise. Currently the richest man in the world, Bezos exists in an entirely different sphere majority of people. As such, Festinger believed that such a comparison would have no effect. However, that a single man earns more per day than most would see in their lifetime, an individual comparing themselves is likely to feel disappointment, anger or sadness. This is because such a comparison does not produce new knowledge about ourselves, whereas a comparison with someone similar provides a means to assess our own situation. Although this perspective dominated for a long time, recent research has provided new insights.

There are more and more of them

In a society in which men worked professionally and women ran the home, housewives looked to other housewives as a reference point. However, with economic change and the entrance of women into professions, women's points of reference have come to include homemakers predominantly oriented toward the home and family, working mothers who combine paid work with looking after their children

and the home, and the often childless career woman. Regardless of her choice of life path—home, career, or a combination of both—women will always find those who seem better at raising children, running their home, or advancing their career. A negative self-comparison may lead an individual to doubt their choices (for example, "I could devote more energy to achieve what my friends have since we graduated from university") or achievements ("I thought I was doing a good job raising my children until I saw how much attention my friend pays them!"). The sheer variety of biographies of women is just one source of potentially negative comparison, another is social media. As one mother commented on an online forum:

> My question then is, how do you make mommy friends if the topics we tend to and like to talk about are always on our babies' development, milestones, what are we doing for our babies etc.? That's my biggest struggle: To be mindful not to ask questions that would trigger comparison, but then to realize I have nothing else to say anymore if I cut that out (a BabyCenter Member, online comment, 2017).

In the past, people typically compared themselves with those with whom they had direct contact, such as their siblings, friends, neighbors, and co-workers. This has been significantly expanded by the rise of social media, increasing the number of reference groups. With easy access to information, people often visit the profiles of their friends or acquaintances and compare themselves. This is often done with people who have never met one another—an individual viewing online Facebook profiles when looking for a particular contact for instance. Moreover, celebrities, youtubers, and bloggers. As a result, social media users often compare themselves with those they have never, and likely never will, meet or even see beyond the computer screen.

Communicating with others via the Internet deprives us of many of the elements of face-to-face interaction. As a consequence, we are not always able to verify the information to which we are exposed—including that pertaining to the lives of other people. In the past, finding out what was happening in the lives of other people—be they friends, family, or acquaintances—typically required direct contact, observation, or rumor. Today, this information is easily available online. The potential number of exotic trips, parties, dates, games, meetings, concerts, city breaks, magical sunsets, or visits to a stylish restaurant—events in which we are unable to participate and witnessed online—have never been so big.

Looking up: Comparison and self-esteem

Kate Middleton gave birth to her third child on April 23, 2018 at 11:01 a.m. At 6 p.m. that same day, she left St. Mary's Hospital dressed in a red dress and high

heels—a perfectly style image that delighted the fans and reporters gathered at the entrance. The reaction of many mothers on Twitter and Instagram was immediate: comparison photos showing the 36-year-old Duchess of Cambridge radiant and in heels just 7 hours after giving birth, and them—tired, pale, and lying in their hospital beds. As one user commented on the *Daily Mail*, "…I mean, I know she had help to look that good, but I would've needed a mortician that specializes in putting make up on corpses and industrial quantities of sanitary wear" (quoted in *Daily Mail*, 2018).

Of course, comparing oneself to those in a more desirable position or situation can be beneficial when used as inspiration for self-improvement. In this case, others are considered as role models. However, the effect of this type of comparison is usually not inspirational, often evoking a sense of inferiority instead. This can lead to lower self-esteem and cause negative feelings like gloom, sadness, and even depression (Vogel, Rose, Roberts, & Eckles, 2014). In contrast, comparing oneself to those we consider to be in an inferior or worse position or state usually leads to an improvement in our self-esteem. As such, it seems possible for someone to permanently feel good if they can cleverly select those to whom they compare themselves. It is enough to be aware of those who are better than us and to compare ourselves with those faring worse: I am overweight, but my neighbor is obese; I got a bad grade, but others did worse; I broke my leg, but the patient in the bed next to me has broken two. I should not be depressed because I am not poor. This is a clever but unreliable strategy. Indeed, the results of numerous studies have shown that the majority of people compare themselves to those they feel are above them.

Humans are not the only species in which comparison plays a prominent role. Besides, not only us, but also other species. Neurobiologists from Duke University conducted an interesting experiment with macaque monkeys. Various photographs were presented to the monkeys, and their eye movement tracked. Three types of photographs were shown: one of a macaque monkey with a high status in its troop, another showed a low status macaque, while the third showed the buttocks of a female macaque. Every time the monkey looked at a particular picture, they were rewarded with some juice—an attractive reward for the thirsty animal. Looking at the picture with the low status macaque was awarded the highest amount of juice, while that with a high status macaque was awarded a smaller amount. Thus, a macaque received less juice each time they selected a picture with an important figure. Based on the varying amount of juice awarded, the researchers were able to determine the importance the macaque subjects attributed to each image. The results showed astonishing consensus: the macaques required significant reward to select images of a macaque of lower status (Deaner, Khera, & Platt, 2005).

Although we have a tendency to compare ourselves to those we deem superior, we constantly come into contact with people—better, worse, and just like us. As one mother commented online,

> I never felt like I had it together compared to all the other moms I knew. Then I had my epiphany moment when I showed up unexpectedly to a friend's house. It was messy; not grossly so, but just…lived in. It was such a relief! And I realized that we all show people what we want them to see and it ends up making us all feel less than, like we better keep hiding who we really are in case we're the only screw ups. So I decided to stop hiding and show people the real me, so that if it even only helped one other mom stop feeling "less than" I'd have done what I set out to do (Lauren Baker Cormier, online comment, 2015).

However, to experience this type of revelation, you need an "offline" reality, direct contact with another person, her life, and, in this case, her home. However, social media is pervasive. Scrolling through Instagram or Facebook, we see images of appetizing meals, interesting destinations, or new clothes—a seemingly idealistic life dripping with intense sensations, often prompting us to ask: is my life as exciting as that of my friend? Am I happy with my life as it is?

"I'm not a good enough mother": Ideal motherhood and social media

We describe ourselves and the world around us in relative terms. For instance, someone who is 185 cm in height is generally considered tall, but would be deemed short when compared to basketball players. As in the case of comparing objects in terms of their physical features, we use comparisons with other people to assess behaviors, achievements, and psychological characteristics. This is often the only way to determine where we fit in society and how we are doing. Without a magical mirror able to identify the most beautiful person in the world, it is difficult to assess our attractiveness objectively. There are no absolute standards. Indeed, areas that are important to us—such as intelligence, attractiveness, or our parental abilities—are usually assessed through comparison with others. Where there are no clearly defined standards, others constitute indispensable reference points. This is significant in respect to motherhood, and the way in which mothers compare themselves: there is no agreed upon list of criteria to assess a "good mother," it has never been created, and never without recourse to subjective values. In other words, there is no clear definition of a "good mother": Is a mother good if she helps her child with their homework three times a week, and bad if she does not? Is a mother good if her child eats two pieces of fruit each day, and bad if she allows them to eat a hamburger? There are no simple answers to such questions. Hence, the tendency to compare has been strengthened by the role that many women attribute to motherhood and the pressures they feel from their surroundings.

This partly explains the interest in family-orientated parents and couples on social media. For instance, in 2017, the photo of a pregnant Beyoncé was the

most liked photo on social media with over 11 million "likes," with football star Cristiano Ronaldo and his twins coming in a close second. Indeed, social media and the Internet now constitute the main source of information about raising children. This is particularly applicable to women between the ages of 20 and 35, and especially mothers of young children who care for them at home. Full of uncertainty with regard to the "correct" way of raising their child, they seek to affirm their values by identifying them in others. A booming online platform of engagement has developed as a result, with articles, blogs, and Internet forums providing platforms to discuss how best to raise a child. These resources include those dedicated to subjects like how to raise children who are adopted child, have been diagnosed with autism, have above-average intelligence, or medical issues like diabetes. There are blogs providing tips on various parenting approaches, such as simple, close to nature, holistic, attentive, and ecological one. Still others are aimed at fathers, single mothers, working mothers, godmothers, stay-at-home mothers, older mothers, homosexual parents, as well as those of different religions. Other blogs are dedicated to notions of thrift, or how to raise a child despite financial difficulties.

Demand has created supply. Although it could be the other way around: companies have convinced us that new superheroes are needed. Instamothers entered the online scene: active, neat, smiling, rested, perfect—at least when the camera's aperture is released—they form a false image of motherhood, an ideal that evokes envy and aspiration in others. The standard is unobtainable for the majority of women, who buy similar clothes or follow the same trends in the hope of reaching the ideal set by these Instamothers. Of course, there are other women that set these standards—such as celebrity mothers, who are successful, sleek, happy, and engaged in the upbringing of their children. Often, these women appear to have no conflict between work and family commitments, as if such a notion is entirely foreign to them.

The Internet ideal, loved by commercials, is the "alpha mother": educated, financially comfortable, and dedicated to fulfilling her role as a mother. Alpha mothers are part of the ideology of "intensive mothering" (Hays, 1996), which emphasizes that being a good mother requires the acquisition of skills and knowledge—including those of a therapist, pediatrician, teacher, and dietician. The alpha mother must work for everything. In their view, good motherhood cannot result from maternal instinct alone. Proper childcare is like doing a good job—it requires training. Consequently, they diligently browse the Internet in search of the latest trends, information, and role models. In US media, so-called "Alpha Mom TV" is aimed at "the new breed of 'go to' moms who are constantly looking to be ahead of the curve and 'in the know' on the newest innovations, hippest trends and research breakthroughs" (Patterson, 2018).

Comparison with such women seldom has a positive effect. As one blogger admitted:

> I was looking at rich mothers, female celebrities and I thought that I would run happily with a pram in the park, but I push my body trying not to overturn over my sleepy eyelids. I was going to drown in the smells of wonderful oils and shampoos, and they only serve to kill the stench from the diaper. I was supposed to dress him like a little gentleman in designer fictional clothes, and I change the clothes of my little pig like "still acceptable" (Jaskółka, online comment, 2013).

Another wrote:

> I can definitely let those amazing women's achievements make me feel inferior. I had my babies in hospitals with epidurals, even though I originally planned natural births. I don't buy all organic produce. I let my daughter watch TV more than I would like (and I feel constantly good and guilty about it, but I still do it)…I secretly love store bought junk food…At the end of a difficult day I'd much rather plop myself in front of Netflix than do something more productive (Laundry Lady, user comment, 2012).

The perfectly looking mothers seem to be *nihil novi*. Pictures of housewives from the 1950s show that mothers are happiest performing domestic duties: they dance as they clean, think of their husband's happiness upon returning home as they cook, and raise polite children with neatly combed and parted hair. The myth of the ideal nuclear family became widespread, and these same elements persist today. Every day, social media—Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, and Instagram—inundates us with an avalanche of filtered photos of seemingly ideal lives.

"I know it's not true…but that does not help"

When Harimao Lee, an influencer from Hong Kong, posted a photo taken in business class on a flight to Rome on Instagram, the Internet boiled with comments. Posing with a glass of champagne, Lee selected a perfect composition and lighting for a fairy-tale charm. Followers were quick to criticize the contrived nature of the photo: "This is absurd! This kind of staged nonsense is a joke. Nobody travels this way," noted one follower. Of course, the majority of people are aware that what is shown on social media seldom reflects reality. However, this knowledge does not protect us. We continue to compare ourselves despite knowing that the image presented in social media is, at best, a highly stylized and contrived snapshot of someone else's life—a moment that talks about the life of its author as much as a book cover does the book's content. As one user noted of her apparent

inadequacies after using social media: "Pinterest makes me feel bad sometimes. Why can't I be as crafty as that person? Or creative? Or as good a cook?" (lisacng, online comment, 2014).

Social media enables individuals to construct a social identity and craft an image that is primarily directed toward unknown people—the latter basing their judgement entirely on what is presented to them and is available on the Internet. By presenting socially acceptable information, social media users strive to gain acceptance and approval from other people. Indeed, research has demonstrated that this desire is one of the main reasons people use Facebook or Instagram (Mäntymäki & Islam, 2016). Social media provides an attractive platform from which to craft an image and advance particular messages (Gonzales & Hancock, 2011). Social media users tend to use a few simple techniques to show them in a specific and positive light: they spend a relatively long time editing their posts, carefully select their images, emphasize their strengths, shape their responses according to their followers, and use links to other websites or emphasize their connections to other people or brands to indicate their popularity and influence (Chou & Edge, 2012). By selecting content and presenting it in a beneficial way, users of Facebook or Instagram create a picture of perfection. When we look at the holiday photos of close friends, we know that however perfect the images appear, they are ordinary people who have their own problems. However, we do not have this assurance when we see the perfect images of those we do not know. Although we realize that these images are carefully selected and crafted in order to influence us, they successfully influence us anyway. Knowledge in this area is not enough to protect us.

"You must be a good mother"

In this context, the question arises as to how women can reject the dominant intensive mothering approach without experiencing shame or embarrassment in social situations. Intensive mothering demands that women dedicate their attention, time, and money to their children—both for the optimal development of their children, and so that their children will excel in comparison to other children. This is why intensive mothering occupies such a central position in so-called "Mommy Wars"—that is, the heated debate about whether a good mother can work while raising a very young child. Certainly, those who advocate against working mothers accuse them of being selfish and harming their child by not spending enough time with them. At the same time, they maintain that the time that mothers spend with the child is unique and irreplaceable because mothers—unlike any other caregiver, including fathers—are innately sensitive to the needs of their children. As such, they assume that the mother has the greatest impact on the child.

Of course, the role of parents is integral to the proper development of a child. As such, those seeking to improve their parenting skills should be supported. However, it is harmful to strive to be better than others and partake in unofficial competition for the mother of the year—a motivation rooted in self-comparison and envy. While the belief that one is better than other mothers may provide an internal benefit of avoiding guilt, such competition usually constitutes a source of disappointment and negative emotions. Individuals tend to find themselves trapped in a vicious circle of expectations, aspirations, unattainable goals, and questions regarding whose child is best. Indeed, Douglas and Michaels (2004) refer to intense motherhood as a type of Olympic Games for women. Psychology indicates that when we consider something important, we tend to use this as criterion for comparison with others and self-evaluation. We also think that we are being evaluated by others in this area. Thus, the acceptance of the ideology of intensive mothering indicates that these mothers feel that they are being assessed by others in terms of their performance as parents; in turn, they evaluate other mothers.

