Great Expectations
Individuals, Work and Family

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Statement of Originality

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all assistance received in the preparation of this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

John Murray
A Cécile
Abstract

Female labour force participation has increased constantly over the last thirty years in Australia. A number of theories and an established literature predict that such an increase in the performance of paid work by women will lead to a redistribution of unpaid work between men and women in the household. There is little evidence, however, of a corresponding redistribution of unpaid work within Australian households, raising a number of questions about the process through which paid and unpaid work is distributed between partners.

A review of the literature considers economic and sociological approaches to the domestic division of labour and how the distribution of paid and unpaid work between partners has been understood, measured and explained. This review identifies two related problems in the existing explanatory frameworks; one theoretical, and one empirical. First, existing explanatory frameworks make assumptions about either unilateral, exchange or bargaining decision making processes between partners, rather than empirically establishing the process through which decisions are made. These untested assumptions about the decision making process lead to an empirical problem, whereby the interpretation of empirical data relies on establishing associations between the individual characteristics of household members and the subsequent distribution of time spent on different tasks. By examining the decision making process that is subsumed within the existing explanatory frameworks, this thesis addresses a gap in the literature.

Results in the established literature rely on the strength of assumptions about the decision making process in these explanatory frameworks and neglect alternative possibilities. More recent studies provide alternative explanations about the allocation of time within households which consider the independent behaviour of autonomous individuals as well as their perceptions and preferences about paid and unpaid work. These insights guide the construction of this study, with additional consideration given to how individuals perceive, anticipate and make decisions about work and family, taking account of both the established and alternative explanations for the allocation of time to paid and unpaid work. Specifically, the research question asks: what is the decision making process when allocating time to paid and unpaid work in the household? Two component questions sit within this, firstly: what type of decision is it – autonomous, unilateral, exchange or bargaining? And secondly: what is the basis for the decision – income, preference or gender?

In order to counter the empirical problems identified in both recent studies and the established literature, and pursue the research questions, a qualitative strategy of data collection and analysis is implemented. Based on replication logic, a target sample of sixty respondents is constructed, containing ten men and ten women from each of three purposefully identified life situations; undergraduate, graduate and parent. This sample allows for the comparative analysis of results between and across samples of men and women drawn from different stages of work and family formation. Subsequently the interview schedule is detailed, along with the composition of the final sample, made up of male and female undergraduates, male and female graduates, mothers and fathers who are also graduates.
The results of the interviews are presented in three separate chapters in accordance with
the different life situations of the interviewees, namely male and female undergraduates,
males and female graduates, and male and female parents who are also graduates.
Following the three results chapters is a detailed analysis and discussion of the key
findings in the final chapters.

Findings from the research indicate that the decision making process is based on gender
and operates independent of partners in an autonomous manner. Indeed, gender is seen
to be pervasive in the decision making process, with gendered expectations evident in
the responses of all men and women in the sample, and taking effect prior to household
formation, before decisions about work and family need to be made. The findings
demonstrate that, independent of one another, men and women have implicit
assumptions about how they will manage demands between work and family. Men in
the study are shown to be expecting to fulfil and fulfilling the role of breadwinner in the
household, with a continuous attachment to the workforce, whereas women in the study
are shown to be expecting to accommodate and accommodating additional care
demands in the household, impacting on their attachment to the workforce. These
implicit assumptions by men and women conspire to limit the range of options
perceived in the household when decisions about work and family need to be made and
prevent households from redistributing paid and unpaid work responsibilities between
partners in accordance with their economic needs and preferences.

These findings also highlight institutional constraints that prevent the redistribution of
paid and unpaid work between partners, reinforcing the delineation in the division of
labour between household members. In the process this study makes two key
contributions to the existing literature, firstly with a method for the investigation of the
hitherto untested decision making process, and secondly with findings that demonstrate
an alternative decision making process to that which is assumed in the existing
explanatory frameworks, which takes account of the gendered expectations of men and
women independently.
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Chapter 1 – Introduction

Changes in the labour force participation of women in Australia over the last thirty years have not effected the distribution of unpaid work between partners in households. Current theoretical explanations for the relatively fixed nature of time and task distributions in households rely on assumptions about the decision making process between partners, although the process through which decisions are made has not been directly studied. The need to understand the process of how decisions between work and family are made, from the construction of individual preference and the creation of household options, to the process of decision making in households, is the theoretical problem that drives this research. These issues are examined in this thesis with a study of how individual men and women in different stages of work and family formation perceive, anticipate and make decisions about work and family.

Work and family issues are of particular importance in Australia and other developed economies at present and they are linked to a variety of public and private concerns. An understanding of how households reconcile interactions between the spheres of work and family adds significantly to policy options that can be used to address headline demographic trends such as birth rates that are below replacement level and the ageing of the population. Similarly, perspectives that consider the work and family interactions of households also inform policy considerations on the position of women in society, with particular regard to ensuring equality of opportunity in employment for women, the responses of employers to women in employment and how the increased presence of women in employment affects the care of children and the elderly. These related concerns underline the importance of understanding the interactions that occur around work and family.

This thesis examines the spheres of work and family at a time when female labour force participation in Australia is at historical highs, having increased steadily for the last thirty years (Pocock 2006). This increase in female labour force participation represents an increased allocation of time to paid work by women. However, the increased amount of time spent in paid work by women has not been offset by reductions in time spent on other tasks such as unpaid work and care (Craig 2007). This presents a conundrum as
women perform increased amounts of paid work without a compensatory decline in the amount of unpaid work they perform in the household, which has been described as the ‘second shift’ (Hochschild 1989). At the same time male labour force participation, as well as the amount of time men have allocated to paid work and to other tasks such as unpaid work and care, has remained relatively constant.

The opening chapters of the thesis demonstrate the relatively fixed distribution of time spent in paid and unpaid work between partners, consider how this lack of redistribution has been understood, and narrow the focus of the research to particular theoretical and empirical problems for investigation. Using aggregate statistical data, chapter two charts the migration of women into paid work and considers the implications for time allocations within households. This data demonstrates that male labour force participation, type of employment, and the amount of time men spend on unpaid work and care is largely insensitive to the increased labour force participation of women, as well as changes in their own life situation, such as becoming a parent. The data points to a different labour market experience for women, with wide varieties in rates of labour force participation between women according to age, and considerable diversity in type of employment amongst women with children present in the household. The contrast between the varied and diverse experiences of women in the labour market, and the relatively constant nature of male employment over time, further underlines the fixed nature of time and task allocations within households.

In chapter three the thesis turns to the literature in order to discern how these changes in the make up of the labour force have been understood, measured and explained, and how they relate to individual men and women in households. Theories about how paid work relates to behaviour in households, specifically Resource Theory, Exchange Theory, New Home Economics and Dependency Theory, are reviewed in detail. This review identifies two related problems in these existing explanatory frameworks: first, the approaches reviewed make assumptions about, rather than directly address, the decision making process between partners; and second, these assumptions about the decision making process mean that the interpretation of empirical data relies on establishing correlations between the distribution of time spent on different tasks and the individual characteristics of household members.
The results of subsequent studies which have tested these explanatory frameworks underscore the theoretical decision making and empirical measurement problems, as the interpretation of empirical data in these predominantly quantitative studies relies on correlations between individual characteristics, such as income or gender, and the subsequent domestic division of labour in the household. These quantitative studies have not sought to focus on the process of decision making itself and instead rely on an inferred rationalisation of the decision that must have taken place, based on correlations between the available data about the household and the observed outcome within the household. Inside households, the process of how individuals construct choices, whether these choices are constructed over time, whether individuals actively enable or prevent particular alternatives from being realised, and whether particular alternatives are perceived as options to choose from, are all possible factors in the decisions made by households.

These theoretical and empirical problems are addressed by undertaking an analysis of how individuals in different life situations perceive, anticipate and make decisions between work and family. Recent studies guide the construction of a study that considers possible alternative explanations, placing emphasis on individuals, preference and autonomy. These possible alternative explanations form the basis of an approach to studying the decision making process which considers and compares the construction of alternatives by individuals that ultimately shape household decisions, as well as the process of decision making over distributions of work in households. Although the decision making process in households is the theoretical problem for the research project, the study considers individual approaches to decision making prior to and post-household formation to explore the way that alternatives are constructed by individuals over time and to test the veracity of gender outside the specific context of the household. The research question sets out to address the question in terms of how it is perceived and rationalised by individuals in different cohorts prior to and post family formation, asking: what is the decision making process when allocating time to paid and unpaid work in the household? There are two further sub-questions within this, firstly: what type of decision is it – autonomous, unilateral, exchange or bargaining? And secondly: what is the basis for the decision – income, preference or gender?
Chapter four sets out the methodology adopted in order to investigate the research questions which emerge from the literature. Addressing these questions, which focus on the perceptions of individuals as opposed to their characteristics, necessitates an interview based, qualitative research strategy. The research question also requires the consideration of alternative explanations centred on autonomy and the preferences of individual men and women separately, leading to a comparative strategy of research design. This is achieved in the study through a purposeful sample based on replication logic, comprised of male and female undergraduates in the field of economics, male and female graduates in the field of economics, and mothers and fathers who are also graduates, facilitating analytic comparison of results from the study. This qualitative approach, based on interview based data collection and a comparative research design, allows the study to pursue the research questions with additional consideration given to possible alternative explanations that have been presented in more recent studies.

The method chapter also outlines the thematic construction of the interview. A semi-structured interview is employed in the study in order to identify the perceptions and expectations of men and women in different stages of work and family formation with regard to the distribution of paid and unpaid work in the household. In the sample of parents, the semi-structured interview centred on key questions in particular topics of discussion, with further probe questions building to a robust explanation for household arrangements which can be assessed against the propositions in the study. A more structured interview schedule is used for the undergraduate and graduate samples, with a short answer response ‘attitude sketch’, followed by a long answer interview, and finally a ‘scenario’ based discussion. As in the interviews with the sample of parents, probe questions are used within specific topics of discussion in the long answer section of the interviews with undergraduate and graduate respondents. The additional levels of enquiry in the attitude sketch and scenario based sections of the interviews with undergraduates and graduates provide a more accurate measure of individual perception and expectation.

The results of the interviews are presented in chapters five, six and seven. The three separate results chapters reflect the construction of the study, with three separate groups defined in accordance with their stage of work and family formation: single
undergraduate, single graduate and coupled parent. Chapter five presents the responses of individual male and female undergraduates in the field of economics and their expectations for work and family in the future. This is followed by a chapter presenting the responses of individual male and female graduates from the field of economics and their expectations. Chapter seven then presents the results of parents, who reflect on how their work and family decisions have been made. Each of the three results chapters is presented in accordance with the structure and purpose of the interview schedule and qualitative methodology, allowing the responses of the interviewees themselves to contribute their own voices where appropriate.

With the results of the interviews with men and women from each life situation presented in three separate chapters, chapter eight is dedicated to detailed analysis of the results. This analysis is presented in stages, drawing together the research questions through analytic comparisons between male and female sub-groups, and across groups from different stages of work and family formation. Very few of the respondents in the study nominate gender as an appropriate or ideal basis for making household decisions about work and family, however gender is significant in the results through the specific and predictable differences between how men and women anticipate work and family concerns and the manner in which respondents reject alternative logics for household organisation when they do not conform to gender expectations. These findings are consistent across the three stages of work and family formation and are tied to expectations on the part of the men and women interviewed that they will perform particular gender roles in their own households. The men interviewed make it clear that they possess implied assumptions about a responsibility for income earning in the household with a continuous attachment to the workforce, while the implied assumptions of the women interviewed centre upon finding ways to accommodate any additional demands around family formation, which potentially rely on further factors beyond their own direct control. These findings reveal decisions by men and women that are made independent of each other in an autonomous manner, and grounded in gender. The significance of these findings is returned to in the concluding chapter.

Investigating the relevant factors in decisions men and women make between work and family is the purpose of this thesis. This is achieved by examining the expectations of
individual undergraduates and graduates, how they anticipate making decision between work and family, and the experiences of individual parents making decisions between work and family in households. In the process, this thesis will address the ways in which paid work affects households, while also giving consideration to the affect that paid work has on interactions between individual members within households. The key issue that will be explored is the process through which individuals make decisions about work and family. It will be argued throughout that theories spanning the spheres of work and life have bypassed an investigation of individuals within households, their pre-emptive perceptions, their construction of preferences and alternatives, and that this hitherto unaddressed gap in our understanding warrants research. In order to develop a more precise sense of how the decision is shaped prior to household formation, the study examines alternative, qualitative measures as well as additional life situations in the analysis of these decisions. Significantly, there is no known research that sets out to examine the decision making process with regard to the choices between work and family as this study does.
Chapter 2 – Context

In recent years the need to address issues that surround work and family has been highlighted by an acceleration in the movement of women out of the private sphere, where women have historically had a primary responsibility for unpaid work and care within households, into the public sphere of paid work. This trend has been unerring over the last thirty years in Australia, moving constantly towards an equal proportion of men and women in the workforce. This context chapter will present Australian data that charts the statistical migration of women from the private to the public sphere and then consider concurrent trends in time allocations within households. These overall trends are detailed across a number of measures and demonstrate significant change in the Australian labour market over time.

Within these overall trends however, there is no change to how men allocate their time to paid work, and similarly, no change in how men allocate their time to unpaid work or care within households. These seemingly contradictory trends reveal issues for the study to pursue, with women experiencing employment and additional demands such as unpaid work and care in different ways to men, and revealing an apparent paradox within households that curbs the effect of increased female labour force participation on male allocations of time to paid and unpaid work.

2.1: Current Trends in the Australian Labour Market

The movement of women into paid employment has occurred at a time when the overall trend in the Australian labour market has been a movement away from full-time employment, with increased proportions of employees in what is routinely referred to as non-standard or precarious employment, with less than full-time commitments. These non-standard types of employment are wide-ranging, although they fit in to a general classification of ‘part-time’ in the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data. These

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1 Labour Force Statistics define and measure ‘full-time’ as ‘employed persons who usually worked 35 hours or more a week (in all jobs) and those who, although usually working less than 35 hours a week, worked 35 hours or more during the reference week’, and ‘part-time’ is defined as ‘employed persons who usually worked less than 35 hours a week (in all jobs) and either did so during the reference week, or were not at work in the reference week’. Beyond hours typically and actually worked, there is no differentiation between types of employment (ABS 2008, cat: 6202.0).
overall shifts in the labour market have had a negligible effect on the participation of men in paid employment, with men enjoying relatively constant proportions of full-time employment in the last thirty years. Women moving into the labour market have not experienced the same level of engagement with the labour market, with a lower female Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) and significant diversity in type of employment amongst women demonstrating an overall different employment profile to men.

The ABS provides labour force data on a range of measures stretching back to February 1978. When the ABS began tracking the labour force, Australia strongly resembled a ‘male breadwinner state’, with women organised into the home with the responsibility to care for children, and their male partners organised into full-time employment. This is illustrated most clearly in the ABS data by the proportion of full-time jobs overall, and the concentration of men in those jobs. In February 1978, 84.8 percent of all employees in Australia held full-time jobs (ABS 2008, cat: 6202.0). Regardless of type of employment, men represented the majority of the workforce at the time, holding 64.7 percent of all jobs (ABS 2008, cat: 6202.0). In addition to this, men were also over-represented as a proportion of full-time employees, making up 72.4 percent of the total full-time workforce (ABS 2008, cat: 6202.0). This concentration of men in full-time employment meant that as a proportion of all men in employment, 95.0 percent of men who were employed held full-time jobs (ABS 2008, cat: 6202.0). Moreover, there was relative stability in labour force engagement across male age groups with LFPR above 96 percent for men between the ages of 25 and 44, and above 92 percent in the age brackets 20 to 24, and 45 to 54 (ABS 2008, cat: 6291.0). Essentially, Australian men of working age were in full-time employment in 1978.

The position of women within the Australian labour market in 1978 was somewhat different to that of employed men. Women made up a significant minority of all employees, representing 35.3 percent of the total workforce in 1978 (ABS 2008, cat: 6202.0). At the time women were under-represented as a proportion of full-time employees at 27.6 percent of all full-time jobs, and over-represented as a proportion of part-time employees at 78.6 percent of all part-time jobs (ABS 2008, cat: 6202.0). The relatively small proportion of part-time jobs in the workforce overall, just 15.2 percent, meant that a majority of those women that were employed held full-time positions, 66.2
percent (ABS 2008, cat: 6202.0). This contrasts with the relative homogeneity of male employment at the time. In 1978, there were nineteen full-time employed men for every part-time employed man, while there were only two full-time employed women for every part-time employed woman.

In addition to the diversity in type of employment for women, there was also a greater variability in workforce participation relative to men in 1978. Overall the female LFPR at the time was 43.5 percent, substantially lower than the male LFPR of 80.1 percent at the time (ABS 2008, cat: 6291.0). This LFPR figure for women masks significant variation between different age groups which is depicted in Figure 1, below. While men were essentially in full-time employment in 1978, there was significant difference in the employment profile of women, with diversity amongst women in terms of labour force participation, employment type, and further variations according to age.

**Figure 1: Labour Force Participation by Sex by Age, 1978**

Source: Figure derived from Australian Labour Force Statistics, Detailed (ABS 2008 cat: 6291.0).

Significant changes have occurred in the thirty years since this snapshot of the Australian labour market. The proportion of full-time employment overall has declined steadily, and women have entered paid employment in record numbers. These trends are constant at the aggregate level, yet there appears to be no impact on the position of men in the Australian labour market.
The decline in full-time employment as a proportion of all employment in Australia has been constant, from 84.8 percent in February 1978 down to 71.5 percent in February 2008, a decline of 13.3 percentage points (ABS 2008, cat: 6202.0). This trend reflects the significant growth in employment classified as part-time by the ABS, which had been peripheral in the Australian labour market in 1978. In the last thirty years, employment classified as part-time has been responsible for 45.7 percent of additional employment in the Australian labour market (ABS 2008, cat: 6291.0). As a result, part-time employment has grown substantially as a proportion of all employment, almost doubling from 15.2 percent in February 1978 up to 28.5 percent in February 2008 (ABS 2008, cat: 6202.0).

The second substantial shift in the Australian labour market has been in the proportions of men and women in employment. As a proportion of all employed people in Australia, women have increased steadily from 35.3 percent in February 1978 up to 45.0 percent in February 2008 (ABS 2008, cat: 6202.0). This increase appears to be greater than an equalisation due to a cohort or generation effect, as women have entered employment at a faster rate than men relative to population. Since 1978, women have filled 54.1 percent of additional full-time positions and 68.3 percent of additional part-time positions in the Australian labour market (ABS 2008, cat: 6202.0). The most significant effect in this time is in the female LFPR, which has increased steadily from 43.5 percent in February 1978 up to 58.1 percent in February 2008, an increase of 14.6 percent that is depicted in Figure 2 below (ABS 2008, cat 6291.0).
As these aggregate trends show, the overall picture of the Australian labour market has changed significantly in the thirty years since the collection of specific labour market data began. The two main shifts have been: the increase in the proportion of part-time work relative to full-time work; and the significant movement of women into paid employment. In this time women have increased both as a proportion of all employees and as a proportion of those in full-time employment. Both of these trends represent significant change in the way women have undertaken paid work in Australia.

Despite these two large shifts in the Australian labour market, the position of men within the labour market has not changed substantially. The average male LFPR has declined gradually over time, from 80.1 percent in February 1978 down to 72.5 percent in February 2008 (ABS 2008, cat: 6202.0). However this decline in the male LFPR has occurred as a slight reduction across the entire population of men in all age groups, depicted below in Figure 3, demonstrating the relative stability of male labour force engagement across all age groups.
In 2008 men continue to constitute more than half of the labour force, comprising 55.0 percent of all employees (ABS 2008, cat: 6202.0). The proportion of men in full-time employment relative to all full-time jobs declined over this time, from 72.4 percent in February 1978 down to 65.1 percent in February 2008 (ABS 2008, cat: 6291.0). Notwithstanding this decline men continue to be concentrated in full-time employment, with 84.6 percent of all employed men in full-time jobs (ABS 2008, cat: 6202.0).

The relative stability in male labour force participation, combined with their concentration in full-time employment is confirmed in the most recent Australian census. Census data, unlike labour force surveys, provides additional information for employment type according to age and living situation, a finer classification than the overall measures of LFPR by sex, age and type of employment that are available in the labour force surveys. There are also slightly different definitions in the census\(^2\), which is concerned with the amount of time spent in employment, rather than the employment classification itself. These slight differences in definition diminish the comparability with totals in labour force statistics, however this shortcoming is counterbalanced by the

\(^2\) ‘Employed, worked full-time’ is defined as having spent more than 35 hours in paid employment in the week prior to census night, with separate categories for ‘employed, away from work’ to exclude those who are employed but did not attend employment in the week prior to census night from the ‘full-time’ measure. Similarly, there are separate categories for ‘hours of work not stated’ and error results (ABS 2007, cat: 2068.0).
range of alternative indicators contained in census data, such as the inclusion of results for people classified as ‘not in the labour force’ for comparison with the broader population. The ability to sort by the additional category ‘not in the labour force’ has little significance in the analysis of men in employment, but is highlighted for its lowering effect on the overall figures. With the inclusion of people not in the labour force, plus the requirements for the measure of full-time employment and the further definitional exclusions, census data produces a proportionately lower result for actual full-time employment and employment overall. Regardless of these differences in definition, the 2006 census data depicted below in Figure 4 reinforces labour force survey results for male labour force participation breakdowns by age, and again emphasises centrality of full-time employment for men.

![Figure 4: Male Employment Type by Age, 2006](image)

Source: Figure derived from Australian Census data 2006 (ABS 2007, cat: 2068.0).

Clearly the overall trends in the Australian labour market, with reductions in full-time employment and an increased presence of women in employment, have had little impact on the general profile of male employment. In 2008, men participate in the labour force across all age groups in much the same manner as they did in 1978, and those men who are employed continue to be overwhelmingly employed in full-time positions. The male LFPR continues to follow the trend set by male full-time employment despite the substantial growth in part-time employment over the last thirty years.
In contrast the general profile of female employment has changed significantly in the last thirty years, and has continued to be different to that of employed men across a number of measures. There has been a substantial increase in the female LFPR overall as women have entered full-time employment at a slightly higher rate than men, and entered part-time employment at twice the rate of men, during which time the amount of part-time employment growth almost kept pace with full-time employment growth (ABS 2008, cat: 6202.0). This increase is reflected in the female LFPR over time, depicted in Figure 5, which shows female participation consistently increasing across all age groups (ABS 2008, cat: 6202.0). Figure 5 also shows that in 2008 the female LFPR remains significantly more sensitive to age than the male LFPR.

![Figure 5: Female Labour Force Participation by Age, Trend](image)

Source: Figure derived from Australian Labour Force Statistics, Detailed (ABS 2008 cat: 6291.0).

Although there continues to be an increase in women as a proportion of all full-time employees, up to 34.9 percent in February 2008, women continue to be under-represented in full-time employment, and over-represented as a proportion of part-time employees at 70.3 percent (ABS 2008, cat: 6202.0). The decline in full-time employment overall, coupled with the over-representation of women in part-time employment, reveals a diversity in employment type for women that is not evident for men, with near a near equal division of women employed full-time and women employed part-time (ABS 2008, cat: 6202.0).
Moreover, the diversity in type of employment for women is also sensitive to age, with women split between full-time and part-time employment throughout all of the identified age groups. Census data reveals the inconsistent nature of female employment between age groups, shown in Figure 6 below (ABS 2007, cat: 2068.0). As with the census data for men, the proportions shown are also impacted by the presence of additional measures in the total, with the figures lower overall due to the inclusion of data for women not in the labour force and the particular time-based definitions used to classify employment data in the census. This data reveals a noticeably greater diversity in type of employment according to age than that of men (ABS 2007, cat: 2068.0). This diversity in type of employment fluctuates between the different age groups, revealing a more opaque relationship between the amount of women in full-time employment and the amount of women employed overall.

![Figure 6: Female Employment Type by Age, 2006](image)

Source: Figure derived from Australian Census data 2006 (ABS 2007, cat: 2068.0).

Overall these trends reveal a substantial shift in the composition of the Australian labour force, which is mainly due to the movement of women into paid work, and represent a redistribution of time by women from the private sphere to the public sphere. This substantial increase in the female LFPR has occurred at the aggregate level and across all age groups. However the increase in the female LFPR masks significant diversity in type of employment for women in Australia, with only 55.5 percent of employed women in full-time positions in February 2008 (ABS 2008, cat: 6202.20). These
aggregate trends have not had a substantial effect on the distribution of full-time employment for men in Australia, with 84.6 percent of men employed in full-time positions in February 2008 (ABS 2008, cat: 6202.20). The entry of women into the labour force has not been associated with a redistribution of employment that has significantly effected the position of men in the labour market.

The relatively constant nature of male employment over time is also insensitive to other effects, in particular the presence of dependent children. Census data from 2006 shows that in coupled households, the presence of dependent children is positively associated with the LFPR of fathers, with the 92.1 percent LFPR of fathers even higher than the average LFPR of all men (ABS 2007, cat: 2068.0). It is also possible to sort the type of employment against the presence of dependent children for fathers using the Australian census. There is a danger in making direct comparisons according to employment type due to different definitional measures contained in census data and the labour force data, yet the census data clearly demonstrates the stability of male employment when measured against the presence of dependent children, depicted in Figure 7 below (ABS 2007 cat: 2068.0). As previously outlined census data is likely to understate the amount of full-time employment compared to the labour force survey data. Despite the tendency to understate the amount of full-time employment due to the measure used, Australian census data indicates that for all employed fathers with dependent children 84.3 percent are in full-time employment (ABS 2007 cat: 2068.0). Adjusting for the anticipated error brought about by different definitions of full-time employment, this proportion of full-time employment among fathers compares favourably with the 84.6 percent of men employed full-time reported in the labour force surveys (ABS 2008 cat: 6202.0). For employed fathers, it appears that the presence of children in the household only has a positive effect on their LFPR, and their employment type remains insensitive to change.
The constant nature of male employment over time provides a stark contrast to the employment profile of women through the same transitions associated with parenthood in Australian data. Examining census data on the female LFPR, sorted by coupled households, the presence of dependent children and the age of dependent children, demonstrates the sensitivity of female employment to the presence of children. While the presence of children was positively associated with the male LFPR, the effect on the female LFPR is negative, substantially larger, and varies according the age of the child.

For mothers in coupled households with a child aged between 0 and 4 years old the overall LFPR is 51.8 percent (ABS 2007, cat: 2068.0). This LFPR increases noticeably to 64.1 percent for mothers in coupled households with a child aged between 5 and 9 years, and again to 71.0 percent when children are aged 10 to 12 (ABS 2007, cat: 2068.0). The LFPR of mothers in households with dependent children eventually stabilises at an average of 76.3 percent throughout the teenage years of the child’s life, representing a substantial difference with the mothers of children aged 0 to 4 (ABS 2007, cat: 2068.0).

This variability in participation also includes a wide diversity in type of employment between mothers according to the age of their dependent children. The diversity in female employment when measured against the age of dependent children further underlines the impact revealed in the overall LFPR for mothers, depicted in Figure 8.
below (ABS 2007 cat: 2068.0). Even with the tendency to understate the amount of full-time employment census data reveals substantial fluctuations between types of employment for mothers in Australia depending on the age of their children. Clearly the presence of children in Australian households has substantial effects on the LFPR and the employment type of women, depicted below in Figure 8. These impacts provide a stark contrast to the slight nature of any variations experienced by men, where the presence of children is associated with a slightly higher LFPR, and includes a slightly higher proportion of full-time employment than in the population of all men.

![Figure 8: Employment Type of Mothers in Coupled Households by Age of Dependent Child, 2006](image)

Source: Figure derived from Australian Census data 2006 (ABS 2007, cat: 2068.0).

The broad shifts occurring within the Australian labour market in the thirty years to 2008 represent a reduced proportion in the amount of full-time work within the labour market, and a more equal proportion of women in paid work overall. More women participate in the market for paid employment than ever before, however this participation continues to be on markedly different terms to that of men with substantial diversity in type of employment between women, differences which are further magnified according to age and the presence of children. Despite these overall shifts in the Australian labour market, men continue to be overwhelmingly employed in one type of employment, regardless of their age or the presence of children in their households.
These shifts represent a substantial reallocation of time by women from the private sphere of unpaid work and care, to the public sphere of paid work. However, in the public sphere, these changes have had no impact on the position of men in the labour market. This suggests that any effects of the increased amount of time spent in paid work by women can be measured in the private sphere, with women spending a smaller proportion of their own time on unpaid work and care. With no discernable redistribution of time between men and women in the public sphere, the changes in the time allocations of women should be reflected in a redistribution of time between men and women in the private sphere.

2.2: Current Trends within Australian Households

The aggregate trends in the labour force represent a significant shift in the way Australians undertake paid work. These labour force trends have outlined a significant reallocation of time by women to paid work in the public domain, which has served to highlight the way that Australian households undertake unpaid work and care in the private domain. The anticipated effect of the increased amount of paid work performed by women in the private domain is a redistribution of unpaid work and care between partners in households, with women performing a reduced proportion of unpaid work and care.

Aggregate data on time use within the household is more limited than labour force data. The ABS provides an aggregate picture through national time use surveys conducted in 1992, 1997 and 2006. The ABS time use survey is drawn from time diary and interview data spread over specifically selected representative days, including weekdays, Saturdays, Sundays, public and school holidays (ABS 2006, cat: 4150.0). The results are aggregated into a seven day week, with results reported as the average from the seven day total. The 1992 data reported here is for primary activities only, while in the latter surveys a distinction has been made between primary and secondary activities in recognition that some tasks might be performed simultaneously, for example domestic work and childcare (ABS 2006, cat: 4150.0).
The 1992 data shows how time is allocated in the average day for men and women, measured as primary activities. For women in 1992, this amounted to an average of 2 hours and 6 minutes per day in paid work, or 14 hours and 42 minutes per seven day week (ABS 1993, cat: 4153.0). In addition to paid work, women allocated an average of 3 hours and 2 minutes per day to domestic activities, 49 minutes to childcare and 55 minutes to the purchase of goods and services (ABS 1993, cat: 4153.0). The 1992 data categorises the combination of domestic activities, childcare and the purchase of goods and services as ‘unpaid work’, which together was a total of 4 hours and 46 minutes per day on average for women (ABS 1993, cat: 4153.0). This gave women an aggregate total of work, paid and unpaid, of 6 hours and 52 minutes per day, with 30.6 percent of their time allocated to the market for paid work (ABS 1993, cat: 4153.0).

The results for men in the 1992 survey indicated they spent an average of 4 hours and 28 minutes in paid work per day, equivalent to 31 hours and 16 minutes per seven day week (ABS 1993, cat: 4153.0). Across the average within unpaid work categories, men spent 1 hour and 37 minutes on domestic activities, 14 minutes on childcare, and 34 minutes purchasing goods and services on an average day (ABS 1993, cat: 4153.0). This means the total amount of work per day for men, paid and unpaid, was 6 hours and 53 minutes, a solitary minute more per day than the amount for women in the 1992 survey (ABS 1993, cat: 4153.0). The distribution of the work performed by men was split differently to women, however, with men allocating 64.4 percent of their total work time to paid work (ABS 1993, cat: 4153.0).

Within the average picture, the ABS data also provides data for the allocation of time in particular living situations. This data allows us to consider, in particular, the impact the presence of children has on the allocation of time between mothers and fathers, relative to the averages for men and women. In the 1992 data, the figures indicate that the presence of children was associated with a decreased allocation of time to paid work for women, down 17 minutes per day, and a substantially increased amount of unpaid work, up 2 hours and 11 minutes per day, for a total work figure of 8 hours and 46 minutes (ABS 1993, cat: 4153.0). Moreover, these increases arguably underestimate the actual difference between mothers with dependent children and other women, as the mothers themselves made up a significant proportion of the results in the average for all women.
The time allocations of employed fathers further affirmed their concentration in full-time employment. The presence of dependent children was associated with a different time allocation for fathers against the average for all men, with a substantial increase of 1 hour and 40 minutes in paid work and an increase of 25 minutes in unpaid work, to a total work figure of 8 hours and 58 minutes per day (ABS 1993, cat: 4153.0). The presence of children seems to have had a different effect on the distribution of time for mothers and fathers, mothers allocating less time to paid work as fathers allocate more time to paid work. This time use data from 1992 starts to suggest that men and women redistribute their allocations of time between each other when they have children, increasing the labour force participation of the male partner while increasing the amount of unpaid work and care for the female partner.

Looking at these trends in the subsequent time use surveys, there is further evidence of the overall move towards higher female labour force participation in the 2006 data for the average allocation of time to paid labour, which increased by 15 minutes per day to 2 hours and 21 minutes, or 16 hours and 21 minutes per week (ABS 2008, cat: 4153.0). Over the three survey periods, women also increase their amount of childcare by 10 minutes per day, and their amount of time allocated to purchasing goods and services by 3 minutes per day, with these increases somewhat offset by a reduction in domestic activities by 10 minutes per day (ABS 2008, cat: 4153.0). This distribution of time allocated to paid and unpaid work is virtually constant across the three surveys, and suggests that the increased amount of time spent by women in paid work has not been offset by a reduction in total unpaid work, but rather increased participation in paid work has simply added to their total amount of work.

The almost constant distribution of time between paid and unpaid work that appears in the average results for women over time is repeated in the results for men at the average. Between 1992 and 2006, men increased their allocation of time to paid work by 5 minutes per day to 4 hours and 33 minutes, simultaneously increasing their amount of childcare by 8 minutes per day to 22 minutes, and also increasing their amount of time spent purchasing goods and services by 4 minutes per day to 38 minutes (ABS 2008, cat: 4153.0). As with the women, there is no identifiable shift in the way time is being allocated to paid and unpaid work over the three sets of results. This finding is
presented in Figure 9, which depicts the proportion of time men and women spend in different tasks over the course of the three surveys.

![Figure 9: Proportion of Time Use by Activity Type for Individuals, Trend](image)

Source: Figure derived from Australian Time Use data (ABS 2008, cat: 4153.0).

Again, exploring trends within the average result provides considerable insight into what is happening in specific demographic groups. The 2006 data includes a greater range of measures for men and women, which can be split by employment type and the presence of children. The ability to compare within employment types, for example full-time employed mothers with full-time employed women overall, and full-time employed fathers, offers a more precise understanding than comparisons against the average.

For men and women in full-time employment the amount of total work including unpaid work and care was approximately equal in 2006, 9 hours and 14 minutes for men, and 9 hours and 9 minutes for women (ABS 2008, cat: 4153.0). Men employed full-time spent a high proportion of their total work in paid work, 75.6 percent, equivalent to 6 hours and 59 minutes per day, with 2 hours and 15 minutes unpaid work (ABS 2008, cat: 4153.0). The time spent by women employed full-time was divided slightly differently with 62.3 percent of their total work in paid work, 5 hours and 42 minutes per day, and a further 3 hours and 27 minutes in unpaid work (ABS 2008, cat: 4153.0).
From this point the further division of the data according to the presence of children is revealing. In households, the presence of children had very little effect on the way that the overwhelming majority of fathers who were employed full-time allocated their time between paid work and unpaid work. Fathers employed full-time allocated 7 hours and 28 minutes per day in paid work, 29 minutes more per day than the average for men employed full-time (ABS 2008, cat: 4153.0). For fathers employed full-time, the presence of children was also associated with 39 minutes more unpaid work per day compared to all men employed full-time in unpaid work, up to 2 hours and 54 minutes per day (ABS 2008, cat: 4153.0). This means that fathers employed full-time spent 72.0 percent of their time in paid work, compared to the 75.6 percent of time spent in paid work by all men employed full-time (ABS 2008, cat: 4153.0). Importantly there is no reduction in paid work by fathers employed full-time, merely the addition of time spent in both paid and unpaid work. These results for full-time employed fathers reiterate the labour force survey results, where the amount of labour force engagement for men was not reduced by the presence of children in the household, and is contrary to the anticipated redistribution of time between partners in households.

The effect is somewhat different for women employed full-time, who allocate time away from paid work when children are present in the household. Mothers employed full-time reduce their time in paid work to a total of 4 hours and 50 minutes per day (ABS 2008, cat: 4153.0). This reduction in time allocated to paid employment represents 52 minutes less per day to paid employment than full-time employed women, and 2 hours and 38 minutes less per day than full-time employed fathers (ABS 2008, cat: 4153.0). At the same time, mothers employed full-time increase their amount of unpaid work by 2 hours and 10 minutes, to 5 hours and 31 minutes per day (ABS 2008, cat: 4153.0). This amounts to 46.3 percent of time in paid work for mothers employed full-time, compared to 62.3 percent for all women employed full-time. This represents a substantial redistribution of time by women, with the increase in unpaid work for full-time employed mothers exceeding the reduction in time allocated to paid work. Such data shows that full-time employed mothers redistribute their own time away from paid work in order to increase their amount of unpaid work and care, which is a different response to that experienced by full-time employed men to the presence of children in the household. These results indicate that there is no redistribution of time between men
and women to compensate for the increased labour force participation of women in the instances where children are present in the household.

Moreover, the changed distributions of time for individual mothers and fathers that have been outlined are for full-time employed parents. These impacts are further exacerbated by the much higher propensity for women to enter part-time employment or leave the labour force with dependent children in the household, depicted below in Figure 10. Mothers employed part-time spend 5 hours and 37 minutes per day performing unpaid work and care, while mothers who were not in the labour force spent 8 hours and 46 minutes per day on the same tasks (ABS 2008, cat: 4153.0). Again, these totals represent significantly larger amounts and proportions of time dedicated to unpaid work and care than the comparative amounts for fathers (ABS 2008, cat: 4153.0).

![Figure 10: Combined Employment Type of Parents in Coupled Households by Age of Dependent Child, 2006](image)

Source: Figure derived from Australian Census data 2006 (ABS 2008, cat: 2068.0). NB Y-value scale

These findings over successive time use surveys by the ABS again highlight the impervious nature of male employment to change. Across three time use surveys, Australian men and women are shown to perform relatively constant proportions of paid and unpaid work. Men continue to spend the majority of their time in paid work, with minimal changes in their allocation of time to paid and unpaid work with dependent children in the household. The constant allocation of time across surveys is similarly repeated in the findings for women, although the response in the time allocations of
women to particular living situations is different and more pronounced, especially in response to the presence of children. In measures of the time allocation within households, by both partners to paid and unpaid work, there has been very little change in the way work is performed. There is no evidence of a reduction in the proportion of unpaid work and care by women, no evidence of a redistribution of time spent on unpaid work and care between partners in households.

This impasse around the performance of unpaid work is contrary to the trend in the performance of paid work, where it has been demonstrated that women have substantially increased their participation in the last thirty years. Combined, the finding that women have substantially increased their allocation of time to paid labour, with the finding that there has been no change in the distribution of time to tasks within households, appears contradictory. The implication is that the increased female LFPR simply adds to the workload of women, and at a disproportionate rate to their male partners. The broad research objective of this thesis is to understand and explain this lack of response to the movement of women into the paid labour force.

2.3: Conclusion

The continued growth in female labour force participation in the last thirty years has presented a number of challenges for how we understand the organisation of daily life for individuals and families in society. In turn, this has generated a substantial debate around the intersection of work and family. The major issue driving the debate has been the absence of any reciprocal shift in the distribution of unpaid work in the private sphere, which might have occurred had men substantially increased commitments to unpaid work and care.

Finding an explanation for the contradictory findings between the spheres of paid and unpaid work is the broad research objective for this thesis. This chapter has charted the movement of women into paid work in the last thirty years, with the female LFPR currently at its highest recorded level in Australia. However this increase in the employment of women overall conceals significant diversity amongst women, which occurs between age groups, between employment types, and in accordance with
children being present in the household. Moreover, there has been very little redistributive response to the increased allocation of time to paid work by women, who continue to carry a disproportionate burden of unpaid work in households, particularly with dependent children present.

Against this backdrop, the participation of men in paid and unpaid work remains relatively constant over time. Men continue to be overwhelmingly employed in full-time employment, despite the overall trend towards an increased proportion of part-time employment in the Australian labour market. Allocations of time by men to unpaid work and care within households are also constant over time. Time use data shows no evidence of an increased proportion of unpaid work and care being performed by male partners in households, regardless of factors such as the presence of dependent children in the household, and impervious to the anticipated responses to overall trends in the Australian labour market.

This data indicates that the increase in female labour force participation has had no effect on the distribution of paid and unpaid work between men and women, and has instead simply added to the total workload of women. Understanding the impasse in unpaid work in light of the changes in paid work is the broad objective of the thesis. The following chapter will review the literature that has sought to explain the distribution of paid and unpaid work between partners in households as outcomes in the domestic division of labour. The theories to be reviewed consider the influence of paid work in the public sphere on unpaid work in the private sphere and vice versa. These theories need to be assessed against their ability to provide an explanation for the trends revealed in both paid and unpaid work in the aggregate statistics.
Chapter 3 – Literature Review

The desire to understand why the movement of women into paid work has not been accompanied by a redistribution of unpaid work within households has sparked an extensive literature across several disciplines. Complicating the literature is the number of theoretical approaches that have been used to analyse the sphere of paid work, as well as the number of theoretical approaches that have been used to analyse the family, or household. By their nature, different theoretical frameworks examine alternative focal points. This gives the work-family debate and related literature remarkable depth, as researchers from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds utilise different methods and measures across these alternative focal points. The sheer range of significant factors identified in theories that consider the labour market and paid work, coupled with a similar number of significant factors that have been identified in theories that consider the household and unpaid work, present several challenges for theoretical development around work and family. This multitude of variables requires theoretical concepts that can consider both the public and private realms of behaviour, their impacts and interactions, simultaneously.

In order to draw out the relevant contributions from a literature with contributions from multiple disciplinary backgrounds, this review is presented in four separate sections. The first section provides an outline of the major explanatory frameworks and variables identified by each approach in accounting for the allocation of time to both paid and unpaid work in households. Importantly, the review of the four explanatory frameworks in the first section concentrates mainly on their overall form, demonstrating how outcomes in the domestic division of labour are assumed to follow from particular modes of decision making between partners, on the basis of particular attributes. Commentaries and critiques of these explanatory frameworks are reserved for the second section of the literature review, which considers studies which have sought to test these explanations. More recent contributions that fall outside the approaches of the main explanatory frameworks are then examined in the third section of the review. The chapter concludes by identifying further questions that remain unaddressed.
Theories that consider the distribution of both paid and unpaid work between partners in households have a similar overarching form, which can be further categorised into four broad approaches. These approaches are Resource Theory, Exchange Theory, New Home Economics and Dependency Theory. Each of these theories explains the behaviour of both partners within households, in particular how households respond to stimuli from the public sphere, where paid work is performed, with behaviour in the private sphere, where unpaid work is performed. These frameworks have been used to explain the lack of response to the increase in female labour supply at the aggregate level, such as that presented in chapter two.

3.1.1: Resource Theory

Sociologists who studied the marital household were among the first to generate explanatory frameworks that drew links across the separate spheres of work and family. The general framework of ‘Resource Theory’ grew out of a debate spawned by an influential study by Blood and Wolfe (1960).

Blood and Wolfe set out to analyse the dynamics of modern American families since the industrial revolution with reference to a variety of factors that had ‘altered the relationship between husbands and wives’ (1960, p3). The premise of their study was that there was a general consensus within society that the institution of marriage had somehow changed, and they proposed to pinpoint exactly how it had changed through the analysis of empirical evidence (Blood & Wolfe 1960). They sought first to identify if this consensus about a new institution of marriage could be verified, and second, to measure if this modern marriage was better for the overall welfare of family members. Under examination were both the cultural and resource factors that might determine how husbands and wives interact. Cultural measures were defined as living location (urban or rural), nationality, race and age, while resources were defined as income, occupational type and social status. Blood and Wolfe (1960) set out to measure the effect of various types of interactions between partners on the general welfare, or living standards, of the family and its members.
In their study, Blood and Wolfe (1960) interviewed over 900 wives in the greater Detroit area of Michigan in the United States, testing their cultural and resource hypotheses. Their cultural hypothesis suggested that a patriarchal social system granted men the authority to make most of the decisions, and families behaved in accordance with what ‘culture tells them to do’ (Blood & Wolfe 1960, p13). Testing this hypothesis involved trying to ascertain which partner made the majority of decisions, such as what type of house or apartment to buy, how much money should be spent on food in a given week, what type of medical consultation or how much insurance was needed within the household. With this measure of which partner had the power to make particular decisions in the household, the cultural hypothesis could be tested by comparing the results of cultural sub-groups who were expected to possess different patriarchal structures and traditions, such as families now or formerly living on a farm, immigrant families, old couples and Catholic marriages (Blood & Wolfe 1960). However, Blood and Wolfe (1960) found virtually no support for their cultural hypothesis, as families with measurably different ‘culture scores’ behaved in a similar fashion. Moreover, Blood and Wolfe (1960) found an alternative range of values to those measured by culture were more significant in explaining who had decision making power in the household.

The second hypothesis tested in their study suggested that ‘the sources of power in so intimate a relationship as a marriage must be sought in the comparative resources which the husband and wife bring to the marriage’, with a resource defined ‘as anything that one partner may make available to the other’ (Blood & Wolfe 1960, p12). Again, testing this hypothesis involved trying to ascertain which partner held the balance of power according to which partner made the majority of decisions. With the resource hypothesis, Blood and Wolfe (1960) tested for a correlation between decision making power and the resources of value that one partner may contribute to the marriage, such as occupational type, income and social status. Blood and Wolfe found considerable support for the resource based hypothesis, suggesting that there was a variable balance of power between partners which was determined by the interplay of dynamic forces which affect the marriage from within and without (1960, p46). These findings indicated that the power to make decisions inside the marital household was best
understood as a factor of resources drawn from outside the household, such as income, occupational type and social status.

In this ‘Resource Theory’, household members contribute their available resources to the welfare of the family. Blood and Wolfe argue that the typical family is ‘like a corporation which makes its decisions in staff conferences but executes them through technical experts’ (1960, p53). Technical expertise was not explicitly set out as a gender-role based expertise for either partner, although it is often implied in their analysis that the available resources one partner contributed to the marriage will function in a parallel manner with the resources contributed by the other partner. In this regard, husbands and wives can be seen to complement rather than duplicate each other’s work, contributing types of labour from their own available resources, however it is divided between themselves, for the wellbeing of the household (Blood & Wolfe 1960). In this sense they saw the husbands and wives in their study relating to each other as partners in the household, with relationships that can be seen to be based on mutual trust and cooperation.

Resource Theory provides an explanatory framework that considers the influence of paid work in the public sphere on unpaid work in the private sphere, and potentially explains the lack of response by men in the private sphere to the increase in female labour force participation. Resource Theory provides a model that allows the dynamics of the family within the household to be understood relative to any of a number of resources such as income or social status that either partner may contribute to the interests of the aggregate household. In this sense the theory relies on a measure of the value each household member attaches to the contribution of their partner relative to household production. One would conceptualise this theoretical relationship as follows:

*Partners A and B, in a marriage AB, are able to derive resources from a range of sources outside the marriage. Resources are contributed by partners A and B to household production to the benefit of AB. The partner contributing the most resources to household production is granted authority over decision making and the ability to manage the productive behaviour of partners A and B to their combined benefit.*
In this sense, Resource Theory is a framework for understanding relative contributions of each partner towards a single goal, the household productive effort. This Resource Theory explains the organisation of household production, in particular the allocation of time of each partner into paid and unpaid work, as the outcome of a decision by the partner contributing the greater proportion of resources to the household. As the decision over how time is allocated in the household is made by the determination of one partner over the behaviour of both partners, this can be understood as a unilateral type of decision by the household manager, with the legitimate authority to make decisions granted on the basis of resources.

In the development of their theory capable of spanning both paid work and family life, Blood and Wolfe (1960) were required to make some assumptions in their abstraction process. Resource Theory measures who in the household is empowered to make a particular decision (Safilios-Rothschild 1970), not how they make the decision. This is problematic on both a theoretical and an empirical dimension if the theory is to explain the allocation of time between household members. Firstly, there is a theoretical problem, with no criteria for decision making that can be used to analyse the organisation of household tasks. Resource Theory assumes decisions are made unilaterally with the exercise of a legitimate resource based authority over decision making, which determines the time allocations of both partners in the household, rather than considering the possibility of a bilateral decision making process between partners. There is no basis for understanding how the partner with decision making authority interacts with their partner, the process through which resources translate into a division of labour in a combined productive effort. The partner A or B who is granted authority to make decisions may or may not be able to exercise this authority, may be unwilling to assert it, or may encounter resistance (Safilios-Rothschild 1970). This is problematic if either or both partners have a preference for spending time in either paid or unpaid work. The detailed process of decision making is not established empirically, but bypassed in the theoretical abstraction process.

The second, related problem is empirical. Without a theoretical understanding of the decision making process, we can only infer that the authority to make decisions and how partners are subsequently organised into paid and unpaid work within the
household is *as if it had* been determined on the basis of resources\(^3\). When the outcome of a particular decision is measured empirically as the allocation of time to tasks in the domestic division of labour, resources become inseparable from the individual characteristics of each partner in the household, with no account for individual agency or preference, and no account of the decision making process itself. Decision making can only be understood to have occurred in the unilateral manner assumed in the theory when interpreting outcomes in the domestic division of labour, and correlated with a measure of resources. In the Resource Theory then, with no measure of individual preferences or the decision making process, household members are reduced to actors in a household system where the allocation of time to tasks is inextricably linked to individual characteristics.

3.1.2: *Exchange Theory*

Heer (1963) later proposed a refinement of the Resource Theory approach where the focus was not on the relative value of the resources contributed by each partner inside the marriage, but on the value placed on these resources outside marriage. In the revised theory:

> the greater the difference between the value to the wife of the resources contributed by the husband and the value to the wife of the resources which she might earn outside the existing marriage, the greater the power of her husband, and vice versa. This theory explicitly states that each partner to the marriage conceives of the possibility of separation, divorce, and subsequent remarriage (Heer 1963, p138).

With these theoretical developments resources are bestowed with a cost and an element of exchange is introduced to the relationship between husbands and wives, moving away from the assumption of mutual trust and cooperation in Resource Theory. Whereas in Resource Theory the relative value of a resource is in its potential contribution to the household itself, the ‘Exchange Theory’ conceives of the relationship between partners as a process of exchange where the value of a resource is

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\(^3\) Berk (1985) makes this point in a different context when she argues that “the perspective requires that one view the household as a mirror – reflecting power relations – rather than as a window, revealing what and how everyday work is accomplished. The impression conveyed is that it is power and not the sustenance of families that is produced through household labour” (Berk 1985 p12)
determined outside the household, in a market\textsuperscript{4}. The ability to measure a resource against its value outside the marriage has a number of advantages for theory testing, as any number of possible measures can be conceived as valuable in exchange and subsequently tested in terms of the contribution by each partner measured in relative \textit{and absolute} amounts. For example, any income contributed to the marriage can now be measured as a universal resource that has value to any other potential partner outside the marriage.

With this modified theory of exchange, we can understand marriage as an interdependent relationship between self-interested agents in search of what they perceive to be an optimal arrangement for themselves. This adds a second layer of complication to the analysis beyond that of the Resource Theory, as Exchange Theory recognises that individuals within the household have their own utility and interpretations of cost and benefit\textsuperscript{5}. Conceptualising the modifications in the new Exchange Theory we have:

\textit{Partners A and B, in a marriage AB, derive resources from a range of sources outside the marriage. Resources can either be contributed to household production through exchange by partners A and B, or withheld from household production in bargaining by both partners A and B in order to strike the best deal for themselves relative to the value of their contribution.}

This illustration highlights the development from Resource to Exchange Theory, with resources now ‘controlled’ and possibly withheld, as resources can be used as bargaining chips to exert power. As has been argued, this does not necessarily presume conflict within the relationship, as at times the household may arrive at ‘peaceful exchange’, each partner believing that they are receiving the benefits they \textit{should} receive \textit{relative} to their input in the relationship (Scanzoni 1979, p20, emphasis in original). At other times however, the marriage may be a site of contest, or ‘regulated conflict’, where a greater degree of power grants one partner an ability to impose a

\textsuperscript{4} Several authors, particularly since Brines (1993) have combined Resource Theory and Exchange Resource Theory within an overall ‘Resource Bargaining’ perspective. As will be shown, the two theories are analytically different, particularly with regard to how partners interact. Here is it argued that a different interaction between partners will affect the way resources are used by partners, their subsequent effect, and thus predictions between the two theories will vary.

\textsuperscript{5} This theoretical framework has attracted economic game theorists to model cooperative and non-cooperative game applications, the results of which are to be discussed in the following section.
reward-cost ratio that the other partner deems unjust (Scanzoni 1979, p20). In the Exchange Theory, resources remain the basis for decision making, however the type of decision is now assumed to be either a bilateral exchange in the instances where partners are perceived to be working in harmony, or a bilateral bargain where partners are perceived to be in conflict. The empirical problem remains, as the outcome in the domestic division of labour should reflect the relative power of each partner.

Exchange Theory provides a second explanatory framework for understanding how households respond to stimuli from the public sphere with behaviour in the private sphere. Although there is an element of bilateral decision making in Exchange Theory, the theoretical problem of assumptions about the decision making process remains. In Exchange Theory the decision making process itself is not established empirically, but subsumed within the theory and inferred onto partners from the outcome in the domestic division of labour. While both theories are capable of drawing on a range of data from the public and private realms that is relevant to household production, neither offers a process through which decisions are actually made by household members. Measured empirically, both theories correlate the outcome in the domestic division of labour with relative resources, which become inseparable from the individual characteristics of each partner and take no account for individual preference. Again, and as with Resource Theory, with the Exchange Theory we are left to presume that the outcome, the organisation of household time into paid and unpaid work, reflects the relative power of each partner, while decision making can only be understood to have occurred in the manner assumed in the theory.

3.1.3: New Home Economics

The third explanatory framework that considers the influence of paid work in the public sphere on unpaid work in the private sphere stems from neoclassical economics. Neoclassical economics has a broad range of explanations for observed human behaviour, including those occurring at the intersection of work and family. In the neoclassical theory of labour supply, individuals make decisions about how best to maximise their utility by allocating their time to a combination of market based employment in return for a wage and the consumption of leisure. In order to place an
understanding of labour supply within a household context that can generate predictions about the behaviour of men and women in families, economists have modified labour supply theory to be a combined household model, with additional scope for the allocation of time to include unpaid work as well as paid work and leisure. This household model of labour supply was developed by Becker (1991)\(^6\) and is known as ‘New Home Economics’ (NHE).

NHE considers how households made up of married couples allocate their available human capital to the performance of tasks that will maximise household production. In NHE, members of the household consume the outputs of their combined production, deriving utility from their consumption of ‘commodities’ such as a well brought up child, prestige, esteem, health, altruism, envy and pleasures of the senses (Becker 1991, p24). A household maximising production will make an optimal allocation of their available human capital to time spent in market and non-market production (Becker 1991). Following the logic of marginal productivity, Becker (1991) argues that if any member of a household has a comparative advantage in either market or non-market productive capabilities, households will have an incentive to allocate their members to tasks associated with their technical expertise in order to maximise their investment in market or non-market capital. In this regard, the NHE interprets any division of labour between market and non-market work as an efficient allocation of household resources in accordance with a comparative advantage derived from technical expertise, increasing marginal productivity from which all household members gain.

In NHE, the division of labour between market and non-market production does not necessarily mean that women will tend to specialise in non-market production while men specialise in market production. As it is in both Resource Theory and Exchange Theory then, NHE is formally gender neutral, as the source of a comparative advantage for a household member in either the market or non-market sphere is irrelevant (Becker 1991). However, should women have a comparative advantage in the non-market sector due to their technical expertise, an efficient household would allocate the time of

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\(^6\) Becker’s original *Treatise on the Family* was published in 1981 and synthesised his contributions on the subject of the family from 1965, 1973 and 1974. The 1991 version used here contains some added commentary that addresses critical responses to his earlier work. Many of these additional points are contained in his 1985 article.
women mainly to the non-market sector and the time of men to the market sector (Becker 1991). Becker (1991) does suggest that biological differences might give women a comparative advantage in the non-market sector, motivating them to invest more in this sector, while men invest in the market sector. To prove this proposition, Becker (1991) postulates that men have greater incentives to invest in human capital for the labour market, which should produce a wage gap whereby single men earn more than single women, and this effect will be multiplied after marriage, due to divergent investments in market capital and their reward. Testing against 1978-79 aggregate data, Becker (1991) finds a gender wage gap in favour of his theory, leading to the conclusion that should women perform a larger amount of domestic labour, it is due to an efficient allocation of household resources and an outcome of rational choice by the household members, to their aggregate benefit.

Beyond the explanation of the domestic division of labour according to the logic of marginal productivity, NHE relies on a further theoretical abstraction regarding the allocation of time within households by introducing ‘altruism’ (Becker 1991, p277). This is a corollary of Becker’s argument that household production is organised to deliver an aggregate benefit to all household members. As individual household members are beneficiaries of aggregate household production, they will act ‘as if’ they are altruistic towards their benefactor (Becker 1991, p284). This holds even for selfish behaviour by beneficiaries or ‘rotten kids’ in his terminology (Becker 1991, p288), as even ‘families with both altruistic and selfish members have neither perfect harmony nor pervasive conflict, but harmony in production and conflict over distribution’ (Becker 1991, p292). In this regard the understanding of the household in NHE resembles that of Resource Theory, as altruistic relationships motivate behaviour that maximises the aggregate household productive effort. This stands in contrast to the possibility of multiple utilities within the Exchange Theory.

In the subsequent literature NHE has been criticised for virtually every claim generated by the theory, as will be shown in section two of this review. However in the debate on the interactions of work and family it makes a theoretical contribution. NHE provides a formally gender neutral theoretical apparatus which explains how an altruistic head of the household allocates the time of its individual members to paid and unpaid work,
effectively spanning the spheres of work and family simultaneously. This allows us to compare the interaction of an individual partner in the household relative to their partner and total household production, as well as the contributions of each partner to the division of labour between market work and non-market work, which all have measurable factors. With inputs of household production that can be measured empirically, we can use labour market data on a range of measures to generate predictions about how households should respond to stimuli in the labour market, particularly how earnings of different household members should impact on non-market production. To summarise the theoretical relation proposed in NHE:

*Partners A and B, in a marriage AB, are under the guidance of an altruist (implicitly male) head of the family, A. Altruist partner A has an innate disadvantage in providing unpaid work and care, providing an incentive to invest more in human capital accumulation, and potentially leading to a marginal productivity advantage in paid work. In the knowledge that AB will gain from the specialisation of partners A and B, partner A organises their combined production into a bundle of paid and unpaid work based on their relative productive capabilities to maximise household utility, to the benefit of AB. In most cases partner A will have accrued greater human capital and household utility will be maximised with him engaged in paid work.*

NHE provides a third alternative explanatory framework that may offer an opportunity to analyse the lack of response in households to the increase in female labour force participation. As an alternative to the notion of relationships that interact in accordance with available resources and power, NHE potentially offers a more precise (rather than simply cumulative) set of measurable factors which can be used to understand the dynamics of the household. In addition, NHE includes a caveat related to gender with households assumed to have an innate tendency to organise around technical expertise.

However, as with both Resource and Exchange Theory, the abstraction process in NHE includes an assumption about the decision making process that occurs between partners, in this case through the notion of an altruistic head of the household who unilaterally makes decisions about the time allocations of both partners in the domestic division of labour, on the basis of marginal productivity. The actual decision making process
between partners is not established empirically, and remains subsumed within NHE, unquestioned and unaddressed. As such, it remains a theoretical problem in the same manner as in Resource and Exchange Theory. Again, this theoretical problem produces an empirical problem, whereby the outcomes in the domestic division of labour are measured through a correlation with individual characteristics, neglecting individual preference and agency.

Drawing the discussion together briefly, whilst not the primary aim of Resource and Exchange Theory, both approaches can be used to explain the allocation of time between household members. Resource Theory suggests that the allocation of time in the household can be understood as the outcome of a decision made by one partner unilaterally over both partners, with the authority to make decisions granted on the basis of resources contributed to the household, whereas Exchange Theory perceives either a bilateral exchange or bargaining process between partners on the basis of resources as the determinant of household time allocations. In contrast, the direct focus of NHE is on the allocation of time between household members. Even so, all three share a number of assumptions about how decisions are made in the household, and on what basis. All three theories draw an association between the characteristics of individual household members and the subsequent allocations of time to paid and unpaid work. This epistemological approach overlooks individual preference, and infers rather than investigates the decision making process between partners.

3.1.4: Dependency Theory

The three explanatory frameworks considered so far present formally gender neutral explanations of the relationship between paid work in the labour market and time allocated to unpaid work in the household. To reiterate, in the three previous theoretical alternatives, a comparative advantage in terms of either resources or marginal productivity is the basis for decisions about allocating time in the household. Even though the source of an advantage in the household may be linked to gender in some way, these explanations construct households with ‘genderless’ actors who possess particular individual characteristics that lead to levels of participation in paid and unpaid work, measured by a correlation between resources and the subsequent domestic
division of labour. This lies in contrast to a fourth theory that spans work and family, a class based theory of relations between the sexes where gender is the starting point. ‘Dependency Theory’ is rooted in an historical analysis in which the relationship between the sexes that ‘addresses the oppression of women and the privileging of men’ (Acker 1988, p473)². The purpose of Dependency Theory is to build a class based analysis of the interaction of capital and labour with an additional dimension, extending the relations of production to include relations of distribution (Acker 1988). The theory conceptualises a dynamic that extends from capital as the origin, to (male) waged labour and, in turn, from (male) waged labour to (female) unwaged labour (Acker 1988). In Dependency Theory, all sites of interaction between the sexes reinforce a patriarchal value system, such that ‘the wage, personal relations and the state are all locations of gendered distribution’ (Acker 1988, p478). This reduces to the level of personal relations within marriage, ‘the last link in a series of actions which have their origin in the wage relation’ (Acker 1988, p486), thus fulfilling the requirement for inclusion in this discussion.

Theorists using this framework in their analysis argue that the existence of social structures that are gendered in ways that continually re-create women’s relative disadvantage will make it impossible for women to achieve full economic independence (Acker 1988). Denied a full place in the public sphere and the possibility of economic independence, women are compelled to depend on men for economic support. In this way female unwaged labour works to reproduce the male waged labour on which it is dependent. In loving relationships based on notions of commitment, mutual obligation and entitlement, men will tend to receive the benefits of unpaid labour by women in ‘exchange’ for their provision of economic support (Acker 1988, p486-7).

However this ‘exchange’ is not conceptualised in the same manner as understood in the theories already reviewed. In Dependency Theory the term ‘exchange’ is used reluctantly in the description of the relationship between couples within the household. Rather, to focus on exchange is to miss the essence of the relationship itself, where ‘marriage, and the family it is supposed to sustain, is defined as a cooperative venture in which people give without thought of return’ (Acker 1988, p487). In this respect

interactions between family members are understood in ‘altruistic’ terms; there is no assessment of relative resources. This is not an exchange in terms of trade, but in terms of reciprocal behaviour. Unpaid labour is not provided for a specific amount of money, and there is no connection between the monetary rewards and the amount of work, effort, skill or experience.

This is a similar relationship between household members to the consensus based approaches of Resource Theory and NHE. As Brines (1993, p303-6) has argued, the interaction of household members in the Dependency Theory closely resembles the household production which exists in NHE. Moreover, beyond the conceptualisation of the relationship between household members as fundamentally productive, there are several other similarities between the gender neutral theory of NHE and the intentionally gendered Dependency Theory. In Dependency Theory, women dependent on men for economic support are obliged to reciprocate his beneficence, and as with NHE, this reciprocal behaviour has its roots in the labour market. However, the operation of the labour market is understood in different terms in the two theories. Dependency Theory holds that a gendered, patriarchal society, and the market in which that society buys and sells labour, has a predisposition to undervalue the labour of women. In this sense one can argue that in the same manner as NHE, the labour market guides behaviour within the household, with the caveat in Dependency Theory that the labour market itself is also gendered. This leads to the fundamental difference between the theories; where the NHE household will tend to organise men in market work and women in non-market work by virtue of comparative advantage, according to Dependency Theory the household will always organise men in market work and women in non-market work by virtue of gender. One can understand the interaction of partners according to Dependency Theory as:

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8 As alluded to earlier in a previous footnote, Brines argues that Resource Bargaining (an amalgam of Resource Theory and Exchange Theory), NHE and Dependency Theory rely on the same underlying logic. This analysis agrees in part with the proposition advance by Brines, in that NHE and Dependency Theory rely on the same logical framework, as does Resource Theory. However, Resource Bargaining is considered to represent Exchange Theory and to theorise a different relationship between partners in the household. This is an aside to the agreement, that Dependency Theory and NHE theorise a similar interaction.
Partners A and B, in a marriage AB, are under the guidance of an (explicitly) male head of the family and potential altruist, A. By virtue of his gender, potential altruist partner A enjoys a greater range of opportunity to participate in society, which also tends to reward the contribution of partner A more than the contribution of partner B. With this knowledge, potential altruist partner A has authority to organise household production to the benefit of AB, or alternatively, is able to relegate partner B to perform unpaid labour, to the benefit of partner A.

In Dependency Theory then, we have a fourth explanatory framework that is capable of simultaneously spanning work and family. With this theory, on the basis of gender, the male ‘head of the family’ is granted the authority to unilaterally determine the allocation of labour within the household. There remains a singular utility function as it is his utility that is maximised, which may be altruistic towards the aggregate household interests, but this is not definitively so. The dependency of household members on the wage obtained by the head of the family and the cooperative nature of familial relations further reinforce the existing structure of household production. In this way the behaviour of individuals in households can be understood to be analogous to the position of their gender role in household production.

As with the previous explanatory frameworks, there is no account of any interaction between partners in the Dependency Theory as individual preference and the decision making process are overlooked in the construction of the theory. Instead, there is no decision in this framework, as individual household members act in accordance with prescribed gender behaviour. Thus in this fourth explanatory framework it remains that an individual characteristic of household members, in this case gender, is the basis for organising how time is allocated to paid and unpaid work between household members, taking no account of individual preference.