Women compete with each other for fear of being defeated by a neighbor or a woman they do not know personally, but whom they see in the media. However, these competitions are not about who is a good mother, but the *best* mother—and the best mothers always put their child's interests before their own, are the main childcare provider, are always smiling and understanding, they never tire or lose their temper, they never tell their child to "go play with the neighbors while I will drink coffee." This is hardly reflective of reality. Motherhood varies from one woman to another. It is tiring, there are sleepless nights, diapers to change, and fussing offspring. There is also consent to just "let it be" and a recognition that "I need a moment of rest." This reality is not reflected in social media: Facebook and Instagram remain filled with pictures suggesting that perfect mothers can enjoy exotic destinations, perfectly tousled hair, flat bellies, on-trend décor, and happy children. The pressure to be a good mother combined with the unreality of such highly stylized "snapshots" make for a potent depressant.

Fulfilling the combined roles of mother, partner, and employee/employer incurs an abundance of duties, deadlines, and tasks—the need to make and maintain a home, relationship, and career often makes it impossible to achieve everything one would have liked. Comparing oneself to the image of the ideal mother makes it difficult not to feel worse. As Jaskółka (2013) has noted, "They watch a lot of stupid TV shows, and get depressed, 'because I'm not perfect'. The other side is that one should show the truth about motherhood, not isolated cases with a huge salary. That's how I see it." Jealousy is one of the feelings that mothers often feel, with a sense of inferiority easily emerging: "I'm not a good enough mother, partner, woman."

People whose achievements have impressed us often become role models, inspiring and motivating us to become better. However, this can often have the

opposite effect: the successes of celebrities, athletes, and other public figures can diminish our sense of achievement. Women are inundated with images of "superwomen" on a daily basis—their self-comparisons resulting in feelings of incompetence, imperfection, and not being good enough. Indeed, research has shown that interaction with exception people can cause individuals to perform worse. For example, Morse and Gargen (1970) demonstrated that the self-esteem of candidates decreased when they came across a better performing candidate and increased when they interacted with those who performed worse. While scholars have yet to agree on what determines which comparisons will inspire rather than deflate, psychologists have indicated that we are motivated when the achievements of those with whom we compare ourselves are within our reach (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997). This may explain part of the popularity of celebrities from disadvantaged background. After all, if an individual believes that they can be like the person they admire or achieve what they have with enough dedication, then their self-confidence will grow and the comparison serves to inspire and motivate. However, when a person similar to me achieves something that is beyond my reach—such as when the right time to do so has passed due to age, or when they find their abilities inadequate to the task—such comparisons are frustrating.

Finally, is worth pointing to a further mechanism of social media impact: mothers often feel dissonance because of the discrepancy between what they themselves understand as "good motherhood" and the image promoted in the media. While women can often resist trends when such a conflict arises, it often requires effort to do so. In the long run, it may be easier to succumb to the pressure of the environment produced by other women who have been influenced by these images and trends.

Instead of conclusion

> "I follow a lot of insta mums too and to be honest it started getting me down they are all so perfect with perfect houses and life's, with every child related gadget going because they are given it to endorse" (doozeldog, online comment, 2017).
> "But eventually a feeling of unease started creeping up on me. I felt like I wasn't doing motherhood right. I don't make granola bowls every day, I don't feed my kids roasted cauliflower and chia seeds, I don't look like I just got a blowout at a hair salon. Most days, I'm running late, I've screamed at the kids to get their shoes on 63 times, I forgot the snacks, the siblings are fighting, someone is bleeding and they are both whining for screen time" (Abecassis, online comment, 2018).

Chapter 5

The gendered sense of sin

> *In every society, there are certain established patterns of personal success… The modern unemployed seems to be the first established pattern of personal regress ever made in our history.*
>
> Florian Znaniecki (cited in Sułek, 2007, p. 267)

According to Bertrand Russell, conscience is spurred by the fear that someone will learn of our wrongdoing. The sense of sin reaches deep into our subconsciousness and evokes fear of the disapproval of others. Consequently, we define some behavior as sinful, although we are not always able to comprehend why such behavior makes us uncomfortable. As such, the root of our "sense of sin" lies in not meeting the expectations of the society in which we live. In this sense—that is, beyond its religious dimension, sin refers to the failure to act in accordance with the standards set by society. These standards are reflected in social norms and gender identity. We adhere to the unwritten set of obligations of what constitutes a "real" man or woman. Defined by our gender, such obligations shape our behavior, attitudes, individual and social expectations, as well as identity. Therefore, sin is a powerful ideological factor influencing human choices, resulting in the reproduction and legitimization of these actions (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Riding donkeys: Gender roles and social expectation

The household has long been regarded as the site of struggle over power and privileges. For instance, an old French wedding ritual saw the bride crook her finger to hamper the wedding ring slipping over the knuckle—playfully ensuring her superior position in the house (Flandrin, 2015). Writing about family history in early modern France, Flandrin (2015) emphasizes that the authoritarian behavior of men in marriage was socially constructed—a "domestic morality" shaped by the Christian church. In traditional societies, a man was expected to impose

his will on a woman. Often, this amounted to beating his wife. As one thirteenth century recommendation noted, "A man should beat his wife, not to death and not to blood, when she opposes her husband." In Bordeaux in 1359, a husband who killed his wife in anger did not suffer punishment if gave a solemn oath that he was repentant (Flandrin, 2015, pp. 168–169). The perception of domestic violence has changed over time—albeit only recently. In France, it was only during the nineteenth century that the attitude of men toward women became one of the main measures of whether an individual was civilized. Indeed, the treatment of rural women became a scandal among urban elites at least in France.

Men who failed to discipline their wives were treated with contempt, rejection, and disdain. In the thirteenth century, husbands beaten by their wives were arrested and sentenced to sit backwards on a donkey. They were then guided around the city. This punishment was used in many places in France, producing the following proverb: "one must make an ass run every time that a woman rebels against her husband and the husband tolerates it" (Flandrin, 2015, p. 169). Despite a law prohibiting the custom of shaming men in this way, this practice remained common in France during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This is a clear indication of the continued scandal of a husband's inability to impose his will on his wife. While men were punished for their inability to exercise power, women were punished for their desire to reach for it. As Benedicti wrote in the seventeenth century, "A woman who does not wish to obey her husband in matters touching the government of family and of the house, and those concerning virtues and good morals, sins" (quoted in Flandrin, 2015, p. 173). Failure to comply with social norms and the denial of gender identity has always had painful consequences for "the outsider."

Describing family life in a Mexican village in the mid-twentieth century, Lewis (1949, p. 602) wrote:

> According to the ideal patterns of husband-wife relations in Tepoztlan, the husband is viewed as an authoritarian, patriarchal figure who is head and master of the household and who enjoys the highest status in the family…It is the husband who is expected to make all important decisions and plans for the entire family.

Of the wife, Lewis continued, "she should seek his advice and obtain before undertaking any but the most minor activities" (Lewis, 1949, p. 602). Husbands whose wives go to work often fear that people will say that they are unable to provide for their family and control their wives. As such, Lewis (1949) argued,

> Thus the fear of giving the wife more freedom, as well as the recognition of the threat to the man in his role as provider, outweighs obvious economic advantages, and most men prevent their wives from earning money for themselves (p. 607).

Today, Flandrin's descriptions of early modern France or Lewis' recount of a twentieth-century Mexican village may evoke a combination of confusion and indignation in the majority of those living in highly developed countries. Yet, the essence of such attitudes persist: strictly defined sex norms continue, and failure to adhere to these codes results in negative consequences for the individual. These attitudes are intertwined with gender roles and thus affect individual gender identity.

West and Zimmerman (1987) have described the incredible process through which gendered identity is created and in which we all participate. Gender is created and perpetuated through the daily activities performed by individuals, including housework and earning money. By exercising or abstaining from doing housework, men and women perform or display gender roles while shaping and perpetuating gendered differences between the sexes, thus giving the activities a symbolic character. According to Goffman (1977), gender plays a more crucial role in determining an individual's identity than other categories of difference, such as social class. For instance, a man will justify his avoidance of housework by indicating that such activities to not align with his masculine identity, rather than his social class. Meanwhile, women often refrain from engaging in technical labor because these areas have been defined as masculine.

Gender identity refers to two or more social categories—in this case, "woman" and "man"—to which various ideal physical characteristics and subjective behaviors are assigned. Each member of society belongs to one of the categories. We confirm our gender affiliation by behaving and presenting ourselves according to the pattern of the "ideal man" and "perfect woman." Behavior that deviates from the pattern evokes discomfort and anxiety in both those who deviate and those who do not. Thus, gender identity significantly shapes the preferences of individuals and the assessment of decisions and behaviors.

In this regard, Akerlof and Kranton (2000) explain four aspects of identity. First, identity can explain behavior (with different identities) that appears wrong or harmful to others. Second, identity can lead to the emergence of a new type of external effect; for example, a man wearing a dress—a symbol of femininity—creates a threat to the gender identity of other men. Third, identity influences the formation of preferences. At the same time, it evolves in society and some members, notably institutions, of society have tools for shaping identity (for example, advertisements). Fourth, because identity is the foundation of human decision-making and behaviors, and people can—more or less consciously—choose who they want to be, a choice about identity is an important type of economic decision.

An example of how gender identity shapes behaviors is the differences between men and women in choosing a profession. For instance, is relatively rare for men to work as a kindergarten teacher, or women to work as truck drivers or pilots. A woman working in a "male" profession makes men feel less masculine (for instance, external effect). In households, it is usually woman who does the cleaning,

washing, and ironing; however, putting up a shelf or changing a car's oil are typically regarded as male tasks. Another example of the gendered division of labor is the Ye'Kwana tribe of Colombia. In this society, men's tasks include hunting and fishing, the production of weapons and wooden objects, building houses, collecting fuel, building canoes, cleaning gardens, and dealing with politics. Meanwhile, female tasks include cooking and serving food; preparing and serving cassava beer; planting, weeding, and harvesting in the garden; basket weaving, including those needed for transport; beadwork, and the production of body paint and clothes; as well as general housework.

In western cultures, men are stereotypically perceived as aggressive, offensive, arrogant, competitive, and treating others as instruments. In contrast, women are perceived as passive, cooperative, and expressive. Stereotypes amount to beliefs about psychological traits, as well as the activities that are appropriate for men and women. While stereotypes are attitudes and beliefs about masculinity and femininity, gender roles are defined by behavior. The culture in which we live shapes our ideas about what it means to be a "real" man or woman. In part, we learn this by observing what different people do. Denoting an activity as "feminine" or "male" discourages the other, "wrong" gender performing it.

Over the past few decades, we have observed an increase in the importance of professional work in women's lives. This was not readily accepted by many people because it did not fit contemporary characteristics of "femininity." Men are also changing, increasingly taking responsibility for household duties and childcare. This has also evoked cognitive dissonance: men are doing what they were not expected to in the past. Despite the wide breadth of changes, a significant proportion of contemporary society remains convinced that it is primarily the role of the man to provide the income for the family, while the woman is responsible for maintaining the "climate" of the home (Gerson, 2009). Although society has generally consented to women embracing professional work and men taking greater responsibility for childcare, the hierarchy of social expectations remains the same in both cases: a woman with a (young) child is a mother first, and an employee second; meanwhile, a man should provide for the family first, thus placing his career before his role as caregiver.

An explanation based on cultural factors suggests that even if there were no differences between men and women—such as those in income and workload—on the labor market, inequalities in the division of domestic and paid work would still exist as a result of norms rooted in representatives of both genders. Indeed, research conducted in Sweden indicates that even if the resources at the disposal of men and women are the same, unpaid work in households remains gendered in the sense that women are expected to do more of it (Evertsson & Nermo, 2007). It has also been suggested that couples with more conservative attitudes toward the role of men and women are more willing to follow the model of the male

breadwinner, while couples with less conservative views would see both partners working full-time.

Attitudes toward the role of gender are also important for the division of labor in the family: social norms encourage women to believe that they should do housework, and men to recognize that cleaning or ironing are not their responsibility. However, the results of research are not unequivocal in this respect. First, the individual attitudes are significant. While women who are more focused on gender equality spend less time doing household chores, their attitude does not seem to affect the behavior of their husbands (Bianchi et al., 2000; Poortman & Lippe, 2009). Second, while the attitude of an individual's partner appears significant, its precise role or influence is unclear. Bianchi and others (2000) have noted that women married to men who support gender equality spend less time doing household chores than women whose husbands have a traditional attitude toward gender roles. However, such a correlation has not been demonstrated by research conducted in the Netherlands (Poortman & Lippe, 2009).

Gender norms are formed very early. According to cognitive developmental theory, children acquire the ability to distinguish men from women around the age of 9–13 months. A child establishes their own gender identity at about the age of three. Children learn and remember their first gender stereotypes in relation to their own gender. Boys quickly learn what it means to be a man, and then create an image of what a woman looks like and how she behaves. However, girls do the opposite. When comparing men and women, 6-year-old children have been shown to indicate that men are strong and women are weak. Children regarded men as cruel, aggressive, stern, enterprising, untidy, and dominant. Meanwhile, women were considered as soft hearted, emotional, tender, grateful, and gentle, exhibiting traits like gratitude, as well as being flirty and dependent (Garbula, 2009).

Masculine sin: Behaving like a woman

It is difficult to define "masculine." Sometimes, being a man simply means not being a woman. More than forty years ago, Robert Brannon (1976) argued that rejecting what is feminine and girlish is a strong aspect of modern masculinity. According to Brannon, "No Sissy Stuff" and "Nothing Girly" constitutes part of the foundation of the male sexual role. He notes three others. First, "The Big Wheel" refers to how masculinity means striving for success and prestige, as well as how it is measured by wealth and power. Second, "The Sturdy Oak" represents everything that makes a man dependable, especially in a crisis situation. This makes him hard and lasting like a rock, pillar or tree. Third, "Give'em Hell" literally refers the way in which masculinity requires the creation of a courageous, aggressive, risk-taking aura that lives on the edge. In 1977, Goffman remarked that:

> Furthermore, some of these doings the individual does in the company of the other sex, an arrangement facilitated by diverse institutional practices, allowing for the dialogic performance of identity-ritual statements by one party receiving ritual answers from the other party, both displays being necessary for the full portrayal of the human nature of the individuals involved. (Goffman, 1977, p. 326).

Most women enter romantic relationships looking for partnership and equality. Most men prefer women who work professionally. Thus, men seem to be content with benefiting from the work of women while maintaining their privileged position when it comes to housework. Indeed, masculinity and privilege are strongly connected—especially insofar as women in the same situation as men cannot count on receiving the same or similar benefits. A study of British couples indicated that even if a woman pays most household bills from her own income, she is rarely rewarded with the privileges typically assigned to a male breadwinner.

In economics, the most widespread model of labor division in the family is provided by Gary Becker (see Michoń, 2008). Becker assumes that between two adults, unpaid household tasks will be fulfilled by the person who performs less work on the labor market. In this model, gender does not matter—at least in theory. However, as numerous studies show, even if a woman performs more professional work than a man, she is still responsible for a larger portion of the housework. As early as 1985, Sarah Berk argued that the decision to divide unpaid work in a household is not a consequence of who has more time, whose time is more valuable, or whose skills are more useful on the market. Rather, the division of labor is determined by the gender-based structure of normative expectations assigned to work (Berk, 1985). Consequently, Becker's metaphor of the household as a "small factory" is incorrect.