3.1.5: Four Explanatory Frameworks

The opening section of the literature review has concentrated on the overall form of four explanatory frameworks: Resource Theory, Exchange Theory, New Home Economics and Dependency Theory. These explanatory frameworks were selected for their
capacity to explain how paid work in the public sphere influences unpaid work in the private sphere. All four of these explanatory frameworks theorise a process through which goods derived from the public sphere lead to behaviour in the private sphere in a slightly different manner.

In Resource Theory a unilateral decision by the partner contributing the most resources to the household determines the time allocations of both partners in terms of paid and unpaid work. Some measure of ‘resources’ are also the basis for decisions in Exchange Theory, however the mode of decision making is understood as either an exchange or bargain, depending on whether each partner believes they are receiving the appropriate benefits relative to their own contribution. A further alternative, NHE, perceives a unilateral decision, however this decision is made on the basis of income driven by comparative advantage in terms of productivity, while Dependency Theory conceptualises a unilateral decision on the basis of gender. These four explanatory frameworks are set out below in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of decision</th>
<th>Resource Theory</th>
<th>Exchange Theory</th>
<th>New Home Economics</th>
<th>Dependency Theory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unilateral determination by one partner</td>
<td>Bilateral exchange or bilateral bargain</td>
<td>Unilateral determination by one partner</td>
<td>Unilateral determination by one partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basis for decision</td>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Productivity</td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All four of these explanatory frameworks hypothesise the decision making process which ultimately bears on the behaviour of both partners in the household in some way. Questions about how decisions are made, the relevant factors in the decision, the individual preferences of partners, how the issues are rationalised by partners, are not addressed. A direct study of the decision making process as presented in this thesis provides an important link in the understanding of how households organise their time into paid and unpaid work, regardless of whether one the established theories is capable of explaining the available empirical data. Even so, there are several studies that have used empirical data to arbitrate between these explanatory frameworks.
3.2: Literature Review – Results

The four explanatory frameworks considered have been highlighted for their potential to explain why the increase in female labour supply in the last thirty years has not corresponded with a redistribution of time allocated to unpaid work and care in households. In order to understand this problem the discussion has focussed on theories that simultaneously consider the public domain of paid work and the private domain of the household. These explanatory frameworks have traditionally been used to analyse the domestic division of labour, either to understand and explain the allocation of time to tasks within the household as a function of ‘resources’ (however defined), or to measure and quantify the effects that stem from unequal divisions of labour between household members on labour market outcomes for women. It must be noted that the literature that considers the domestic division of labour is incredibly vast and detailed, and contains a substantial body of research that draws significant links between female labour force participation and unpaid work in the household. The studies that measure the direction and magnitude of effects across paid and unpaid work are robust and provide further support for the need to explain why there has not been a redistribution of unpaid work in households. This review will endeavour to focus on the search for an explanation to the female labour supply paradox that the theories are yet to provide. In this regard the review focuses mainly on studies that build on the theoretical contributions identified in the previous discussion, rather than studies that provide further evidence that there has not been a redistribution of unpaid work in households.

A considerable literature developed in response to the concept of a balance of power determined by relative contribution as advanced in the Resource Theory of Blood and Wolfe (1960), including the subsequent modifications to measure not only relative but absolute contributions as proposed in Exchange Theory by Heer (1963). The focus of the early research in this regard concentrated on a validation of a resource based relationship between husbands and wives, the ‘power structure’ within the family (Safilios-Rothschild 1970), as measured by which partner had the ability to make particular decisions of varying importance. In this regard the studies conducted in the 1960s and into the 1970s were concerned with the identification of a variety of resources that could successfully be leveraged into the power to make decisions within
the household context (Safilios-Rothschild 1970⁹), a focus somewhat adjacent to interactions across public and private that is sought here.

The use of these theories to explain dynamic relationships across public and private spheres followed some time later, against the backdrop of an established debate on the nature of domestic labour within the household. With the identification of domestic labour as *work*, and moreover *unpaid work* (Oakley 1974, Himmelweit 1995), Resource and Exchange Theory were used to understand how resources drawn from outside the household such as education, social status or income, effected the distribution of unpaid work between household members. Simultaneously, Becker was in the process of making claims that these interactions were better understood from a standpoint reliant on the logic of rational economic behaviour. These trends offered the potential for empirical studies to arbitrate between the competing theoretical interpretations.

An influential study by Berk (1985) set out to examine the determinants of household production within a NHE framework. The study sought to examine the total amount of household work, how this total was split between household members, and how household members organised themselves between domestic labour and paid work (Berk 1985). From a sample of 355 coupled households in the United States, Berk (1985) examined both the amount of time spent in domestic labour (measured through time diaries), and which partner had responsibility for particular domestic tasks (measured by having respondents sort a stack of cards depicting a household activity). Both were considered against the total amount of paid work undertaken by both members of the household. After a variety of tests that considered the determinants of total household work and the individual contributions within the total, Berk (1985) argued that the contribution of time to unpaid work and care by husbands in her sample

⁹ Safilios-Rothschild (1970) provides a thorough review of this early research, in which she levels a number of charges against the studies that had been undertaken. Safilios-Rothschild (1970) reasoned that the need to generate hypotheses that could be tested against available data resulted in a variety of methodological shortcomings that prevented any comparison between accumulated research on the topic of power structures within the family. Subsequently she cites unaddressed problems with multiple dimensions of power and their measurement, questions the fundamental relevance of power to subsequent behaviour in the household, highlights disparities in method across studies that measure different decisions and ignore others, or use different sampling techniques such as asking wives, husbands or both, and unsurprisingly, finds substantial variations in results that prevent any generalisation (Safilios-Rothschild 1970). Safilios-Rothschild (1970) concludes that future studies should revisit the potential significance of multiple dimensions of power and make a more systematic effort to catalogue the breadth and strength of factors.
was essentially constant, while the contribution of time to unpaid work and care by wives was responsive only to the wives’ own amount of paid work. Thus, if the wife increased her allocation of time to paid work, her proportion of domestic labour decreased due to the reduction in the total amount of domestic labour performed, rather than an increase in the amount of domestic labour performed by her husband. Further complicating the picture is the finding that male and female partners found their objectively unequal contributions to be ‘fair’ (Berk 1985).

Berk (1985) found that none of the available explanatory frameworks\textsuperscript{10}, were capable of explaining the different and disproportionate nature of time allocations between partners in the households in her study. While paid work was found to be significant, there was no evidence of any increase in paid work by women leading to an increase in unpaid work by men. Berk (1985) argued the persistence of the household time allocation between partners, in the instances where no redistribution occurred, was the outcome of ‘gender display’ between partners.

The inclusion by Berk (1985) of gender display behaviour in the understanding of interactions between partners makes intuitive sense and is attractive for its ability to explain behaviour that is contrary to the theory. The gender display argument followed well known work by Goffman (1977) about the nature of a range of social interactions between men and women that can be seen as rituals that allow for the production of gender difference, and in the process the affirmation of gender identity. In marriage, the affect is to permanently attach a man or a woman to another who will ‘reciprocate the enactment of gender expressions’ (Goffman 1977, p321). Berk (1985) developed this with the assertion that gender itself is produced in exchanges between partners within a household. In the context of the household, the gender display explanation suggests that an individual female is motivated to increase her amount of domestic labour in order to render herself feminine in accordance with traditional conventions of behaviour between men and women, while for the very same reason her male partner avoids domestic labour to appear masculine.

\textsuperscript{10} The study by Berk pre-dates the Dependency Theory
The interpretation of gender display behaviour and its subsequent inclusion in theoretical analyses offered an explanation for the contradictory findings about the nature of the domestic division of labour, and satisfied a number of concerns that had been raised concerning theories linking resources drawn from outside the household and the domestic division of labour. Prior to the Berk (1985) study, Farkas (1976) had also found men’s housework time to be impervious to change, against theoretical predictions reliant on resources drawn from outside the household, while Oppenheimer (1977) had underlined the avoidance of potentially negative outcomes from gender deviant behaviour which she termed ‘role strain’. Moreover the interpretation of gender display behaviour built further on the previously cited work of Goffman (1977), and the assertions of Burr et al (1979) on the symbolic meaning of behaviour within the context of the family. The study also confirmed the findings of Atkinson & Boles (1984) that when wives were ‘senior partners’ in a relationship, different resources were exchanged in accordance with alternative rules to allow the relationship to appear normal, which they interpreted as ‘gender deviance neutralisation’. Indeed the inclusion of the gender display component in the theoretical framework by Berk (1985) appears to synthesise a large body of literature on the domestic division of labour. However this synthesis is achieved with an additional explanation, gender, which is used to explain the lack of redistribution between partners in the instances where there is no redistribution between partners evident, while resources continue to be used to explain the instances where redistribution between partners does occur. That is, following Berk (1985), there are two possible explanations for the domestic division of labour, some measure of relative resources or gender.

Adding gender as an explanatory factor in the process of allocating time to tasks within households is particularly complex when considering the existing theories have a structural form, and as a result, are based on either unilateral determination or bilateral exchange as the decision making process. This formal structure leads to an understanding of gender in static terms, whereby gender display is evident in the results as a kind of voluntary, spontaneous expression of gender by individuals within households that also possess a specific set of economic circumstances that violate the ‘gender normal’ distribution where the female partner has primary responsibility for providing care while the male partner has primary responsibility for earning income. In
households with gender normal income distributions decisions are made on the basis of an economic logic, whereas in households with gender deviant income distributions, the logical basis of the decision changes and decisions are made on the basis of gender. This interpretation negates more nuanced views of gender that extend beyond households to consider individual men and women as actors within broader social structures that maintain a ‘gender order’ (Connell 1987) and the construction of gendered identities over time (Connell 1985) and precludes analysis of how the institutions of work interact with and shape gendered identities (Acker 1990). Existing accounts suggest the logical basis for making decisions within households changes depending on particular household circumstances related to gender norms, rather than households having a consistent gender framework that spans their employment situations and social institutions, within which decisions are made.

Within the formal structure of the available explanatory frameworks, the inclusion of gender display adds another layer of complexity for the understanding of interactions across public and private domains. There are a range of methods through which one can measure relative resources such as income or how people allocate their time. It is somewhat more difficult to accurately account for effects attributable to gender. Moreover, it is not clear how the modification of the NHE to allow for gender display behaviour changes the decision making process subsumed within the explanatory framework, or whether gender display might be consistent with all of the theories. How exactly does gender display fit in with, or around, the time allocations to maximise household utility under the direction of altruist partner A? Testing for the influence of gender display in these theories, the standard interpretation has been that when time allocations in the domestic division of labour are not explained by the relative resources of each partner, any amount of disproportionate additional unpaid work performed by the female partner in the household is due to the influence of gender.

Brines (1993) tested the theoretical alternatives and the notion of gender display using 1985 data from the Panel Study of Income Distribution (PSID) in the United States to study the interactions of couples in households, finding that the relative resources (measured as income) contributed by household members have different sized, ‘asymmetrical’ impacts on the time allocations of men and women within the household.
Brines (1993) argues that although income effects are significant in her results, the asymmetrical nature of these income effects between men and women is proof that partners are not maximising as NHE suggests, and that the female income is not regulated by reciprocal bargaining terms as a theory reliant on relative resources would suggest (either Resource or Exchange Theory). In her typology, Brines (1993) subsequently argues that the overall significance and direction of the income effects provide weak support for an economic relation and are consequently closer to the predictions of Dependency Theory. However, she also finds that beyond a certain amount of economic transfer from the wife to the husband there is no evidence of an income effect, that both partners engage in behaviour contrary to the theoretical prediction that is best understood as gender display (Brines 1993). These findings are repeated in a similar paper when Brines (1994) again finds time allocations between partners to be an otherwise economic relationship explained by degree of dependency except for the instances when husbands are seen to be dependent on their wives’ income and they engage in gender display behaviour.

Greenstein (2000) reported very similar findings around income and gender with a replication of Brines’ (1994) test using the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), although he preferred the interpretation used by Atkinson and Boles (1984) of gender ‘deviance neutralisation’ (Greenstein 2000, p332). Regardless of terminology, the process through which a couple might decide on how to allocate time to paid and unpaid work is still understood to be reliant on either of two significant variables, income in the instances where an economic relation is evident in the results, or gender.

Bittman et al (2003) provide the only study that considers Australian data and sets out to test the validity of the theoretical interactions under consideration here. They use data from the 1992 Australian National Time-Use Survey (ANTUS) and the NSFH used by Greenstein (2000) in the United States to make a cross-national comparison of how resources affect the ‘struck bargain’ in household time allocations, in an Exchange Theory type relationship (Bittman et al 2003, p189). As in the previous studies that considered data collected in the United States, Bittman et al (2003) found that as Australian women earned more relative to their husbands their domestic labour decreased, but only to the point of equal contributions to household earnings. From the
point of equality in earnings, they found that as the proportion of household earnings contributed by women increased, so did the amount of domestic labour performed by women (Bittman et al 2003). Moreover, this increase in earnings brought about a larger increase in domestic labour in the Australian case compared to the United States. In a manner similar to the previously considered studies that tested the available theories they conclude that an economic relation reflecting the outcome of bargaining between partners A and B using income determines time in domestic labour when husbands contribute more to household income, and that ‘gender trumps money when women provide more income than their husbands’ (Bittman et al 2003, p209).

These initial tests of the available explanatory frameworks provide a reasonably consistent set of findings for the interaction of effects across paid and unpaid work for households. The findings in these studies are consistent in that they show: 1) no change in the amount of time spent in unpaid work by men in the household regardless of income, 2) women reduce their time spent in unpaid work in the household when they enter paid work, and 3) in the exceptional circumstances where women earn more income in the household than men, then interaction between partners changes and women increase their amount of time spent in unpaid work. Explaining these findings within the available explanatory frameworks is problematic, as the precise effects of resources and gender are difficult to pinpoint, as well as how these factors lead to changes in behaviour.

At least to some extent, this is due to the structural form of the explanatory frameworks that are available, which rely on establishing a correlation between the individual characteristics of household members and the subsequent distribution of time spent on different tasks in the domestic division of labour. Without a concept or understanding of the decision making process or how individual gender identities and individual preferences are constructed over time, including beyond the household, these empirical findings fall outside the explanatory limit for the frameworks available. Evidence of gender display in the final allocations of time suggests that individuals in the household have gendered identities, yet the explanatory frameworks do not provide a mechanism for the use of gender in either unilateral or bilateral decisions between partners.
This is not to say that the findings in these studies are invalid. These findings are repeated in research that is not directed specifically at testing these theories, but which consider the dynamic interplay of income and the domestic divisions of labour. Throughout studies that focus on an explanation of the domestic division of labour, there is a repeated finding in the United States and the United Kingdom that increases in proportion of female earnings are associated with a more equal division of domestic labour (Ross 1987, Gershuny & Robinson 1988, Blair & Lichter 1991, Tichenor 1999, Coltrane 2000), which has been replicated in Australia (Bittman 1995, Bittman & Pixley 1997). These studies further underline the significance of an ‘economic relation’ that considers relative contribution to household income as the most significant predictor of time allocation outcomes, findings that extend to include a variety of measures and types of economic explanations such as cooperative and non-cooperative game theory applications (Lundberg & Pollack 1996, Breen & Cooke 2005).

In addition to the repeated finding of some kind of economic relation in the analysis of time allocations in the household, a range of studies that find the same economic relation but also include a range of contrary results that are ‘about gender’ (Bittman et al 2003, p193 [Pleck 1985, Hochschild 1989, Presser 1994, Shelton & John 1996, Bianchi et al 2000, Jacobs & Gerson 2004]). More qualitatively oriented studies have tended to focus on and analyse the way gender guides behaviour. The interpretation and rationalisation of behaviour is of particular interest in the studies that are not explicitly set out against these theoretical frameworks, such as in the ethnographic work of Hochschild (1989). Hochschild (1989) spent a year with ten families observing how they organised domestic labour and reported on the construction and development of a set of statements about their behaviour that were at odds with their actual behaviour as she observed it, which she termed a ‘family myth’. Hochschild (1989) observed that households in her study espoused either egalitarian or traditional ‘gender strategies’ for distributing domestic work, with households creating a family myth about how they distributed domestic work to resolve the contradiction between their espoused values and their lived reality. These findings show that rather than changing behaviour that followed gender patterns of household time distributions, households sought different ways to rationalise their behaviour in accordance with their gender strategies.
Blair-Loy (2004) also pursued a qualitative approach to her study of how female finance executives navigate between the ‘competing schemas’ of work and family. These schemas resemble ideal types that Blair-Loy (2004) argues are shaped by deeply held cultural values, with both the work and family schemas seen as ‘greedy’ institutions. Despite the similar origins of the women in the sample, Blair-Loy (2004) finds variety amongst the women in terms of their choices about pursuing competing schemas, and their satisfaction or and frustration at the outcomes. The findings lead to a critique of the theoretical models that rely on a notion of rational choice, particularly as the women in the study who try to innovate with different combinations of work and family have the most difficulty realising their choices, with Blair-Loy (2004) arguing that cultural models of how men and women should spend their waking hours remain inflexible.

These studies in combination with the theoretical frameworks and their tests underline the repeated finding in the literature: the allocation of time to tasks in the household is dependent on income when men earn more than women, in line with predictions generated in theories that assume a resource based, economic type of interaction between household members, and; the allocation of time to tasks in the household is dependent on gender when women earn more than men, in line with the gender display interpretation of behaviour.

Clearly both income and gender are significant factors in how time is distributed between partners within the household. However this explanation is limited by the theoretical and empirical problems that have been identified in the available explanatory frameworks. This interpretation neglects alternative possibilities that have not been empirically established.

When explanations about how households distribute time between paid and unpaid work are ventured, they invariably rely on an assumption subsumed within the theories about the decision making process that occurs between partners in the household. These assumptions about the decision making process are untested due to the way that the theories spanning public and private spheres have been constructed, measuring correlations between the individual characteristics of household members and the distribution of time to tasks in the household. Although studies such as Hochschild
(1989) and Blair-Loy (2004) show how people re-interpret and justify their decisions about work and life, the actual decision making process within these explanatory frameworks remains unquestioned and unaddressed, depending on a retrospective rationalisation based on the final distribution of time in the household, rather than addressing more complex questions about how individuals construct their gender identities over time in response to a range of social and institutional pressures.

An empirical investigation of the decision making process itself confronts an important gap in the literature. Addressing this missing link in the explanations of how household members distribute their time between paid and unpaid work presents an opportunity to explain why the increase in female labour force participation has not led to a redistribution of unpaid work between household members. Thus the overarching aim of the research is to empirically investigate the decision making process, which potentially explains the paradoxical nature of time allocated to paid and unpaid work between partners in the household context.

3.3: Literature Review – Possible Alternative Explanations

In the construction of a study of the decision making process, there are a number of studies that offer alternative angles on the issues that have been detailed in this chapter. Propositions can be identified in these explanations which provide the basis upon which a different approach can be developed which focuses the subject matter for the investigation explicitly on the process by which decisions are made about paid and unpaid work.

3.3.1: Autonomy

The first alternative explanation arises from a quantitative study on the determinants of time allocations within households by Gupta (2006). Gupta (2006) uses second wave NSFH data collected in 1992-94 to test for the separate effects on the amount of female domestic labour caused by their partners’ income, and secondly, effects on the amount of female domestic labour caused by their own income. Gupta (2006) finds that women’s own earnings are, conservatively, two or three times more significant in
explaining the allocations of their time to domestic labour than the earnings of their husbands. Gupta (2006) argues that this independent model also explains the dynamic relationship between earnings and domestic labour for single women, who have no bargaining or gender display imperative.

Gupta (2007) further tested his independent model, ‘Autonomy Theory’, against the Dependency Theory and interpretation of gender display, which finds variation that is ‘about gender’ in the household allocation of time. He finds that the variation about gender is best explained by the Autonomy Theory, suggesting that men and women make decisions about time spent in paid and unpaid work independently of one another, on the basis of income, which also ‘offers a plausible explanation for the trends in both women’s earnings and their housework time’ (Gupta 2007, p413). At the same time, Gupta (2007, p413) is unable to ‘determine the mechanism by which women’s earnings translate into reductions in their housework time’, and speculates on the possible ways that partners may interact to make such decisions. These recent findings provide further impetus for the study of the decision making process around paid work and family under investigation here and reveal another possible explanation to be considered, which is that the time allocations of women to paid and unpaid work may be related to their own income, that is not as a relative measure in the household context, and not as the outcome of bargaining, or under the direction of a partner.

The Autonomy Theory presents an important development for how outcomes in the domestic division of labour are understood. In the four explanatory frameworks reviewed, regardless of whether they are made unilaterally or bilaterally, decisions are perceived to be made at the household level: one decision that is binding on both partners is seen to determine the subsequent distribution of time in the household. The Autonomy Theory posits that time allocations may instead be better understood as the outcomes of decisions made by each partner over their own behaviour, independently, rather than through an interaction that is assumed to occur in the context of the household.

The possible separation of time allocations by women to unpaid work from both men and the particular context of the household presents a number of analytical challenges
and opportunities. The findings of Gupta (2007) provides a different view on the decision making process, with both independent autonomy and life situation seen to be potentially significant in the interpretation of his results. Considering the perspectives of individual men and women in different life situations can thus be an important and legitimate means by which to develop an alternative explanation of decisions about paid and unpaid work.

With regard to the decision making process, the findings of Gupta (2007) also start to suggest there is no real bargaining or exchange going on in the household, with women responsive only to their own income and without any reference to a partner. This highlights the decision making process as an overlooked mechanism in our understanding of how partners interact and allocate time within the household. Together, the potential significance of individual autonomy and different life situations need to be considered in a study of the decision making process.

3.3.2: Preferences and Constraints

The second of the possible alternative explanations follows the ‘Preference Theory’ advanced by Hakim (1991, 1995, 1996, 1998, 2000), which is primarily concerned with the choice between family work and market work for women. The starting point for Hakim (2000) is the culmination of five significant social developments in modern societies, 1) freely available contraception, 2) equal opportunities legislation, 3) white collar job growth, 4) growth in options around non-permanent employment, and 5) the rising importance of personal preferences in lifestyle choices. For Hakim (2000) these changes signal the removal of structures that have historically constrained the choices of women in society. After detailing the removal of these historical constraints, Hakim (2000) argues that women in modern egalitarian societies are free to choose between family and market work, and that differences in types of employment for women are a reflection of the different lifestyle choices of women. Subsequently Hakim (2000) creates a typology of three categories of women who can be categorised as primarily family-centred (family life and children are their main priorities in life, approximately 20 percent of the population), primarily work-centred (approximately 20 percent of the population), and adaptive women who are neither family nor work centred.
(approximately 60 percent of the population). Hakim (2000) subsequently argues that this typology of female preferences explains the contrary findings about female employment, such as examples of women expressing satisfaction with what are otherwise seen to be poor employment conditions.

The arguments advanced by Hakim (1991, 1995, 1996) invite a range of critiques and counter arguments that emphasise the interdependence of structure and agency ‘in terms of the historically available opportunities and constraints’ in the construction of choices available to women (Crompton & Harris 1998, p119 [Acker 1990, Ginn et al 1996, Bruegel 1996, Blair-Loy 2004]). Overall these criticisms of Preference Theory are pertinent, in particular with Crompton and Harris (1998) arguing that their biographical study of the employment patterns of women reveals changes over time that occur within and between categories in the typology set out by Hakim (2000). This evidence serves to highlight the danger of drawing associations between expressed preferences and the distribution of employment for women as proof of the Preference Theory. Even so the Preference Theory highlights two further alternative explanations related to the preferences of women. This alternative explanation contends that the time allocations of women to paid and unpaid work may be grounded in their own preferences, that is not as a relative measure in the household context, and not as the outcome of bargaining, or under the direction of a partner.

The possible inclusion of preferences for women, with a further possible separation from the household context, are in line with the insights of Gupta (2007). The critiques of Hakim (2000) also serve to highlight that particular life situations, and not just the context of the household, may act to constrain the choices available to women and thus subsequently limit their preferences. Moreover it also highlights the dearth of literature that considers the preferences of men in any life situation. Building on the insights of Gupta (2007) and Hakim (2000) and their alternative explanations which are grounded in autonomy and preference requires an additional account of men and women separately as individuals with additional consideration given to the potential significance of alternative life situations.
3.3.3: Lagged Adaptation

One further interpretation offers a possible explanation for the apparent lack of redistribution in time spent on paid and unpaid work by men and women in households, which is that changes actually are happening, albeit very slowly. Gershuny et al (1994) considered data from the Social Change and Economic Life Initiative (SCELI) and established a positive association between the paid work of wives with an increased proportion of domestic labour by their husbands. Gershuny et al (1994) argue that this is evidence of a slow and gradual change between partners over time that is moving towards an equal domestic division of labour according to relative income contributions, best understood as a process of ‘lagged adaptation’. Moreover, Gershuny et al (1994) include a gender proviso in their explanation by linking attitudes to the domestic division of labour to ideas of masculinity and femininity that are rooted in early childhood. Thus they argue that the process of lagged adaptation can only ‘be complete and painless once all members of households were themselves children in households with unchallenged egalitarian models – that is, in a very long time into the future’ (Gershuny et al 1994 p155). Gershuny et al (1994) also predict that successive generations of men will participate more equally in domestic labour.

In many ways, this interpretation is similar to the argument that ‘gender trumps money’ that Bittman et al (2003) so eloquently encapsulate. That is, the lagged adaptation interpretation suggests that changes in the relative amount of household income contributions explain any shift in the domestic division of labour that does occur, and gendered attitudes to domestic labour explain any lack of redistribution in the domestic division of labour. However the link to attitudes implies a different trend, that the movement towards an equal division of labour will occur gradually over successive generations. This suggests one further alternative explanation based on attitudes, namely that the outcomes of partners in time allocations may be grounded in their own reference group expectations, including perceived societal norms of behaviour, and the adoption of learned behaviour from parents.

The search for evidence of a change in attitudes to domestic labour through different ‘generations’ has been particularly well documented. Rather than a particular focus on
domestic labour, an increasing amount of this research considers the place of paid work in the equation. Proctor and Padfield (1998) interviewed 47 British women aged 18 to 27 about their experiences and aspirations to combine paid work and family. Proctor and Padfield (1998) found young women faced contradictory pressures in particular around family formation that they would have little assistance in managing. Recently in Australia, Pocock (2005, 2006) has considered the perspectives of primary school and high school students in a range of locations in Australia in regards to expectations of their own careers in paid work, care and domestic labour. She finds ‘little support for the optimistic hope that the allocation of unpaid work is moving briskly to a fair division between the sexes’ and concludes by illustrating a host of changes that will need to occur if young men and women are to realise their plans (Pocock 2006 p153).

3.3.4: Three Possible Alternative Explanations

These three alternative explanations, reliant on autonomy, preferences and lagged adaptation, provide the initial framework for a different approach to the question of how time is distributed between partners in households. Rather than viewing households as an aggregation of characteristics, with decisions made on the basis of either resources or gender as in the four explanatory frameworks reviewed, these alternative approaches conceive that household allocations may be determined on the basis of preference, and potentially on the basis of how household allocations are perceived relative to the situation of their peers.

These studies also start to suggest that the mode of decision making may not be related to the interaction of partners in the household, and instead place emphasis on individuals acting autonomously. The four explanatory frameworks reviewed in the first section of the chapter perceived some kind of interaction between partners, either through exchange, bargaining, or a unilateral determination by one partner over both partners, as the way decisions in the household were made. These alternative explanations start to suggest that household decisions may be made by partners autonomously, independent of one another. An illustration of this is set out below in Table 2.
Table 2: Three Possible Alternative Explanations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of decision</th>
<th>Autonomy Theory</th>
<th>Preference Theory</th>
<th>Lagged Adaptation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autonomous decision made separately</td>
<td>Preference of individual</td>
<td>Perceived reference group gender norms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

These alternative explanations present the start of a new approach to understanding household decisions, which may be made separately by individuals in an autonomous manner, and may be on the basis of perceptions and preferences. Understanding decisions that are based on individual preferences and perceptions, that are made independent of partners in an autonomous manner, also indicates that the particular context of the household may not be significant in the rationalisation of decisions, inviting the analysis of individual men and women that extends to alternative stages of work and family formation. This interpretation gives rise to the possibility that outcomes in the domestic division of labour are manifestations of individual decisions about work and family that are made separately, prior to household formation, which would provide some explanation for the difficulty aligning outcomes in the domestic division of labour with household characteristics. Thus the possibility of decisions made autonomously on the basis of gender invites an analysis of individual men and women that extends to alternative stages of work and family formation, placing emphasis on how household decisions are perceived and anticipated by individuals.

Developments from these studies further reinforce the need for a different method for addressing the research question, which need to pinpoint a more precise relationship than an association between the individual characteristics of household members and the subsequent distribution of time between paid and unpaid work. The alternative explanations suggest that it is necessary to consider the perceptions and preferences of individuals separately. It is further necessary to investigate the extent to which time allocations are actually determined through interactions that occur within households, or whether time allocation decisions are made autonomously. Moreover the pursuit of these questions should also consider perceptions of these decisions that occur in different stages of work and family formation. These considerations guide the sample
selection so that the analysis can consider how the issues are perceived, constructed and rationalised by individual men and women, both prior to and post family formation, and pursuant to the following research questions:

What is the decision making process when allocating time to paid and unpaid work in the household?

What type of decision is it – autonomous, unilateral, exchange or bargaining?

What is the basis for the decision – income, preference or gender?

3.4: Conclusion

This review of the literature has developed with the broad objective of finding an explanatory framework that is capable of explaining dynamics that occur across the separate spheres of paid and unpaid work and between household members. The purpose of finding an explanatory framework capable of spanning the two spheres was to understand how the increase in female labour force participation had not brought about a redistribution of time spent in unpaid work between partners within households.

In the first section of the review four explanatory frameworks, namely Resource Theory, Exchange Theory, NHE and Dependency Theory, were considered for their potential to explain the influence of paid work in the public sphere on unpaid work in the private sphere and vice versa. The review of these theories focussed on their formal structure, highlighting ways in which the theories draw associations between individual characteristics and outcomes in the domestic division of labour. This is due to a theoretical problem, as assumptions made in the abstraction process bypass an analysis of the actual decision making process in households, and decisions are assumed to be made either through exchange or bargaining, or by one partner unilaterally. This leads to an empirical problem, as outcomes in the domestic division of labour, the distribution of paid and unpaid work between partners, are understood as if they had been decided by some measure of relative resources through correlation, and household characteristics become the basis for understanding how decisions are made. The interpretation of empirical results thus relies on the validity of assumptions about the decision making process between partners, which is not established empirically.
The second section of the review considered the results of studies that have drawn on these explanatory frameworks in their questions and analysis. Interestingly the empirical findings in these studies were shown to be consistent, and yet explanations of the empirical findings varied. Repeatedly, the findings in the literature suggest the significance of two key variables as the basis for allocating time and task between partners in the domestic division of labour, income and gender. However this explanation is limited by the explanatory power of the available theories, which rely on establishing a correlation between the individual characteristics of household members and the subsequent distribution of time spent on different tasks. Again, the actual decision making process is a theoretical problem within these explanatory frameworks which remains unquestioned and unaddressed. This interpretation does not consider how decisions about time and task between partners are made nor does it identify the particular preferences of individuals in the household. This retrospective rationalisation of the data interprets gender display as a by-product of gender deviant income distributions in the household without delving further into how individuals construct gender through interactions with institutions over time.

The third section of the literature review considered alternative explanations that investigate similar issues but fall outside the existing explanatory frameworks. These alternative explanations are used as the initial framework for a different approach to the question of how time is distributed between partners in households. These studies establish that preferences need to be explored as a potential basis for decision making, the need to consider whether decisions about time allocations to paid and unpaid work are made by individuals independent of one another, and the need to take account of perceptions in alternative stages of work and family formation. These alternative explanations need to be considered in conjunction with the established explanations, which rely on joint decisions making processes based on factors of income and gender. Thus it is necessary to design a study which is centred on the decision making process that can also account for established and alternative explanations for the allocation of time to tasks in the domestic division of labour.

Given the limitations of the existing approaches that have been outlined in this review a new approach is warranted. Recent literature provides an indication of the way in which
this new approach should be fashioned, with a focus on individuals rather than households, and with consideration of their perceptions and preferences about paid and unpaid work. This means a shift from quantitative to qualitative methods, particularly to allow for comparison of rationales for decisions made in alternative life situations, independently and within households. The construction of a study that can measure and account for these explanations is detailed in the following chapter.
Chapter 4 – Methodology

As illustrated in chapter three, there is a large and complex literature that considers the internal and external determinants of decisions between household members with regard to their participation in paid and unpaid work. An examination of this literature has not provided a definitive explanation for the lack of redistribution in unpaid work in light of the increased performance of paid work by women. The Resource, Exchange, Dependency and NHE theories, and subsequent studies informed by these explanatory frameworks, present a number of possible explanations for the lack of redistribution in unpaid work between household members. Repeated studies point to the significance of income and gender as the basis for how time between paid and unpaid work is distributed in households, without addressing the decision making process through which this distribution occurs. The decision making process itself is yet to be treated as an object of study.

Constructing a study of the decision making process offers an opportunity to further develop the existing approaches that have been considered in the literature review, and potentially clarify the way that income and gender effect the outcome of decisions in the household. In addition to the neglect of the decision making process itself as an object of study, there are also a number of empirical shortcomings that have been revealed in the literature review. Theories that explain the allocation of time and task in households infer from empirical data a particular type of decision making, either bilateral exchange or bargaining, or unilateral determination, rather than empirically establish how decisions are made. Consequently the particular characteristics of individuals in the household, such as income or gender, are seen to lead to outcomes in the domestic division of labour.

This chapter sets out a strategy for data collection and analysis of how household decisions about work and family are perceived and anticipated, and the process through which these decisions are made. In the first section of the chapter, studies that have pursued similar issues of process and perspective are considered. The second section details the construction of a study that is qualitative and addresses the alternative explanations that are centred on individual autonomy, individual preference, and can
also account for different life situations. The second section also considers the appropriate methods of sample construction and selection to maintain internal and external validity, generalisability and reliability. This includes a detailed outline of the interview structure and how it facilitates the pursuit of the study propositions. The third section of the chapter provides the technical details about the interviews and the sample composition.

The study addresses a significant gap in the literature with an empirical investigation of the decision making process. This links back to the research objective, which is to explain the impasse around unpaid work in the household in light of the significant increase in female labour force participation. This is achieved through a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis which considers the established and alternative explanations in the literature by identifying perceptions, preferences and expectations about the decision making process of individuals in different stages of work and family formation.

4.1: Similar Studies: Studying Processes and Perspectives on Work and Family

This particular study is concerned with the process through which people perceive and make decisions around work and family. It explicitly seeks to identify any differences in the way that men and women arrive at their preferred mix of paid and unpaid work. Such an approach provides for gender differences, if they exist, to be highlighted. Moreover, by exploring different life situations with respect to decisions about work and family, some indication of the permanence of preferences and how these preferences are shaped by partners is revealed. These questions are not addressed in the existing literature. Constructing a study that addresses these questions necessitates an innovative approach to research design. Some direction can be gleaned from studies that address similar conceptual problems, measuring attitudes before and after household formation, despite those studies having a different empirical focus. These studies provide considerable guidance on the appropriate research method.

In recent years, Pocock (2006) has introduced an alternative perspective on work and family through focus group interviews with school students. The perspectives of
primary and high school students have been used in the investigation of countless social issues across a range of disciples, and the study by Pocock (2006) reveals the potential for such an approach in the work and family debate. In her study, Pocock (2006) conducted 21 focus group interviews with 93 young Australians. The focus group participants were from two cohorts, one aged 10 to 12 in year 6 at primary school, and the other aged 16 to 18 in years 10 and 11 at high school (Pocock 2006, p221-4). The 21 focus groups included 4 groups from country areas, 8 groups from low-income urban areas, and 9 groups from high-income urban areas (Pocock 2006, p19).

Focus groups were used by Pocock to investigate the perspectives and preferences of young people in order to analyse their future plans for work and family. This is of value as how young people plan to organise their own work and households are issues that are little researched in Australia (Pocock 2006, p14). There are two particular issues at the centre of her study; first, young people’s plans around work and family, and second, the allocation of domestic work that they anticipate in their adult lives (Pocock 2006, p122). The use of focus groups as a tool for data collection allows Pocock (2006) to analyse how young people perceive and anticipate work and family concerns through discussion of the issues under investigation.

For Pocock (2006), focus groups as a tool for data collection in this study had two main advantages over the alternative of interviews. Firstly, focus groups were seen to facilitate a better interaction with young respondents than a potentially intimidating interview, whereas a discussion among peers could be more amenable and allow for unexpected lines and unanticipated views (Pocock 2006, p223). Focus groups also offered a practical element, allowing a large number of respondents to be canvassed in a relatively short amount of time (Pocock 2006, p223). In her study, these advantages were seen to outweigh the potential pitfalls of focus group research, such as the possibility that young respondents would seek peer approval in the focus group situation (Pocock 2006, p222).

There are multiple issues around perceptions of work and family in the study, as the two cohorts of school students experience and react to the work and family challenges of their parents, and are invited to propose their own preferred solutions (Pocock 2006).
Focus group findings are then considered in light of the current institutional framework shaping the range of options available in decisions between work and family. Pocock uses this comparison as a way to draw out the potential social costs, particularly borne by women, should public policy fail to modify the institutional framework. These insights and methods inform the construction of the present study of how individuals perceive and anticipate work and family.

In addition to the work of Pocock (2006) on the attitudes of young people towards their future work and family concerns, studies of other processes in the household offer guidance on the construction of this study. Both Komter (1989) and Tichenor (2005) utilise semi-structured interviews for data collection in their studies of hidden power in marital relationships. The purpose of studying hidden power in marital relationships is to reveal mechanisms of informal power in gender relationships, the ability of either partner to realise a desired change, rather than the outcomes in the domestic division of labour (Komter 1989). Hidden power may indicate whose preferences are represented in the status quo between partners (Tichenor 2005), as opposed to the status quo representing a function of resources drawn from outside the marriage. The issue in studies of hidden power is not how the ‘power cake’ is divided, but to reveal mechanisms that prevent change in the context of interpersonal relationships (Komter 1989, p191).

The study by Komter (1989) comprised semi-structured interviews, conducted separately with each partner, in 60 Dutch couples. All of the couples were married, were aged between 20 and 55, and had children living in the household (Komter 1989). The study was concerned with the operationalisation of desires and strategies for change in the distribution of household labour, childcare, sexuality, finances and leisure. The sample was based around class and the employment status of the wife, with women from different socioeconomic groups sorted according to their employment status. This produced 4 clusters of 15 women and their husbands as follows; lower-class women in paid employment; lower-class women not in paid employment; higher-class women in paid employment; and higher class women not in paid employment (Komter 1989).
Using this qualitative approach, Komter (1989 p213) found that ‘when the idea of normalcy and rightness of prevailing patterns in gender relations characterises both husbands’ and wives’ perceptions and experience in marriage, inequality in marital power is confirmed in an unobtrusive way, automatically as it were, without brute power’. These relations were maintained through hidden power structures that supported the position of men, and were revealed in the context of the marital household.

Tichenor (2005) also considered hidden power dynamics in the household. Her study consisted of a questionnaire and then semi-structured interviews, conducted separately with each partner, in 30 American couples. The sample consisted of 22 unconventional earners in which wives earned substantially more than their husbands (measured as earned income of 150 percent or more relative to their husband) and wives that work in higher status occupations than their husbands (measured as a factor of education required for the job and positions in the bureaucratic hierarchy). This sample was contrasted with 8 comparison couples in which husbands and wives were relatively equal status, or husbands surpassed their wives on these two variables. All couples in the sample had two incomes and at least one child living at home, in order to try and measure effect of the wife earning more, rather than an effect due to the wife being in employment, and to avoid comparisons of effects due to childcare responsibilities. This sample construction allows for contrasts between groups according to the relative earnings of the wife and facilitates the measurement of relative and hidden power.

The study found that ‘these women are afraid that their tremendous resources will *make them look powerful*, or that their husbands will experience their resource disadvantage as domination – or worse, as emasculation (Tichenor 2005, p201, emphasis in original). In this study, with the specific process focus in the context of particular household relationships, behaviour that does not reflect the distribution of relative resources is linked back to gender display behaviour in the conclusion that couples in this situation ‘focus their efforts on making their unusual marriages look and feel more conventional’ (Tichenor 2005, p203). Together with the study by Pocock (2006), the two studies of hidden power by Komter (1989) and Tichenor (2005) point to the value of qualitative methods that ask direct questions to respondents in an empirical study of the decision
making process that can accommodate perspective, preference, life situation and alternative interactive processes between partners.

4.2: Studying the Decision Making Process: A Qualitative Approach

Through an examination of the literature, the development of perceptions and the creation of options for combining paid and unpaid work and the enacting of these choices through decisions in households has been identified as an object of study. As has been argued throughout, individual preferences and how decisions are actually made is overlooked in the range of theories that focus on the outcomes of these interactions in households. Where studies have measured outcomes through quantitative analysis, explanations for the domestic division of labour have been unable to separate income and gender. Making the decision making process the empirical object of a qualitative study that is concerned with the allocation of time within households presents an opportunity to clarify and refine existing explanations. The insights from the autonomy and preference literature suggest a more direct examination of specific propositions about how individuals interpret their range of options in household decisions, particularly outside the specific household context, would be fruitful. This requires a new approach to the measurement of work and family decisions which can account for individual preference and alternative stages of work and family formation outside specific context of the household.

Studying the perspective of individuals, the attitudes and values they have in their decisions about work and family, can be achieved using qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. Such methods are ideal for uncovering the perspectives of individuals and identifying why particular processes occur, particularly where the specific relationships and contextual settings are significant (Peshkin 1993, p23-24).

Selecting the most appropriate qualitative method depends heavily on the questions being asked and general propositions that follow. The questions pursued in this study emerge from the explanatory frameworks and related studies considered in the literature review, where theoretical and empirical problems were identified, along with possible alternative explanations. With consideration of how decisions are perceived, constructed
and rationalised by individual men and women, both prior to and post family formation, the research asks the following question and sub-questions:

What is the decision making process when allocating time to paid and unpaid work in the household?

What type of decision is it – autonomous, unilateral, exchange or bargaining?

What is the basis for the decision – income, preference or gender?

These research questions centre on the process through which choices are constructed by individuals over time and in turn shape how decisions are made, which is the theoretical problem of the research. As shown in chapter three existing frameworks assume that household decision are reached in a particular way, either exchange, bargaining or unilateral imposition. This theoretical presumption follows from an empirical problem in the literature, namely the absence of any evidence about the decision making process of itself. Measured in the context of the household, outcomes in the domestic division of labour have previously been interpreted through correlation with the individual characteristics of household members. Countering this empirical problem requires a different approach to empirical analysis which considers how the decision making process is perceived and anticipated by individuals at different stages of their work and family formation in addition to the rationalisations of the decision making process provided by partners in households. Analytic comparison of results between men and women as individuals, and between groups of individual men and women in different life situations, gives consideration to the two other alternative explanations; first based on the notion of lagged adaptation, and second based on the notion that gendered expectations limit the range of perceived outcomes in the decision making process. These analytic requirements dictate a comparative research strategy.

A comparative research strategy allows the distinguishing characteristics of two or more subjects to facilitate theoretical reflections about contrasting findings (Bryman 2008, p61). With this method distinguishing characteristics can provide the basis for comparison within and between specified samples provided the measures are relevant to the theoretical propositions. In this study, this is achieved through the comparison of
results from interviews with men and women in samples drawn from different life situations.

This study consists of parallel samples of men and women at three different stages of their career and family formation: undergraduate, graduate and parent. With this sample design, it is possible to make comparisons between the categories of undergraduate, graduate and parent in the analysis, while also allowing further comparison between the sub-groups of men and women themselves. This comparative research strategy allows for the preferences of individual men and women to be considered separately as a way to ‘test gender’, and together as an interaction that informs the understanding of the decision making process as a way to ‘test income’. The ability to draw comparisons across and between multiple levels of analysis provides an opportunity to analyse and contrast the individual preferences of men and women, with regard to the decision making process, at different career stages. The comparative research strategy also allows for comparison across career stages through replication, further underlining the suitability of this strategy. An example of how this classification of sub-groups in the study allows for comparative dimensions of analysis between men and women, and across life situations, is depicted as undergraduate and graduate samples in Figure 11, below.

**Figure 11: A comparative research approach to the decision making process**

Employing this research strategy allows comparisons of the decision making process to be made across life situation and between genders as required. In turn, this raises further
challenges in order to address issues surrounding reliability, validity and
generalisability. In this study these concerns are addressed through a sample selection
based on replication logic.

4.2.1: Sampling: Generalisability and External Validity in Qualitative Research

This study facilitates comparison through a replication logic. Employing a replication
logic is the key criteria for external validity in a comparative research strategy (Yin
2003, p34). The replication logic is distinctly different from the notion of representative
sampling in statistics. A statistical generalisation is based on the mathematical
probability that a sample is sufficiently representative of the wider population, such that
if a phenomena occurs in the sample, it is reasonable to infer it occurs at a proportionate
rate in the wider population (Yin 2003, p32). This mode of statistical generalisation,
when it has been applied to the complex decisions households make between work and
family, leads to the apparently contradictory outcome whereby women allocate more
time to unpaid labour than men regardless of their income.

Instead of a statistically representative sample, analytic generalisation depends on using
a developed theory as a template with which to compare the empirical results of a study
(Yin 2003, p32). Sample selection thus depends on the relevance of the sample to the
research question. In this way a purposive sample can be strategically selected for its
relevance to understanding a particular social phenomena (Bryman 2008, p415). This
sample can then be analysed alongside the theoretically predicted outcomes through
replication.

Yin (2003) cites two types of replication as significant in a comparative research design,
literal and theoretical. A literal replication predicts similar results to recur, while a
theoretical replication ‘predicts contrasting results for predictable reasons’ (Yin 2003,
p47). In this sense the literal replication is the vehicle for generalising results within a
particular sample, while a theoretical replication is the vehicle for contrasting results
between those samples. In this study this logic facilitates generalisations about the
decision making process of men and women through the literal replication of interviews
with individual men and women in the sample, while theoretical replication allows
comparisons to be drawn between men and women within the same life situation. This process is repeated for the decision making process itself with the literal replication of the study in alternative stages of work and family formation, allowing a comparison of life situations to be made. Yin (2003, p51) also provides guidance on the number of replications when he suggests that if the rival theories being considered ‘have subtle differences or if you want a high degree of certainty, you may press for five, six, or more replications’.

This replication logic provides considerable guidance on the construction of the sample. In particular, the literal replication of sub-groups should purposively sample people of a similar age, demographic, and with similar economic opportunities, allowing the study of a small group with specific characteristics to be generalisable to a wider population (Proctor & Padfield 1998, p32). Selection of an appropriate sample is still required to address the particular phenomena under examination, which in this instance are decisions around work and family.

Specifying the particular characteristics of a group that best fits the study of the phenomena under investigation follows these requirements. Following from this, the literal replication of individuals in the sample should be according to a number of specific characteristics relevant to the research questions, with a division of sub-groups where the only theoretical difference is gender. In this study, this led to the identification and selection of single university undergraduates in the field of economics without children, single graduates in the field of economics without children, and partnered university graduates in the field of economics with children, as the ideal sample. The parameters for the selection of this sample were influenced by a number of factors.

This purposive sample of actual and potential degree holders conforms to the conditions Schofield (1990) suggests can magnify the generalisability of qualitative research, namely through the selection of an appropriate ‘fit’ between the situation under investigation and the sample, which also considers what theoretically could be the case, and what may be more common in the future. In this study, potential and actual degree holders were identified as the ideal sample as they are seen to be more likely to enter
professional occupations. People entering professional occupations were seen as an ideal as they were considered to potentially have more control over their own ability to make decisions between work and family, rather than have decisions dictated by financial necessity for example. Following this rationale, professionally employed people were seen to be an ideal sample as they are more likely to be giving consideration to the type of decisions about work and family being investigated in the study.

There was also an extreme-case logic in play with respect to this sample selection with consideration to what, in the terminology of Schofield (1990), ‘theoretically could be’. People employed in professional occupations are considered more likely to be confronted with the choice between work and family, potentially magnifying the effects under investigation. Also factored into the selection of this sample was the possibility that by investigating undergraduate and graduate perspectives of work and family, this sample is potentially representative of future trends, conforming to the purposive sample requirements of Schofield (1990).

The decision to select students and graduates from the field of economics also followed a particular rationale. Again the literal replication logic suggested that one particular field of study would further accentuate any differences within the sample that could be attributed to gender. This indicated the selection of one broad area of study would be suitable. Moreover, it was considered important that the sample represented an area of study where the student population was not heavily gender-biased in representation, as may be the case with engineers or teachers, for example. The reason for avoiding this is the possibility that gender differences may have influenced their course selection in the first place, and would make the comparison of gender perspectives on work and family decisions harder to draw out in this study.

A similar process of elimination according to the issues under investigation ruled out two alternatives where the area of study contained a more equal gender representation in the student population, namely arts and law. It was intended that the sample included students that selected their degree based on future employment opportunities, a criteria that may not necessarily have applied to graduates and undergraduates in an arts degree.
It was also deemed important to have a degree structure that was not too career specific, where the perspectives on work and family decisions may be known to respondents and have already been considered as either a motivating factor or ruled out as a deterring factor, which may be the case with a professional degree like law, much like teaching and engineering. The desire to achieve a high degree of replication and the subsequent process of elimination between areas of study suggested that the particular group where these concerns would be minimised would be economics undergraduates, economics graduates and graduate parents, making them an appropriate sample for this research.

The desire to draw comparisons between groups that are linked to both gender and take account of possible issues related to life situation, as necessitated in the research question, motivates the sample selection comprised of undergraduates, graduates and (graduate) parents. This allows the expectations of the undergraduates and graduates with regard to work and family to be investigated and compared, with an additional comparative group made up of parents who have made decisions between work and family in the household. Thus the study targeted one sample of undergraduates to contrast with two samples of graduates.

Sampling two groups who did not live in households and instead talked about the way that they anticipate making decisions is an attempt to control for the influence of household context itself. Throughout the literature, the particular context of the household is used in the rationalisation of the findings, with the household providing individuals with a gender display imperative that is seen to drive the change in the logical basis for decision making. Any differences revealed in comparisons between a sample prior to, and a sample post household formation, may be attributed to the influence of the household context, and in doing so obscure the influence of broader institutional factors. Drawing from two samples of individual men and women who do not have the household gender display imperative offers a potential way of exploring the influence of institutional factors and reveal how individuals construct gender over time through interactions beyond the household. Thus, the targeted sample comprised:
4.2.2: Data Collection: Reliability and Internal Validity in Qualitative Research

Identifying the perspectives of individuals on decisions around work and family, trying to ascertain any differences that are attributable to gender in the preferences of men and women, gauging the permanence of their preferences and measuring the relevance of particular life situations requires a qualitative mode of data collection. Semi-structured interviews are the ideal form of data collection when the perspectives of individuals need to be measured, rather than simply their response to a question (Bryman 2008).

The semi-structured interview as a method of data collection has a number of advantages for the investigation of the questions in this study. Semi-structured interviews encourage the pursuit of tangents in discussion (Bryman 2008). This allows responses to be situated within the type of detailed and complicated context that decisions around work and family are made. Moreover, significant points can be returned to and these answers can be clarified by respondents.
The content of the interview was designed to interact with the interviewees’ perspectives on issues around work and family, in line with the propositions of the study. Attitudes and values are typically recorded in panel surveys, such as the Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey and the PSID survey used by Brines (1993), providing a guide on the general form of questions that could be used to establish attitudes on issues such as paid work, parenting and childcare. Other large scale survey instruments such as the NSFH survey used by Greenstein (2000) and Gupta (2006), and in particular, the SCELI survey used by Gershuny et al (1994), also provided a guide on the use of scenarios as propositions. These survey instruments facilitated the design of an interview schedule that was constructed around key themes, with subsequent probe questions that pursued the study propositions.

The interview itself was structured to try and establish a consistent viewpoint from the respondent on a range of factors influencing particular decisions, and to draw out whether the perceived alternatives are limited by concerns related to gender expectations. In the interviews with the parents this could be achieved in a relatively straightforward manner through a discussion linked to key themes, and then asking a series of probe questions about particular arrangements in the household and about attitudes to the appropriate allocation of responsibilities between partners.

In the interviews with the parents, the key themes in the interview covered the topics of; 1) the allocation of the responsibility for paid work between household members both before and after the first child, 2) the allocation of the responsibility for unpaid work between household members both before and after the first child, 3) the allocation of the responsibility for childcare between household members after the first child, and 4) any changes in the household through the transition from one parent on maternity leave and to the mothers’ return to work.

Within the key themes for discussion, probe questions pursued the propositions of the study in greater depth. For example, a question about the allocation of responsibility for childcare between partners would be followed with a series of probe questions about how these arrangements were decided, the relevant factors in the decision, the preferences of each partner, the involvement of each partner in the decision, and
whether the outcome reflected the prior expectations of either or both partners. With such an approach to the interviews with parents, the semi-structured interview schedule allowed particular explanations provided by the respondents to be pursued in greater detail. The processes described and the outcomes of these decisions provided a robust explanation for household arrangements which could be compared to the results in the undergraduate and graduate samples, and assessed against the propositions in the study.

Accurately measuring the expectations and perspectives of undergraduates and graduates presented a more challenging task. Again, the interview was structured to try and establish a consistent viewpoint from respondents on a range of factors influencing particular decisions. In the interviews with the undergraduate and graduate samples\(^{11}\), this was achieved by asking questions around the same issues through three stages in a more structured manner than the interviews with the parents. The first stage of the undergraduate and graduate interview was a short answer response ‘attitude sketch’, which was followed by a long answer interview, and finally a ‘scenario’ based discussion. In the long answer section, questions around work and family were also asked with regard to a range of specific topics.

These structural elements in the interview schedule were designed to refine the measurement of the issues in the undergraduate and graduate samples. Two additional stages were included in the interview, which allowed respondents to confirm or reject statements associated with their expressed attitudes. This was necessary in order to identify any discrepancy between expressed attitudes and actual behaviour, an issue raised in the work of Hochschild (1989) with the notion of a ‘family myth’ that is constructed to rationalise the domestic division of labour. This staged structure of the undergraduate and graduate interview also provided some guard against reflexivity, whereby ‘politically correct’ responses may be provided to satisfy the respondents’ participation without reflecting actual attitudes at all. The multiple levels of enquiry were established to provide a more accurate, refined and complex measure of the issues explored in the research question.

\(^{11}\) The full interview schedule for undergraduates and graduates is provided in Appendix 2
In the three pilot interviews conducted, the interview was slightly too long and repetitive, and some minor refinements were made to overcome these problems. The final interviews with undergraduates and graduates began with an initial ‘attitude sketch’ using short answer questions asking interviewees to express attitudes on topics such as the importance of women having employment and their position within the labour market, with the same questions repeated separately in regards to men. Attitudes were also gauged on household issues, such as any costs and benefits from having two parents in employment, who should be responsible for certain tasks in the household, and how the household should allocate responsibilities.

The long answer section of the interview with undergraduates and graduates directed discussion through topics that are central to perspectives on work and family. In order, these were 1) the important things in life, 2) university course selection and motivation, 3) experiences in paid work, 4) anticipated future career in paid work, 5) life history of parents, and 6) balancing demands. These general topics of discussion were designed to provide a robust individual narrative that covered a multitude of possible explanations for the expressed attitudes that were raised in the interview. The topics of discussion were repeatedly directed towards the central questions of the respondents’ preferences, expectations and considerations in the decision making process between household members.

Finally the undergraduate and graduate interviews concluded with a scenario based ‘test’ of the respondents’ expressed viewpoints as a way to measure the possible acceptance of a role reversal. The scenario based questions involved a progression through a series of situations that confronted a hypothetical married couple, with discussion focussed on how the situation should be resolved. Scenarios were purposefully biased against the expressed attitudes of the respondents, so that a respondent who expressed a preference for a ‘traditional’ household arrangement of male earner and female carer was presented with a hypothetical couple where the female had higher earnings and vice versa.

All of the interviews were recorded by the investigator. Except for the sample of ‘mothers’ (women who were graduates and parents), which were transcribed by an
external service provider, all of the interviews were also transcribed by the investigator. The decision was made not to code responses using a software tool as the interview itself was designed to add to the complexity and variety of possible explanations. With this interview design, expressions may have different meanings and significance in the particular context in which they occur, and coding the transcripts was seen to be stripping responses of context in an effort to quantify the analysis. Instead, responses were analysed within the structured logic of the interview construction. This allows for the respondents to explain their perspectives on the decision making process under investigation.

4.3: Sample Composition

The study aimed to interview approximately ten men and ten women from each of three different, specific, groups. The groups have been selected around specific characteristics that relate to their perspectives on decisions between work and family. The three groups were:

1) ‘Undergraduates’: male and female undergraduates studying in the field of economics, in their first year of university

2) ‘Graduates’: male and female university graduates in the field of economics within three years of their graduation

3) ‘Parents’: male and female university graduates in the field of economics that have young children

These samples were chosen specifically to compare the responses of men and women, within and across different life situations, with respect to their expectations of how decisions between work and family should be made, and in the case of the parents, how decisions between work and family had been made.

The recruitment of undergraduate interviewees within the narrow confines of the specified criteria was achieved successfully, albeit after some early difficulty. Initially,
undergraduate interviewees were invited to submit an ‘expression of interest’ to participate in the study following presentations by the investigator at the beginning of a class they were attending. Particular classes were targeted to ensure the respondents would come from the required group within the university. This initial approach did not generate a substantial sample. The discovery that the student-research-participation market was awash with payment schemes devised by participant seeking marketing and finance researchers led to a revised recruitment strategy. Following an addendum submission to the human research ethics committee to allow for the payment of undergraduate participants, discipline funding was secured in order to provide respondents with a small payment for participation. Paying students for participating in the study had several benefits beyond its intentions, most notably with a massive increase in the response rate that allowed a demanding selection process between respondents according to the specified criteria. Almost all participants from the undergraduate sample also referred additional volunteers, the majority of whom did not fulfil the criteria for the study. After completing the recruitment and some interviews, the study was heavily over-subscribed for interviews that included reimbursement.

In total, twelve male and eleven female undergraduate interviewees were selected, all in their first year of full-time study at a university in the field of economics. The median age of the men was 18, with an average age of 19.1. For the women, the median age was 19, with an average age of 20.7 that is slightly distorted by the effect of a mature age student in a small sample. All of the men and women classified themselves as single, with no children. Additional background information was collected, with the key elements displayed below in Table 3. All of the undergraduate interviews were conducted one on one with the investigator. The interviews ranged from 45 minutes to over 90 minutes in length, with an average of 76 minutes.
Table 3: Undergraduate Participants
Full-Time Students in Economics, Single with No Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Hours / week, paid work (status)</th>
<th>Hours / week, unpaid work</th>
<th>Religious background (any)</th>
<th>Non-English speaking background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anne</td>
<td>10 (part-time)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>7 (part-time)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caroline</td>
<td>1 (casual)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daphne</td>
<td>3 (part-time)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ella</td>
<td>7 (part-time)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felicity</td>
<td>15 (part-time)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabrielle</td>
<td>24 (part-time)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heidi</td>
<td>8 (casual)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isabel</td>
<td>15 (part-time)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>16 (part-time)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>35 (full-time)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Hours / week, paid work (status)</th>
<th>Hours / week, unpaid work</th>
<th>Religious background (any)</th>
<th>Non-English speaking background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashley</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameron</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>22 (casual)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>13 (casual)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kieran</td>
<td>7 (part-time)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liam</td>
<td>8 (casual)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 notes: Participants in the study, sorted by alias and additional background information

The immediate point of interest in the sample of undergraduate women is that all of the sample combine some form of paid employment with full-time study. It is also noteworthy that eight nominate their employment to be on a part-time, rather than
casual basis. Given the conflation between hours of work and employment status these respondents may in fact have been casual employees, particularly as six of the eight who list their jobs as ‘part-time’ in their profile are employed in the hospitality industry where casual employment is routinely high among university students. However, the respondents have indicated part-time employment in the information they provided in their profile, and they are listed as such here.

Also worthy of note in the undergraduate females is Karen, who reports that she is combining full-time employment and full-time study. Karen’s university entrance score won her eligibility for a cadetship with a major firm, which she accepted. Her cadetship entails full-time study in conjunction with a position as a trainee in her firm. Karen is paid by the firm, with a proportion allocated to cover the cost of her university fees, and her hours are scheduled around her university timetable.

There is also some variability within the sample of undergraduate men. Whereas the undergraduate women all combine some kind of paid work with study, only five of the eleven men are in paid employment in addition to their university study. The other point of difference between the two samples is the higher proportion of respondents who nominate themselves as religious, and from a non-English speaking background. Although this information was collected from respondents, being from a religious or non-English speaking background made no difference to the responses provided in interviews and had no bearing on the final results.

Recruiting graduate interviewees within the narrow confines of the specified criteria was more difficult than the undergraduate sample, and is reflected in the slightly lower than targeted number of eight female respondents. Compared to the direct, en masse presentation approach to the recruitment of undergraduates, who would also be paid for participating in the study, the recruitment of graduates was more challenging. There was to be no payment for graduates participating in the study, and communicating information about the study was through more indirect means. Potential graduate interviewees were invited to submit an ‘expression of interest’, this time in response to an advertisement of some kind. An unsuccessful attempt was made to use university alumni networks in the recruitment of respondents, and advertisements were eventually
distributed through contacts in various organisations with instructions to place them on company notice boards. More often than not, the instructions were ignored and the direct email request containing the instructions was passed on to potential interviewees instead. Establishing email contact with potential participants was highly valuable as an ice-breaker and usually led to further exchanges about how to schedule an interview for the study.

The majority of the interviews with graduates were scheduled in office hours and conducted in meeting rooms in the buildings where the respondent was employed, although some were squeezed into the lunch break of the respondent and conducted in a café or food court. In total, there were ten male and eight female graduate interviewees, all within two years of their graduation with a university degree in the field of economics. The median age of the men was 23, with an average age of 23.4. For the women, the median age was also 23, with slightly higher average age of 23.9. None of the men or women had children, although three of the men and two of the women indicated that they were in de facto relationships. Additional background information is displayed below in Table 4. All of the interviews with graduates were conducted one on one with the investigator. The interviews ranged from 43 minutes to 95 minutes in length, with an average of 63 minutes.
Table 4: Graduate Participants
Degree Holders in Economics, Single and De Facto with No Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alias</td>
<td>Household type</td>
<td>Hours / week, paid work (status)</td>
<td>Hours / week, unpaid work</td>
<td>Religious background (any)</td>
<td>Non-English speaking background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>with parents</td>
<td>40 (full-time)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>share rental</td>
<td>35 (contract)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte</td>
<td>with parents</td>
<td>45 (full-time)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diane</td>
<td>share rental</td>
<td>40 (full-time)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>share rental</td>
<td>40 (full-time)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flora</td>
<td>share rental</td>
<td>38 (full-time)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgina</td>
<td>with parents</td>
<td>40 (full-time)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td>with parents</td>
<td>60 (full-time)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Men</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alias</td>
<td>Household type</td>
<td>Hours / week, paid work (status)</td>
<td>Hours / week, unpaid work</td>
<td>Religious background (any)</td>
<td>Non-English speaking background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthur</td>
<td>share rental</td>
<td>30 (casual)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barry</td>
<td>share rental</td>
<td>40 (full-time)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colin</td>
<td>with parents</td>
<td>15 (casual)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derek</td>
<td>with parents</td>
<td>40 (full-time)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ewan</td>
<td>with parents</td>
<td>30 (casual)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>with parents</td>
<td>40 (full-time)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gary</td>
<td>share rental</td>
<td>45 (full-time)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry</td>
<td>share rental</td>
<td>8 (casual)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaac</td>
<td>with parents</td>
<td>40 (full-time)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeremy</td>
<td>with parents</td>
<td>40 (full-time)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 notes: Participants in the study, sorted by alias and additional background information

As with the undergraduates, the immediate point of interest within the sample is around paid employment, with all of the female graduates in full-time employment or fixed-term contract employment. In contrast, the men are split evenly between full-time and casual employment. Also, both the male and female samples are split evenly between those who live with their parents, and those who are in rental accommodation with their friends, which includes those who have nominated that they are in a de facto relationship.
As the study progressed through the recruitment and interviewing of undergraduate and graduate respondents, there were additional developments external to the study. Specifically, an opportunity arose to participate in an externally funded research project, the Parental Leave in Australia Study (PLAS), which was a nested study within the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC) (Whitehouse et al 2007).

The LSAC is being carried out primarily by Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) and the ABS, with data collection spanning the time period from 2003 until at least 2011 (AIFS 2005). Two waves of children are being studied in the LSAC. There are more than 5000 children in the ‘Wave A’ sample, comprised of children who were 4 years of age when their parents were first contacted about participating in the study during 2003 or 2004 (AIFS 2005). There are also in excess of 5000 children in the ‘Wave B’ sample, comprised of children who were born between March 2003 and February 2004 (AIFS 2005).

The PLAS was a nested study within the LSAC that focused on the parents of children in ‘Wave B’ (Whitehouse et al 2007). The PLAS aims to build a comprehensive picture of pre- and post-birth employment experiences with questions that focus on the respondent’s work history, parental leave experience, and return to work (Whitehouse et al 2007, p105-6). Data for the PLAS was collected in three stages, the first and third of which were relevant to this study. The first stage of data collection was a survey of the parents of children in the ‘Wave B’ sample, and the third stage of the PLAS comprised household interviews of purposefully selected parents from the ‘Wave B’ sample.

The questions to be asked in the household interviews, the third stage of the PLAS, had considerable overlap with the questions to be asked of in the sample of parents for this study. Moreover the questions in the PLAS would be asked in an open-ended one on one interview. With prior approval from the coordinators of the PLAS, it was possible to provide sufficient flexibility that the questions under investigation in the two studies could be addressed in ten individual interviews with respondents in their sample.