In economic models, the basic criteria for division of labor in a family comprise an individual's skills, time availability, and earning opportunities on the market. Traditionally, women are less able to avoid unwanted housework due to their being paid lower wages, experiencing more negative consequences in divorce, and having fewer chances of finding a new partner when they are older. As such, women tend to accept the unequal burden of housework because their negotiating position is relatively worse. Models using the gender perspective indicate that the division of labor in the family shapes the relationship between the partners and represents the confirmation or denial of gendered identity in men and women. The gender perspective adds another element to this explanation: gender differences can influence the avoidance or selection of certain types of work. In models referring to gender identity, the division of labor largely creates and maintains the boundaries between the masculine and the feminine (Twiggs, McQuillan, & Ferree, 1999). In turn, these boundaries strengthen masculinity and femininity. As a result, when a man performs tasks recognized as feminine or a woman does what is masculine, there is a need to justify the abandonment of gender codes.

Studies conducted in the United States indicate that if the man is the only breadwinner in a family, his participation in unpaid work in a household (excluding child care) reaches an average of 10%. In turn, the woman being the only one in the relationship who works for pay is associated with a decrease in the man's share in the amount of working time. In this case, the participation of men in unpaid work increases to a maximum of 37% (Akerlof & Kranton, 2000; 746). In other words: if only the man works professionally, the woman's share of household duties is 90% on average. When the situation is reversed and the woman is the sole breadwinner, the women's share of household duties is 63%. The concept of gender identity provides an explanation of the differences in the participation of women and men in housework. A "model" and "typical" male should not do women's work such as ironing, cooking, and cleaning, and should earn more than his partner (Akerlof & Kranton, 2000). Although the examples above provide a markedly clear image of the differences between the sexes, they overlook a significant element: the participation of men in the performance of housework can increase even if the time spent on such chores does not change. Indeed, the growing involvement of women in performing paid work has been accompanied by a reduction in the overall amount of unpaid work in the household. Consequently, the proportion of male household work can grow because the amount of time spent on housework by all family members lessens.

It is worth noting that the adoption of a gender perspective for the analysis of the division of household duties is not tantamount to assuming that knowledge, qualifications, earning opportunities, and so on do not affect the division of work in the household. Rather, the perspective emphasizes that gender norms are an element of the negotiation process in which the confirmation of one's gender identity is an important boundary condition. For example, Davis and Greenstein (2004) suggest that women are less able to use their negotiating power than men (see the theory of exchange). Even if both partners have the same resources, men are aware that society does not expect them to do more housework (Davis & Greenstein, 2004). As a result, they do not feel responsible for the cleanliness of the home, the ironing of clothes or grocery shopping. Moreover, women are first to be blamed for failure to fulfill such obligations because it is her "area of responsibility."

Gender norms are transferred through the process of socialization to some extent. As Robert recalled,

> When I was younger, my mom would just do all the dishes and clean everything, so I've never really had to clean. It's hard for me now. Every little bit I do, I feel like it's a lot! I'll say "Well I did the dishes! I took out the trash!" (Miller & Sassler, 2012, p. 440).

Adapting to the norms of masculinity does not only apply to doing housework. It is not uncommon that men working in occupations traditionally dominated by

women experience negative stereotypes or have to acknowledge their masculinity. For example, the name of the largest trade union in the Polish health services is the Nationwide Trade Union of Nurses and Midwives, which suggests that its members are women and not men. This is just one example of many. An increasing number of men work as nurses, preschool teachers, and carers for the elderly; however, caring and caregiving is generally ascribed to women. Literature in the field of nursing indicates that men decide to work as a nurse because they want to help others and care for their welfare. However, male nurses experience significant stigmatization. The stereotype of the man as a "sexual aggressor" and that of male nurses being homosexual makes it difficult for some patients to accept men touching them. As a result, male nurses must be especially careful to avoid accusations of improper handling of patients (Evans, 2002).

Nonetheless, men working in women's professions often experience specific benefits: they have a better chance of playing a leadership role, typically receive better treatment, and typically enjoy more career advancement than the women working with them. At the same time, men working in "female" professions are usually comfortable working with women. Women who function in the "masculine" world may be hurt by negative stereotypes, while stereotypes about men—such as the pursuit of a career, struggle for status, and leadership skills—often bring tangible benefits. However, performing the "emotional" work of caring for children in kindergarten or nursing hospital patients may be difficult for men because of the conviction that these fields require the particular qualities associated with women.

Men working in occupations dominated by women are often afraid of stigmatization. Therefore, working in the stereotypically female occupations often triggers male behaviors aimed at confirming their gender identity. As a result, men whose professional work has a "feminine" character (for example, nursing)—typically measured by a larger share of women being employed in a given profession—spend more time performing "male" work in the household than men working in occupations dominated by the males (Schneider, 2012). The same is true for women. Those who work in jobs dominated by men pay more attention to confirming their gender through the performance of "feminine" tasks. The empirical findings of Schneider's study (2012) are interesting and important: showing that women in managerial positions—thus performing "male tasks"—avoid doing "male" work at home, the findings undermine the dominant theories.

The sin of not being a real man

In 1929, the lives of those living in Marienthal—a small village near Fisch-Dagnitz in Austria—changed radically: in just one year, the vast majority of village residents lost their jobs. First, the spinning mill was closed, then the printing house,

the bleaching shop, and finally the weaving mill. Consequently, the biweekly payment of benefits became more important than Sunday and more anticipated than Christmas. Visiting the village, Jahoda, Lazersfeld, and Zaisel (2002) visited the village and described their observations in a seminal study entitled, *Marienthal: The Sociography of an Unemployed Community*. In this study, the researchers noticed significant differences in how women and men reacted to unemployment. At midday, the majority of people appeared on the main street of the village. Observing the pedestrians, the researchers noted:

> Almost two-thirds of men interrupted their walk at least twice; only one out of ten walked to his destination without stopping. The women presented a strikingly different picture; only about one-sixth of the stopped on two or more occasions…they have considerably less time on their hands…Once someone trotted past; it turned out to be a village idiot…For men, the division of the days into hours has long since lost all meaning. Getting up, midday meal and going to bed are the only remaining points of reference (Jahoda et al., 2002, pp. 66–68).

The day of the unemployed lasted around 13.5 hours for men and 14.5 for women. As Jahoda and others explained,

> The term "unemployed" applies in the strict sense only to the men, for the women merely unpaid, not really unemployed. They have the household to run, which fully occupies their day. Their work has a definite purpose, with numerous fixed tasks, functions, and duties that make for regularity…So for women the day is filled with work. They cook and scrub, stitch, take care of children, fret over the accounts, and are allowed little leisure by the housework that becomes, if anything, more difficult at a time when resources shrink (Jahoda et al., 2002, pp. 74–75).

Explaining this, Jahoda and others (2002) noted that a wife would say, "Although I have much less to do than before, I am actually busy the whole day, and have no time to relax." In turn, the most common form of time management in men is idle. A 40-year-old man would write that between 2 and 3 p.m. he "Lay on the couch and glanced through the newspaper"; 3–4 p.m. "Chatted with a neighbor" from 3 to 4 p.m. "Looked at the rabbits at 4:40 and brought some water into the kitchen" between 4 and 5 p.m., "Waited for supper with the children" from 6 to 7 p.m., "Had supper and the children went to bed" between 7 and 8 p.m.; finally, after talking to his wife, they were in bed by 8:30 p.m. (Jahoda et al., 2002, p. 72).

A similar study was conducted in Poland. Summing up the study of the biographies of unemployed Polish men, Zawadzki and Lazarsfeld (2007, pp. 238–239) wrote:

> As the most characteristic manifestations of the mental life of this group of unemployed were revealed: particularly depressing sense of humiliation and being unnecessary, increased sensitivity…[Moreover] social benefits are perceived as alms and for this reason their recipients feel humiliated (Zawadzki & Lazarsfeld, 2007, p. 234, translated by author).

A healthy man of working age is generally expected to perform work. By working, he meets this social expectation, and consequently experiences a high level of *identity utility*. If such a man is unemployed, and thus fails to meet the social norms of men his age, he deviates from the ideal and experiences a lower degree of identity utility (although the utility of consumption may still be high). Such social norms are reflected in the following statements by the female partners of unemployed men:

> 2 years without a job, it can be a young man just after graduation, a graduate without [work] experience has little chance of finding a good job. But a 36-year-old guy? (dziś na pomarańczowo, online comment, 2018).
> And maybe he is well in a warm house…you bring money and he does not have to worry about anything. Either he wants to work for a lot of money or it's a common lazy-bone and I would do something about it (myszkaka, online comment, 2018).
> For me your husband is evidently lazy both mentally and physically, even if my guy had a world class MBA but he would not work for long time: he would not be a man. If he could not just work, no matter where, at the construction site, in the store, he has to have a job, and then he can look for something that suit his own abilities and ambitions (Baszi, online comment, 2018).

Another expression of this social norm regarding work is captured in Saint Paul's letter to the Thessalonians:

> Nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you…For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat…" (II Thess., 3, 8, 10).

Akerlof and Kranton (2000) introduced identity into the economic utility function. Their proposition was based on the assumption that each person derives their usefulness from two sources: namely, consumption and social norms. First, traditionally and in accordance with the canon of economics textbooks, the level of utility is affected by the consumption of goods and services, including rest. Second, our experienced utility results from the extent to which our lives and behavior are in line with social norms. If a man acts in accordance with the norms defining "masculine" behavior, then their identity utility will be greater than if

they act against these norms. Of course, societies and individuals differ in terms of social norms and the level of attachment to them.

Identity utility has interesting consequences for individual happiness. When the objective situation of an individual remains the same while the social norms of the group to which they belong change, this transformation may affect the level of individual well-being. In this way, we can explain the results of a study conducted by Clark (2003). Examining the British labor market, Clark (2003) indicated that the increase in unemployment led to a weakening of the social norm of being employed, thereby resulting in a relatively high level of life satisfaction among unemployed individuals. Similar results were found in Switzerland, where regional referenda on cuts in unemployment benefits was used as a measure of work ethic (Stutzer & Lalive, 2004). In regions where the social norm of employment was stronger, the unemployed were found to reenter the labor market much faster. At the same time, the unemployed were significantly less happy than those who were employed professionally, and the difference between these groups was higher the stronger the norm regarding employment (Stutzer & Lalive, 2004). Such norms can have more drastic consequences than a lower level of life satisfaction. Between 1997 and 1998, the number of suicides in Japan—which has the leading rate of suicide in the world—increased dramatically, growing from nearly 22,400 to almost 33,000 per year. The annual rate of suicide remained above 30,000 until 2011. This sudden and significant increase mainly concerned unemployed middle-aged men (Tanisho, 2013).

Generally people adapt more easily to severe changes if they are irreversible, such as the death of a spouse, than they are reversible ones like unemployment. This is because the unemployed individual always has the potential to return to the labor market and thus meet the social norms corresponding to their social category. Only illness, disability, or reaching of retirement age results in a transition from a group in which paid work is a social norm to one in paid work is not required. This is illustrated by a German study that compared the life satisfaction of people who were unemployed before retirement age with those who were employed (Hetschko, Knabe, & Schöb, 2014). This study found that being unemployed immediately before retirement did not translate into a reduced level of life satisfaction after retirement. Moreover, despite the lack of a major change in financial situation, health, or amount of free time, those who were unemployed before reaching retirement age experienced a significant jump in life satisfaction after reaching retirement age (Hetschko et al., 2014). In other words, before retirement age, an individual feels that they are young enough to work and thus should work. Therefore, when they are unemployed, they feel that they have deviated from the social norm. This pressure disappears upon reaching the age of retirement: the individual is not expected to work, making unemployment acceptable. This indicates that overcoming the gap between experiences and social aspirations is shaped by social norms.

As such, social norms indirectly indicate what a person should do. Sociologists point out that human behavior is shaped by the expectations of other people to some extent (Bittman et al., 2003; Greenstein, 2000). In order for everything to form a logical whole, individuals choose to behave in a way that allows others to understand their actions. Consequently, they meet the expectations of others—including those related to gender roles (Coltrane & Shih, 2010). For instance, the norm regarding employment is closely tied to gender, particularly masculinity. As one social media commented, "Men without a job, living with their parents, make others to believe that they cannot exist alone" (renee, online comment, 2018). Moreover, for a norm to gain social status it must be shared by other members of the society. Failure to comply with norms usually causes embarrassment, anxiety, guilt or shame in people (Elster, 1989). As one woman commented online, "I absolutely would not want a guy who does not work" (Lilianna1, online comment, 2018).

However, Elster (1989) emphasizes that behavior induced by norms is not mechanical and non-reflective: social norms usually create some room for one's own interpretation and manipulation. Therefore, social norms differ from moral, legal, or individual norms. Furthermore, the behavior conditioned by norms is not compulsive.

The gendered dynamics of households have been demonstrated by numerous studies. Such dynamics are particularly clear in instances where the principle that the "man is the main breadwinner of the family" has been violated to some extent. This happens when a woman earns more than her working partner—that is, she is the main breadwinner—or when she is the only one earning money, and is thus not only the main but sole breadwinner in the family. Bittman and others (2003) have shown that while women increase their income, they only reduce their involvement in housework until their share in household income is equivalent to that of the man (Bittman et al., 2003). Thereafter, their behavior changes in an economically surprising way: if her income surpasses that of her male partner, the woman's share in housework begins to increase again. Bittman and others (2003) suggest that disrupting normative standards—that is, that a man earns more than a woman—is partially compensated for by a more traditional division of housework. Similar results were obtained by Evertsson and Nermo (2004): women in the United States were found to increase the amount of time devoted to domestic work when their partner was dependent on them economically.

The discussion above makes the following comment particularly interesting:

> Last year, my husband left his job in April, he was looking for a new one and he could not find, he was at home for 8-months. We are not short of money, because what I earn is enough for everything and we do not have any debts…but? but—I am ashamed in front of my family…The worst is my family, they deride him, and I feel sorry and

> ashamed, I feel that we are helpless in life, I feel horrible about it, I'm mad at him that he did not extend the contract there (corobiccorobic, online comment, 2018).

If it is "masculine" to earn money on the market, then losing a job signifies an important blow to a man's masculine identity. In this situation, taking care of the home—that is, undertaking "feminine" work—may prove to be particularly unpleasant for an unemployed man. The gender display model (Brines, 1994) and the similar concept of gender deviance neutralization (Greenstein, 2000) suggest that, when facing the non-traditional division of paid work—that is, the woman earns money while the man is unemployed—both partners will strive to neutralize the effect of behaviors that do not correspond to gender norms. Therefore, when a woman acts as a breadwinner, a man can manifest his gender identity by limiting the amount of housework he performs.