The opportunity to participate in the PLAS had complications, but also seemed to offer a number of possible advantages for the questions under investigation here. The main
disadvantage was the loss of absolute control over sample selection, which would ideally have been in accordance with a strict replication logic. This would not be possible in terms of the economics degree criteria, as the first stage of data collection in the PLAS included only broad measures for educational attainment. Instead, modifications were made to recruit respondents for the sample of parents that matched the intended ‘career aspiration’ logic used in the selection of economics degrees. With this, the parents targeted for the sample were degree holders, employed full-time prior to the birth of their first child, with above-average incomes in professional-type careers.

Despite the loss of an absolutely strict replication around economics degrees, this alternative approach to the sample selection maintains the logic of replication used in the construction of the targeted sample. The PLAS also provided additional criteria that could be used to ensure comparability, in particular around the timing of the transition to parenthood. The children in the ‘Wave B’ sample of the LSAC were all born within the same twelve month period, and the data included how many children the couple had prior, and since. By only selecting parents who had their first child in the LSAC ‘Wave B’ sample, it should be possible to magnify how the respondents framed and made choices between work and family in different stages of work and family formation. The opportunity to include this in the sample criteria through the PLAS appeared more valuable for answering the questions under investigation than the strict economics degree criteria. Indeed, the desire to magnify these effects was one of the key components in the selection of economics undergraduates and graduates as a sample. Thus the purposive sample that could be constructed through the PLAS was considered to be an alternative construction of a valid sample for comparison.

Recruiting parents to interview within the newly drawn narrow confines of the specified criteria through the PLAS was relatively straightforward for mothers. There were ten mothers in the sample group, all with degrees, employed prior to the birth of their first child who was being tracked in the ‘Wave B’ of the LSAC. All of these women were also married prior to and since the birth of their first child. Additional information is displayed below in Table 5.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alias</th>
<th>Age at First Child</th>
<th>Highest Qualification</th>
<th>Pre-Child Hours / week, paid work (status)</th>
<th>Pre-Child Salary / week</th>
<th>Percent Salary to Household Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alison</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>35-39 (full-time)</td>
<td>$1000-$1499</td>
<td>33%-50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alison’s partner</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>35-39 (full-time)</td>
<td>$1500-$1999</td>
<td>50%-67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridget</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>40-49 (full-time)</td>
<td>$1000-$1499</td>
<td>50%-68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridget’s partner</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>40-49 (full-time)</td>
<td>$700-$999</td>
<td>32%-50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>30-34 (full-time)</td>
<td>$500-$699</td>
<td>33%-50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine’s partner</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>40-49 (full-time)</td>
<td>$700-$999</td>
<td>50%-67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debra</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>50+ (full-time)</td>
<td>$2000 or more</td>
<td>&gt; 67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debra’s partner</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>40-49 (full-time)</td>
<td>$700-$999</td>
<td>&lt; 33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erin</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>35-39 (full-time)</td>
<td>$1000-$1499</td>
<td>40%-60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erin’s partner</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>35-39 (full-time)</td>
<td>$1000-$1499</td>
<td>40%-60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiona</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>50+ (full-time)</td>
<td>$2000 or more</td>
<td>&gt; 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiona’s partner</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>50+ (full-time)</td>
<td>$1500-$1999</td>
<td>&lt; 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genevieve</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>40-49 (full-time)</td>
<td>$1000-$1499</td>
<td>40%-60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genevieve’s partner</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>50+ (full-time)</td>
<td>$1000-$1499</td>
<td>40%-60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>20-29 (casual)</td>
<td>$500-$699</td>
<td>&lt; 26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen’s partner</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>50+ (full-time)</td>
<td>$2000 or more</td>
<td>&gt; 74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>35-39 (contract)</td>
<td>$700-$999</td>
<td>&lt; 33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene’s partner</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>40-49 (full-time)</td>
<td>$2000 or more</td>
<td>&gt; 67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>40-49 (contract)</td>
<td>$1500-$1999</td>
<td>60%-74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane’s partner</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>40-49 (full-time)</td>
<td>$700-$999</td>
<td>26%-40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 notes: Participants in the study, sorted by alias and additional background information

Nine of the mothers were in full-time employment prior to the birth of their first child, and eight of the women reported earnings that compare favourably against the average for all workers of $733 per week for the period February 2003 to February 2004 (ABS 2008, cat: 6302.0). Only two of the sample women were married to men with a ‘Certificate or Diploma’, with the remainder married to fellow degree holders.
Two of the interviews with mothers were conducted with an additional investigator present from the PLAS. The remaining eight of the interviews were one on one with the investigator. The interviews were generally squeezed into or around the working day of the respondent, usually in the foyer of the building where they were employed. This factor, along with the less detailed and structured interview schedule, contributed to shorter interviews, which ranged in length from 26 minutes to 37 minutes, at an average of 33 minutes for each interview. The ages of the women at the time of the birth of their first child ranged from 28 to 37, with an average age of 31.2. The corresponding ages of their partners ranged from 27 to 37, with an average age of 33.1.

Unfortunately, the recruitment of fathers to interview through the PLAS did not eventuate. As the LSAC tracks children, primary care givers are the point of contact, and with the LSAC ‘Wave B’ sample constructed within the first year of the child’s life the overwhelming majority of respondents in the PLAS are female. Moreover, in conjunction with the range of sample criteria required in the purposive sample for these questions, there was a very real limitation to the potential size of the final sample should the sample of fathers have been drawn from the PLAS.

Recruiting fathers that fulfilled the same criteria as that which applied to the sample of mothers in the PLAS took a very long time. The mothers drawn from the PLAS were in effect a sub-sample of a 5000 person rolling sample in the LSAC, and replicating the criteria that applied to the PLAS mothers in a sample that had to be recruited from scratch was more challenging. Potentially willing participants often fell out of sample with such narrow criteria to apply. There were also two examples of attrition from the sample through the recruitment process, where employment commitments, scheduling and other priorities conspired to prevent the interview from ultimately taking place.

In the end there were nine fathers in the sample group. All of the fathers selected had their first child after 1 January 2003, a slight difference to the March 2003 to February 2004 window used in the PLAS sample. Prior to their interviews, respondents filled in a replica of the survey from the first stage of the PLAS, with questions about their own and their partner’s employment experience in the lead-up to their first child, and in the subsequent time as parents. All of the interviews were conducted one on one with the
investigator. All of the interviews were conducted at a time that was during the working day of the respondent, which was in their own office in nine instances. As with the mothers, this tended to limit the interview length, which ranged from 23 minutes to 55 minutes, with an average of 34 minutes for each interview. The ages of the men at the time of the birth of their first child ranged from 31 to 37, with an average age of 32.8. The corresponding ages of their partners ranged from 29 to 35, with an average age of 32.4. Additional information about the sample of fathers is displayed below in Table 6.

Table 6: Father Participants
Degree Holders in Married Households with One or More Children, Status at Birth of First Child (2003-2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alias</th>
<th>Age at First Child</th>
<th>Highest Qualification</th>
<th>Pre-Child Hours / week, paid work (status)</th>
<th>Pre-Child Salary / week</th>
<th>Percent Salary to Household Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aaron</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>40-49 (full-time)</td>
<td>$1000-$1499</td>
<td>&lt; 43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aaron’s partner</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>40-49 (full-time)</td>
<td>$2000 or more</td>
<td>&gt; 57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brett</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>40-49 (full-time)</td>
<td>$2000 or more</td>
<td>&gt; 67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brett’s partner</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>35-39 (casual)</td>
<td>$700-$999</td>
<td>&lt; 33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>50+ (full-time)</td>
<td>$2000 or more</td>
<td>&gt; 95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie’s partner</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>10-19 (self e’d)</td>
<td>$1-$99</td>
<td>&lt; 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>50+ (full-time)</td>
<td>$1000-$1499</td>
<td>67%-83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean’s partner</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>20-29 (part-time)</td>
<td>$300-$499</td>
<td>17%-33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earvin</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>40-49 (full-time)</td>
<td>$1500-$1999</td>
<td>50%-67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earvin’s partner</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>40-49 (full-time)</td>
<td>$1000-$1499</td>
<td>33%-50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>50+ (full-time)</td>
<td>$2000 or more</td>
<td>&gt; 57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred’s partner</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>35-39 (full-time)</td>
<td>$1000-$1499</td>
<td>&lt; 53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greg</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>50+ (self e’d)</td>
<td>$2000 or more</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greg’s partner</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>50+ (self e’d)</td>
<td>$2000 or more</td>
<td>~ 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry’s partner</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>50+ (full-time)</td>
<td>$2000 or more</td>
<td>~ 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ian</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>40-49 (full-time)</td>
<td>$2000 or more</td>
<td>~ 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ian’s partner</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>40-49 (full-time)</td>
<td>$2000 or more</td>
<td>~ 50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 notes: Participants in the study, sorted by alias and additional background information
4.4: Conclusion, Research Questions and Contentions

The literature that considers interactions between household members across the spheres of paid and unpaid work leads to an understanding that the decision making can be viewed as either a unilateral or bilateral transaction between partners based either on income or gender. Looking to the theoretical assumptions that underpin this transaction raises further questions about the decision making process. Empirical measurement guides interpretation of the interaction of paid work and unpaid work, inferring the decisions making process on to partners in the household after the distribution of tasks. This oversight in the literature is problematic when seeking to explain the lack of redistribution in unpaid work within households and has been identified in this research as a theoretical problem. This study sets out to investigate the decision making process in terms of how it is perceived and rationalised by individuals in different cohorts prior to and post family formation, asking:

What is the decision making process when allocating time to paid and unpaid work in the household?

What type of decision is it – autonomous, unilateral, exchange or bargaining?

What is the basis for the decision – income, preference or gender?

This chapter has detailed a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis with regard to these research questions which also consider alternative explanations related to the theoretical problem. Problems with the empirical measurement of the decision making process are countered through the implementation of a comparative research strategy. This comparative research strategy enables the analytic comparison of results between men and women as individuals, and between groups of individual men and women in different life situations, through replication.

The comparative strategy of research design informs the selection of a purposive sample comprised of male and female undergraduates, male and female graduates, and male and female (graduate) parents. This purposive sample facilitates the pursuit of the research question through a semi-structured interview. A detailed outline of the interview structure was provided to demonstrate the appropriateness of these methods of
data collection and the way in which the responses build a narrative of the decision making process. The responses provided in these interviews are presented in the following chapters.

In the explanation of empirical data in much of the existing literature it is assumed retrospectively through inference that households have made decisions about paid and unpaid work allocations through unilateral determination or a type of bilateral exchange or bargaining process, which is based on either income or gender, depending on the observed outcome. Alternative decision making processes, potentially based on different values, are beyond the explanatory limit of the available frameworks. A more likely scenario is that income and gender are interdependent and existing measures are unable to separate their combined effects, particularly as there is no established mechanism for understanding decisions made about paid and unpaid work allocations. Measuring individual perspectives of the decision making process in alternative stages of work and family formation should start to unpack the ways that income and gender, together, shape the outcomes of decisions about paid and unpaid work allocations.

It is anticipated that the results will show individuals expecting to make decisions, and parents explaining their decisions, in a similar manner to the exchange bargaining process that is assumed to occur in the literature. However, it is also anticipated that the results will reveal individuals and parents who have a desire to be seen acting within unspoken boundaries of gender normal behaviour, which in turn constrain the range of perceived choices and possible outcomes in exchange before decisions are made. It is anticipated that gender will not be seen as a valid basis for allocating tasks in the household. However, it is anticipated that the analysis of men and women separately will reveal different expectations related to gender. These differences are expected to magnify through the three sample groups as individuals construct their own gender identities over time and they progress through life situations characterised by education, employment and parenthood which represent additional interactions with peers and the broader institutional framework.
Chapter 5 – Results: Undergraduates

As detailed in chapter four, data collection in the study was through one on one interviews with individuals who fulfilled specific sample criteria. Interviews with three sample groups, undergraduates, graduates and parents, were conducted in order to measure the way in which individuals perceive, anticipate and make decisions between work and family.

The interview moved throughout various points of discussion in order to approach the full range of concerns that individuals may face when making decisions about work and family issues. The interview was purposefully structured to allow a range of work and family concerns to arise within discussions on several potentially related topics. With the undergraduate sample, interviews began with an initial ‘attitude sketch’, a series of short answer questions designed to open discussion across a range of issues. These issues were then investigated in depth in a long answer discussion that spanned several areas considered central to perspectives on work and family. The interview then concluded with a scenario based section that tested the robustness of the values respondents expressed.

The results of the interviews are presented with the inclusion of extended quotes from the respondents in order to present their own perspectives and explanations on the issues under discussion. With so much interview material, quotations were selected for their ability to demonstrate specific points, rather than on strictly representative grounds, with care taken to specify where the quotes are not fully representative of the sample group.

The presentation of the results from the interviews follows the particular structure of the interview itself. The interviews with the undergraduate men and women start to draw out the way in which decisions about work and family are anticipated in their particular life situation. All of the respondents have expectations about particular roles in the household, with varying degrees of certainty about their future outcomes. Similarities and differences between the expectations of undergraduate men and women are of particular interest in the analysis. In these results the sample of men can be classified
within a singular spectrum of perspectives on anticipated future outcomes. With this in mind, the results of each sample of men are presented as a group, with the results of each sample of women following.

5.1: Undergraduate Men

The trends in the responses of the undergraduate men are striking for their consistency. Undergraduate men reveal themselves to be concerned mainly by future employment opportunities that will allow them to earn an income. Within the responses of the undergraduate men, there is a strong implied assumption about becoming primary breadwinners in their future lives as married parents. The results of the undergraduate men are strikingly consistent within the sample despite some variation in the attitude sketch at the outset of the interview.

5.1.1: Undergraduate Men: Attitude Sketch

The first section of the interview was a short response section used to sketch a general attitude to the issues under investigation in the study. Respondents were told to answer without explaining their reasons, which would be followed up later in the interview, and were told that answers such as ‘I do not know’ and ‘not necessarily’ were acceptable. The first group of questions in the attitude statements focussed on the importance of men and women being in full-time paid employment, advantages men and women may have in paid employment, and the appropriateness of men and women receiving welfare benefits when choosing not to work. The responses of the undergraduate men were as follows:

| 1. Do you think it is important for women to have full time paid work? |
|-----------------|-------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----|
| Yes | Sometimes | Don’t Know | Not Necess. | No | TOTAL |
| 6 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 12 |

| 2. Do you think being a woman is an advantage when trying to get a job? |
|-----------------|-------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----|
| Yes | Sometimes | Don’t Know | Not Necess. | No | TOTAL |
| 2 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 12 |

| 3. Do you think being a woman is an advantage when trying to get a promotion at work? |
|-----------------|-------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----|
| Yes | Sometimes | Don’t Know | Not Necess. | No | TOTAL |
| 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 12 |
Within the first four questions on the position of women in the sphere of paid work, the undergraduate men in the sample are split on the importance of women having full-time paid work. Moreover, the spread of responses continues in relation to the possibility that women might be advantaged in the sphere of paid work, either at the entry level or in the competition for promotions. There is, however, a general agreement that family benefit payments should be available to mothers who choose not to work. Following from this, the same propositions were presented to sketch the perceived position of men in paid work.

5. **Do you think it is important for men to have full time paid work?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>Not Necess.</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. **Do you think being a man is an advantage when trying to get a job?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>Not Necess.</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. **Do you think being a man is an advantage when trying to get a promotion at work?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>Not Necess.</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. **Do you think it is appropriate that fathers who choose not to work receive family benefit payments?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>Not Necess.</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As with the responses concerning the position of women in paid work, the undergraduate men do not reveal a singular trend in their responses about the position of men in paid work. Eight of the respondents gave the same answer in reference to the importance of full-time work for both men and women. For these eight, this suggests an attitude to the importance of paid work itself, rather than whether it should be performed by men or women. Interestingly three of the undergraduate men, Daniel, Eric and Heath indicated that, although it was ‘not necessarily’ important for women to have paid employment, it was important for men to have full-time paid employment. There is also an outlier at the other end of the spectrum in the undergraduate men, with Kieran taking an inverse position to that of Daniel, Eric and Heath. Kieran suggested it was
important for women to have full-time paid employment, but that this was not the case for men.

There was also little consistency within the group of undergraduate men in the response to the questions about any advantage accrued by men when looking for employment or promotion. One respondent, Benjamin, indicated that ‘sometimes’ either being a man or a woman was an advantage when looking for employment, and that neither men nor women had an advantage when seeking promotion. All of the remaining respondents perceived some bias in the employment or promotion process that could be attributed to gender. These responses were in both directions within the sample, and sometimes, in both directions from the same person. For example, Eric indicated that being a man is an advantage when trying to attain paid employment, while maintaining that a woman would have an advantage when trying to gain promotion. Kieran imagined the opposite, with women advantaged when seeking paid employment, but men advantaged when seeking promotion.

Finally, the undergraduate men are also varied in their response to the question on whether fathers should receive family benefit payments if they choose not to work. The question on whether women should receive family benefit payments was the only real consistent response within the group, and it is not repeated when in reference to whether men should receive family benefit payments should they choose not to have paid work. In this sense, some of the undergraduate men reveal an implicit assumption about the provision of care for children with their responses suggesting that women, and not men, should be the recipients of financial assistance related to the delivery of care to children. This is exemplified most strongly with Daniel, Eric and Heath, who had previously indicated that it was more important for men and not women to be in paid employment, all indicating that women and not men should be the recipients of assistance relating to the delivery of care.

The next few questions sought to outline attitudes around the interplay of work and family. This involved changing the questions from propositions about men and women broadly to propositions that considered ‘parents’ and ‘children’. The final question
starts to interact with the notion of male and female roles in paid work and care. The responses of the undergraduate men were:

9. **Do you think having two parents working full-time has a negative effect on children?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>Not Necess.</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. **Do you think having two parents working full-time has a positive effect on parents?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>Not Necess.</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. **Do you think it is important for two parents to live together when they have children?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>Not Necess.</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. **Do you think at least one parent should work full-time?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>Not Necess.</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. **If only one parent works full-time, do you think it matters which parent it is?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>Not Necess.</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The range of responses to these questions makes any generalisation particularly difficult. Even tracking the responses of individuals within the sample also presented inconsistencies such that no particular position could be identified as consistent. The most significant finding in the responses of the undergraduate men is the four respondents, *Eric, Heath, Ivan* and *Liam*, who agreed with the suggestion that it did matter which parent worked in a situation where only one parent could work full-time. Three of these respondents, *Heath, Ivan* and *Liam*, felt that the range of responses between ‘yes’ and ‘no’ was insufficient, and specified that not only that it did matter which parent it is, but that it should be ‘the man’.

From the three, *Daniel, Eric* and *Heath*, who earlier expressed that the position of men in paid employment was more important than the position of women, and that women and not men should receive family benefit payments, *Eric* and *Heath* in particular have consistently expressed strong attitudes about the suitability of men and women for particular roles in paid and unpaid work. *Daniel, Ivan* and *Liam* have similarly tended to express attitudes that suggest gender should be a determining factor in how families perform paid and unpaid work.
The formation of this sub-group offers an interesting starting point for the final part of the attitude sketch, which further delves into assumptions on the interaction of paid work and care, and specifically the idea that there might be particular roles for men and women in these domains. Again, these were only short responses that required no logical development or justification from the respondent. Before being presented with these questions, it was explained to the respondents that the interview was still investigating general statements, however, the questions were to move beyond propositions to agree or disagree with. Now, the monosyllabic response would detail a position, where any identifying characteristic of a person’s physical body, personality or employment might be considered to be a determining factor in the issue presented.

14. If only one parent can work full-time, which parent should work full-time?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Earnings*</th>
<th>Preference</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15. Do you think men or women should be responsible for ensuring housework is done?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Earnings</th>
<th>Preference</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. Do you think men or women should be responsible for ensuring children are looked after?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Earnings</th>
<th>Preference</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17. Do you think men or women should be responsible for ensuring that a family has an adequate income?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Earnings</th>
<th>Preference</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first issue of note in the responses of the undergraduate men is the consistency in the response to the question of which parent should work, if only one can work full-

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12 In these questions, ‘Traditional’ refers to the man taking an ‘earning’ role and the woman taking a ‘caring’ role in the family. So, if the response to Q14 or Q17 is ‘the man’, it is reported here as ‘Traditional’, and likewise if the response to Q15 or Q16 is ‘the woman’, it is reported as ‘Traditional’. There were no responses that reflected an ‘a-traditional’ arrangement.

13 In these questions, ‘Earnings’ is used to show that the respondent indicated that this issue should be dependent on the respective income of the two partners. In Q14 and Q17, this is shown if the respondent indicated that the ‘higher earner’ is seen to be responsible for working full-time or achieving an adequate income. In Q15 and Q16, this is shown in the cases where the respondent indicated that the ‘lower earner’ should be responsible for ensuring housework is done and children looked after.

14 In these questions, ‘Preference’ is used to show that the respondent indicated that this issue should be resolved by mutual consent between two parents.

15 In these questions, ‘Time’ is used to show that the respondent indicated that this issue should be resolved according to the amount of time available to the respective partners.

16 In these questions, ‘Both’ is used to show that the respondent indicated both parents should be responsible for this particular issue, or, in Q14, neither.
time, with ten of the twelve undergraduate men nominating the gender of the father as the determining factor. Again, the response of Kieran, who earlier suggested that it was more important for women to be in paid employment than men, differs from the group. Kieran indicates that being engaged in full-time employment is not specifically the responsibility of either parent, it falls to both. Similarly, Ashley thinks income should be the determining factor.

This consistency around task allocation based on gender is not repeated in the following question, as only two specify that the mother should be responsible for housework, with Eric again expressing his preference for a traditional arrangement of paid and unpaid work, in this instance joined by Fabian. These two also agree with each other on the following question, indicating that women should be responsible for ensuring that children are looked after. Both Eric and Fabian specify that men should be responsible for ensuring a household has an adequate income, which places them at the ‘traditional’ extreme on all of the responses regarding the allocation of paid work and unpaid work, which they have allocated according to gender in all four propositions. Overall, Daniel, Heath, Ivan and Liam also tend towards the ‘traditional’ end of the spectrum in terms of their aggregate responses, with their preference for men to have the responsibility for full-time work underlining their earlier responses.

At the other end of the spectrum is Kieran, who has expressed a consistent position that locates women in paid work ahead of men, accompanied by an indication that roles for men or women should not be allocated on the basis of sex. Instead, Kieran felt that other factors that were dependent on the situation should take priority, rather than gender. The remaining five respondents, Ashley, Benjamin, Cameron, Gavin and Jack, also refused to express an attitude on the suitability of parents allocating tasks on the basis of gender. They generally nominated both parents as responsible for tasks related to paid work, unpaid work and care.

Based on the attitude sketch, it is not easy to make a singular generalisation about the attitudes of the undergraduate men in the sample. Rather, their expressed attitudes seem to place them within two broad categories related to the performance of tasks by male and female partners and how these decisions should be made. These groups reflect a
preference for a traditional allocation of tasks which is essentially based on gender, with an implicit assumption of a male earner and a female carer, and a second group that expressed a preference for an allocation of tasks that was contingent on the particular situation faced by partners when making the decision. These groups are represented in Table 7, below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Contingent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daniel, Eric, Fabian</td>
<td>Ashley, Benjamin, Cameron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heath, Ivan, Liam</td>
<td>Gavin, Jack, Kieran</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.1.2: Undergraduate Men, In Depth: Important Things

Following the opening, attitude sketch, the rest of the interview looked to explore the issues under investigation in significant depth. The main point in the long interview is to establish some themes that run throughout the interview, and to keep raising related questions that surround those themes. The main theme is paid work, which in this research, has the associated sub-themes of gender roles, attitudes to paid work, careers, unpaid work, family, and balance. This gave the respondents an opportunity to describe in detail their decisions and expectations about their own lives. Exploring these themes is achieved by raising particular contexts, such as the important things in life, and either looking for, or introducing, questions that relate to paid work. At times, this is achieved in a straightforward manner, simply presenting the respondent with a direct scenario. It is also achieved by asking respondents to describe the influencing factors that surround particular decisions.

Over the course of the interview this line of questioning allows the development of the themes that surround paid work, continually framed by related concerns throughout a number of different contexts. As a result, the open-ended questions are the main part of the interview. The questions are intended to help the respondents build an individual narrative within which their individual perspectives can be properly understood. The semi-structured, open-ended section of the interview began with a general discussion on the ‘important things’ in life.
When discussing the important things in life, the identifiable groups within the sample of undergraduate men that appeared to be evident in the attitude sketch began to dissolve. Through the individual discussions on the important things in life, the undergraduate men generally focussed on the core issues of family and friends. Besides these two core concerns, of the group of twelve, only five mentioned either their studies or paid work at all. Of these five, only two specified that they were currently thinking about their future prospects. Even though this was somewhat of an exception, this quote from Liam shows that this progression is an afterthought, an implicit assumption about his direction.

What are the most important things in the lives of you and the people you know?
Liam: At the moment, getting my degree and finding a job, family, my mates. I want to have fun at the moment, so balancing uni work and, this is the time to party hard, while we can, before we settle down

Have these important things changed for you in the last few years?
Liam: Yeah, it used to be just fun, that was my prime concern. I was pretty lazy at school, I scraped through somehow

Do you think they are likely to change for you in the next five years?
Liam: Yeah, my body will start to resist alcohol [laughs]. No, seriously, it will definitely change with more responsibility on my shoulders, looking to buy a house maybe. Something, some kind of investment, have some sort of foundation

Do you think these important things are different for men and women?
Liam: That's a tough one. No. I don’t think it’s a gender based question, I think it’s a personality based question. I know a lot of girls who want to get married now, I don’t support that sort of behaviour, I think they should have their fun, but I think it stems from family more than it does gender

For Liam, his time at university appears to be a straightforward progression, ‘getting a degree and find a job’, before adding that family and friends are also important. Although the mention of study and employment seems offhand, only one of the other respondents, Cameron, mentioned positioning himself for a career after graduation while discussing the important things in life, and in a similarly flippant manner. For the rest of the group, the responses are a somewhat monosyllabic repetition of family and friends that Liam touches on. This repetition also meant that, in reference to things having changed, or changing in the future, the responses of the undergraduate men were limited to speculation about how these relationships might change in the future.

The limited range of concerns makes it possible to generalise about the undergraduate men in regards to the important things in life. In particular following the quotes from Liam, the undergraduate men express a very limited range of concerns that relate any
future choice between work and family, with no strong career directions, objectives or desires entering their discussion on the important things in life. Following the discussion on the important things, the line of questioning turned to the university course they selected, seeking to explore the motivations and explanations about the decision to enter their particular course, and where they believed it would take them.

5.1.2.1: Undergraduate Men, In Depth: University

With only two of the undergraduate men expressing any mention of a future career in paid work in the discussion on the important things, the chance to discuss motivations around university course selection offers an opportunity to advance the interview more specifically toward the central work themes. As in the first section of long answers on the important things, the motivations of the sample of undergraduate men in their course selection can be generalised using their own straightforward deductions. The undergraduate men explain clearly that their reason for entering economics at university centred on implicit assumptions they held about their future direction. Their assumptions about their future had served to highlight concerns related to future employment prospects and financial reward, which they associated with an economics degree. Ivan was particularly candid about the deduction process that led to his selection of economics at university.

Was economics your first choice at university?
Ivan: Yes

What made you choose economics?
Ivan: I suck at maths so I can't do engineering, and I didn't take biology so I can't do medicine, that leaves economics and arts, and you can't do anything with arts. You can get a job, but it's harder than economics.

What would you say was the most significant influence on the choice that you made?
Ivan: Future economic benefit. You will probably get a job faster than an arts student. If you're in arts, you're probably a history major, an English major or literature major, you've got to be damn good at what you do to stand out and get a job offer. Hard skills like finance and accounting are always in demand, as opposed to soft skills like marketing you need to stand out.

Were there any other factors that meant you could not take another course?
Ivan: No. My parents told me to do whatever I want

When you chose the university course you entered, did you have a particular occupation in mind?
Ivan: Banking.
What is it about being a banker that appealed to you when you made the choice to study in economics?
Ivan: Besides the money? Money is always the main motivation. Money or... is there a second option? I always wanted to be in operations in an airline or something, that’s a pretty fast-paced kind of life.

While Ivan is considerably more candid in his rationale for choosing an economics degree for ‘future economic benefit’, similar sentiments were expressed in a more surreptitious manner throughout the sample of undergraduate men. Although some of the other undergraduate men also nominated additional factors in their course selection, such as interest in the subject material, the perceived links between an economics degree, future employment prospects and a high income were important factors for all of the respondents.

After discussing employment characteristics that the undergraduate men considered to be important in their course selection, the line of questioning sought to uncover why these characteristics were so highly valued. When pushed to explain their responses, five of the undergraduate men were happy to earn enough to get by, while a further three cited lifestyle. Interestingly, four of the undergraduate men made reference to their future need to provide for a family. However, as Ashley explains, the need to provide for a family does not necessarily mean finding an occupation with flexible or even reasonable hours. For Ashley, income was linked directly to the need to provide for a family in the manner of a male breadwinner.

Why was income an important factor in your decisions about a future career?
Ashley: [This city] is a very expensive place to live. Property prices, you know, they’re softening right now, but they’re not going to go anywhere but up. It’s an expensive place to live and an expensive place to raise children, and I would like to have a family one day, and I would like to be able to feed them and house them. So, from a practical perspective, a job with those kinds of opportunities is very attractive.

And you mentioned earlier that you would be willing to work long hours, do you worry about being able to control your hours in work at all?
Ashley: If you’re going to ask for big income, big company, you’re going to have to be prepared to work big hours. It does worry me that I could end up working six twelve-hour days a week. I could hack that in the short-term, say the first five years of my career, but after that... I tend to look at my parents as an example, they leave when it’s dark, they get home when it’s dark. But they can enjoy the weekend, and public holidays seem to mean so much more to them than they do to me as a student. I think that they manage to spend enough time with family, and dad gets out for a game of golf on the weekend, I think it’s worth it in the end. If you’re not working those long hours, what are you going to be doing? If you get home at 6 in the evening, you eat dinner, go to bed, or you get home at 8 in the evening, you eat dinner, you go to bed, the difference is a couple of hours of sleep each night. If I have my weekends, and I can do what I want on the weekends, then I’m prepared to work a few hours extra during the
week to get some money to do what I want on the weekend, like golf. Even taking the kids to the movies for example, I’m prepared to trade off the hours to be able to afford to have the lifestyle I want to have on the weekend.

Again, this quote is selected for its stark nature, yet it demonstrates Ashley’s implicit assumption about his future as a male breadwinner. With more apprehension about their working hours than the sentiments expressed by Ashley, the other respondents who mentioned family in this discussion, Benjamin, Cameron and Gavin, all used the same rationale about being able to provide for a family financially. Although the other respondents did not use the word ‘family’ while discussing their rationale for university course selection, they emphasise the same links between an economics degree, future employment and a high income as those that do. As the interview continues, it becomes increasingly apparent that, consciously or not, these undergraduate men are privileging financial concerns that relate to a particular split between work and family, with an implicit assumption that their own role is that of a breadwinner.

5.1.2.2: Undergraduate Men, In Depth: Paid Work and Careers

The interview developed further around the issue of paid work in the next discussion point, which sought to establish a narrative of the interviewees’ previous experience of paid work and their expectations about a future career. The point of establishing the continuum between experience and expectations in a discussion on paid work was to shed light on how their understanding of the labour market is shaping their decisions about their future careers. The main focus of the discussion was on the career trajectory they anticipate, and whether they could imagine any obstacles to the realisation of their goals.

With the undergraduate men, only five of the twelve were currently employed in paid work. Where they were not currently employed, the discussion centred on previous employment experiences. Whether they had previously been in paid employment, through high school or during breaks between university semesters, or were currently in some kind of paid employment, the undergraduate men were very practical in their view of their own experiences in paid work. Previous experiences of paid work were considered valuable in the context of life as a university student, as Jack explains.
You have indicated that you work thirteen hours a week, are you happy with your working arrangements?

Jack: Ah… well, yeah. It’s ridiculously boring, but no one else is going to pay me $21 an hour to do what is, really, very little. So realistically, I’m happy.

What are some of the positives of your current working arrangements, as you see them?

Jack: I get paid well enough that I can begin to say to my parents “don’t give me any money”, or “don’t give me as much money”. I can actually do some other things, like get a nice pasta instead of just the cheapest one, to make some decisions like that. I have the money to have some fun. Also, it’s good exercise as well, walking around for nine hours, you’re not allowed to sit still, so I just walk around for nine hours, burn quite a few kilojoules.

Do you worry about job security in your current job?

Jack: Not really too much, I don’t do anything wrong, I try to do the right thing by people. If they fire me, I’ll miss the money and some of the good aspects of it, but really it’s not something I want to do for the rest of my life.

Although he will ‘miss the money’ if he is fired, Jack sees his current employment in the terms of a simple exchange of time for money. This type of relationship is shared by the rest of the undergraduate men when discussing their previous and current employment. However there is a noticeable disconnection between how they see their current work and their expectations about their future careers as graduates. When discussing anticipated careers, it was possible to return to questions around university course selection and work experience that link to desirable job characteristics. Importantly it gave the respondents an opportunity to construct a context for their expectations. As these discussions take shape, the undergraduate men who have not previously mentioned family in the interview begin to reveal their implicit assumptions about being breadwinners. Following through the discussion on paid work with Jack, demonstrates the disconnection between his description of his current employment, and his future expectations, which is typical of the undergraduate men in the sample.