Indeed, several studies have found that unemployed husbands perform slightly less housework than those who are employed (Bianchi et al., 2000). For instance, in the United Kingdom, the involvement of unemployed men in domestic chores clearly decreases to around a quarter of the housework load (Harkness, 2008). Brines (1994) has similarly shown that when women become breadwinners, men compensate for the loss of breadwinner status by limiting their involvement in housework. Meanwhile, investigating whether the sex of the individual who loses their job affects the changes in the division of household tasks, Gough and Killewald (2011) found that the amount of time spent on housework is twice as high among unemployed women than men. This contradiction can be explained by the identity of the socio-cultural gender in the household: housework is considered "women's work," and men avoid it in order to demonstrate that competencies are assigned according to sex (Treas, 2010). In short, men who fail to fulfill the traditionally masculine role of the main breadwinner strive to strengthen their "masculinity" by avoiding "women's work" (Treas, 2010).

Notions of femininity and masculinity are also manifested in people's reactions to unemployment. When a man is unemployed, women tend to take care of his emotions in helping him find employment. Some wives try to support their husbands by making their emotions become more positive (for instance, other focused emotional work). In particular, they seek to restore a high level of self-esteem in their partners with regard to the professional sphere. They justify their behavior by saying that an unemployed man who has been fired or is finding it difficult to find a job often thinks that he has nothing to offer. The longer the period of unemployment, the stronger this conviction becomes. Women want to restore the man's faith in themselves—both out of love and concern, and because they are worried about when he will start working again. As one woman admitted,

> I'm very worried about him. I am. If he thinks that he's nonemployable [sic], then he won't be…It's very scary. I sit up in the kitchen and I think "We're going to have to give up this house," you know what are we going to do? We're going to rent some shitty little apartment? (Emily) (Rao, 2017, p. 648).

In Rao's (2017) study, the woman, Emily, convinced her husband that "he has many skills. He's so dedicated. He's so loyal. He works really hard and any company would be happy to have him" (Rao, 2017, p. 648). Rao (2017) supplied several other examples. For instance, Tamara supported her partner by reminding him that "Clearly you're valuable because these people call you back and you go in for interviews. It's just you haven't found the right thing yet" (Rao, 2017). Women also undertake other types of emotional work such as self-focused emotional work, controlling their emotions for the benefit of others. They do this by not showing their worries or fears, especially those related to the material future of the family. Unlike women, men do not spare their wives such concerns and share their fears openly. In the face of a difficult experience like unemployment, Rao (2017) found that unemployed men did not try to take care of the emotional well-being of their partners. Rao's (2017) research clearly showed the cost of performing emotional work: hiding their worries caused the surveyed women to feel overstressed and they ceased performing emotional work when their partner's unemployment continued (Rao, 2017).

The difference between the sexes can also be seen in the fact that men whose earnings increase more than those of their female partners over the course of their careers are more satisfied with the relationship. In contrast, the difference between a woman's income and that of her husband was shown to be of little importance to her. According to a study by Brennan, Barnett, and Gareis (2001), in the case of couples where both partners work, men's satisfaction with the marriage appeared to depend on the size and direction of the difference in income. Another study indicated that the lack of full-time employment significantly increases the risk of divorce among men born after 1975, while both the employment of women and their participation in housework are not relevant in this context (Killewald, 2016). Moreover, while the expectation that wives should perform the housework have decreased, male professional employment remains a social norm (Killewald, 2016).

Men who experience more difficulties fulfilling their gender role tend to suffer from depression, low self-esteem, a lower level of happiness, feelings of helplessness, and a lack of sense of life (Vandello & Bosson, 2013). These men are also the most reluctant to look for help. In turn, the majority of women who work more than their partners are dissatisfied with their economic role despite earning higher salaries and being the primary bill payers (Miller & Sassler, 2012). In such couples, women seldom anticipate that they will serve as the main breadwinner of the family. As a respondent in one study admitted,

> He's not really responsible and that's sort of weird, 'cause I never, going back to the question about how I imagined my life when I was a kid, I never in all my life thought that I would be the one that would be responsible for things like that, but I am, so go figure (Miller & Sassler, 2012, p. 440).

Gender roles are also revealed in the approach of women and men to the work done by their partner. In traditional couples, women often see and appreciate the importance of their partners' gainful employment and their ability to support the family. However, when the woman is the breadwinner, men are less likely to notice and appreciate it (Miller & Sassler, 2012). As Miller and Sassler (2012) observed,

> Mark, a stay at home father, viewed doing half of the chores as strictly rational but did not express gratitude for her providing. Instead, he complained about how incapable she was on the domestic front. He lamented: "I finally trained her to do laundry right. How can a girl grow up and not know how to do anything domestic at all? It just blows my mind" (Miller & Sassler, 2012, p. 439).

Another difference between the sexes concerns the partner's career approach: men often place their professional goals above those of their partner.

Instead of conclusion

In many pre-industrial societies, "masculinity" is attained through participation in rituals confirming strength, valor, or endurance. Modern males in developed countries do not have to survive circumcision like the Samburu tribesmen in Kenya, kill a large animal like Masai in East Africa, or pass through the painful ritual of scarification like boys in New Guinea. Paradoxically, the lack of ritual puts men in a more difficult situation: without passing a "masculinity exam," they still have to prove that the masculine or manly status can be assigned to them. This produces to two kinds of difficulties: first, men do not really know how to confirm their identity; second, "being male" is fleeting and requires constant confirmation. This is not the case for women: the status of "being feminine" is assigned. The woman is feminine, while the man is masculine when he earns it. Masculine status has to be gained and maintained. Moreover, "masculinity" is attributed and confirmed by those creating the man's environment, which is why it requires public demonstration (Vandello & Bosson, 2013).

Chapter 6

Persecution mania: Different standards, worrying, and household managers

All my life I had believed that unless I was perfect *I* would not *be* loved.

Jane Fonda

Writing about persecution mania, Bertrand Russell (1996) emphasized our sensitivity to gossip. Although we all gossip about the imperfections of our friends and acquaintances, we also expect others to treat us with the love and respect we feel toward ourselves. We are aware that our friends have faults, but love them regardless. However, we are less able to tolerate knowing their awareness of our own faults. We expect them to recognize us as ideal people. Persecution mania is always rooted in an exaggerated belief in one's self-worth. Moreover, Russell notes, our motivation to do good is rarely as clear as we think it is: "Love of power is insidious; it has many disguises, and is often the source of the pleasure we derive from doing what we believe to be good to other people" (Russell, 1996, p. 116).

Different standards

Much like sunshine, tidiness brings satisfaction to everyone. However, there is always someone who prefers the wind and a cloudy sky, or someone who does not attach much importance to the weather outside. For such people, a sunny day evokes indifference. Similarly, we differ in terms of the importance we attribute to tidiness. For instance, some enjoy evenly arranged cups; as one online user noted, "Order gives me the feeling that I'm organized and I have everything under control. I consider it an advantage" (Wspomnienia oniryczne, online comment, 2018). However, tidiness is of no concern to others, as another online user claimed, "I generally do not attach importance to tidiness, when I cannot move, I do some cleaning and it's ok. Mess does not make any difference to me, I remove dirt on

a regular basis, I do not like bugs" (a ja tyle powiem, online comment, 2018). Similarly, we differ in our standards of cleanliness—parents certainly know this feeling when their teenager tells them, "well, I cleaned up!" As such, someone who values neatness is more likely to experience discomfort in the face of scattered clothes or dirty dishes. As one particularly neat user commented, "I am always clean, because it hurts me when I see dust" (kjaka, online comment, 2018). For such individuals, order and harmony brings more satisfaction: "…and so I always come back to a clean, nice smelling house, I drop my shoes and I can lie in a nice smelling room…oh what a delight" (kjaka, online comment, 2018).

Men offer differ from women in regard to standards of performing certain household chores, at least in some areas. Indeed, women tend to have higher standards of housework (including cooking and cleaning) and childcare (Poortman & Lippe, 2009). This is captured in the comment of one online user,

> And I do not know how to fight him here in terms of taking care of this damn order, because for him I could not clean up and it would be good. For some time now he does not need tidiness to be happy…The worst is that I have been taught since childhood, and I cannot live seeing that the sink is full, that when I walk barefoot in the apartment, I feel sand under my feet (Lejdiii, online comment, 2018).

This is not to say that men do not care about orderliness. From a dorm room to bachelor apartment, few men accept dirt, disorder, or neglect in their homes. However, what satisfies their standard of cleanliness and order is often below the level required by their female partner. As one user admitted on an online forum,

> I love such a clean house, I live alone with my husband and cannot deal with it ☹. He laughs that we could have a dental office in our place because it's so sterile. However, I am always tired of something else is still to be done ☹ (Czyściocha, online comment, 2007).

The aforementioned users, Czyściocha and Lejdiii, reveal two important consequences of such differences between partners: specifically, the danger of one looking for perfection, failing to understand their needs, and the resulting attitude and behavior of the other partner. Striving for the ideal means that we want a home that shines, often making "clean" not good enough. In other words, regardless of how objectively the quality of the housework is measured, the subjective perspective can still find it wanting.

The standards of their partner are never met, regardless of how much they try. As Czyściocha (2007) commented, "something else is still to be done ☹" In this regard, it is worth considering the comments of Jahoda, Lazarsfeld, and Zeisel (2007) regarding the home visits they undertook during their study on the unemployed in Marienthal:

> The accommodations—one room, small bedroom, kitchen—are very well kept. The children are neatly dressed and give the impression of being well cared for. The wife apologized for not having cleaned up yet, although everything looked tidy enough (Jahoda et al., 2007, p. 141).

The amount of time and effort spent on housework is also a significant source of frustration for many—as Czyściocha (2007) added, "I am always tired…" As Schwartz writes in *Paradox of Choice* (2016), "Getting the best objective result may not be worth much if we feel disappointed with it anyway" (p. 89). This is reflected in the comments of several women, one of whom noted that: "I always have remorse bad conscience that I am not doing enough, that I'm too unsystematic, that it does not always shine like it should be" (Hubinka, online comment, 2018). Similarly, another commented, "I'm not a pedant, but I'm always cleaning, washing up and I still have a mess" (epur, online comment, 2018). In one study, Canadian teenagers explained why their mothers did more homework than fathers: "[Mom] complains a lot…even though you do help her, it's never right… She likes a certain way of everything done…she's a clean freak" (Beagan et al., 2008, p. 662).

The unequal distribution of tasks between partners originates from the inequality of norms concerning the performance and quality of housework. Usually, the person responsible for the execution of a given activity is the one who expects more. Responsibilities such as caring for the cleanliness at home, providing nutritious meals or grocery shopping are often placed on the shoulders of women, while for performance of these tasks remains optional for men. In Beagan and others' (2008) study, one mother commented:

> I end up cleaning it up, because it's never done—it's my own fault because I'm fussy. It's never done to my satisfaction, so I really feel bad about going behind them and cleaning it right after they've done it, so…(Beagan et al., 2008, p. 663).

Meanwhile, in the opinion of someone with lower requirements, cleaning is a waste of time and little more than a whim of a fastidious partner. As an online user commented on her husband, "He treats it sometimes as some of my exorbitant whims, ridiculous, pathetic" (mam podobnie, online comment, 2018). Consequently, people who require less or have lower standards often expect that their actions—such as cleaning—will be noticed and appreciated.

Several studies have evidenced the gender differences with respect to tidiness standards. Comparing single males and females, Sayer (2015) noticed an interesting pattern: childless women who live alone do twice as much housework as single males. This discrepancy was especially clear in the case of laundry and cleaning. While this discrepancy remains significant, it has improved over time—having

been 5 : 1 in 1965. The results of Sayer's study suggest that the main determinant of gender differences is not the actual needs of the household, as these are the same for both single males and females, but individual standards of cleanliness.

Single women do not wash and clean to meet the needs of others, such as their partner or children, or because they have to meet the requirements set by their partners. Rather, the higher frequency of washing and cleaning is the result of gender-specific social expectations regarding the appearance of the individual and their place of residence. In other words, differences between men and women may result less from inequalities in hierarchy of power in households, but from the individual and social aspects of the place of residence. According to social norms, it is easier to accept a disorder in a bachelor's apartment than it is a single woman's. Similarly, a man wearing a wrinkled shirt seldom raises questions, whereas a woman doing so is often judged negatively. There are countless examples of this discrepancy of society's gendered expectations. In short, the differences between men and women in terms of the burden of housework may not be rooted in unequal negotiating power between partners, as is often assumed. Such assumptions are based on the notion that because housework is unpleasant, the partner with greater negotiating power—such as their earnings—forces the other to undertake these duties. Rather, these inequalities are rooted in the individual and their social beliefs about what constitutes a *real man* and *real woman*.

In his research, Kaufmann (1995, based on Żadkowska, 2012) pointed out that individuals often devote time to completing tiring tasks despite being unable to explain why. In such cases, statements like "you (man) are stronger than me" or "you have to do it" are made. Such an attitude is associated with a partner's lack of understanding and unnecessary drudgery. While having lower expectations, men seldom consider it necessary to adapt to their partner's expectations. The meaning assigned to housework is strongly associated with a sense of responsibility. In the case of men, the principle is: if you want something to be done, do not bother me with it and leave me alone. As one woman complained online,

> Everything fell on me, I cleaned the living room, the kitchen, the bathroom, I dusted off the stairs. It was something unbearable. My partner did not help me much. In addition, I always cooked dinner, I made lunch to office, and I did shopping. The only thing he did was; he sometimes gave me a lift to work and to the shop (Green.butterfly67, online comment, 2009).

However, even if men do not pass all household duties to women, they often face a serious obstacle in undertaking such roles: women themselves. Although the comparison to Cerberus guarding the entrance to Hades is somewhat exaggerated, several studies have demonstrated that women themselves exclude men from performing certain activities (e.g., Allen & Hawkins, 1999). Similar to impatient

parents waiting for their child to put on their jacket or shoes, many women prefer to do something on their own rather than entrust it to a man. As Czyściocha, quoted earlier, writes: "my husband helps me, just like a male…he does not do something as carefully as I want it to be done, and I rearrange it, get irritated or angry" (Czyściocha, 2007). Thus, while women want men to do certain chores and men show a willingness to do it, some women do not believe that the final result will meet their standards. As one user commented on an online forum, "It's best to do it yourself than to get upset and improve" (czikitka cziki cziki, online comment, 2018). Similarly, another commented,

> He cleaned up yesterday…He says he dusted off but there were crumbs. He says that he was cleaning the shower tray but it is dirty. Why is it so hard to do it properly? To make it more interesting he is generally hard-working and not lazy (gość, online comment, 2018).

Those who prioritize the importance of cleanliness and the preparation of meals will typically assume that others will judge them based on this criterion. This is a well-established psychological mechanism. Simply put, if I value education or an athletic figure, I assume that others judge me based on what my education or figure. In turn, our expectations of what people will judge us on shape and reaffirm our values. For instance, women tend to have higher standards of cleanliness because they tend to feel assessed on the basis of cleanliness, including that of their children and homes. As one online user commented in this regard, "I feel the pressure to be perceived as perfect. I admit that I was cleaning the house to meet children…I pretended that I had everything under control so that I could be admired" (kozazwoza, online comment, 2007).

Some may feel outraged by the suggestion that contemporary women fear condemnation over an unwashed pot or dusty shelf. Although standards of cleanliness are changing, it remains a social merit and women are still perceived as responsible for such tasks in most societies. The words "what a beautiful house" and "what a wonderfully decorated apartment" are still directed more toward women than men. For many people, cleanliness or other housework tasks can be a measure of a proper work ethic, organization or self-discipline. As one online user commented, "A woman who is a mess and terrible slob is not a woman!!! It's not a difficult to take care of the look and parade around the city—while inside [the house is] one big crap [sic]!!!! Horrible" (Branka79, online comment, 2007).

Writing for *Slate* magazine, Shire (2013) points out that in popular culture, the neglected space surrounding a man usually indicates that he is too busy solving "real" problems to devote attention to such trifling tasks as cleaning. The former president of the United States, Barack Obama, recalls that his flat was full of pizza boxes when he was a young senator. In the worst case, men enjoy the quality of

an "distracted professor." On the other hand, in the first scene of the movie *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001), the protagonist (Renée Zellweger) walks through an untidy room to an almost empty refrigerator, symbolizing that her life is in shambles.

The feeling of not achieving goals or meeting (social) expectations is only part of what women experience in fulfilling domestic tasks. Another aspect, no less important, is the feeling of not being appreciated. As one woman complained on an online forum,

> Do you know how much extra time I'd have at the end of the day if I didn't have to constantly pick up your dirty socks, shoes and underwear. And is it sooooo [sic] hard to put your dirty dish in the dishwasher??? And seriously, you just saw that I swept and mopped the whole house, so can you please not track in mud??!!!…Is my DH [dear husband] the only pig???' (Bellasmommy0806, online comment, 2009).

The work of many women remains unnoticed and unappreciated. As another user commented,

> My husband, however, underestimates my efforts…[what I do] does not mean anything to him. According to him, only he can be tired when he comes back from work, and I do not, because I was all day at home, taking care of my son, and this is no hardship (according to him) (Smutaska_1,2010).

Indeed, household work is often only noticed when it is not performed. As one user noted in this respect,

> The men do not appreciate the work of a woman at home until they see what it means. Send your child to kindergarten, and when daddy has free time, eg at the weekend, let him take care of her, and at the same time make him do dinner, washing and cleaning, and you go for the day to a friend, mother, shopping, etc. (cux, online comment, 2010).

There is no biological explanation for the gender differences with regard to the standards of housework. Rather, such standards are rooted in culturally shaped gender identity and related social roles. It is culture that creates and enhances divisions, stereotypes, and differences. For example, only in a small portion of advertising (about 2%) are men shown performing housework. Advertisements for cleaning products are target toward women. Even if men are shown doing housework in commercials, such tasks predominantly comprise cooking or looking after a child. Of course, the feminine desire for cleanliness at home has much deeper roots than the message created by marketing gurus. It is women who are first blamed for mess and, eventually, praised for neatness. Such a scheme does not create incentives for men to perform housework. Paradoxically, even in couples

in which the man does relatively more housework, the woman receives the social praise. As a result, men tend to find housework not worth the time or effort. Although there is no evidence, it seems likely that a man coined the phrase "A clean house is a sign of wasted life."

Men's relative lack of motivation to do housework can also be due to the belief that they lack the appropriate skills. In this case, "I cannot do it" equates to "I do not want to learn." A potential explanation for the lack of men's involvement is their not knowing what needs to be done. In the case of contemporary men, their fathers seldom did housework while the efforts of their mothers often went unnoticed. In this case, while a man may notice a pile of dirty dishes, he may not perceive that there is a household task—washing the dishes—to be done. For men, there is no sign saying, "wash these dishes." As a result, the reality of the masculine world remains different to that of the female one.

"The one who knows": The inequality of mental workload

In the Mexican village of Tepoztlan, men who want to control their family keep their earned money and give small allowances to their wives. Such men were called *cuilchilete* or "a man with a long penis." *Cuilchilete* were considered misers and not suitable as husbands. Although the wife has traditionally been subordinate to her husband, she is responsible for planning, organizing, and running a household, as well as educating and looking after children (Lewis, 1949, p. 604). It is women who remember their children's shoe size, know what is missing in the refrigerator, remember the birthdays of distant relatives, and where the pin numbers for the various accounts are hidden. Women are often assumed to be better at such tasks. As mothers or partners, the woman is "the one who knows," her knowledge encompassing all things related to raising a child and running a household. As a result, her every thought tends to be centered on what needs to be done, both now and in the future. Such work is continuous, tiring, and, more often than not, invisible.

The problem of the "invisibility" of the work done in the home is easily illustrated. If I asked you, as an external observer, to estimate the workload at home, what would you think? Cleaning, cooking, ironing, shopping, paying bills, babysitting, and many other activities can be observed if cameras are installed everywhere. However, what about the activities that we do not see? These include monitoring the cleanliness and provisions of the household, planning chores and activities, gathering information and responding accordingly, and delegating tasks. In enterprises, people performing these tasks are known as managers. While managers in a work environment are typically the highest paid member of the staff, the work of the (female) manager of the home is seldom noticed by her loved ones.

In popular culture, female characters are often shown feeding their children while preparing dinner and greeting guests. In on such comic, this image was followed by a man exclaiming, "You should've asked! I would've helped!" The author of this particular comic strip, Emma, adds: "When a man expects his partner to ask him to do things, he is viewing her as a manager of household chores. So it's up to her to know what needs to be done and when" (Emma, online comment, 2017). The term "mental workload" refers to "the ability to process available information and resources required for the system to meet expectations." The workload of "those who know"—that is, woman—predominantly comprises controlling activities aimed at directing attention in the right direction, dealing with opposing goals, selecting strategies, adapting to the complexity of the task, and determining tolerance levels of productivity levels (Jex, 1988). Some may be surprised by the fact that Jex's (1988) notion of how women operate in the home was originally based on machine operators who experienced a high level of mental strain in their work. Of course, psychological stress is being investigated in a number of fields, particularly on those who require constant focus and attention, including astronauts, pilots, drivers, submarine officers, and machine operators. However, it is relatively rare for the term to appear in publications devoted to housework and childcare.

Suzan Walzer (1998) has drawn attention to the three categories of mental labor in parents: namely, worrying, processing information, and managing the division of labor. According to Walzer (1998), although men have an active role in childcare, such mental labor is predominantly performed by mothers. These categories are worth further examination.

Worrying

Jaworska (2017), a blogger, observed:

> …we live today in times of ubiquitous fear for children…Since they are very young we try to make them aware of the dangers that life brings. We make sure that they do not talk to strangers, do not take anything from them, we carry them everywhere, we give them telephones so that we can control them, we do not take our eyes off when they are in water."

Indeed, Sylvia, one of the participants in Walzer's (1998) study, stated, "My mind is always on something, you know, how is he? Or how's he eating? Or how he's this or that, how he's doing in day care." (Walzer, 1998, p. 33). By definition, worrying is something unpleasant, and often related to sadness and anxiety. Indeed, the etymological root of the word "worry" is *wyrgan*, which means "strangle."

Certainly, it is not much of an exaggeration to say that intense worry can make us feel as though we are choking. We often worry about what might happen, knowing that there is always the possibility of something bad on the horizon. In our mind, the question of "what if…?" is haunts us, strengthening our fear that something bad might happen. The worry of mothers is something of a truism. As one participant noted in a study conducted by Walzer (1998), "Mothers worry a lot."

There is a saying: mothers do not sleep, they just worry with their eyes closed. Indeed, worrying is expected of a mother, especially when her child is very young. It is widely believed that a woman who is not worried about her children cannot be a good mother (Walzer, 1998). Consequently, women can show concern due to their fears about meeting social expectations, thus following the expected behavior of a good mother. Maternal worry is partly rooted in a mother's environment. As Williams, writing for the *Guardian* (2018), recalled, "When I got pregnant myself, I realised that this drive towards obedience, the need to prove that you will create, instinctively, the healthiest possible womb-environment for your foetus, doesn't come from you: it comes from outside." Worrying about a child can take various forms: from concentrating on details like whether the child has eaten enough, to more general concerns surrounding the good motherhood. Nonetheless, even general worries translate into specific behaviors. Fears about being a good mother can translate into action, like looking for information about child-related diseases or initiating meetings with their teachers.

Of course, caring for the well-being of others is noble, and many people—especially mothers—do what is they believe is best. However, it is important to note that women expect that the way their children feel, dress, and behave affect the way people assess them. This is much more meaningful for mothers than fathers. Moreover, the grading scale seems to start from a negative "bad mother" to a neutral "this is how it should be." As a mother admitted in Walzer's (1998) study, "I think that people don't look at you and say, 'oh there's a good mother,' but they will look at people and say, 'oh there's a bad mother'" (p. 36). A recent study revealed that six out of ten mothers had been criticized for the way in which they care for their child—the criticism generally focused on matters of discipline and nutrition. Of course, it is often the people closest to us that are the most critical: parents, partners, friends, and other mothers (Mott Poll Report, 2017). The combination of sudden changes in the needs and requirements of growing children, the accumulation of new information about what is best for the child, and diverse cultural norms regarding parenthood produce a social battlefield with mothers in the middle.

Processing information

Generally, women spend much time seeking more information about parenting, resulting in the assumption that mother's "simply knows better." The mother is the manager of the "child and household" project. Examining contemporary parenting guides, Hays (1996) observed that although they did not directly categorize tasks into maternal and paternal duties, such texts served to consolidate and deepen these divisions because they predominantly targeted mothers. This trend is reflected elsewhere. For instance, many parents look for information on the Internet. However, there are significant differences in the sex and age of Internet users. A typical parent using the Internet is a white, middle class woman under the age of 35 (Plantin & Daneback, 2009). It is estimated that the vast majority (85%–95%) of parents who use the Internet in connection with parenting are women. Moreover, such Internet users primarily seek health-related information (Madge & O'Connor, 2006; Sarkadi & Bremberg, 2005).

Managing the division of labor

Management involves a set of activities—including planning, decision-making, organizing, leading, and controlling—directed toward an organization's human, financial, physical, and informational resources with the intent to achieve organizational goals in an efficient and effective manner (Griffin, 2005, p. 6). In organizational contexts, managers are often the highest paid employee. Moreover, managerial positions are predominantly occupied by men. The definition of manager also fits the (unpaid) role undertaken by women in the household. Women monitor, set deadlines, plan, organize, and synchronize both their own housework and the activities of family members. Indeed, management plays a key role in the efficient functioning of modern families. Families must anticipate and plan who receives, who performs specific tasks, who buys and when, and so on. Conversations at the table often involve looking for solutions and setting schedules. As the anthropologist Darrah (2007) notes, the hidden element of being busy is the need to devote time to management. Confirming and transmitting an instruction like "are you at home? Dinner is on the top shelf of the fridge" takes time and effort. Moreover, because modern families have many different tasks, the proper coordination of all activities requires management, which contributes to increasing the scope of such tasks.

The mental labor of motherhood

To date, few studies have been conducted on mental labor in the household. In a study conducted by Alby, Fatigante, and Zucchermaglio (2014), women described the specific type of commitment required in managing the needs and activities of all family members. Thinking ahead and remembering everything is a kind of mental effort that was deemed particularly tiring. As one woman noted, "Concerning the energy I spend for the organization, it is mentally very burdening" (Alby et al., 2014, p. 34). The difficulty of household managerial work is largely due to the need to meet external requirements, such as the knowing a child's school schedule and ensuring that they have everything they need for school and after-school activities, as well as communicating the daily schedule with other family members and making any necessary changes. In this mental labor, mothers often describe having and connecting all the details of both her own schedule and that of her family members. Of course, mistakes occur. Mothers often forget details like what their child needs to take to their next art lesson, making check-up appointments for their child, or other dates, events, and occasions. While going to the store to buy a gift for your child to take to a friend's birthday party is not an effort, remembering to do it can be. As one mothers noted online,

> I started finding that I needed a diary to get me through—me, who'd never needed that sort of thing before. I dropped to part-time work & still needed a diary—the housework dropped lower, I was still forgetting things (mainly inconsequential things, thank goodness), so I tried to concentrate on making sure things were written in my diary (jaden62, online comment, 2017).

More than three in four American mothers believe that it is their task to control their child's schedule, with 86% affirming that they plan and organize the tasks of family members. In contrast, just 22% of American fathers consider it their responsibility to manage their children's schedule (Bright Horizons, 2017). Indeed, mothers keep a mental calendar, make appointments, and generally make sure that every family member is where they should be at the right time (Bright Horizons, 2017). Mothers also know household details, like whether there are still things in the washing machine that need drying before tomorrow. Indeed, mothers are inundated with mental notifications like "Monday, kindergarten, our turn to bake a cake, buy a gift for Sophie's birthday; Thursday, take dog to vet" and so on. Men rarely play the role of coordinator in the home—not because they are unable to or find such a role unimportant. Rather, the involvement of women frees men from these duties, saving them from the constant stress of having to plan, coordinate, manage, and negotiate household and family affairs.

Although men are increasingly involved in household affairs, studies have shown that they fulfill the role of assistant to the woman's manager. As managers, women delegate tasks in the family (Coltrane, 1998); as assistants, men help. As one woman reported of her husband, "Peter is very good at helping out. If I say, 'Peter, I'm tired, I'm sick, you've got to do this for me, you've got to do that,' that's fine, he's been more than willing to do that" (Walzer, 1998). The word "helping" is significant as it indicates that the woman is the one who remains responsible, with the man only fulfilling these tasks occasionally. The man-as-helper often waits to be told what, when, and how to do something. This is not tantamount to a reluctance to perform household tasks, but to taking responsibility for planning and organizing. Asked what they like most about their husbands in the context of housework, the majority of women said self-responsibility: men doing the work on their own, without being asked (Coltrane 1998). "I do not have to ask for it," commented one woman in Coltrane's (1998) study. The women also agreed that the need to remind the men that something must or at least should be done, and to teach him how to do the job properly, constituted the most irritating aspect of their partners. They also noted that men often complained that they did not notice their efforts, and that men's standards were too low.

Many psychologists consider a sense of control necessary for the proper functioning of a human being. The notion of freedom and the right to self-determination imbues Western culture, from psychological and philosophical treatises to the concept of democracy, as well as popular culture and imagery. Believing that I can control the environment surrounding me and achieve something that is important to me is necessary for human happiness. The role of manager provides one with power and control over specific areas of the home. However, the pursuit of total control can also cause suffering for many people.