For you, what’s the most important thing about having a job?

Jack: Most important thing is doing something that makes you feel good about yourself. That comes first, before money. Money is a concern, but it’s not the most important thing.

Are you at all concerned about hours?

Jack: A little bit with the hours there are going to be, I don’t really want to get caught up working extra hours all the time just because maybe there’s a possibility someone might notice me doing that, I want to try and keep a bit of a balance, just because that’s important.

Do you think the values that are important in your future career will change over time?

Jack: Possibly. Maybe if I have a family and things like that, and the difference is between me working harder and aiming more for money to help provide for my family better and things like that, then I’d have to make quite a judgement there, maybe choose to shift jobs to give my kids a better chance.
In light of Jack’s comments on his current employment where he values income, this further exchange on the topic of his future in paid work reveals several contrasts. Jack believes an intrinsically rewarding career is more important than a high income, but as soon as he mentions a family, Jack reverts to the assumed breadwinner logic, prioritising the need to ‘provide for my family’. This is representative of how the undergraduate men anticipate their future careers changing over time, with an increasing emphasis on their ability to provide a steady income seen as more important in the context of a family. The undergraduate men place the need to ensure the necessary income for a family ahead of other concerns, such as their own interest or time spent in employment, with implicit assumptions about how unpaid tasks will be carried out.

5.1.2.3: Undergraduate Men, In Depth: Parents

As the discussion on anticipated future careers has developed, the respondents have been invited to relate their expectations around paid work through a number of discussion areas. Following this trend, the interviewees were invited to change track, and compare their own expectations to the lived circumstances that they have observed with their parents. Of particular interest were the ways in which they perceived their parents to be making decisions about paid and unpaid work, and whether they believed they would be making similar decisions.

From the group of twelve undergraduate men, five came from families where their father was the sole parent in employment, commonly known as a ‘male breadwinner’ family. A further four came from families with both parents in full-time employment, known as a ‘dual earner’ family. The remaining three came from families where one parent was in full-time employment and the other parent was in part-time or casual employment, which has come to be known as the ‘modified breadwinner’ family. In two of the families that had a modified breadwinner arrangement, the father was the primary earner, while in the case of Cameron, his mother worked full-time in the family business while his father worked part-time and shouldered the burden of domestic responsibilities. In the last question in the section about his parents, Cameron did not
see himself making a similar decision to his father, with an expectation to emphasise his professional life more.

**Do you think there is anything you might be able to do in a better way than the way your parents managed things?**  
**Cameron:** I think my parents sacrificed a lot for us when it came to work, especially my dad. I can’t see myself, I know it’s bad to say this, but I’m almost angry at my dad for sacrificing so much even though it was for us, so I can certainly see myself not sacrificing so much in that way. But then I’m saying that now, because I can’t think about having a family. At that stage, values and things might change, but at this stage, I can’t see myself sacrificing so much for the lifestyle of my kids. It’s not saying they’re going to have a bad lifestyle, just I can’t see myself sacrificing as much, so in that way I can see myself being different, professionally.

Although the particular situation of Cameron is unique to the group, his response is again representative of the way in which the undergraduate men have constructed their imagined futures around an assumption of a continuous attachment to the workforce. Other issues, such as family formation and domestic responsibilities, fit around the assumption of a continuous attachment to the workforce. This assumption about their own employment pattern in the future is repeated throughout the sample of undergraduate men, regardless of how they anticipate interacting with their partner. When drawing comparisons with their parents, all of the undergraduate men expect to have a relationship that is, if not absolutely equal, more equal than that of their parents. Invariably, as their own expectations are to be attached to the workforce, ideals around equality are associated with an expectation that their partner will also be attached to the workforce. These particular expectations about splitting tasks between partners reveal themselves very strongly in the following section on balancing demands.

**5.1.2.4: Undergraduate Men, In Depth: Balancing Demands**

After spending the majority of the interview asking questions on topics that sought particular perspectives on issues that surround work and family, the final section of the interview presented the questions in a straightforward manner. These questions addressed the attitudes to work and family in context, focussing on expectations about family formation and how becoming a parent might affect priorities, in particular, around paid and unpaid work.
The undergraduate men were remarkably consistent across the key questions in this section. All of the undergraduate men imagine themselves with a partner in the future, and all expect to become parents one day. The group is very vague on any timelines or deadlines for partnership and parenthood, although they all agree that financial stability is a requisite for parenthood. As parents, all of the undergraduate men see themselves continuing in employment, with Jack and Kieran the only two to speculate on the possibility of part-time employment while they have children, which they would consider if they could still earn enough to provide. All of the undergraduate men also indicated that, if one parent had to be the full-time carer, and one the full-time earner, they would prefer to be the full-time earner, and only Kieran showed any hesitation when making the decision.

**When do you think you would like to have kids?**
Kieran: At a time when I am financially stable, everything is going well with respect to work. Family that already exists before the kids are around, and just want to make sure that I have myself in order before I took on the big responsibility of having kids

**Do you think you will continue to work?**
Kieran: Yes I think I will work, but I’d like to still make sure there’s enough time for the kids as well. I guess it’d be full-time, it depends on what full-time is. If full-time is a five-day week, I wouldn’t want to work full-time. I’d like to work four days if possible, with three days off, but I guess if it was necessary for me to work more so that everyone can eat, then I’ll work more

**Do you think your partner will continue to work?**
Kieran: Probably. I guess whatever’s she’s into. She could be anything really. It might be that she has to work similar hours to what I’m working, if we can both work part-time and coordinate when I’m working and she’s working

**Between you and your partner, do you imagine the major share of childcare might become your responsibility one day? Why/why not?**
Kieran: If it happens that way, it could happen. I don’t know if it would, It’d be fine if it did, but I don’t know if it would. Just because of the various social structures that you have, the glass ceiling or however you want to put it. Even though you have discrimination laws, it just seems to be harder for a female, at least that’s the impression I get

**Do you imagine the major share of housework might become your responsibility? Why/why not?**
Kieran: I hope not! [laughs] I’d say no, I don’t think I would, just because I really hate housework and would do anything to get out of it. But then again, in the end if it came down to it, and my wife was earning a lot of money, and either I didn’t have a job or couldn’t find a job or didn’t want to work, then it’d be like yeah, start cleaning

**If you only have one full-time earner in a couple with kids, how should it be decided which parent does what?**
Kieran: The one that is going to get enough money to live on, not just work because he’s the father, she’s the mother

**If you had to make the choice, do you think you’d prefer to be the full-time earner or the full-time carer?**
Kieran: Ahhhh. Good one. Full-time... earner. Yeah
From the sample undergraduate men, Kieran is the least definite about his future as a male breadwinner. Even so, Kieran still only entertains the thought of part-time employment and an increased proportion of time with his children if he is first able to ensure that there is enough food ‘so that everyone can eat’. In this sense, Kieran is typical of all of the undergraduate men, who cannot see beyond their own imagined futures as male breadwinners first and foremost.

These assumptions also feed into views expressed in regards to domestic work and childcare as parents, where the undergraduate men tend to see things in a contingent manner. Although they tend to have made their decisions with a male breadwinning type role in mind, they do not rule out the possibility that they may end up with the major share of domestic work or childcare. Gavin articulated these points well in the interview.

How do you imagine your life with kids, or life should be with kids?
Gavin: I’d like to try and make sure I’m there lots for the kids, but not to the extent that it compromises the extent to which I can earn money to support them. I’d like to be fairly involved

Between you and your partner, do you imagine the major share of childcare might become your responsibility one day? Why/why not?
Gavin: I don’t think it would fall, the majority would fall into my responsibility. I suppose it is a possibility depending on my partner’s work arrangements, there are some situations I suppose in which that could occur. But I don’t think my partner, it is a value that I want my partner to have, that we would at least share the responsibility, and not just divert to one person, whether it be the man or the woman

Do you imagine the major share of housework might become your responsibility? Why/why not?
Gavin: Again, I think it’s important to share it, or at least come to some kind of consensus on. I don’t think it is something that either party should be pushed into doing if the other person is not around enough to do it. I think you should come to some agreement, or share

These responses from Gavin encapsulate the general trend for the undergraduate men. Gavin assumes he will be an economic provider, and although he wants to be involved in the upbringing of his children, this would not mean spending time away from work to the extent that he is unable to ‘earn money to support them’. The possibility of a contradiction in this orientation has not previously occurred to him. However as the discussion continues, it becomes clear that Gavin is not necessarily wed to the idea of breadwinning, it is simply unquestioned at this stage.
The final part of the interview employed a scenario which was constructed around the lives of an imaginary couple. The interviewees were presented with background information about a couple, and then invited to discuss ways to resolve hypothetical situations faced by the couple. The scenario was deliberately constructed to test whether the respondent would be willing to accept an outcome that did not match with their expressed value, as revealed in the introductory ‘attitude sketch’. With the undergraduate men generally expressing an attitude that preferred a ‘traditional’ allocation of tasks between men and women, the effective use was to explore whether respondents would be willing to accept an ‘a-traditional’ distribution of paid and unpaid work between partners. In practice this meant that all of the respondents were asked to reason their way through a series of points of differentiation between a hypothetical dual-earner couple where the wife earned a higher proportion of household income.

With the undergraduate men in the sample, this section had virtually no traction. The undergraduate men were happy to accept any allocation of paid and unpaid work between a couple if it was entered into freely by both partners and seen to be in the best interests of the family. This was true in regards to the potential for the female partner to specialise in paid work, and the potential for the male partner specialise in unpaid work and childcare. These results are of particular interest in light of the research questions, as the undergraduate men imagine a kind of exchange based relationship will allocate tasks between partners within the household, and yet the undergraduate men prepare to be future breadwinners regardless.

Overall the responses of the undergraduate men reveal that they are concerned with positioning themselves for a future where they assume the role of breadwinner in a family. Throughout their long answer responses, financial concerns and the ability to provide for a family remain consistent themes. Other potential factors related to raising a family, such as reduced working hours or even an interrupted career trajectory, have
not been considered in any of the decisions undergraduate men have made about their future working lives.

The results of the undergraduate men are strikingly consistent within the sample despite some variation in the attitude sketch at the outset of the interview. In the attitude sketch, half of the undergraduate men expressed that they believed gender should be the determining factor in how a couple allocates time to paid and unpaid work between partners. However, the attitudes expressed tended to be more radical than the responses provided in the long answer interview and scenario based questions, where the overall attitudes converged into a singular narrative where the undergraduate men explained how their previous and current decisions, as well as their anticipated future prospects and options, had only been made with consideration to the possibility of becoming breadwinners.

5.2: Undergraduate Women

Exactly the same interview was conducted with the eleven undergraduate women. In the opening section designed to gauge general attitudes to issues related to work and family, the undergraduate women are remarkably similar. In general, the undergraduate women refused to be drawn into agreement with any point that implied gender should determine behaviour.

From the outset of the in-depth interview, two identifiable groups are evident within the sample of undergraduate women. The difference between the two groups is their awareness of potential difficulties they may have combining a career in paid work with parenthood. In one group, the ‘preparers’, the potential difficulties combining work and family are known, and their decisions include ways to actively shape the desired goal of a successful career and family. The other identifiable group within the sample of undergraduate women is less concerned, with any potential difficulties combining work and family. This group, the ‘postponers’, appear to be aware of potential difficulties combining work and family while avoiding taking any steps to enable their desired outcomes.
5.2.1: Undergraduate Women: Attitude Sketch

As in the interviews of the undergraduate men, the first group of questions for the undergraduate women focussed on the importance of men and women being in full-time paid employment, any perceived advantages either men or women might have in gaining employment or promotion, and the appropriateness of men and women receiving family benefit payments when choosing not to work. The responses of the undergraduate women were as follows:\(^{17}\):

1. *Do you think it is important for women to have full time paid work?*

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2. *Do you think being a woman is an advantage when trying to get a job?*

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3. *Do you think being a woman is an advantage when trying to get a promotion at work?*

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4. *Do you think it is appropriate that mothers who choose not to work receive family benefit payments?*

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With the first four questions designed to sketch broad attitudes to the importance or position of women in the sphere of paid work, there is a broad trend suggesting that undergraduate women do see it as important that women have full-time paid work, and furthermore, that women are rarely advantaged in the sphere of paid work, either at the entry level or in the competition for promotions. There is also a general agreement that family benefit payments should be available to mothers who choose not to work. Following from this, the same propositions were presented to sketch the perceived position of men in paid work.

\(^{17}\) Responses of undergraduate men are provided in the second row, in grey
5. **Do you think it is important for men to have full time paid work?**

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6. **Do you think being a man is an advantage when trying to get a job?**

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7. **Do you think being a man is an advantage when trying to get a promotion at work?**

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8. **Do you think it is appropriate that fathers who choose not to work receive family benefit payments?**

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As with the responses in regard to the women, there is a broad agreement on the importance of men having paid work. In all but one case, respondents took exactly the same position on the importance of men and women in paid work, suggesting that any differences within the sample are caused by an underlying attitude to the importance of paid work itself, and not whether it is carried out by men or women as such. In this comparison, there was only one respondent who changed, Karen indicating that it was not important for women to have paid employment, while it was important for men to have paid employment. Excepting Karen, these responses indicate that the undergraduate women believe that women having paid employment is just as important as men having paid employment.

At the same time, the responses of the undergraduate women do indicate some scepticism that the position of women in the sphere of paid work is on equal terms to that of men. Where most respondents did not imagine that women had an advantage when looking for paid employment or seeking promotion, they did imagine that men possessed an advantage in these situations. Again, individual stories continue their emergence, as Karen remains an outlier, this time by indicating no advantage for either women or men on seeking employment or promotion. Another respondent, Gabrielle, can imagine either men or women having the advantage ‘sometimes’ when seeking employment or promotion, which appears to be situation dependent. All other
respondents indicate a belief that men have at least some advantage in gaining employment or seeking promotion, and in some cases believed that men had an advantage in both respects. Further emphasising this trend is the interrelated finding that none of the undergraduate women in the sample could imagine that women held an advantage when seeking employment or promotion.

All of the individual responses on the appropriateness of men receiving family benefit payments matched exactly with the responses on the appropriateness of women receiving them. As with the responses on the importance of men or women having full-time employment, the differences in the response reflect an attitude to the issue of family benefit payments in general and not whether men or women specifically should receive this entitlement. The finding that family benefit payments should not be entitlements linked to the parents’ gender correlates nicely with the suggestion that women having paid employment is just as important as men having paid employment. This starts to suggest that the undergraduate women in the sample do not believe that individuals pursuing either paid work or care should be dependent on whether they are men or women, that it should reflect individual choice. At the same time, it appears that there is an anticipated bias towards men within the sphere of paid work.

The next few questions sought to outline attitudes around the interplay of work and family. This involved taking the questions away from the individual men and women, instead considered ‘parents’ and ‘children’. The final question starts to interact with the notion of male and female roles in paid work and care. Their responses were:

9. **Do you think having two parents working full-time has a negative effect on children?**

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10. **Do you think having two parents working full-time has a positive effect on parents?**

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11. Do you think it is important for two parents to live together when they have children?

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12. Do you think at least one parent should work full-time?

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13. If only one parent works full-time, do you think it matters which parent it is?

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The immediate issue with these questions is their bluntness. Of the five, only the final question represents any significant trend, with almost all of the undergraduate women rejecting the idea that it might matter which parent is responsible for paid work. Aside from this final question, most respondents looked for an alternative, contingent position, whereby the effect of paid work depends on the working situation, for example. This presents the heterogeneity in the responses that does not infer any real trends across the sample, or any consistent positions when tracking individuals within the sample. Given that the questions are asking respondents to speculate about specific, directional impacts of paid work on children, it is not surprising that undergraduate women, with little paid work experience and no actual parenting experience, were unwilling to profess any particularly strong position on these issues.

The final part of the attitude sketch at the outset of the interview delved further into the interaction of paid work and care and the idea that there might be particular roles for men and women in these domains. Again, these were only short responses that required no logical development or justification from the respondent, although the range of possible answers is expanded.

14. If only one parent can work full-time, which parent should work full-time?

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15. Do you think men or women should be responsible for ensuring housework is done?

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16. Do you think men or women should be responsible for ensuring children are looked after?

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17. Do you think men or women should be responsible for ensuring that a family has an adequate income?

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As with the male undergraduates, it was explained to the respondents that the interview was still investigating general statements but asking for a more specific position in response. In these questions, the first issue of note is the unanimity in response to question sixteen, with all respondents indicating that both parents should be ensuring that children are looked after. Question seventeen almost enjoys a similar consensus, with ten of the eleven indicating that both parents should be responsible for ensuring that a family has an adequate income. As with the questions on men and women in paid work, there is an outlier in the responses, as Karen suggested that the man should be responsible for ensuring a family has an adequate income. Working backwards, Karen is also the outlier on question fifteen, indicating that women should be responsible for ensuring that housework is done. Karen also expressed a ‘traditional’ preference for the father to work full-time in the instances where only one parent can work full-time. These responses, along with the earlier priority for men in employment over women, place Karen at the ‘traditional’ end of the spectrum on attitudes to the roles of men and women in paid employment.

Karen is also the outlier in the personal data, with a cadetship attached to her undergraduate study, and reporting full-time hours of paid employment. Leaving Karen aside for the minute, the remaining respondents are somewhat unwilling to specify very particular roles for men and women in paid employment, at least on the basis that it is because they are men and women. Apart from Karen, only two of the remaining ten expressed this might be the appropriate way to determine who would take paid
employment in the instances where only one parent could work. On the questions regarding housework, respondents nominated either personal preference, income from paid work, or time available to be the appropriate points to consider if dividing tasks between parents. However the general consensus expressed was for these tasks to be the responsibility of both parents. This trend continued in reference to the division of childcare between parents, with all respondents nominating this to be the responsibility of both parents, and all but Karen agreeing that a family income was also the responsibility of both parents. This indicates that the undergraduate women interviewed saw beyond the gender stereo-type roles and explanations for the allocation of paid work and care between parents.

The development of the combined concerns of paid work and family provides a reasonably broad sketch around the issues to be explored in depth within the interview. Where the undergraduate women tended to reject the idea that individuals pursuing either paid work or care should be necessarily dependent on sex, as the development of work and family continues, the undergraduate women express a preference for alternative ways with which to determine the allocation of time to tasks such as housework and childcare. At the same time, the undergraduate women seem to anticipate a bias in the treatment of men and women within the sphere of paid work that favours men.

5.2.2: Undergraduate Women, In Depth: Important Things

Following the opening attitude sketch, the rest of the interview looks to explore the issues under investigation in significant detail, inviting the respondents to explain their concerns around work and family. These questions are designed in a manner that allows the respondents to explain their individual perspectives, and gives a framework within which those perspectives can be understood properly. The semi-structured section of the interview began with a general discussion on the ‘important things’ in life.

When discussing the important things, the undergraduate women in the sample began to break from their almost uniform attitude sketch. Many of the substantive elements of what they considered to be important were consistent across all respondents, such as
existing relationships with family and friends. Also, and not at all surprising when you consider the make up of the sample, study and education were also popular responses. Aside from these particular points of emphasis, there was an interesting spread of responses, with all of the respondents mentioning either their current paid work, or positioning themselves for future careers.

During the discussion on the important things, six of the undergraduate women spoke positively of their experience in paid work. Although this group did not specify that careers were important as such, all made reference to the fact they were in paid work, in particular in reference to independence that this gave them. For example, Heidi placed particular emphasis on money derived from paid work and the independence this gave her.

What are the most important things in the lives of you and the people you know?
Heidi: Friends, family, money can be an issue but it’s not always, general happiness levels

Have these important things changed for you in the last few years?
Heidi: Yes. I’ve moved out of home, I’m no longer relying on my parents. I’m independent, I’m paying my rent, which means I have to be able to afford it and to finance, know how much I can spend each week. I rely more on friends for support than on brothers and sisters than before, they kind of are my family now because I live with them. Money is important to pay for college, so I don’t have to worry about food

Do you think they are likely to change for you in the next 5 years?
Heidi: I think so. Probably becoming more independent, not having to rely on friends that I live with, different living environment again

Do you think these important things are different for men and women?
Heidi: I think they’re probably fairly similar, sure there would be differences because there would be differences from one woman to another woman as well, but I think it really up to the individual, values can be shared across all individuals, males and females

The example of Heidi provides an interesting insight into the early responses of the six undergraduate women who mention independence derived from paid work. Although they mention paid work, it is the independence enabling sense of earning an income that they express satisfaction with. Interestingly, none of the six in this group felt that the important things would be any different between men and women. For reasons that will become evident as the interview progresses, these undergraduate women are grouped together in the analysis as ‘postponers’.

The responses of the postponers, where work is seen in terms of independence, stand in contrast to the rest of the female interviewees who discuss paid work with an emphasis
on career. This second group of five undergraduate women, classified here as ‘preparers’, spoke about their current situation as a time to focus on choosing a career direction, as explained by Daphne.

**What are the most important things in the lives of you and the people you know?**

Daphne: A job, because you have to be able to provide for yourself, and family relationships. And I guess for the people I know, just being able to go out, leisure activities, having the freedom to do that. It varies, some people, money is more important to them, more important than say choosing a career that they're passionate about, some people are the complete opposite, but I think they all agree that you need some kind of direction

**Have these important things changed for you in the last few years?**

Daphne: Important things have not changed as such, it's just that when I was at high school I didn't think money would ever be a problem, I thought it would just happen. When you get to uni you get a job, but now I think about stuff, I probably should have applied for more scholarships and that sort of thing

**Do you think they are likely to change for you in the next 5 years?**

Daphne: I think I will think a lot about it, and worry about it, but I think in the end I will still choose, in terms of career, a job I am really interested in

**Do you think these important things are different for men and women?**

Daphne: I don’t think they are, for the general population, but from the people I know, it seems like the females I know are more worried about a degree that they are passionate about, whereas the guys seem to just be willing to go with commerce or whatever because that's where the money is

Daphne typifies the responses from the second group within the sample of undergraduate women, the preparers, who talk about shaping their future career. This emphasis on future career directions also led to three of the five in the second group agreeing that the important things were different for men and women, although they were also careful to qualify any perceived difference with an explanation. These differences were best illustrated by Jessica, who appears to feel confronted by the decisions that she is currently faced with, and very readily identify contradictions between what she wants for herself as and individual, and the parent she wants to be.

**Do you think these important things are different for men and women?**

Jessica: Well, it depends on the type of person. Since I’m a female, do I want to be a mother or do I want to have a career? I don’t know yet, I’m still thinking about it. I think I do want to be a mother but at what age, I don’t know. I’d prefer to be a younger mother than an older mother, but it will definitely impact on my career as I would like to take time out to be with my children for the first year or so. And then I’d like to do three-quarter time work if that is possible, and if I had wanted to be, say, a lawyer, or a diplomat, that would change things, so it is definitely impacting on decisions now. Whether it’s different for men, traditionally it is, but I think it’s changing. I would like my partner to do the same sort of thing as me if it was feasible. I’m probably too young to give you a concrete answer right now.
For Jessica, being a woman presents her with what she feels are contradictory pressures related to her goal to have a career and to raise a family. Jessica believes that it is her femininity itself that is pushing her to face the question, ‘do I want to be a mother, or do I want to have a career?’, suggesting that she has been unable herself to reconcile her expectations around motherhood and a career, and sees them as constraining pressures on one another. For Jessica, her desire to pursue a career in paid work is already creating pressure on family formation, and she admits that pressure around family formation is already impacting on decisions she is taking now about her career. This leaves Jessica as somewhat of an outlier in the group that is currently focussed on shaping their careers, with her expressed desire to actively pursue a career in the workforce and form a family motivating her decisions now in an attempt to prepare for future concerns.

All of the undergraduate women are in some form of paid employment and this entered the discussion on the important things in each case. Within the sample, there is a group of six undergraduate women that have been labelled postponers, who tend to emphasise the monetary rewards of their current employment situations and the associated feeling of independence. In addition to this, there is a group of five undergraduate women who have been labelled as preparers, who emphasised choosing their future careers. The preparers include Jessica, who feels that her expectations of family formation place additional pressure on her career selection. Following the discussion on the important things, the respondents were asked about the university course they selected. The line of questioning sought to explore the motivations and explanations about the decision to enter their particular course and where they believed it would take them. It offered a greater opportunity to discuss their ambitions in paid work.

5.2.2.1: Undergraduate Women, In Depth: University

In the analysis of the responses in regard to motivations surrounding university course selection, the two identifiable groups within the undergraduate women take shape again. During the discussion on university course selection, the postponers who discussed paid employment in terms of independence follow a similar track through the discussion. These undergraduate women chose to enter economics degrees due to a general interest
in the subject matter, with some kind of non-specific employment outcome expected, and a job at the end of the degree that paid the ‘enough’. Felicity exemplifies the responses of this group.

**Was economics your first choice at university?**  
Felicity: Yes  

**What made you choose economics?**  
Felicity: Just thought it was interesting, an important thing to know. It’s flexible, and I’m not sure what I want to do when I leave university. I’m not sure what the actual career is, I just want a flexible degree and I want my degree to eventually contribute to my work. That’s why I’m getting a degree, to get a better job at the end  

**What would you say was the most significant influence on the choice that you made?**  
Felicity: I didn’t know much about economics, that’s why I picked it. The course is flexible  

**Were there any other factors that meant you could not take another course?**  
Felicity: UAI, and my parents didn’t want a lawyer  

**When you chose the university course you entered, did you have a particular occupation in mind?**  
Felicity: No  

**When entering economics at university, were there particular minimum standards that you had in mind about your career, after graduation?**  
Felicity: Paid enough to support myself, that’s about it  

**At the time you were choosing your course, did you consider that hours might be an important issue in your future career?**  
Felicity: No. I can be a bit of a workaholic

Felicity explains that the association between finding something interesting and ‘getting a better job at the end’ were important factors in her selection of an economics degree. The other postponers employ a similar logic. Interestingly, only one of the respondents in the postponers group had given much thought to job characteristics at the end of the degree, with Karen insisting that although she still had no particular career plans, she saw a good income as very important when considering her course selection. Other than income in the case of Karen, these undergraduate women did not identify any particular attributes that they believed to be important about their future careers. The specific nature of particular jobs has not been an influence on their decision to pursue an economics related course, although they present an underlying belief that a degree in an economics related area is likely to enable future economic reward. In this sense, their decision to enter an economics degree is based around a future career in paid employment, even though it may not be in a specific professional occupation.

The preparers group, who talked about actively shaping their career direction in the discussion on the important things, were again identifiably different. For these five
undergraduate women, particular career outcomes were considered important in the
decision to enter economics degrees. While not every preparer nominated a specific
occupation, these undergraduate women chose their courses with particular career
attributes in mind and actively tried to create these opportunities. Concerns attached to
family formation entered the discussion in three of these cases, with Gabrielle the most
extreme example.

Was economics your first choice at university? What made you choose
economics?
Gabrielle: Yes. I made the specific choice to enter a course that is only three years, so
it’s a lot faster. I want to become an auditor, so I chose this university because it’s really
reputable. It’s quick, it’s only three years, which means I can get into the profession of
auditing before I am in the age when I want to have children. So I actually made this
decision also planning my family plans in the future, because I’m aware of the fact that if
I have a child I probably have to step back and… just a normal, natural process, I have
to face this, so I thought “I have to be quick in my studies, get a good job, work, and
have a child, step a little bit back, then go back to work again”
What would you say was the most significant influence on the choice that you
made?
Gabrielle: The short period of time in study
Were there any other factors that meant you could not take another course?
Gabrielle: No, not at all
What is it about being an auditor that appealed to you when you made the choice
to study economics?
Gabrielle: I’m interested in the business world, but I’m also aware of the fact that if you
are in the business world, you can get into a place where you have to make decisions
which you’re not really happy about, for example firing people. But you have to do it
because it keeps you in business, and so I was probably lazy and thought “ok, if I’m an
auditor, I’m still in the business world, but I don’t have to make these decisions”. And it
probably satisfies me to find other people’s errors… something like that.

In this example from Gabrielle the decision to enter an economics related field is
actually motivated by an awareness of potential challenges balancing demands with a
career in paid work and raising a family. Gabrielle sees her future ambitions in paid
work and family as intertwined, and dependent on one another. This is very similar to
the responses so far from Jessica in particular, and the two of them have been quite
clear on their desire to achieve a balance between a rewarding career in their chosen
field and being able to take an active role in their children’s lives. This is a distinct
position, with the effort being made to accommodate both paid and unpaid work
simultaneously.

The explicit logic around family formation detailed by Gabrielle and Jessica means that
they represent extremes in the group of five preparers, who have in common that they
are all actively trying to shape their careers. The rest of this group discuss career expectations similarly without explicitly identifying their reasoning. If anything, family formation is mentioned as a distant concern. However, the mention of family formation as a future pressure when discussing university course selection and anticipated careers displays an awareness of potential issues that do not enter discussion with the first group.

At this stage in the analysis, we appear to have two quite distinct streams. At one end of the spectrum, there is a group of ‘postponers’ who have entered economics to pursue interesting courses, with an underlying assumption about future monetary reward. The postponers are undergraduate women who have not chosen particular careers, and are seeking an occupation that they can be passionate about. Within this group, very few have considered issues related to the effect paid work might have on their lives, beyond income. For these undergraduate women, secondary issues such as those related to hours in paid work, balancing demands, security or stability, prestige or profile are things that can be considered at a later date, and have had no bearing on their university course selection. A second group is made up of ‘preparers’, who are actively trying to shape particular career outcomes, and do express concerns about particular career attributes such as income and hours. In the case of two of the women in this preparers group, these concerns have been explicitly stated as attempts to enable dual expectations of both work and family.

5.2.2.2: Undergraduate Women, In Depth: Paid Work and Careers

As the interviews continued to develop around imagined futures of paid work, the next discussion point centred on the existing experiences of the individuals in paid work. With the undergraduate women, who are all in some kind of paid employment in addition to full-time study, this might provide some insights into how their current experiences in paid employment are shaping their expectations about their future careers.

Although the two groups continue to be evident within the sample when discussing their future careers, in the opening part of the discussion on current employment all of the
undergraduate women adopt a similar position. Essentially, the undergraduate women indicate that they enjoy their experiences in paid work, for what it is worth. The general trend in relation to the current experience of paid work among the undergraduate women strongly resembled the links drawn by the first group between income and independence when discussing the important things. Anne explains this well in broad terms that apply to the group.

You have indicated that you work 10 hours a week, are you happy with your working arrangements?
Anne: Yes. Because it's open until twelve, it's easy to get a lot of hours, so yeah
What are some of the positives of your current working arrangements, as you see them?
Anne: I get to make new friends, it's quite good money, I think that's about it
Do you worry about job security in your current job?
Anne: No. If anything they are understaffed, rather than overstaffed

However as the discussion progresses to consider future careers, the two groups from the earlier discussion points reform. As a postponer, without particularly detailed career plans or objectives, Anne discusses how her values might change over time with an increasing emphasis on career over time.

Do you think the values that are important in your future career will change over time?
Anne: Yes. I think that as you get older, your career becomes a bigger focus of your life. When you first start out, you've got a lot of social things going on, what you enjoy, and then you focus on your career, it becomes the priority.

In the preparers group, family formation is a key nominated turning point. In this context, hours become a key issue. However, there appears to be an expectation that the individual is expected to bear these responsibilities. With these pressures in mind, the undergraduate women talk about making heavy investments in their early career, in order to advance within their professional careers and achieve a position of control that will enable them to shoulder additional domestic responsibilities.

Do you think the values that are important in your future career will change over time?
Isabel: Possibly. Yeah. If I had a family, I think the things that were important to me would change, that would be the primary reason. Or, I guess if I get into this career and become a little disillusioned with it, things could change then
As with the other undergraduate women in her group, Isabel imagines that family formation might have an impact on her career in paid work, potentially resulting in a change of values. Looking back at the answers of the preparers group on the important things and explanations about university course selection, we can see that specific career direction is considered simultaneously with concerns around family formation. Even so, they anticipate that having children of their own has the potential to impact on their careers. These undergraduate women anticipate that early in their careers, these are not choices they believe they will be in a position to make. It appears that, underpinning this explanation, there is an implicit understanding that family formation should only be considered once a career is established and the combined household earnings can afford any and all of the possible expenses associated with parenthood, independent of any potential support structures. These questions are explored again later in the interview.

At this stage, one group of undergraduate women have admitted planning around the combined concerns of paid work and family.

5.2.2.3: Undergraduate Women, In Depth: Parents

As the discussion on anticipated future careers has developed, the respondents have been invited to relate their expectations around paid work. Following this, the interviewees were invited to change direction, and compare their expectations to the lived circumstances that they have observed with their parents. Of particular interest were the ways in which they perceived their parents to be making decisions about paid and unpaid work, and whether they believed they would be making similar decisions.

All of the group had fathers who worked full-time hours in paid employment. Two of the group also reported mothers with full-time employment, although they specified a higher amount of hours for the father’s employment. Six of the group had mothers working part-time, while the remaining three had mothers who were not in any paid work.