Managing the daily schedules of family members represents an important element of household work. Usually, the obligation and resultant costs of performing these activities falls on women. However as stated one participants in a study on mothers noted, "my most tiring task is, in my opinion, exactly this mental job [literally 'head job']…the physical work, you do it, you can do everything all in all" (Alby et al., 2014, p. 34). Another participant added, "concerning the energy I spend for the organization, it is mentally very burdening, I mean, I feel it heavy on my shoulders" (Alby et al., 2014, p. 34). Even if the activity (for example, cooking) is ultimately performed by someone other than the mother, the latter is still obliged to organize it (for example, buying the ingredients) and ensure that it is completed. At the same time, if the task is not carried out, the mother is deemed responsible. This is especially important in relation to the chapter devoted to fatigue: in short, statistics relating to the time spent on work do not reflect the actual workload.

Instead of conclusion

Obligations related to running a home and looking after children are often presented as the mechanical exercise of simple, repetitive activities. However, they often involve difficult mental work—a fact seldom recognized in relation to the household. Moreover, involving the constant transfer of attention between tasks, forced breaks, and diverse requirements, such metal labor creates favorable conditions for the experience of mental exhaustion. Although exhaustion often results from significant events, it is often caused by the accumulation of small activities and decisions in work that requires constant reflection and involves external limitations. Simply put, too much happens at once. The mental work involved in managing the functioning of the family reflects these tensions, women often becoming vulnerable to stress and burnout.

Chapter 7

Fear of public opinion: New fathers

> *"Grace has never been happier…"*
> *William looked at her in quiet amazement.*
> *"You believe that, don't you?"*
> *"Of course I do," Edith said. "I'm her mother."*
>
> John Williams, *Stoner*

> *The husband avoids intimacy with members of his family in order to be respected by them…His contacts with his children are brief and reserved. The Tepoztecan husband expects his wife to see that the children are quiet when he is at home, and it is her obligation to teach them to fear him. Men are generally not talkative at home, and contribute little to family conversation; nor do they seek or expect their children to confide in them. When the husband is at home during the day he tends to sit apart from the rest of the family; at night he eats alone or with his grown sons and then goes out, or retires.*
>
> Oscar Lewis, *Husbands and Wives in a Mexican Village*

> *…for the mud, the miserably stormy weather, and the necessity for driving a diminutive horse through deep waters have not been able to distract his thoughts from you and prevent his proving that wherever he is, he thinks of you.*
>
> Thomas More

Writing about fear of public opinion, Bertrand Russell (2006) noted that most people need to feel accepted by those around them in order to be happy. An individual with certain beliefs or lifestyle can be considered an outcast in one society and accepted by another. While children and young people acquire knowledge about how they should act, these ideas are often unacceptable in the environment in which they live. Those who are different are threatened with social isolation—remaining

independent in a hostile environment thus requiring energy while causing pain. Certainly, Russell's work focuses more on those who do not conform to conventions than those who do.

Paradoxes related to public opinion are evident in relation to contemporary fatherhood. While fathers are increasingly expected to be involved in caring for their offspring, they are still expected to fulfill their traditional role as the main breadwinner of the family.

The peculiarity of fatherhood

In 95% of mammalian species, males are rarely involved in directly caring for the wellbeing of their offspring (Geary, 2000). Human males comprise the remaining 5%. Although, as in other mammals, human mothers are typically responsible for raising children, human fatherhood remains an intriguing exception in the mammal family. According to evolutionary psychology, women are more involved in caring for children because the birth of a child carries a much higher cost for them than it does for males. Pregnancy, breastfeeding, and limited childbearing potential make women focus on caring for their offspring. In contrast, males are focused on looking for other partners who may give birth to their offspring. Hence, the dominant conclusion is that men are orientated toward increasing their number of offspring, while women focus on their wellbeing. As such, for men, dealing with children means equates to an irreversible loss of time and energy that could be spent on courtship and mating. As such, from the evolutionary perspective, men practice childcare in order to prevent their current female partner from leaving or to increase their chance of acquiring another. In this scenario, caring constitutes a form of advertising. This has been observed in nature, albeit rarely. For instance, the sand goby—a small fish inhabiting the European coast—are the only species in which the male is more attentive to the construction of the nest and caring for eggs when an unknown female is nearby. In this instance, the care is a performative form of courtship. Indeed, while male sand gobies look after the eggs more diligently and built nests faster in the presence of females, they are a markedly more negligent—even eating the eggs—when female sand gobies are not around (University of Florida, 2004). Such of behavior has also been observed among insects. For instance, older male burying beetles (*Nicrophorus*) care more for their offspring than younger males because they have a relatively smaller chance of future reproduction (Benowitz, Head, Williams, Moore, & Royle 2013). Of course, among humans, a man's childcare ability can be attractive to women. "My fiancé is great with kids," noted one woman, "when I see him interacting with kids or holding a baby, I melt. It's one of the things I love most about him" (GoondockSaints,

2014). However, this chapter looks beyond this kind of motivation to focus on a uniquely human behavior: fatherhood.

Anthropologist Lee Gettler (2010) suggests that the involvement of fathers in childcare resulted a greater number of children being born to our ancestors. In the early period of human evolution, our ancestors experienced a surge in energy demand due to increased body size. At the same time, for reasons unclear, females began experiencing shorter periods between births. It was long thought that the primary role of men during this period was to provide food for women and children. According to Margaret Mead (2013),

> When we survey all known human societies, we find everywhere some form of the family, some set of permanent arrangements by which males assist females in caring for children while they are young. The distinctively human aspect of the enterprise lies not in the protection the male affords the females and the young—this we share with the primates. Nor does it He in the lordly possessiveness of the male over females for whose favors he contends with other males—this too we share with the primates. Its distinctiveness lies instead in the nurturing behavior of the male, who among human beings everywhere helps provide food for women and children (p. 188).

However, a different and now widely accepted hypothesis emerged in the first decade of the twenty-first century. In addition to providing food, men actively reduced the burden placed on mothers by taking on responsibilities like holding, bathing, feeding, and teaching children. In this way, they were invested in their biological offspring and ensured their access to their partner. According to Gettler (2010), it is the involvement of fathers in childcare that resulted in the shorter period between births, thus facilitating human development.

The mostly likely candidates for "best dad" might be found among the Aka people of central Africa. In Aka society, whole families sleep in one bed. If a child does not require breastfeeding at night, the father typically cares for the child should it wake, singing to them until they calm down. Fathers wash and clean up after their children, and even allow them to suckle at his breast to calm them down when the mother is not around (Buss, 2008). This prompts the question: where does the relatively "unnatural" behavior of human fathers—who directly and indirectly invest in their children—come from? It is difficult to imagine that the motivation of fathers is an evolutionary trait rooted in the desire to ensure the survival—and eventual dominance—of *homo sapiens*. It is suggested that, like in the animal world, human fathers pay children more attention when they believe that they are the biological father, the likelihood of pairing with different women is limited, and when the survival of the child increases (for instance, where investment directly translates into the child's future) (Geary, 2000).

Paternal childcare

Fathers occupy a central role in mythology. For instance, in South America, the mythology of the Ye'Kwana holds that Wanadi is a positive figure while Odo'sha and his subordinates represent the forces of evil. Before Odo'sha appeared, the world was beautiful—wise and good people lived forever, food was plentiful, work was unnecessary, and there was no sickness or war. Then Odo'sha appeared, destroying this perfect world. According to Ye'Kwana lore, children were originally born to men—the pregnancy developing at the back of men's knees. This prevented men from working and hunting. Odo'sha changed this: deciding that women should give birth, he created the womb and ovaries (Lauer, 2005).

Nowadays, we are observing a partial return toward this mythical reality. Although estimates show that mothers still devote twice as much time to childcare in comparison to men in the US, Canada, and Netherlands, and even three and a half times more in France (Sayer & Gornick, 2012), the gendered discrepancy in the amount of unpaid work—especially childcare—is gradually decreasing. In terms of household chores, the reduction in gendered difference is primarily due to women spending less time on unpaid household labor. In contrast, the narrowing gap in childcare is due to an increase in male involvement (Bianchi et al., 2000; Bianchi & Milkie, 2010; Craig, Mullan, & Blaxland, 2010). Additionally, in many countries, while women engage in less housework, they continue to provide the same amount of childcare (Budig & Folbre, 2004). The reduction in the amount of time devoted to childcare primarily concerns activities where the child plays a more peripheral role and is not the mother's sole focus (for example, performing housework while caring for a child) (Bittman et al., 2004; Budig & Folbre, 2004). While both mothers and fathers are devoting increasingly more time to their children, the increase in time spent by fathers exceeds that of mothers (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010). This care includes that provided on weekends and holidays, as well as jointly with mothers (Fuligni & Brooks-Gunn, 2004). The feature that differentiates the sexes is that in caring for a child, fathers give up the time spent on rest and sleep, while mothers give up time spent on household duties (Sayer & Gornick, 2012).

While female employment results in reduced commitment to childcare, this effect varies according to social policy and dominant cultural norms. Sayer and Gornick (2012) have documented a difference in approach to childcare among mothers according to their employment. For instance, in regard to unemployed mothers, American mothers spend twice as time on childcare than Slovakian women (16 and 8.1 hours a week, respectively). Meanwhile, in regard to mothers who work part-time, women in English-speaking countries—with the exception of Great Britain—spend two to three times more time on childcare than those in France (Sayer & Gornick, 2012). Differences between countries decrease slightly

when comparing women who work fulltime. Interesting differences between countries also appear when considering the difference in the number of hours spent on childcare between unemployed mothers and those who work at least 41 hours a week. In Norway, there is only a decrease of 1.5 hours (from 12 to 10.5) per week, while the drop is much as 8 hours (from 16 to 8) in the US (Sayer & Gornick, 2012). In contrast, the time spent by fathers on childcare is much less sensitive to changes in the number of working hours. More specifically, the transition from unemployment to fulltime work reduces the time spent on care by about three hours per week (Sayer & Gornick, 2012).

Studies conducted in numerous countries indicate that differences between the sexes regarding childcare are reflected both in the amount of time spent and the form of childcare. Certainly, in comparison to mothers, fathers do not perform as many routine activities related to the child's needs, often spending more time teaching and playing with the child—especially on weekends (Craig, 2006b; Fuligni & Brooks-Gunn, 2004). As one mother complained online,

> …at home, there is such a division of roles that I am [the one responsible for] these boring, obligatory matters, reminding about medicine, bathing, having to leave the computer, cleaning up the room—I am the grumbler (I have to stop it a bit, I know) and daddy is having fun (Marta Mal, online comment, 2016).

In addition, men are seldom alone with their child; rather, they tend to be accompanied by other people, usually the mother of the child. Moreover, unlike women, men do not tend to combine childcare with other activities (multitasking) or engage such duties within a well-defined or routine time frame (Craig, 2006a; Sullivan & Gershuny, 2013). As a result, fathers do not really replace mothers in providing care. Additionally, by fulfilling routine duties that must be done at a specific time, women find it more difficult to combine work and childcare (Craig, 2006a). In contrast, it is still easier for men to adjust caregiving to suit their own schedules.

For both mothers and fathers, the time spent on care is influenced by the age of the child (the younger children the more time) and the number of children in the family (the more children the more time) (Sayer & Gornick, 2012). The time required for childcare decreases as the child ages. There are a number of reasons for this, including their attendance of school, the availability of institutional care for older children, as well as the increasing self-sufficiency of children—with those aged twelve and above generally able to look after themselves for longer periods. For example, Australian data suggest that children under the age of two spend twice as much time with their parents as those between the ages of two and four. In turn, the latter spend twice as much time with their parents than children between the ages of five and nine (Ironmonger, 2004).

The scale and form of fathers' involvement in care are constantly changing and vary from one culture to another (Geary, 2000). Research conducted in 1982 revealed that 43% of British fathers had never changed their child's diaper. In contrast, in 2000, only 3% of fathers had no experience changing diapers. In 2012, 65% declared that they were primarily responsible for changing diapers. Moreover, the research of Fuligni and Brooks-Gunn (2004) indicates that even if the amount of paternal childcare provided is relatively small, women feel that responsibilities are appropriately shared if men perform routine duties such as changing diapers or bathing the child. Women also tend to feel that responsibilities are shared when fathers take care of their child during the week, rather than only on weekends.

Parental care and well-being

The happiness derived from taking care of a child is important for several reasons. First, there is a strong relationship between happiness and health: happier people are healthier. Second, the emotions felt by parents influence the health and happiness of their children, as well as the quality of the relationship between parents and children. Third, the happiness of parents can affect the quality of their relationship and their plans to have more children. Nonetheless, happiness in regard to childcare has been relatively overlooked by scholars. After all, parents love their children, so they must be happy looking after them. However, this assumption is easily undermined by the fact that many parents are unhappy, and often childcare is the root cause of this unhappiness. Kahneman and others' (2004) research has been particularly influential in this respect. Using the day reconstruction method (DRM), Kahneman and others (2004) revealed that mothers experienced more positive feelings shopping, watching television, and preparing meals than they did from engaging in childcare. While children can evoke a deep sense of happiness and joy, parenthood can also be a source of frustration, boredom, and anxiety.

The cultural imperative of good parenting involves spending time with children and ensuring their success in life. A parent's sense of work-life balance is influenced by their perception of their child's well-being. Parents who perceive that health, education, behavior, emotional state, and, more broadly, development of their child is inadequate are more willing to partially withdraw from work to devote their attention to the child. Contemplating how the time spent with a child influences the subjective well-being of parents, Offer (2014) notes that women are more likely than men to perform unrelated tasks or passive care when caring for children. Spending time together with their children, including meals, is best for the optimal emotional well-being of parents. However, performing routine activities

related to childcare has been linked to greater stress and less involvement among mothers (Offer, 2014). Such research suggests that the impact of childcare on the emotional well-being of an individual is related to the type of activity performed.

Subsequent studies revealed that an individual's subjective perception that they spend enough time with their child impacts their sense of work-life balance more than the objective amount of time actually spent with the child (Milkie, Kendig, Nomaguchi, & Denny, 2010; Milkie et al., 2002). Milkie and others (2002) found that despite spending relatively more time with their children than others, some parents thought the time spent with their children was inadequate. In this regard, Nomaguchi (2005) noted that for the assessment of life satisfaction, the so-called subjective time spent with a child is more important than the actual, objective time spent with them. In other words, studies demonstrate that an individual who thinks they spend an appropriate amount of time with their children and is convinced that their children are well is more likely to enjoy a work-life balance.

Several studies conducted in the United States indicate that mothers' work-family balance improves when their husbands spend more time alone with their children, but declines when they spend time with their children without their husband (Marks, Huston, Johnson, & MacDermid, 2001). Milkie and others (2010) have also revealed interesting insights into differences between parents: performing routine activities related to childcare (for example, feeding, bathing, bedding, doctor's visits, and transport) influences the sense of work-family balance of fathers but not mothers. Interestingly, this impact depends on the level of education. The performance of routine activities strengthens the work-life balance of fathers with a higher level of education, but weakens that of fathers without a diploma. Meanwhile, interactive activities—such as reading, learning, and playing—are particularly conducive to strengthening the work-life balance of mothers. Moreover, greater work-life balance through engaging in such interactive activities was achieved by relatively less educated parents (Milkie et al., 2010). This may be due to the fact that standards for investing in children differ according to social class. Furthermore, for parents who are better educated, certain activities (for example, reading to children) may be a routine occupation, while less-educated parents engage in such activities less frequently and thus find them more attractive.

As such, the type of activity performed, and whether it is routine / non-routine and low/high quality is important for parental emotional well-being. High quality activities are interactive, and include shared meals, playtime, reading, and homework. According to Coleman (1988), these lead to an increase in the level of human capital of children and shape a close relationship between the child and parent. At the same time, the practicing of these activities satisfies social expectations regarding the fulfillment of parental roles.

New fathers: Expectations versus reality

While Odysseus returned home—experiencing dangers and adventures along the way—his faithful wife, Penelope, waited at home and looked after the children. In the past, being a good father did not require being at home, only ensuring the family's income. Today, this does not suffice. Recently, the terms "new fathers" and "involved fathers" have become popular both in the popular and scientific press. So-called new fathers represent attitudes and behaviors that contradict the stereotype of the absent father who is distant from his children. New fatherhood emphasizes the need to develop relationships with the child, as well as embrace the role of an active caregiver. As one such father claimed online,

> I take care of my children, I raise them, I care for them. I put them to sleep, I change nappies, I bathe, I feed, I play, I cuddle, I laugh, I calm down, I praise, I teach. I do it exactly the same amount of time as my wife. I do what a parent does, because I am one (ZUCH, 2018).

In common perception, a parent is someone who behaves the way a mother does. Like a mother, a good father remains in close contact with their child. He remains involved in care, provides support for the child, is emotionally sensitive, and devotes time to creating bonds. Hence, by shaping their understanding of a potential, ideal self, men express a desire to be close to their child. They also feel that their close relationship with their child will be the basis upon which their children, partner, and society assess the way in which they fulfill their role as fathers (Barclay & Lupton, 1999).

New fathers are expected to take on numerous responsibilities. However, the data indicate significant differences in the amount of time fathers spend with their children. For example, Smith and Williams (2007) show that almost half of Danish fathers, a quarter of British and German fathers, and only a tenth of French fathers spend 28 hours or more with their children per week. Data collected in different cultures indicate that while fathers are becoming increasingly involved in childcare, mothers remain the primary caregivers. For instance, in Denmark, fathers account for almost a third of the time devoted to childcare, while fathers in Greece or Portugal account for just over 11% (Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 2000).

Similar differences are observed in primary cultures. For example, among the Ye'Kwana people, mothers hold young children for 78% of the time, while fathers only for hold them for 1.4% of the time; the remaining time of total care is occupied by other people, mainly women, such as sisters, aunts, and grandmothers (Buss, 2008). While Aka fathers carry their children longer—at some 57 minutes a day on average, they still lag far behind their partners—Aka mothers holding their children for 490 minutes per day on average (Buss, 2008). As such, even among

Aka—a culture of so-called "mothering men"—women still perform a greater portion of childcare duties (Buss, 2008, p. 221).

It should also be remembered that "being close to a child" is subject to the individual interpretation of fathers. Fathers typically assume that their child is already big enough to be able to actively spend time with them, enjoying activities such as fishing, playing football, going to the cinema, homework, reading at bedtime, and travelling. Fathers tend to see themselves as a teacher, friend, guide, and companion. This vision of fatherhood does not involve cooking, cleaning, washing or shopping. As such, the birth of a child results in a painful clash of a father's expectations with the reality of fatherhood, requiring amendment to their understanding of "being close." Such amendment seldom involves adapting their behavior and expectations to the physical and mental development of the child, but postponing the building of closeness to when the child is mature enough to fit into the father's vision (Barclay & Lupton, 1999). In the case of many fathers, emotional fulfillment in relation to their child comes later than expected. Certainly, babies do not reciprocate attention and caring for them can be very demanding. As one father admitted, "I did find it difficult playing with him because he didn't do much (Julian)" (Machin, 2015).

Fathers also point to purely biological limitations as impacting their role when their children are very young. As "Alex" noted,

> I haven't experienced feeding until quite recently with solids. I wouldn't say I was jealous of my wife but I was just I guess resentful in some ways. She was able to calm him when he was hungry and I couldn't do a thing. So that was a little bit of a challenge for me to deal with (Machin, 2015).

In the case of fathers, the process of forming bonds with their child is slowed down by the lack of opportunities to participate in breastfeeding. According to Machin (2015), this has significant consequences for the well-being of fathers. The relative absence of the expected bond flowing from "deep love" often causes stress in fathers in the first months following the birth of the child.

Various studies conducted in different countries indicate that, despite initial difficulties, fathers want to be present in the life of their children and do so by creating an emotional bond with them. The expectations of fathers are also changing. Fathers are increasingly required to create close relationships with their child, be involved and independent and not simply a substitute for the mother. At the same time, men remain responsible for ensuring the financial and material well-being of the family. It should be noted that similar changes have occurred in relation to women, especially in the second half of the twentieth century. However, in the case of women, they are expected to fulfill the roles of housekeeper and caregiver first, and earn an income second. As such, although women were granted the right

to work, they are primarily assessed in terms of how they cope with childcare and running a home. Contemporary men follow a similar path—although they are breadwinners first. Although "new fatherhood" as a norm, attitude, and behavior is gaining importance, the dominant belief in society is that fathers need to serve as breadwinners first, and care for their children second.

Biology does not differentiate

Throughout human history, women—rather than men—have occupied the primary role in childcare (Geary, 2000). It is not uncommon to suggest that cultural norms are rooted in the biological differences between the sexes. According to such arguments, women deal with children because it is "natural" for them to do so—a notion captured in the ubiquitous term, "maternal instinct." Indeed, a quick Google search reveals almost 60,000 returns for the Polish term and almost three million for the English term. The term "paternal instinct" is far more rare: Google returns just 17,000 results for the Polish term and 621,000 for the English term. Similarly, it is more common to refer to a "working mother" than it is a "working father."

It is widely believed that pregnancy and birth prepare a mother's brain for childcare. The neurohormone oxytocin is released when we hug someone, hence the charming name: hugging hormone. The role of oxytocin is to tune the brain to social situations, pushing us toward behavior that strengthens close relationships. Oxytocin makes us look for physical contact with family members and close friends, makes us more empathetic, and more willing to help the people we care for. Also released during uterine muscle contractions during childbirth and the secretion of breastmilk, oxytocin is thus believed to facilitate "maternal" behavior because it influences feelings of attachment, sensitivity to the needs of a child, the manner of speaking to the child (known as "motherese" or baby talk), and a mother's feelings (Carter, 2014; Feldman, 2012).

Recent research suggests that oxytocin also influences the behavior of men (Abraham et al., 2014; Feldman, 2012; Gordon, Zagoory-Sharon, Leckman, & Feldman, 2010). First, there is evidence to suggest mothers and fathers have similar oxytocin levels before the birth of a child. Second, the level of oxytocin among involved fathers is higher than in men who do not have a small child. This difference is already noticeable in the first week of fatherhood. This indicates that, like mothers, fathers are biologically predisposed toward childcare. Third, there are differences between mothers and fathers in terms of the type of behavior that stimulates oxytocin production. The level of oxytocin in mothers increases when they touch their child affectionately; speak to them in a specific, "childish" way; and when they look at their children. In fathers, oxytocin levels increase when they engage in strongly stimulating activities requiring concentration and joint

exploration or through stimulating touch. Such activities took just 15 minutes before the oxytocin level increased in both the parents and child. One study provided men with oxytocin via a nasal spray and showed them various stimulating factors, including a picture of another child of a similar age to their own, a picture of an unknown adult, audio of another child crying. None of these resulted in an increase in the level of oxytocin. However, when shown a picture of their own child, their oxytocin levels and brain activity increased in the regions responsible for reward, empathy, and attention (Li, Chen, Mascaro, Haroon, & Rilling, 2017).

Researchers have identified a network of connections related to childcare in parents' brains. This neural network comprises emotion and cognition. The former is equipped with numerous oxytocin receptors and includes the areas of the brain responsible for stress, reward, and vigilance. Thanks to them instinctively and unconsciously, the parent protects and feeds his child, and also feels the immediate pleasure of seeing his offspring. The second element is responsible for cognitive processes, empathy, and judgement. It provides parents with the ability to make the necessary inferences (for example, based on their child's behavior), forecast their child's needs, and plan appropriate actions (Abraham et al., 2014; Saturn, 2014).

Moreover, researchers have found that the parts of the brain responsible for processing emotions are highly active in mothers who serve as the primary childcare provider. Analysis of the brains of fathers who play a secondary role in direct childcare indicate that the parts of the brain responsible for thinking are more active. However, research on the brains of fathers who act as the primary caregiver provide particularly exciting results: increased brain activity was observed in parts of the brain responsible for emotional and cognitive processes (Abraham et al., 2014). This suggests that raising a child contributes to the activation of two systems in men's brains, thereby optimizing their childrearing abilities. Being in the presence of a child and actively dealing with the child's needs increases the amount of oxytocin, directing the nervous system to increase commitment to care. These results thus suggest that maternal instinct is largely a product of culture, and we can just as easily foster paternal instinct.

The paradox of contemporary fatherhood

Contemporary fathers increasingly point out the difficulties in combining their desire to be a committed father with the overwhelming reality of work and social expectations. Men—even those who strongly identify with the idea of gender equality—remain sensitive to traditional gender norms. Although they recognize that caring for a child is important to them, many think that it should be a priority for their partners rather than themselves. It is not uncommon for men to perceive themselves as the "helper" rather than the primary caregiver. Although social

norms and gender identity are characteristically stable and constant, they can change. The birth of a child in a family provides individuals with new opportunities for self-observation, which can significantly change their perception of their own gender identity. According to Burke and Cast (1997), parenthood strengthens gender differences between and gender identity of parents: fathers became more masculine and mothers became more feminine. However, depending on the degree to which men and women take on the roles of their partners, their gender identity can change toward that of their partner (Burke & Cast, 1997). This is because the appearance of a child increases the repertoire of roles—individuals become parents.

Gender identity and social norms have always and continue to strongly affect fathers. While men increasingly aspire to the commitments of "new fathers," they continue to feel social pressures regarding their role as the main breadwinner. Fathers who stay at home with their children feel stigmatized due to the prevailing social belief that the role of primary caregiver is inappropriate for a man. Men have also been sidelined in hospitals following the delivery of their child. They also fear that finding suitable employment may be difficult due to the fact that they perform a traditionally feminine role (Harrington, van Deusen, Sabatini Fraone, & Mazaar, 2015). Certainly, dominant social norms have been demonstrated in the organizational culture of many companies that "punish" fathers for fulfilling the role of a parent by providing fewer chances of promotion and a lower income (Harrington, Fraone, Lee, & Levey, 2016). Many fathers have experienced unequal treatment in fulfilling parental tasks. As one woman noted online,

> When my husband took L4 [sick leave in Poland—P.M.] for a sick daughter—women [sic] In the human resources department told him that it was probably rather abnormal for a man to take the leave, and not the mother (Ewa Firs, online comment, 2018).

In this regard, public debate and academic investigation have often overlooked that fathers often do not participate in childcare because of the attitude of their child's mother.

Maternal gatekeeping

In *The Subjection of Women* (1869), John Stuart Mill argued that men undermine their own words through their actions. While men argue that women are incapable of various actions and pursuits, they simultaneously seek to prevent women from attempting to do them. Mill suggests that this indicates that men know that women are capable of performing such tasks, but do not want them to. While defending women, Mill notes that a full understanding of what is natural for both sexes is

only possible if they are allowed to develop skills and do what they choose. I propose a thesis of "men's subjection," in which men face a reversal of the principle described by Mill in regard to childcare. Indeed, some modern women claim that men are incapable of certain tasks and want to stop them from attempting to do so. However, women know that men are capable of fulfilling such tasks, they simply do not want them to. Such attitudes can be described as "maternal gatekeeping."

Gaining skills related to dealing with an infant requires commitment, time, and energy. As one father (Toby) noted,

> Our lifestyle has changed completely, in ways for the better but it is a massive struggle, it's like taking on another job almost because it has been very tiring, a lot of hard work, a lot of sleepless nights…the further you go back the worse it was…learning everything, being a dad for the first time everything is brand new (Machin, 2015).

Studies indicate that following the birth of their first child, fathers usually need about two years to fully adapt to the new role, while women usually take about six months. During this time, parents learn to accurately recognize their child's needs. However, some fathers do not even attempt this undertaking, while some fail in the endeavor. This is typically due to their need to undertake paid work. Traditional social expectations push men toward being the primary breadwinner in a family. Together with such expectations, the organization of working time and social policy solutions make fathers the second choice parent. Sometimes fathers recognize that taking care of a child is not a "truly masculine" occupation. However, there are also those whose partners do not allow them to undertake such activities.

The term "gatekeeping" was coined by Lewin (1947), who used it to describe the practices of wives or mothers who ultimately decide what food will appear on the family table. A gatekeeper is a person who decides who or what can go beyond the, often symbolic, gate. An example of such a guard is the mythical Cerberus, the three-headed dog who guards the entrance to the land of the dead in Greek mythology. In regard to childcare, the term "maternal gatekeeping" is used to refer to the way in which mothers guard or even close the gate to childcare, thus limiting and excluding fathers from caring for a child (Fagan & Barnett, 2003). As such, gatekeeping is a set of beliefs and behaviors that can hinder the joint parental roles played by both partners (Allen & Hawkins, 1999).

Mothers play a key role in facilitating the relationship between fathers and their children (Arendell, 1996). Over the last two decades, several studies have indicated that there is a strong correlation between the desire to maintain full control over the care of the child and the amount of time that the father devotes to childcare. The more that mothers limit the father's access to their children, the more time they take care of them. The groundbreaking study conducted by Allen and Hawkins (1999) identified maternal gatekeepers, a group comprising just over 20% of the

entire population. According to Allen and Hawkins (1999), these women perform approximately five hours more work per week for the benefit of the family and have less division of household labor in their homes.