Karen indicated that her father was in full-time employment, while her mother worked part-time closer to home. As in the rest of the undergraduate women, Karen’s mother performed a disproportionately large amount of unpaid work within the house. When
discussing the difference between the lives of her parents and her own expectations, a number of assumptions about the type of split between paid and unpaid work are evident in the response.

**Do you see any differences between your parent’s life and what you expect for yourself?**

Karen: I think we’ll be different because times will have changed. When my parents first started out they were heaps poor, they started out from very poor backgrounds. They had kids pretty young as well, got married young, so I’ll probably do more with myself, with my career, before I settle down. I will have a professional job in the city whereas my mum had a part-time job close to home.

For Karen and the rest of the undergraduate women in general, the things that she might be able to do differently in comparison to her parents relate to her own career. There were three cases where this emphasis on their own careers as different to their mothers went slightly further, with Daphne, Ella and Felicity anticipating differences that related to parenting style. Even so these differences related back to their expectations about their careers. However the question was looking for an explanation about how the undergraduate women perceived that their parents had allocated time between paid and unpaid work, whether they thought it fair, whether they thought they would try to change their own approach to unpaid work in a future relationship. This raised an unanticipated point as the undergraduate women talked about how their careers would be different to those of their mothers, and the unpaid work as a discussion point did not arise.

This is interesting as the most prevailing identifiable trend within the group of undergraduate women is the difference in perception about the decisions they will be able to make in regards to combining paid work and family. While the undergraduate women assume a career in paid work and future family formation, few see an additional burden in unpaid work. Although many of them understand that their mother made a sacrifice in their interests, they do not believe this is a sacrifice they might be making. Where they identify that their mothers were compelled to make a choice between a family and paid work, these undergraduate women do not believe the choice is necessarily so clear cut, and they indicate an assumption, or compulsion, to have support from their partners to facilitate these choices. Whether this is simply
unanticipated, or plans are already in place for a defined split in responsibilities, is further explored in the final in depth section of the interview.

5.2.2.4: Undergraduate Women, In Depth: Balancing Demands

After spending the majority of the interview asking questions on topics that surround the issue of paid work, and to see if they were considered to be inhibitive of a career in paid work, the final section of the interview looked to quite deliberately introduce complicating factors into the picture. In essence, these questions pursued issues surrounding family formation and expectations about how these responsibilities would fit in around careers in paid work.

The undergraduate women were very consistent across the key questions in this section, all imagining themselves with a partner in the future, and all expecting to become parents one day. The undergraduate women do nominate timelines or deadlines for partnership and parenthood, ranging from mid-twenties to early-thirties. All of the undergraduate women also have a particular employment pattern in mind once they have children, which usually includes some amount of part-time work before returning to full-time work. Most of the undergraduate women hesitated on the question about whether they would prefer to be a full-time earner or a full-time carer, with the majority taking a similar stance to Ella, below.

**How do you imagine your life with kids, or life should be with kids?**
Ella: I imagine it will be a lot of work. I imagine despite my best intentions I will end up doing more of that work. I think it’s still a big struggle juggling kids and career, you have to choose somewhere to work that will give you better options, need to choose a partner that will not be lazy

**Do you think you will continue to work?**
Ella: Yes. Probably part-time work

**Do you think your partner will continue to work?**
Ella: Yes. Same thing as he is doing before. Full-time

**Between you and your partner, do you imagine the major share of childcare might become your responsibility one day? Why/why not?**
Ella: Initially, with young children, there are reasons why it has to be the mother. Men can’t really do the breastfeeding

**Do you imagine the major share of housework might become your responsibility? Why/why not?**
Ella: It depends on the partner, again. But I think it’s kind of a chain reaction, if you’re both working and then the woman gets pregnant, the woman has to take maternity leave, have the baby, and then spend the time breastfeeding, so she has to take the time off. So she’s already not working, and he’s still working, so if someone stays home
a bit longer to look after the kids you’re already there, and he’s still at work, and you kind of get stuck in it because that’s just how it happens. For that to change you would have to make an effort to go back to work and change the whole system, and then somehow come out of it with him at home. So it’s almost easier just to let it happen, you just fall into it

**If you only have one full-time earner in a couple with kids, how should it be decided which parent does what?**

*Ella:* Based on choice and skills and prospects, what they want to do and where they are up to. If he’s at the point where he’s just rocking along, wouldn’t mind taking a break, then why not have the father stay home?

*If you had to make the choice, do you think you’d prefer to be the full-time earner or the full-time carer?*

*Ella:* I’m not going to give you a straight answer on that because it depends on the age of the child. So, within the first four years, three years maybe, I’d prefer to be at home, and after that, prefer to be working

There are a number of implicit assumptions about her future that Ella reveals in her responses here, which are repeated throughout the responses of the undergraduate women. These women anticipate choosing partners and employers that allow them to juggle responsibilities between work and family. However the undergraduate women also anticipate a traditional split between responsibilities in the early years of parenthood at least, where their own responsibilities are tied closely to childcare, and their partner is responsible for earning income. These assumptions also feed into views expressed in regards to domestic work and childcare as parents, where the undergraduate women tend to see things in a contingent manner. They expect that unpaid work will be at least shared, with most of the undergraduate women expressing a belief that they will end up with the majority of childcare and housework despite their best efforts to avoid this eventuality. More than income which is mentioned in a number of the responses, the undergraduate women specify that preference and a negotiation based consensus should be used to arbitrate who should be responsible for different tasks within the household.

5.2.3: Undergraduate Women: Scenarios

The final part of the interview was a scenario based test of the earlier responses. The respondents were presented with background information about a couple and then invited to discuss ways to resolve hypothetical situations faced by the couple. The scenario was deliberately constructed to test whether the respondent would be willing to accept an outcome that did not match with their expressed values. For the undergraduate women, this meant that all of the respondents were asked to reason their way through a
series of points of differentiation between a hypothetical dual-earner couple where the wife earned a higher proportion of household income.

As with the undergraduate men, this section had virtually no traction with the undergraduate women. As with the undergraduate men, the undergraduate women were happy to accept any allocation of paid and unpaid work between a couple if it was entered into freely by both partners and was seen to be in the best interests of the family, and this remained true in regards to the potential for the female partner to specialise in paid work, and the potential for the male partner specialise in unpaid work and childcare.

5.2.4: Undergraduate Women: Summary

Overall the responses of the undergraduate women do not allow a singular, broad generalisation. While on some points the group is in general agreement, in particular in the attitude sketch and when they discussed their current experiences of paid work, when discussing their futures there were two identifiable groups within the sample of undergraduate women. The first group, made up of six undergraduate women, were seen to be postponing decisions about how they would like their work and family concerns to unfold. The undergraduate women who were postponing their decisions were aware of future concerns associated with balancing work and family, and kept these future concerns separate to decisions on their career.

The second group within the sample of undergraduate women were totally aware of future demands from work and family, which they did not see as complimentary. These undergraduate women were seen as preparers, who were taking a strategic approach to their careers in light of their desire to achieve a successful career and have a family. Importantly, the preparers were seen to be taking steps specifically to enable both options to coexist simultaneously, as working mothers, rather than moving between motherhood and work as separate domains. The significance of the similarities and differences between the two groups of undergraduate women, and in comparison to the undergraduate men, is explored in the discussion chapter.
5.3: Conclusion

The results of the undergraduate sample provide some early indication of how individual men and women perceive their future decisions about work and family, while at the same time providing a detailed account of their current behaviour. Variation in the response from the sample suggests that the male and female undergraduates are indeed preparing for particular, gender specific roles in their future households. In terms of how they perceive the process of decision making itself, the undergraduate men and women believe households should make bilateral decisions on the basis of an economic logic, in the way Exchange Theory suggests household members engage in a bilateral exchange or bargain based on some measure of relative resources. This ideal of decision making appears to be grounded in a collective understanding about the nature of partnership in households, where either partner is equally willing and able to choose a flexible allocation of time to paid and unpaid work with a measure of control and certainty. This ideal of unrestrained choice between partners may be difficult to realise in future households if the undergraduate men and women do not follow similar career trajectories, or, as it seems in this sample, only one group pursue paths that might enable them to manage time allocations in the future.

The results do suggest that the undergraduate men and women have made and continue to make decisions that assume and construct individual, gendered, life trajectories. The undergraduate men perceive long and uninterrupted careers in paid work, which is underwritten and driven by an assumption about fulfilling the (gender) role of (male) breadwinner in their future households. In contrast the undergraduate women perceive work and family concerns as competing pressures that they will have to resolve, and respond by trying to create alternatives between these pressures. The early results of the women in particular appear to support the work of Blair-Loy (2004), who interpreted the work and family pressures on the female finance executives in her research as competing schemas of devotion. Furthermore not only is there variation in the results between the undergraduate men and women, but this variation is in accordance with particular behaviour that is in line with gender role ideology. This is particularly interesting as the notion of gender roles that drive gender display behaviour has underpinned a lot of the explanations for variance in household allocations of time that
are not in accordance with economic logic (Berk 1985, Brines 1993, 1994, Greenstein 2000, Bittman et al 2003), and yet it appears to be important outside the context of the household where individuals have no gender display imperative.
Chapter 6 – Results: Graduates

The second sample group in the study was comprised of graduates in the field of economics. As with the undergraduate sample, data collection in the graduate sample was through one on one interviews, following the same interview schedule, in order to measure, and draw comparisons about, the way in which individuals perceive and anticipate decisions between work and family.

The responses the graduate interviewees are also presented in accordance with the interview structure, beginning with an attitude sketch, followed by a long answer discussion across several themes considered central to perspectives on work and family. As with the undergraduates, the interview then concluded with a scenario based section that tested the robustness of the values respondents expressed. This repetition builds upon the results from the undergraduate sample and begins to draw out the significance of life situations in perspectives of work and family decisions.

Again, the results are presented with the inclusion of extended quotes from the respondents so that the rationale they present in their answers can drive the discussion. The responses of the graduates cover a smaller spectrum than the responses of the undergraduates, and facilitate generalisation more easily. This allowed the selection of quotations to be highly representative while demonstrating the logic of the group in general. As in the case of the undergraduate results, the men within the sample are easier to generalise than the women, and are presented first.

6.1: Graduate Men

The responses of the graduate men demonstrate a very high degree of agreement across most discussion points. The graduate men reveal that they have been working towards broad goals, with an implicit assumption about becoming a male breadwinner in the future. At the outset of their professional careers, the graduate men are looking ahead and beginning to consider alternative directions, which they frame in contingent terms against a variety of factors.
6.1.1: Graduate Men: Attitude Sketch

The first group of questions in the attitude statements focused on the importance of men and women being in full-time paid employment, advantages men and women may have in paid employment, and the appropriateness of men and women receiving welfare benefits when choosing not to work. The responses were as follows:

1. **Do you think it is important for women to have full time paid work?**

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2. **Do you think being a woman is an advantage when trying to get a job?**

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<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>Not Necess.</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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<tr>
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<td>0</td>
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3. **Do you think being a woman is an advantage when trying to get a promotion at work?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>Not Necess.</th>
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4. **Do you think it is appropriate that mothers who choose not to work receive family benefit payments?**

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<th>Yes</th>
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Within the first four questions on the position of women in the sphere of paid work, the graduate men in the sample present a reasonably consistent position on the position of women in paid work. There is a general agreement that it is important for women to have full-time paid work; that women are rarely advantaged either gaining employment or promotion, and that mothers choosing not to work should receive family benefit payments. Following from this, the same propositions were presented to sketch the perceived position of men in paid work.

5. **Do you think it is important for men to have full time paid work?**

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6. **Do you think being a man is an advantage when trying to get a job?**

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7. **Do you think being a man is an advantage when trying to get a promotion at work?**

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8. Do you think it is appropriate that fathers who choose not to work receive family benefit payments?

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The graduate men virtually match their response on the importance of men having full-time paid work. All but one exactly matched their response to the question of women having full-time paid work, with Arthur specifying that it was important for women but not necessarily important for men. This suggests that for nine of the ten there is no difference in attitude towards whether men or women should be in paid work that is dependent on gender, while Arthur sees it to be more important for women. In regards to gaining employment and promotion, the graduate men tended to express an advantage for men in either or both aspects, with not one respondent identifying that women might have any advantage in either regard. With family benefit payments all of the respondents matched their initial response exactly.

Developing the propositions to include notions of parenting, the responses of the graduate men were:

9. Do you think having two parents working full-time has a negative effect on children?

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10. Do you think having two parents working full-time has a positive effect on parents?

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11. Do you think it is important for two parents to live together when they have children?

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12. Do you think at least one parent should work full-time?

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13. If only one parent works full-time, do you think it matters which parent it is?

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The immediate issue in this section is the almost unanimous response from the graduate men in regard to the belief that it is important for two parents to live together when they
have children, with no disagreement with this proposition. Aside from this there is a
general rejection of the idea that it would matter which parent works in the situation
where only one parent does. Only Derek and Gary believe that it does matter which
parent is in full-time work, if it has to be one.

Delving further into the interaction of paid work and care, and specifically the idea that
there might be particular roles for men and women in these domains. Again, these were
only short responses that required no logical development or justification from the
respondent, although the range of possible answers is expanded.

14. If only one parent can work full-time, which parent should work full-time?

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<tr>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Earnings</th>
<th>Preference</th>
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15. Do you think men or women should be responsible for ensuring housework is
done?

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16. Do you think men or women should be responsible for ensuring children are
looked after?

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17. Do you think men or women should be responsible for ensuring that a family has
an adequate income?

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The first issue of note in the response of the graduate men is the unanimous response
across three consecutive questions, with all of the respondents specifying that ‘both’
parents should be responsible for ensuring that housework is done, children are looked

18 In these questions, ‘Traditional’ refers to the man taking an ‘earning’ role and the woman taking a
‘caring’ role in the family. So, if the response to Q14 or Q17 is ‘the man’, it is reported here as
‘Traditional’, and likewise if the response to Q15 or Q16 is ‘the woman’, it is reported as ‘Traditional’.
There were no responses that reflected an ‘a-traditional’ arrangement.

19 In these questions, ‘Earnings’ is used to show that the respondent indicated that this issue should be
dependent on the respective income of the two partners. In Q14 and Q17, this is shown if the respondent
indicated that the ‘higher earner’ is seen to be responsible for working full-time or achieving an adequate
income. In Q15 and Q16, this is shown in the cases where the respondent indicated that the ‘lower earner’
should be responsible for ensuring housework is done and children looked after.

20 In these questions, ‘Preference’ is used to show that the respondent indicated that this issue should be
resolved by mutual consent between two parents.

21 In these questions, ‘Time’ is used to show that the respondent indicated that this issue should be
resolved according to the amount of time available to the respective partners.

22 In these questions, ‘Both’ is used to show that the respondent indicated both parents should be
responsible for this particular issue, or, in Q14, neither.
after, and that a family has an adequate income. In regards to how it should be decided which parent should work full-time, the majority specified a negotiation between the couple dependent on earnings or preference. Three of the group, specified that it should be the male partner, including Derek and Gary, who also indicated that if only one parent was in paid work it did matter which parent it was. In the group of graduate men, Derek and Gary appear to be the closest to the traditional end of the spectrum, albeit not very far along.

Across all of their responses in the attitude sketch, the graduate men are very easy to generalise. In regards to questions about the importance of men or women in paid employment, their responses reflected an attitude that the right to a position in that sphere should not be dependent on sex, while maintaining that women did not receive any advantages relative to men within the sphere of paid work. Even once children are introduced into the equation, the graduate men tend to maintain a position that particular roles should not be determined by sex, and they are unanimous about this in regards to the performance of unpaid work. The only exceptions to this unanimity were Derek and Gary, who expressed a belief that it mattered which parent was in paid work if it was only one, and that it should be the man.

6.1.2: Graduate Men, In Depth: Important Things

The attitude sketch of the graduate men showed very little variability within the group. There were two respondents, Derek and Gary, who expressed a slight preference for a traditional allocation of men in paid work, although this preference did not extend as far as a desire for women to be responsible for unpaid housework or childcare, and their responses essentially match the rest of the group on the other issues discussed.

In the discussion on the important things, the graduate men continued to resemble their near uniform attitude sketch snapshot. All of the respondents nominated core issues of family and friends to be important in their lives. Beyond this, all of the graduate men nominated something related to their position in paid work, either in the sense that having an income enabled particular and desirable lifestyle options, or in regards to
some sense of fulfilment. Moreover, only two respondents, exemplified here by Arthur, believed that things could possibly be different for men and women:

**What are the most important things in the lives of you and the people you know?**
Arthur: Family, relationships, having some sort of occupation that’s engaging and fulfilling

**Have these important things changed for you in the last few years?**
Arthur: Maybe. I don’t know. I feel it’s pressing to try and find a vocation that I want to do that is going to occupy me, I’m going to be interested in and passionate about, and also I feel it is important to try and balance whatever those interests are, try to find a way to reconcile it with trying to maintain meaningful personal relationships, and I suppose I’m just more aware of those issues in the last 5 years.

**Do you think they are likely to change for you in the next 5 years?**
Arthur: Potentially, although I hope not. I’d hope not to become a career obsessed guy, or totally lose all ambition, but it may well, your life takes you into different areas. I’m sure you get put in certain situations where life develops in such a way that you’re doing things you wouldn’t have imagined you’d be doing 5 years ago and you get caught up in things bigger than yourself.

**Do you think these important things are different for men and women?**
Arthur: Potentially. I’m sure many women have a different take on it than what I do, but I’m sure many women have the same sort of take on it as I do as well. I don’t think it’s just because they’re women that it might be different.

The timing of the interview with Arthur, who had just resigned from his graduate position in a big company in order to enter another field altogether, explains part of his response. However the responses of Arthur through this section were also highly representative of the group of graduate men, and were selected for their structure in particular. In response to each question in this section, Arthur provides a qualified statement, setting out a range of possible contingent factors that might influence the final outcome. This type of contingent response was typical of the graduate men in general, with a majority of answers dependent on a range of further factors beyond the control of the individual. In terms of the important things in life, the core issues of family and friends were maintained in the responses of the group, with all respondents also touching on paid work in one way or another. Only two of the graduate men believed the important things could possibly be different for men and women, and again, these were contingent responses that depended on a range of further factors.

6.1.2.1: Graduate Men, In Depth: University

With all of the graduate men mentioning paid work in the discussion on the important things, the discussion on the motivations surrounding their course selection offers a
chance to add some background to their explanations. Once again with the graduate men, there are very few real differences between the respondents in the group.

The trend throughout the discussion on university course selection is that the respondents had a general interest in the subject matter, and at least a subconscious understanding that a degree in economics would lead to job opportunities in the future. The link between particular desired skills and future occupations was not very strong at all, tending more towards the assumption that a degree in economics would make you employable in general, rather than leading to a specific profession.

Was economics your first choice at university?
Gary: Yeah, my first preference

What made you choose economics?
Gary: It was an open field, I think, in the same way that arts is open. But I just felt there were more job opportunities to find at the end of it. So I was unsure of what I wanted to do, what I wanted to get into, so I thought I'd go into something with various jobs at the end of it, and it is associated with employment

Were there any other factors that meant you could not take another course?
Gary: I'm sure my parents were probably weighing on it, it's been so drilled into me that it's a decision that I have to make, but I'm sure they were pushing me the message as I was growing up

When you chose the university course you entered, did you have a particular occupation in mind?
Gary: Not really, but I thought it would be fun to do advertising or something like that. But when I went in, I even did subjects like finance and accounting because they were what my parents would have pushed. But as soon as I started in them, I didn't enjoy them, so I dropped them

What is it about being in advertising that appealed to you when you made the choice to study in economics?
Gary: I consider myself to be a creative person, and I think it's hard to make money as... like in arts, there are a lot of creative people, but it's hard to make money once you finish that degree, as opposed to other industries like advertising or marketing that I thought you could still be creative, but almost guarantee you'd have a job when you finish

The logic used by Gary, that you could ‘almost guarantee you’d have a job when you finish’, resonated strongly with the men who had subsequently graduated with economics degrees. Their perception of the labour market coming out of high school was that an economics degree would get you a job, and what they wanted was a job. Following this, the discussion probed particular job characteristics that the respondents may have considered important when selecting their course. Turning to which job characteristics were associated with an economics degree and why they were valued revealed the other recognisable trend in the group in this section, with their collective admission that there were several factors about their careers that were not considered
important, or their importance was unknown, at the time they were choosing their university course. As Gary continues

Can you list some of the job characteristics that were important to you at the time, if there were any?

Gary: I wanted to be in a sort of high-paced, well paying, youthful and dynamic organisation, that was how I saw marketing and advertising subjects

At the time you were choosing your course, did you consider that working hours might be an important issue in your future career?

Gary: Not necessarily about working hours I guess. I never saw myself going into a job where I would be able to control hours until I eventually set up my own business. I always imagined a nine to five job, that's just what I imagined, but I really didn't think about it too much

In these responses, Gary displays the implicit assumptions about future career direction that the graduate men all use when describing their university course selection. Although Gary did not really think about it too much, he assumed he would find his way into a standard nine to five working week with good pay. Again, this is highly representative of the graduate men, who often recounted their logic as eighteen year olds entering university in very candid terms with the opportunity to reflect on the outcome. Unadvertised characteristics of the occupations that they ended up in, such as long hours, have since become a large factor in their lives, and advancing the discussion to consider paid work allowed this theme to develop.

6.1.2.2: Graduate Men, In Depth: Paid Work and Careers

The interviews with the graduate men developed further around the issue of paid work as the discussion sought to establish a continuum between their current experience of paid work and their expectations about the future. With paid work so central to the current experiences of the graduates in the sample, this presented an opportunity to investigate how this experience was interacting with their prior expectations, and if in turn their current situation affected their expectations of the future. As in the previous discussion points, the group falls into a broad generalisation, with long hours in the office leading to a discussion about being a parent in the future in all but one case.

You have indicated that you’re in full-time work, how many hours per week is that?

Jeremy: How many hours a week am I in the office? Maybe fifty, maybe more, it varies
What are some of the positives of your current working arrangements, as you see them?
Jeremy: Being challenged all the time, learning ridiculous amounts, being put out of my comfort zone which I think is healthy, a necessary pressure. I work with some pretty cool people, very intelligent, very nice, some really friendly people

Do you worry about job security in your current job?
Jeremy: No, if I lose this job I can get another one, there’s a lot of demand for us at the moment, we’re in a boom

Are you happy with your hours?
Jeremy: No

How are your hours decided?
Jeremy: By workload basically. We’re very transactional based, if that’s a word. If there’s something on it has to be done, and a certain amount of work gets allocated to me. It’s not a matter of five o’clock comes around and I can leave, it’s a matter of I have to get it done. So, there are weeks where I work very long hours, and weeks where it’s nine to five

A buoyant labour market in the commercial sector that Jeremy is employed in, and his persistence in a job where he is unhappy with his hours, seems like a contradiction. However, all of the full-time employed graduates were in the same situation, and felt that a long hours culture in their workplace was something to be endured in the interests of advancement. Those who were not full-time employed at the time of the interview were about to start full-time in their graduate position, including Arthur and Gary, who were moving into their second graduate position after deciding to switch sectors. The sense from the graduate men was that long hours had to be endured due to a lack of alternatives. Ironically, the cure for long hours in the future was seen to be long hours in the present. As the discussion progressed with Jeremy, he began to discuss his future career plans.

Has your experience of work changed the way that you respond to incentives from management?
Jeremy: Yes. Before I started, I would have thought that the only incentive that would get me going would be a monetary incentive, whereas now, if I was given a day off in lieu, that would be huge

Do you think the values that are important in your future career will change over time?
Jeremy: Yes. I will want stability. I think probably as I got older I’d want more responsibility, at the moment I’m very much at the bottom of the food chain, that’s alright as a twenty-four year old. With the income situation, if I could earn a higher income, it would hopefully allow me to have a little bit more self-determination in terms of my working hours. On the presumption that some poor girl decides to marry me and have children, I’d want to be able to spend a lot of time with my children. Absolutely my values would change, all this bravado now, “if I lose my job I’ll just get another one”, I think in ten years time it will be very different, or whenever I’m having children
The response of Jeremy is again typical of the graduate men, who are aware that their current working arrangements do not match their longer term plans, in particular their experience of long working hours and their expectations about being parents. Without declaring it, Jeremy reveals an implicit breadwinner logic in his response, hoping that his ability to earn an income will allow more self-determination in regards to working hours, so that he can spend time with his children. This concern around hours is repeated through nine of the ten graduate men in the sample, the same nine who mentioned ‘family’ once the discussion moved to the career ahead of them, typified by Ewan.

**Do you think the values that are important in your future career will change over time?**

_Ewan:_ Yeah, as I was saying before, in terms of hours, juggling work and family. I think the values of work ethic and a contribution to society, I don’t think that’s ever going to change, in fact I’m sure of it, it’s just such a fundamental part of who I am, that’s not going to alter really. But I think as things change and my situation changes, my family situation and any other sort of economic requirements that come up, they might slightly alter, not fundamentally I don’t think.

This quote reveals this implicit if confused breadwinner logic, with Ewan first explaining that he expects his values will change in terms of working hours when ‘juggling work and family’, before continuing with a situational dependent reference to a future family as an ‘economic requirement’. In the graduate men, this link between hours in employment and their future family situations came through strongly. The exception, Henry, made no mention of work hours or future family concerns, and pointed to the protection offered by a highly unionised workforce in the public service.

6.1.2.3: Graduate Men, In Depth: Parents

As the discussion moved to focus on their anticipated futures, the graduate men were invited to discuss the working lives of their parents, including how they organised unpaid work, and draw comparison with their expectations for themselves. With this, the focus of the interview begins to move towards the actual process of making decisions about paid and unpaid work, and whether the interviewees believed they would be making similar decisions.
All of the graduate men nominated their mothers as having the primary responsibility for housework and for childcare. From the group of ten graduate men, nine came from dual earner families where both parents were in full-time employment. The tenth, Henry, came from a modified breadwinner family with his father in full-time employment and his mother in part-time employment. Even so, Henry rejects the idea that men and women might have particular roles as parents, as do the graduate men in general.

Do you see any differences between your parent’s life and what you expect for yourself?

Henry: Absolutely. I think my parents, my dad particularly, is quite conservative with matters of work and finance, and he puts a stable career as a far higher priority than I do. I think he’s one of those proud old males who thinks his job is to provide a home for his family, whereas I am far less anchored in that sense. I don’t feel obliged to stay, quite open to the idea of travelling for long periods of time, I don’t cling to any gender stereo-types like my family does. If I was to get married and have kids and it suited better for my partner to work and me to stay home I’d be totally fine with that.

None of the graduate men felt that there was a necessary reason that they should follow the examples of their fathers, who emphasised their roles as breadwinners. Even so, the assumption within their responses is that there will be some delineation between responsibilities for income earning and caring for children, and if for some reason it eventuated it was more suitable that they be responsible for providing care they would provide care. The point here is that although the graduate men express a belief that they could become responsible for providing care to their children, they are not planning to be primary care givers, which will be an eventuality depending on circumstance. At the same time, the graduate men are subconsciously planning around their ability to provide for their future families. These issues were confronted directly in the final section of the interview.

6.1.2.4: Graduate Men, In Depth: Balancing Demands

The final section of the interview presented questions about work and family in a straightforward manner. Again, the graduate men were remarkably consistent across the key questions in this section. All of the undergraduate men imagine themselves with a partner in the future, and only Henry has any doubts about the possibility he might become a parent one day. The graduate men point to their late-twenties and early-
When asked about whether they would continue in employment as parents, the instinctive response reflected an understanding that they would continue in employment. Five of the men saw no impact on their anticipated positions in full-time employment, Barry and Colin considered part-time, and Henry, Isaac and Jeremy mentioned the possibility that maybe their partner will be responsible for earning an income once they are parents. However, the responses of Isaac show that acknowledging this possibility is limited to a range of additional factors, and the likelihood of actually becoming a primary carer has not really been considered. Colin, Henry and Isaac are also the least definite about their response to the question that, if one parent had to be the full-time carer, and one the full-time earner, they would prefer to be the full-time earner, to which the rest of the group immediately nominated earner.

When do you think you would like to have kids?
Isaac: It wouldn’t just be my decision, it would be whoever you’re with and whether they’re ready to have kids as well. Like if they’re career-based as well, they might have certain goals they want to achieve before they leave the workforce. I mean, although I would be happy to take time off, obviously they’re forced to take some period of time off, given the way it all works, so you’d want to make sure they were ready for that. I wouldn’t want to put a timeline on that, obviously it’s a two person decision, it would be selfish otherwise
Do you think you will continue to work?
Isaac: Yes. Certain standard of living I expect to provide myself and I want to provide for my kids, a comfortable level of living, and you know you have to work so hard to provide that. I definitely think I will need to work, at least one of us
Do you think your partner will continue to work?
Isaac: If they wanted to, it would be their decision. I couldn’t be working myself and then turn around and say “you can’t work”
Between you and your partner, do you imagine the major share of childcare might become your responsibility one day? Why/why not?
Isaac: I doubt it, I reckon it would probably be pretty even. I don’t think it would ever become a majority of my time, I consider myself always wanting to stay in the workforce, it will depend on if that’s what they want to do as well, but I always see it as being equal time to spend. I see myself wanting to be fully employed, and if they wanted to be fully employed, we would split it equally, but if they didn’t want to maintain full-time employment then they would have more time than me
If you had to make the choice, do you think you’d prefer to be the full-time earner or the full-time carer?
Isaac: I honestly wouldn’t mind, I would be happy to spend all day with the kids, the housework, but it would depend on what my partner wanted as well, it wouldn’t bother me either way. Changing roles, you could flip it around after a couple of years, but I don’t know what kind of other impacts that would have on career development, but it really wouldn’t bother me
Isaac presents an interesting set of responses which encapsulates the general attitude across work and family issues expressed by the graduate men. In the first question, Isaac reveals that he considers himself to be ‘career-based’, and while he ‘would be happy to take time off’ around the birth of a child, he is also aware that his situation is different to his partner, who must take time off. Isaac also expects he will continue to work with children, to provide, and sees himself ‘wanting to be fully employed’. All of these responses show that although Isaac answers the final question by saying that he ‘wouldn’t mind’ being the full-time carer if he was compelled to make the choice, all of the planning he has made about his future has been around the implicit assumption that he will become a breadwinner. If anything, the remaining graduate men are more definite about their futures as breadwinners.

The expectations of the graduate men about their future breadwinning seem to contradict their responses in the previous section, where they drew comparisons with the split of paid and unpaid work between their parents. This is due to the contingent way in which the graduate men view unpaid work and care, which is a priority after income earning. As a result of this contingent view that depends on income earning first, the graduate men do not rule out the possibility that they may end up with the major share of domestic work or childcare. Henry is the least definite about becoming a parent in the future. Like Isaac and the rest of the graduate men, Henry considers an equal split of unpaid work as ideal, although he also points out that he has only imagined himself as a worker, and has not really thought beyond those plans.

**Between you and your partner, do you imagine the major share of childcare might become your responsibility one day? Why/why not?**

**Henry:** Well, I mean, I don’t see it as that likely because as I said, at this stage, I can’t imagine having children. That said, if I was to have kids, I certainly believe I would have equal responsibility as a caregiver, and if the circumstances dictate that I should be the primary caregiver then I would take that responsibility. I certainly would have no assumptions.

**Do you imagine the major share of housework might become your responsibility? Why/why not?**

**Henry:** Well yeah, as I say, I like to think I have a completely egalitarian outlook on that, where people in a household have equal responsibility for housework. As circumstances change I might take on more or less of the responsibility, but I don’t have any preconceptions about a household where I have more or less responsibility.

**If you only have one full-time earner in a couple with kids, how should it be decided which parent does what?**

**Henry:** Hopefully a rational dinner table discussion and not too many raised voices.
If you had to make the choice, do you think you'd prefer to be the full-time earner or the full-time carer?

Henry: Very tough question, I couldn’t answer that question with much confidence at all. If I had to give an answer I’d say I prefer to be the earner, but only because children are a long way away from my mind at the moment, so the only real plan I have for myself is as a worker, not a parent, but I’d like to think that put in the situation I would be willing to compromise.

These responses from Henry and Isaac encapsulate the general trend for the graduate men overall. The graduate men are becoming aware of additional responsibilities within households that may impact on their future lives, however, these impacts happen outside their participation in paid work where they assume they will spend the majority of their time. Pushing the graduate men who are least definite about their future as breadwinners to make choices between providing a household income or care for family members, these graduate men reveal that they are not necessarily determined to become breadwinners, but have just not considered any other possible future. The least definite breadwinners are still planning for a breadwinning career.

6.1.3: Graduate Men: Scenarios

The sample of graduate men were also presented with a series of scenario-based questions that detailed ways to resolve potential situations faced by a hypothetical couple. Scenarios were deliberately weighted to test whether the respondent would be willing to accept an outcome that did not match the values they had expressed during the interview. This section added very little as the graduate men were happy to accept any allocation of paid and unpaid work between a couple if it was entered into freely by both partners and seen to be in the best interests of the family. This was true in regards to the potential for the female partner to specialise in paid work, and the potential for the male partner to specialise in unpaid work and childcare.