Attempts to limit the role of fathers in childcare seems to contradict common sense and the theory of homo economicus. As noted earlier, if care is costly—both financially and in terms of energy and time—then reducing this load, at least temporarily, seems desirable. This prompts the question of why some mothers do not allow men to take care of their children. The literature provides several explanations (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Fagan & Barnett, 2003; Gaunt, 2008). First, women appreciate the intensity of their direct and exclusive relationship with the child. Even if it brings them tiredness and sleeplessness, they do not try to encourage fathers to even take over caring tasks. Men derive more from parenthood and see themselves as excellent fathers no matter how many times they change their child's diaper. The same cannot be said for some women. For them, being a real mother is inseparably connected to the performance of numerous tasks resulting from parenthood. In their view, a real mother gets up at night to care for their crying child, changes diapers, and takes care of their child's appearance. A man may do it, but he does not have to.

Second, women jealously "protect their area." According to the cultural ideals shaped and empowered over centuries, woman are primarily perceived as caregivers and men as breadwinners. Consequently, the family, household, and childcare represents the woman's kingdom in which she has undivided power. As such, fathers undertaking part of the responsibilities associated with childcare is perceived a partial loss of autonomy and competence by some women (Hoffman & Moon, 1999). According to Ehrenberg, Gearing-Small, Hunter and Small (2001), maternal gatekeeping is conducive to mothers feeling more competent and more emotionally connected to their children. Women's behavior is rooted within the social inequalities between the genders. In the public sphere, men more usually have a superior role, particularly in the economic sector. This is demonstrated in the fact that men typically hold more prestigious positions, are paid higher salaries, and receive promotion more quickly. Therefore, paid work often represents a tool by which women can increase their self-esteem. Consequently, childcare and household work are fields in which women are dominant, and in which they claim authority and enjoy a higher status. Gaunt's (2008) research unequivocally demonstrates that the lower a mother's self-esteem, the more they strive to maintain total control over the functioning of the home and family. Women with low self-esteem have a stronger maternal identity. Such women connect the performance of work for the family with the perception of themselves as a good mother, and thus believe that the home is solely a woman's domain (Gaunt, 2008). Many researchers suggest that gatekeeping is a means by which mothers protect their maternal, and thus female, identity (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Gaunt, 2008). Moreover, as Craig

(2007) has shown in her survey of Australian mothers, women's attitudes toward gender equality and parenthood do not always go hand in hand. While women are more likely to agree that gender equality is necessary in the labor market and in the division of domestic duties, they do not hold similar expectations in relation to childcare. A potential cause of a mother's "reluctance" to share childcare with the father may be increasing social expectations that they do so (Craig & Mullan, 2011). Indeed, contemporary parents are expected to be present in various areas of the child's life—such as their education and friendships—that go far beyond exercising supervision and satisfying their basic needs.

Third, many mothers have doubts about the competence of fathers in regard to childcare. A mother finds evidence of a father's irresponsibility every time he fails to notice that the child is hungry or needs their diaper changed. Women see themselves as the foremost expert on matters related to childcare and the running of a household. In turn, how mothers assess the parental competence of a father impacts the amount of time that fathers devote to childcare. As one father (Simon) noted,

> When you want to help it was not necessarily been wanted or welcome. I think I can rock a baby as well as anyone else but I'm not allowed to do that. There are times when you go to help or offer to help and she says "No" (Barclay & Lupton, 1999, p. 1016).

On the one hand, women convinced that their husbands do not know how to care for children properly will separate them from childcare duties (Bonney, Kelley, & Levant, 1999; Fagan & Barnett, 2003). On the other hand, fathers who feel incompetent are less motivated to look after their offspring (Lamb, 2010). Women also "slam the gate" when they perceive their relationship with the father is unstable, as well as when they feel anxious and depressed. Another reason for banning fathers from childcare is a lack of conviction in men's ability to fulfill such roles (Schoppe-Sullivan, Brown, Cannon, Mangelsdorf, & Sokolowski, 2008). A fourth, and overlapping, reason is that women feel that they are directly or indirectly involved in the exercise of care. For example, even if it is the father's turn to feed the child at night, the mother will wake up when the child cries and fall asleep only when the child does.

While blocking the involvement of fathers in childcare in various ways, maternal gatekeepers simultaneously send out ambiguous signals. A typical example is requesting that the father dress their child, and then a critique them for choosing "inappropriate" clothing. A common joke is that "it seems that daddy dressed the child" or "mom probably left" when the clothing is deemed inappropriate. Joking about fathers and their expected or perceived incompetence is quite common. Indeed, the Internet is filled with pictures and examples illustrating the lack of fathers "highly specialized" knowledge. As one mother noted, "My husband does is all the time! He brought her to my work, thinking her tights were pants. He also

brought her to his work Christmas party in what was supposed to be her Christmas night pjs" (Lauren, online comment, 2018). Therefore, by sharing responsibilities at home, both partners create a space demonstrating the principle, "it's good that you do it; it is a pity that it is wrong." Everyone can adopt the stance that "I'm doing it as it should be"—judgement is ultimately subjective. Before spending the evening with a friend, the gatekeeping mother prepares her husband with a long list of instructions, as if the father is a newly employed babysitter. Meanwhile, some maternal gatekeepers seeking to "share" responsibilities with their partners will ensure that they retain control over the most important decisions. As such, separating fathers from childcare should not always be perceived as intentional behavior on the part of men. Women often have an ambivalent attitude toward the role of fathers and thus remain unconscious to their own behavior and its potential consequences for the involvement of fathers (Gaunt, 2008).

The manager and the subordinate

Gatekeeping is particularly visible in shaping the relationship between the mother and father of a child. Even though they openly proclaim to support gender equality, some women believe that only they can provide the child with whatever is necessary. Although they do not like it, they believe that women are simply better caregivers. This results in a boss-employee relationship or a teacher-student relationship between the mother and father. The woman knows what she wants, gives orders, and expects her male partner to do it the way she wishes. As one man admitted on an online forum,

> My daughter is 2 months old and I have no right to near her. When I'm at home and my daughter is crying and I take her in my arms, my wife starts yelling that I wants to hurt her. I prepare milk for my daughter, and my wife comes and pour it out, claiming that I have done it wrong. She picks holes in everything (Felicjann34, online comment, 2011).

Like project bosses, mothers organize, plan, supervise, and evaluate the participation of men in childcare. In this situation, their partners act as subordinates and do as they are asked—as subordinates, they remain passive and wait for instructions. Mothers expect support from the fathers. However, because they do not trust their skills, they still perform the majority of tasks themselves (Allen & Hawkins, 1999). Failure to meet their requirements provokes criticism. This criticism has a significant impact on the behavior and attitudes of fathers. For instance, Schoppe-Sullivan and others (2008) found that the incentives provided by women had a strong impact on the involvement of fathers. Indeed, men whose

partners avoided criticism and encouraged them to deal with their offspring were more involved in care. Other studies have demonstrated that fathers who believe in their skills are more likely to engage in childcare in the first weeks following their birth (Fagan & Barnett, 2003; Sanderson & Thompson, 2002). An individual's assessment of their own skills—shaped since birth—has a significant impact on the degree to which they are involved in childcare. This is particularly evident in the case of fathers whose partners are employed (Barry, Smith, Deutsch, & Perry--Jenkins, 2011). Discouragement and criticism often reduces the involvement of fathers, particularly in couples in which the woman is engaged in unpaid labor.

The socially defined role of the father is less unambiguous than that of the mother, making it easier for fathers to withdraw from care. Both mothers and fathers tend to perceive the parental, caring role of the mother as undisputable. Therefore, fathers who feel incompetent or uncertain find it is easier to withdraw. As such, the behavior and attitudes of fathers are partly dependent on how much they are criticized by their partners or how much they are encouraged to look after their child. Even fathers who see their role as active caretakers for their children still require encouragement. As such, how a man prioritizes his role as a father largely depends on the behavior, views, and attitudes of his female partner (McBride et al., 2005).

Both mothers and fathers learn to perform parental duties in practice. It may be a truism that we learn through to practice, but women who spend more time with the child from the outset gain an advantage over men—becoming more sensitive to the needs of their child and able to react faster. It is this experience, rather than inborn maternal instinct, that creates differences between parents. As noted earlier, the perception of one's own competencies fathers influences a father's behavior. This creates a vicious cycle: the father knows less due to his having less experience, making him unable to meet his partner's requirements and opening him up to her criticism. In turn, this reduces his confidence in his own skills, encouraging him to withdraw from the caregiving role.

Henry Ford once said, "Whether you think you can, or you think you can't—you are right." In order for an individual to function effectively, it is necessary to understand the facts and reasons for a particular behavior. While knowledge and skills are important, it is necessary to believe that we are able to do what we intended correctly in order to use them properly. In psychology, this is referred to as self-efficacy. Much of our behavior is shaped by our thoughts. The conviction that we are or are not able to do something finds its expression in scenarios of future events that we construct. People with a high level of self-efficacy envision how they will achieve their goals. However, those who doubt themselves have low self-efficacy, and see the future as a series of failures in which obstacles effectively prevent them from achieving their intended goals. It is difficult to achieve a goal when having to deal with a lack of confidence in one's own abilities (Bandura, 1993).

According to Bandura (1993), the most important source of agency is mastery experience. Successfully managing to do something builds an individual's belief in their own strength. Conversely, failure leads to a decrease in self-efficacy. This is especially true if the failure occurs before self-confidence is built. The source of lasting self-efficacy is perseverance, effort, and overcoming difficulties. Vicarious experiences constitute another source of self-efficacy. It is easier to judge achievements when there is an objective measure (for example, speed of running) or the nature of these activities leaves no room for ambiguity in interpretation (for example, the ability to pilot an airplane). However, many activities lack an adequate measure. In this case, self-evaluate is based on comparison with others. In other words, individuals build a sense of agency by observing people—especially those perceived as similar or as role models. When others achieve important goals for an individual, it strengthens their conviction that they are able to deal with it themselves.

A further source of self-efficacy is verbal persuasion from people important to us, such as teachers, partners, and trainers. When other people express their belief that we are able to do something, we are more likely to put in the necessary effort and not give up in the face of obstacles. This can have a limited effect on perceived self-efficacy. However, verbal persuasion can produce significant results if it is accompanied by increased and more consistent efforts. However, it is worth noting that criticism—that is, verbalizing a lack of belief in someone's abilities—can lead to failure, discrediting the critic and undermining the faith of the individual whose abilities they are critiquing. During early skill development, positive feedback has a particularly significant impact on the development of a sense of agency. A final source of sense of agency is an individual's emotional and physiological state. For example, while sadness strongly reduces an individual's faith in their own abilities, positive emotions can enhance it.

Fathers' self-efficacy—especially of those whose partners act as gatekeepers—can be significantly shaken. By not believing that they can be involved fathers, they have little chance of becoming so. People with a high level of self-efficacy adhere to the principle of "I can do it," allowing them to perceive challenges as problems to be solved rather than threats to be avoided. Numerous studies indicate that people who achieve low self-efficacy scores often have the knowledge and skills necessary to complete the task, but do not believe in their own abilities. For example, students who believe in their learning abilities have greater motivation, higher aspirations, and better academic achievements (Bandura, 1993). In short, an individual must believe in their ability to perform a given activity. This gives a sense of perceived control over the events that affect their life. The belief that something can be done influences our thoughts, feelings, motivation, and behavior.

The mothering trap

Popular culture is full of fathers who take care of their children alone. Indeed, *Pinocchio* (1940), *Bambi* (1942), *The Little Mermaid* (1989), *Beauty and the Beast* (1991, 2017), *Pocahontas* (1995), and *Chicken Little* (2005) are just a few of the children's movies in which fathers serve as the sole parent. Such fathers are often shown as assertive, imperious, physically separated from their children; at other times, they are funny and naïve—such as those in *Aladdin* (1992) and *Beauty and the Beast*. In *Chicken Little*, the father seems helpless when it comes to interacting with his son, as demonstrated in a scene in which he holds a portrait of his deceased wife and admits, "if you were here, you would know what to do." Another example of the apparent inability of fathers to communicate with their children is in *How to Train Your Dragon* (2010)—the absence of the mother repeatedly referred to by the struggling father. Such representations are quite unlike those where the father is accompanied by the mother. In such instances, the fathers are shown as balanced and brave, while she is caring and affectionate.

The image of the floundering single father in popular culture reveals something significant: a desirable model of parental behavior. Such indirect conditioning communicates that in order to be a good parent, one needs to act like a mother. Describing the protagonist of *Stoner* (1965), John Williams wrote,

> And he was more nearly a mother than a father to his daughter. He changed her diapers and washed them; he chose her clothing and mended it when it was torn; he fed her and bathed her and rocked her in his arms when she was distressed (p. 93).

The new father does what is stereotypically expected of a mother, usually based on his partner's requests. As one online user noted, "She knows how a father should behave, because it does not matter if he is doing it badly or is doing it well, it's important to do as she wants" (Sonne Kern, online comment, 2018). Fatherhood seems to have no ideal image. While traditional fatherhood primarily involves earning money, the new version supplements this role with that of mothering. As another online user noted, "There is now a fashion for fathers huddled in headscarves, who run around playgrounds, because all advisors, coaches and trends recommend this way" (Wilk, 2018). In the nineteenth century, the dominant ideology was that of the so-called separate spheres, with women connected to the hearth. According to this social structure, women have a "natural" ability to care for others, while the man is naturally responsible for being the breadwinner. Being a central figure in the household, the woman gained some power and control over the man. As such, men entering the "feminine" sphere are confronted with the expectations and standards of good parenting formulated by women for

women. As one father wrote, "it is you, women, who give the role to a man, what he should do, and how he should be, or what kind of father he should be" (Ojciec, online comment, 2018).

Conclusion

About a hundred million years ago, mammalian brains began to develop at an extremely fast pace. This created the so-called new cortex, leading to the development of what we used to call "human thinking," as well as love. The limbic system creates feelings such as pleasure, passion, and sex drive, resulting in the emergence of sexual desire. It was this new cerebral cortex that made it possible to create emotional bonds. Species that do not have this—such as crocodiles or lizards—do not have parental feelings. After hatching from eggs, the offspring of such species have to look for shelter and escape being devoured by their own parents. Denying the ability of men to engage in childcare is akin to saying that their new cerebral cortex has not developed adequately.

While searching for Internet forums where fathers speak about their role in childcare, two types of discussion became apparent. First, those starting with a woman stating something to the effect of "my husband does not want to take care of the child" and "What to do when he does not want to take care of the child?" Second, there were those in which the starting point was a statement like "seeing father and child" and "the wife moved out and took the child."

Writing to his son in 1517, Thomas More noted that, "It is not strange that I love you with my whole heart, for being a father is not a tie which can be ignored." According to Margaret Mead (2013), every well-known human society is firmly based on the learned protective behavior of men. Culture, especially in developed countries, is changing. Numerous studies indicate that fathers want to be present in the lives of their children by creating an emotional bond with them. However, like women, men are trapped by social convention. While contemporary society formulates expectations regarding the creation of close relationships between fathers and their children, it does not absolve them from being the primary breadwinner in the family.

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eISBN: 978-83-8211-075-3