6.1.4: Graduate Men: Summary

The responses of the graduate men reveal that their concerns are limited to their career direction, with an implicit assumption about a future where they assume the role of breadwinner in a family. Throughout their long answer responses, the ability to provide for a family is repeatedly reiterated. Working hours also get drawn into the discussion
when looking to a future family, however, this is a secondary concern after income earning. Other potential factors related to raising a family, such as reduced working hours or even an interrupted career trajectory, have not been considered in any of the decisions undergraduate men have made about their future working lives. The graduate men make considerable efforts to explain that these arrangements depend on circumstance, while simultaneously they only prepare for one eventuality.

The views expressed by the graduate men are remarkably consistent within the sample. There are differences in particular discussion areas, and some variation on attitudes. However, these variations are within a very narrow band of possible answers, and even the interviewees who were least definite about becoming breadwinners in the future are anticipating a future breadwinning role. In actual discussion during the long answer interview and scenario based questions, none of the graduate men believed gender should be the determining factor in how a couple allocates time to paid and unpaid work between partners, including Derek and Gary whose responses in the attitude sketch suggested they held the most traditional views in the group. This accorded with the other discussion areas, where limited variation revealed in the attitude sketch subsequently converged during the interview.

6.2: Graduate Women

The graduate women present a complicated picture. Across a number of discussion points, the responses of the graduate women express similar attitudes and values. However as the interview progresses, two identifiable groups emerge, which can be labelled ‘optimists’ and ‘pessimists’. These labels seem particularly appropriate as the differences between the two groups really only emerge when the discussion points focus on their future expectations, in particular in reference to family formation and their ability to continue in their careers as mothers.

6.2.1: Graduate Women: Attitude Sketch

As with the previous samples of interviewees, the first group of questions set out to establish general attitudes to a range of issues linked to work and family. The questions
focussed on the importance of men and women being in full-time paid employment, advantages men and women may have in paid employment, and the appropriateness of men and women receiving welfare benefits when choosing not to work. The responses of the graduate women were as follows:

1. **Do you think it is important for women to have full time paid work?**

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2. **Do you think being a woman is an advantage when trying to get a job?**

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3. **Do you think being a woman is an advantage when trying to get a promotion at work?**

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4. **Do you think it is appropriate that mothers who choose not to work receive family benefit payments?**

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With the first four questions designed to sketch broad attitudes to the importance or position of women in the sphere of paid work, there is a broad trend suggesting that the graduate women do see it as important that women have full-time paid work, and furthermore, that women are rarely advantaged in the sphere of paid work, either at the entry level, and rarely in the competition for promotions. There is also a general agreement that family benefit payments should be available to mothers who choose not to work. Following from this, the same propositions were presented to sketch the perceived position of men in paid work.

5. **Do you think it is important for men to have full time paid work?**

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The responses of the graduate men are listed in the second row, in grey.
6. **Do you think being a man is an advantage when trying to get a job?**

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7. **Do you think being a man is an advantage when trying to get a promotion at work?**

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8. **Do you think it is appropriate that fathers who choose not to work receive family benefit payments?**

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As with the responses in regard to the women, there is a broad agreement on the importance of men having paid work. In all cases the respondents took exactly the same position on the importance of men and women in paid work, suggesting that any differences within the sample are caused by an underlying attitude to the importance of paid work itself, and not whether it is carried out by men or women as such. In this sample then, there is no evidence to suggest that it may be more important for men rather than women to have full-time paid work, or vice versa. It follows that the graduate women believe that women having paid employment is just as important as men having paid employment.

At the same time, the responses of these women do indicate some scepticism that the position of women in the sphere of paid work is on equal terms to that of men. Where most respondents did not imagine that women had an advantage when looking for paid employment or seeking promotions, they did imagine that men seeking paid employment or promotion possessed an advantage. Not one of the respondents in the graduate women suggested that women might have an advantage gaining employment or promotion, and all nominated an advantage for males in at least one of these aspects, if not both.

Only one of the responses on the family benefit payments changed at all. This suggests that the two who indicated that either parent should not be entitled to family benefit payments reflect an attitude to welfare payments themselves, rather than the appropriateness of either parent receiving them. The finding that family benefit
payments should not be entitlements linked to the sex of a parent correlates nicely with the suggestion that women having paid employment is just as important as men having paid employment. This starts to suggest that the graduate women in the sample do not believe that individuals pursuing either paid work or care should be dependent on gender. At the same time, it appears that there is a clear belief that there is a bias towards men within the sphere of paid work.

The next few questions sought to outline attitudes around the interplay of work and family. This involved taking the questions away from the individual men and women, to instead consider ‘parents’ and ‘children’. The final question starts to interact with the notion of male and female roles in paid work and care. Their responses were:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>9. Do you think having two parents working full-time has a negative effect on children?</th>
<th>10. Do you think having two parents working full-time has a positive effect on parents?</th>
<th>11. Do you think it is important for two parents to live together when they have children?</th>
<th>12. Do you think at least one parent should work full-time?</th>
<th>13. If only one parent works full-time, do you think it matters which parent it is?</th>
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The responses to these questions show a lot of variation across the group. Generally, most reject the idea that it might matter which parent is responsible for paid work. There is a degree of heterogeneity in the responses that does not infer any real trends across the sample, or any consistent positions when tracking individuals within the sample. Given that the questions are asking respondents to speculate about specific,
directional impacts of paid work on children, it is not surprising that young women, with little paid work experience and no actual parenting experience, were unwilling to profess any particularly strong position on these issues.

The final part of the attitude sketch at the outset of the interview delved further into the interaction of paid work and care and the idea that there might be particular roles for men and women in these domains. Again, these were only short responses that required no logical development or justification from the respondent, although the range of possible answers is expanded.

14. If only one parent can work full-time, which parent should work full-time?

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15. Do you think men or women should be responsible for ensuring housework is done?

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16. Do you think men or women should be responsible for ensuring children are looked after?

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17. Do you think men or women should be responsible for ensuring that a family has an adequate income?

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As the questions move beyond propositions that called on the participants to agree or disagree the first real evidence of individual attitude starts to emerge. One respondent, Charlotte, is a clear outlier with a ‘traditional’ response to each question on parent responsibility. Her responses reflect a belief that if only one parent should work, it should be the male, that males should be responsible for ensuring a household has an adequate income, and that females should be responsible for unpaid housework and childcare. This also follows her response that it does matter which parent is in paid employment, if it is only one. The other respondent that felt this was an issue, Flora, is the other respondent tending towards a ‘traditional’ arrangement, indicating that the male parent should be in employment if it is only one, and it matters, along with a belief
that the female parents should be responsible for ensuring children are looked after. A third, *Georgina*, felt that if only one parent should work, it should be the father. This sub-group of *Charlotte, Flora* and *Georgina* appears to be worth exploring in the in-depth section of the interview.

Aside from *Charlotte, Flora* and *Georgina*, the remaining respondents are unwilling to specify particular roles for men and women in or outside of the labour market. The remaining five believed the parent engaged in paid work should be decided by the couple on the basis of earnings or preference. These five all agreed, as did *Georgina*, that both parents should be responsible for housework, childcare and ensuring a family has an adequate income. This suggests that generally the graduate women interviewed saw beyond the gender stereotype roles and explanations for the allocation of paid work and care between parents. Across the range of attitudes, the graduate women are quite easy to generalise, with an expressed attitude that the importance of individual participation in the sphere of paid work should not be determined by sex, although women were not seen to enjoy strictly equal treatment within the sphere of paid work. Only once children are introduced do any of the graduate women specify any particular role based on sex, with *Charlotte, Flora* and *Georgina* apparent outliers from the rest of the group in this regard.

The development of the combined concerns of paid work and family provides an angle to pursue in the long answer section of the interview. All of the graduate women tended to reject the idea that individuals pursuing either paid work or care should be necessarily dependent on sex, as the development of work and family continues, they tend to express a preference for alternative ways with which to determine the allocation of time to tasks such as housework and childcare. At the same time, these respondents all seem to anticipate a bias in the treatment of men and women within the sphere of paid work that favours men.

*6.2.2: Graduate Women, In Depth: Important Things*

Following the opening attitude sketch, the open ended interview began with a general discussion on the important things. When discussing the important things in life, the
differences within the sample of graduate women from the attitude sketch were less significant. Many of the substantive elements of what they considered to be important were consistent across all respondents, such as existing relationships with family and friends. Beyond the core necessities, having a career in paid work directly was not nominated as one of the ‘important things’ with any of the respondents. There was, however, a tendency to nominate something related to income, such as ‘money’ in stark terms, or being able to meet necessities in life. The graduate women did anticipate a growing career focus, as explained by Georgina.

What are the most important things in the lives of you and the people you know?
Georgina: Would have to go family and friends, they’re just the most important people to me. Job at the moment, as much as I shouldn’t say this, is not that important to me at the moment, just because of my age and things, I don’t need that security yet, I don’t particularly need the money because I don’t need to save for anything, a home or anything like that, I still have a lot of stuff provided for me and money-wise it’s just not that important. Close family, mum, dad, grandma, very close to my grandma, my school friends, moreso than my uni friends, very close to the girls.

Have these important things changed for you in the last few years?
Georgina: No, not really, stayed pretty constant actually.

Do you think they are likely to change for you in the next 5 years?
Georgina: Yes. Then, I won’t be able to depend on my parents and I will have to have, well I have a steady job now, but I will have to stick to it and I won’t be able to ever have the degree of flexibility I have now. I don’t take it, but now I always know that I would be able to just up and leave if I wanted to. But then, I’m going to have a lot more responsibility, I’ll have to start saving, I’ll be living out of home, I don’t know what expenses I’ll have but I’ll be saving, so yes, my priorities will change. Family and friends will always stay there but there will be added pressures.

Do you think these important things are different for men and women?
Georgina: Stereotypically, you always think money is important to men, I don’t know, that might be just complete stereotype. I think career is probably more important to men, the whole career progression, promotions, and things like that, I know my male friends would be much more career orientated than my female friends. I know they probably wouldn’t ever take off time to take care of the kids, as my female friends of course will. So I think there probably are different aspects.

This general rationale exhibited by Georgina, with an increasing importance attached to paid work and a belief that there was some difference between how men and women feel about the important things, is matched by Charlotte, Flora and Hannah, the other three to mention paid work as important. This sub-group of Charlotte, Flora, Georgina and Hannah has not shown a significant difference to the rest of the graduate women, although they seem to possess more traditional attitudes and a attach greater importance to paid work.
The remaining respondents did not nominate paid work as a defining feature of their important things in life, and stuck to the core issues of family and friends. As a result, they were also unwilling to specify that the important things might be different for men and women. Across the graduate women the mention of paid work as an important thing appears to be the only difference within the group, whether it is of any significance will be further explored as the analysis progresses. Overall in regard to the important things, the graduate women tend to agree on the big picture, if not every detail within the discussion.

6.2.2.1: Graduate Women, In Depth: University

The responses in regard to university course selection also exhibited a broad consistency within the sample of graduate women. Whether at the forefront of their minds or subconsciously, all of the women indicate that some kind of anticipated future reward in paid employment was an influencing factor in their decision to pursue studies in the field of economics. This meant that the graduate women recounted a logic that suggested a general interest in the field and non-specific professional occupations were deemed to be motivating course selection. Amy is a good representative example of the entire group.

Was economics your first choice at university?
Amy: Yes

What made you choose economics?
Amy: I enjoyed it at school and I wasn’t entirely sure what I wanted to do, it was a good general degree. I viewed accounting as a profession I could always fall back on, until I tried it and discovered it is incredibly boring

Were there any other factors that meant you could not take another course?
Amy: My dad’s a lawyer and my mum’s a doctor, and I didn’t want to be like them

When you chose the university course you entered, did you have a particular occupation in mind?
Amy: Not particularly

Can you list some of the job characteristics that were important to you at the time, if there were any?
Amy: I pretty much fall on me feet a lot of the time. I always knew that I would work and that I would work hard. It doesn’t really matter what I do as long as I enjoy it, if I don’t enjoy it I wouldn’t do it, unless there is some goal in mind

At the time you were choosing your course, did you consider that income might be an important issue in your future career?
Amy: Yes, always an issue. Reasonably high, I’ve always aimed at providing for myself and my family in the way I was brought up, it will require a decent income. It probably wasn’t the smartest thing to go into human resources
At the time you were choosing your course, did you consider that working hours or balance might be an important issue in your future career?

Amy: It's not something you consider at 17, at least I didn't. I probably have a really naïve view of the world in that I won’t do anything that compromises the rest of my life. Probably a bit of arrogance there too, that I won’t have to work in a job I don’t like.

The broad explanation provided by Amy was highly representative of the graduate women, with all of them nominating some combination of interest and potential outcomes in paid employment behind their decision to enter the field of economics at university. A potentially high income was nominated as an associated job characteristic that did influence the choice. However other concerns such as hours of work or security in employment, which might be linked to family considerations, were not nominated as factors considered when selecting economics for study at university.

6.2.2.2: Graduate Women, In Depth: Paid Work and Careers

The interviews with the graduate women began to address the issue of paid work in a more direct line of questioning in the next discussion area, where questions about current experiences of paid work led directly into future expectations. In this section, there was a noticeable split in the responses of the group, especially with regard to the perceived impact of family formation on future careers.

The two groups resemble the original separation from earlier in the interview, where a sub-group containing Charlotte, Flora, Georgina and Hannah seemed to have more traditional attitudes, and interestingly, were more willing to attach importance to earning an income through paid work. The remaining interviewees, Amy, Brenda, Diane and Emily shared a broadly positive view on their experiences of paid work and held an optimistic outlook on their ability to balance work and family in the future. Those expressing the most traditional values in the attitude sketch fell within the second group, taking a more pessimistic view of their future ability to balance work and family. The ‘pessimists’, Charlotte, Flora, Georgina and Hannah, spoke just as positively about their current employment arrangements and their overall commitment to their paid work as the ‘optimists’, with the differences between the two groups much more evident in relation to their expectations. Even in the extreme case of Charlotte, who was the only respondent dissatisfied with income and the amount of hours she was required to work,
and the only respondent concerned with job security, broadly resembled the rest of the
graduate women when discussing her present situation in employment.

You have indicated that you work over 45 hours a week, are you happy with your
working arrangements?
Charlotte: Generally yes. Sometimes no, because it just gets really, really busy and the
hours are too much, especially during busy times at month end
What are some of the positives of your current working arrangements, as you see
them
Charlotte: There is some flexibility, for example most people get in anywhere between
8:00 and 9:30, it’s not like anyone’s watching over you. And leaving as well, most
people leave between 5:00 and 7:00, and the main thing at my work is as long as you
finish your work, we’re treated as responsible adults, we just do the work
Are you happy with your income?
Charlotte: Never happy with income, it’s not too bad but it could be better
Do you worry about job security in your current job?
Charlotte: Yes, because we’ve had quite a few redundancies over the past 6 months,
business hasn’t been doing too well, so I thought “goodness, what’s going to happen
with my job?”, but accountants are fine because you always need accountants
Are you happy with your hours?
Charlotte: No
How are your hours decided?
Charlotte: Generally the workload, generally speaking it’s consistent, but for the past
nine months it’s been really, really busy, and also month end, we have deadlines
Overall, do you feel committed to your work?
Charlotte: Yes. Another thing I like about my job at the moment is there is a real sense
of ownership over what I do. I’m responsible, so if I slack off this week I’ll pay for it next
week

Charlotte expresses a commitment to her workplace and general satisfaction with her
employment despite being unhappy with her income and her working hours, and being
concerned with job security. With this combination of concerns, Charlotte is the least
satisfied with her current employment situation from the graduate women, the rest of
whom express broad satisfaction with their current employment. As the discussion
advances to the consideration of future pressures, the graduate women nominate family
formation, with Charlotte typifying the pessimism that some graduate women feel for
their careers once they have children.

Do you think the values that are important in your future career will change over
time?
Charlotte: Yes, they will change over time. Having kids, sort of growing up even more
and having more responsibilities, family responsibilities, and therefore your need for
money might become a bit more
What kind of effect on your career do you think having a family might have?
Charlotte: I guess I’ll have no career! No, well, it will definitely put a hold on things. If
you’re out of the workforce for one year, or five years, it’s obviously going to impact your
career. And also, say if you just take three months or whatever, when you return to work
you won’t be able to put is as long hours because you have a family to raise and you
have got to be with your kids

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Charlotte describes the shifting priorities in very specific terms, children having an impact on the values she attaches to her career, and the need to care for children having an effect on her career. For Charlotte and the other pessimists Flora, Georgina and Hannah, efforts to keep progressing in a career and begin raising children are not complimentary demands.

In contrast to the four graduate women who are pessimistic about their ability to maintain commitments to paid work after children, there is another group of four within the sample who are identifiably optimistic about their ability to manage their careers after they have children. These four, Amy, Brenda, Diane and Emily, remain optimistic about the ability to manage paid work and children with an expressed expectation that flexible arrangements can be made somehow, either with an employer or a partner. The optimists were also less likely to anticipate any change in their values over time, as Brenda explains.

**Do you think the values that are important in your future career will change over time?**
**Brenda:** No, although perhaps the only thing that would change to some extent would be probably income because at the moment I really don’t put that much emphasis on income in the choices that I’m making over my job but that may change in the future I suppose, particularly if I had a family, or looking at things like home ownership or anything like that which seem just so far off in the distance for me.

**What kind of effect on your career do you think having a family might have?**
**Brenda:** It would definitely increase the pressure to have a job that brought in a reliable income, but that said it would also depend on what my partner’s employment status was and what decisions we were making about household income and who was going to be responsible for what.

These responses from Brenda exemplify the contrast between the optimistic view of family formation and career, and the pessimism exemplified by Charlotte. The optimists of the graduate women talk about family as a hypothetical or distant concern, which will not necessarily impact on their careers as they anticipate finding a way to manage a variety of demands somehow, and depending on their partners and employers. The optimists do anticipate that family formation will effect their careers, although this is seen as a different pressure rather than a necessarily negative pressure. The respondents in the graduate women who were pessimistic about the their ability to balance work and family in the future spoke more certainly about family formation, which they felt would necessarily have a negative impact on their own careers.
Following the move to begin looking to future careers, the discussion questions asked the respondents to draw comparisons between the way their parents organised paid and unpaid work, and their own expectations for these arrangements. All of the graduate women indicated that their father was in full-time employment during their youth, and that it was their mother who was responsible for both housework and childcare. The full-time employment of their fathers was in a variety of household earning arrangements, with four dual earner families, two modified breadwinner families, and a further two male breadwinner families. Interestingly, the four who have been identified as ‘optimists’ came from the four dual earner families, while the four ‘pessimists’ had parents with a sharper delineation between responsibilities for paid and unpaid work.

When discussing the differences between their parents lives and what they expect for themselves, regardless of the split of paid and unpaid work that their parents had, all of the graduate women nominated a more equal distribution of unpaid work between themselves and their partner. Diane, who had two full-time employed parents, pointed directly to unpaid work in her response.

\textit{Do you see any differences between your parents’ life and what you expect for yourself?}

\textit{Diane:} Yes! My father did nothing in terms of unpaid housework, in terms of looking after children, in chores say. I expect that to be equal, if I am working full-time and my partner is working full-time, that things would vary depending on what position each person is in, and that would be discussed.

\textit{Diane} typifies the graduate women with this response, in particular with the final few words emphasising discussion between partners. The graduate women generally felt their parents had followed the socially accepted distribution of unpaid work based on tradition, and that in their own future the distribution of unpaid work would unquestionably be more equal, and that the distribution of unpaid work would be negotiated.
The final section of the interview directly confronted the range of work and family issues that arose during the interview with questions around family formation and about how these responsibilities would fit in around careers in paid work. In the group of graduate women, all imagined themselves with a partner in the future, and all thought they would have kids one day, with only very small differences in the certainty of the predictions. From this point, the individual stories emerge, and the sub-groups that have evolved throughout the interview again take shape. Most particularly, where there was a broad agreement that family formation would have an impact on career trajectories, there was a split over whether family formation would have a necessarily negative impact on career, and implicit differences of opinion on dual concerns of work and family could be managed.

All of the four that were classified as ‘optimistic’ about the ability to manage through a combination of demands from paid work and family make it clear that every answer in this section is based on some kind of contingent factor, generally related to their potential partner or the household context. To summarise their position, they believe they will, at some point in the future, find a partner and have children of their own. They do not believe there are any particular family or work contexts that need to be achieved before they can entertain the idea of children, although they recognise that having a partner beyond conception and a reasonably well established career will assist with the combination of demands. They believe they will return to work, and that their partner will continue to work, although this arrangement is not necessarily the split of paid work that will occur as it will depend on the choices of both partners and the needs of the household. Furthermore, the allocation of unpaid work and childcare between partners would be similarly contingent. Emily and then Brenda demonstrate this contingent viewpoint well.

*When do you think you would like to have kids?*
Emily: Always five years away. It’s not a deadline, it’s a safe enough distance not to be too worried about it but still able to think that you’ll be a reasonably young mother

*Family-wise, would you need to have anything in place before you have kids?*
Emily: Nothing
Career-wise, would you need to have anything in place before you have kids?
Emily: To be well-established enough to be employable. If I left the workforce, to have been in a workplace long enough that I can come back to it, or if I want to chop and change that's ok because I have sufficient skills and a decent resume behind me so that I can be employable wherever

Do you think you will continue to work?
Emily: It will really depend on the job I’m in, I don’t really know what I’ll be doing, it will depend on whether I like the workplace I’m in, whether it is a job that can be done part-time. I don’t imagine if I had a child I would go back to work in the first 6 months, and whether I go back after that will depend on my partner’s situation and household income. I would like think I would go back part-time for at least a year or two

Do you think your partner will continue to work?
Emily: Once again it will depend on the set up. A perfect world would be that we both work part-time, but that will depend on income. That way, there would always be a share of childcare and household duties

Between you and your partner, do you imagine the major share of childcare might become your responsibility one day? Why/why not?
Emily: It would depend on what they did, on what I did, whether or not I liked staying at home, whether I could have my own business that was based from home, or whether I could work from home. I don’t expect that because I’m a woman in a relationship childcare just becomes my responsibility, I think it’s the set up

The optimists also refused to be drawn on whether they would prefer to be full-time earners or full-time carers, if pressed to make the choice. Brenda articulated this position particularly well, eventually settling for an answer that only considers a particular time period, and is still prefaced by citing an alternative possibility.

If you had to make the choice, do you think you’d prefer to be the full-time earner or the full-time carer?
Brenda: If I absolutely had to? And I can’t say that I refuse to answer that? You could potentially shift between one parent and the other, although that may not be efficient. I don’t think I would want to be a full-time carer for the entire child rearing process and I can’t see myself being a full-time worker for that entire time either. That’s still not answering it, it is a long period of time. Until they go to school, I would probably prefer to be a full-time carer

The four optimists remain clear in their logic and position on these issues. For them, there is no particular reason to believe that they should be performing particular tasks along the lines of the gender roles set out by their mothers, who regardless of particular household situations, were responsible for unpaid housework and childcare. For these four optimists, it is quite clear that these should be decisions made in the particular material context that exists at the time the decision is taken, and the situation of their partner at that time is also a factor.
The pessimists also take a reasonably consistent line through this section, which contrasts quite strongly to idea of a contingent, joint decision. In their ideal scenario, paid work will be something they can return to after at least a year at home with their children, if not more, with an expressed preference to be full-time carers for their children and a lesser commitment to paid work. They also acknowledge that economic reality means they are probably going to be compelled to work in any case, and when they return to work will depend on their partner, who will be in continuous full-time employment.

When do you think you would like to have kids?

Flora: Probably that will happen before I turn thirty

Family-wise, would you need to have anything in place before you have kids?

Flora: A wedding

Career-wise, would you need to have anything in place before you have kids?

Flora: No. Well I expect to be working for about five years before I have kids, is that what you mean?

Do you think you will continue to work?

Flora: Yes. I would probably push for four days a week

Do you think your partner will continue to work?

Flora: Yes. Full-time… full-time and a half! [laughing] Full-time

Between you and your partner, do you imagine the major share of childcare might become your responsibility one day? Why/why not?

Flora: Yes, I expect it would. Because it’s traditional

Do you imagine the major share of housework might become your responsibility? Why/why not?

Flora: No, I expect it to be pretty shared on who is available to do the work

If you only have one full-time earner in a couple with kids, how should it be decided which parent does what?

Flora: If he’s earning more money, he will work. Otherwise, he will work because he’s the man

If you had to make the choice, do you think you’d prefer to be the full-time earner or the full-time carer?

Flora: Full-time carer

The responses of Flora demonstrate the traditional values of the graduate women who are pessimistic about their continuation of work once they become parents. These answers reveal a preference for an allocation of tasks that depends on the gender of the parent, with mothers preferred for childcare and fathers preferred for earning income. The four pessimists imagine, where possible, very particular splits of paid and unpaid work according to ‘traditional’ arrangements. This is an expressed preference, although still held within a material context where economic factors allow this arrangement. At the same time, this is not necessarily a position they expect to find themselves in. The four pessimists contrast quite strongly with the first group of four optimists, who view
these decisions as situation dependent, and refuse to accept gender as a reason for arbitrating between responsibilities in the household.

6.2.3: Graduate Women: Scenarios

As with the previous sample groups presented, at the conclusion of the long interview the graduate women were also presented with a series of scenario-based questions concerning a hypothetical couple. Again, the scenario section added very little to the long answers, as the graduate women were happy to accept any allocation of paid and unpaid work between a couple if it was entered into freely by both partners and seen to be in the best interests of the family. This was true in regards to the potential for the female partner to specialise in paid work, and the potential for the male partner specialise in unpaid work and childcare.

6.2.4: Graduate Women: Summary

The responses of the graduate women reveal a complicated set of concerns, in particular with regard to future family formation. In a number of discussion areas, the graduate women provided very similar answers and can be generalised as a single group. These similarities applied to the way graduate women explained the reasons for their selection of economics for study at university, which was motivated mainly by interest and the knowledge that an economics degree would lead to a non-specific career outcome with some kind of income earning prospects. The graduate women were also similar in their descriptions of current experiences of paid work, which overall were seen in positive terms even though particular characteristics like working hours, job security and income were regularly cited as concerns. All of the group felt that they would have a more equal split of unpaid work with their partners than that of their parents. Finally in the scenarios, all of the group were happy to accept a female breadwinner if it was seen to be in the best interests of the family.

However, the graduate women also displayed noticeable differences across a range of discussion points. In the attitude sketch, two separate groups begin to emerge once questions turn to the roles of parents, developing further throughout the course of the
interview. One group is identified as ‘pessimists’ due to their view that children will have a negative impact on their careers. In the attitude sketch, these graduate women appear to hold more traditional values about who should be responsible for earning income and providing care to children. Subsequently in the long answer section, the pessimists mention paid work in the discussion on the important things. Once the interview begins to discuss their future careers, the pessimists talk about family formation impacting on their careers, specifically, with no mention of their partners. Subsequently in the final section of the interview, the pessimists describe preferences for a particular, traditional split of responsibilities with their future partners, who should be responsible for earning a sufficient income so that they can be responsible for providing care.

The responses of the pessimists contrast strongly with another group in the sample, labelled ‘optimists’. The optimists gave no indication that gender should be a determining factor on any allocation of paid or unpaid work between partners, and were consistently seeking to reject or subvert the logic in questions that explored these issues. The optimists nominated core issues in the discussion on the important things, and felt that these were similar for men and women. Once discussion moved on to their future careers, the optimists considered all of their responses to be contingent on the particular details of the situation at the time, and included the situation of their partners in these decisions. The optimists ultimately believed that there would be some way to manage their return to work and childcare.

6.3: Conclusion

Results from the graduate sample build further on those of the undergraduates, pursuing the same questions about how they perceive their future decisions about work and family and providing a rationalisation for their current behaviour. As in the sample of undergraduates, variation in the response from the sample suggests that the graduates are also preparing for particular, gender specific roles in their future households, and agree that households should make bilateral decisions on the basis of an economic logic, in the manner that Exchange Theory suggests. With some experience in the labour market, the graduates express an awareness of the possibility that this ideal of decision
making may be constrained by further factors related to their ongoing employment. In this sense the graduates provide explanations that are contingent on further factors such as their partner and both of their respective employment situations, as opposed to the somewhat wider spectrum of options that the undergraduates perceive for their future decisions.

Like the undergraduates, the results of the graduates suggest that they have made and continue to make decisions that assume and construct individual, gendered, life trajectories. As with the undergraduate men, the graduate men assume that they will perform the (gender) role of (male) breadwinner in their future households. The graduate women have more in common with the undergraduate women than the graduate men, as these women also perceive work and family concerns as competing pressures that they will have to resolve, although their response to the situation is different. The women again present an awareness of the notion of competing schemas of devotion advanced in the work of Blair-Loy (2004), despite not having experienced this particular pressure at this time in their life. As in the sample of undergraduates a substantial amount of the variation in results amongst the sample of graduates is in accordance with particular behaviour that is in line with gender role ideology, which has been the basis for a lot of explanations for household time allocations that are not in accordance with economic logic (Berk 1985, Brines 1993, 1994, Greenstein 2000, Bittman et al 2003). These results start to suggest that the significance of gender in the decision making process is underemphasised in the existing inferred rationalisations of decision making by households.
Chapter 7 – Results: Parents

Rather than the hypothetical line of questioning presented to the undergraduate and graduate samples in order to gauge expectations and preferences, the interviews with parents were able to focus on the actual experiences of men and women making decisions between work and family in the situations that are the focus of the study. This allowed the questions to focus on specific aspects of the process through which household work arrangements were made and to consider the subsequent outcomes. The interviews with the parents continue to pursue a thematic structure of discussion topics with subsequent probe questions, which provides an additional opportunity to compare the pre-birth household and its expectations with the subsequent outcomes. Of particular interest are parallels with how the undergraduates and graduates expect to make decisions between work and family, and any changes in attitudes over time such as preferences that have changed since becoming parents.

As outlined in the methodology chapter, the more specific focus of questions on periods of time around the transition to parenthood meant the interviews were also less structured than the previous samples. This is also reflected in the presentation of the results in a chronological order, focussing on two particular transitions at particular periods of time. The first transition is from a two-person household comprised of the partners themselves, to a three-person household with one parent on leave from work as the primary carer for the newborn. The second transition considered is the subsequent transition associated with the primary carer returning to work. Again the results for the sample of parents are presented in turn, with the fathers as a group and then the mothers.

7.1: Fathers

The fathers interviewed presented reasonably uniform responses to the questions under investigation. As a group, the fathers were comfortable in what they perceived to be their role in the household as an economic provider. This role was considered to be a natural consequence of their superior earnings capabilities, and it is clear that these men had not considered any alternative role in the family. Overall the fathers interviewed
were happy with developments around the transitions to parenthood and with their partners’ return to work, transitions which essentially fell in line with arrangements the fathers anticipated.

7.1.1: Fathers: Prior to parenthood through one parent on leave from work

Within the sample for the period of time prior to becoming parents, the profiles, behaviour and rationalisations of the men are remarkably consistent. In six of these cases, this permanent employment was in the private sector, one in the public sector, and two of the men were self-employed. All of the nine men made full-time commitments to their paid work, with an average of at least 40-49 hours per week in paid employment, prior to the birth of his first child. In the household earnings arrangement prior to the birth of their first child, six of the households had been dual earners with two full-time employees, two of the households had been modified male breadwinner type households with the male partner in full-time employment and the female partner in part-time employment, and one household had been a male breadwinner type household with the female partner not in the labour force.

All nine of the fathers interviewed were university graduates, as were eight of their partners. Relative to average household income at the time, these were high income families, all falling into the fourth quintile or higher on the ABS Household Expenditure Survey in the applicable time period (ABS 2006 cat no: 6530.0). Household earnings ranged from more than 1.1\(^{24}\) to more than 3.5\(^{25}\) times the average weekly household earnings, with the group average in excess of 2.3 times the average prior to the birth of any children.

In six of the nine instances, the male partner had made the major contribution to household earnings in the period before they had their first child, and in a further two instances the household earnings were relatively equal. In only one case did the subject,\

\(^{24}\) The Household Expenditure Survey records the average household income in the in the relevant time period as $1128. Respondents were gave separate responses for their own and their partners’ incomes, within bands (indicated in Table 18), hence the range compared to the average.

\(^{25}\) 3.5 represents the maximum ratio to average on the scale of data, ie, both partners in the maximum earnings category of “more than $2,000 per week”. In 5 of the 9 in this sample, one partner was in this category, and in a further 2 of the 9, both. This suggests the actual ratios against the average are higher.
Aaron, earn a lower proportion of household income than his partner prior to the birth of their first child, although this had no effect on discussions around which partner would take leave to care for their newborn child. As will be shown, during the discussion about which partner would take leave from paid employment to care for their child, employment status seemed to have a greater impact on whether the discussion took place, although not on the outcome. All of the fathers maintained a near-continuous attachment to full-time employment through the period under investigation.

The seven fathers who were permanently employed prior to becoming parents referred to a straightforward, implied, assumption in their households that their partners would have the primary responsibility for providing care to their child. With these seven fathers, this was explained with an economic logic, due to his superior earnings capabilities. Even in the particular instance where the father contributed a lower proportion of household income, this economic logic is used to explain their care arrangement. Aaron explained that as his partner was only eligible for unpaid leave, and that he would become the primary earner in the household with children present, so it made economic sense that his partner take leave from work to care for their child. The outcome was that Aaron took three days of paid paternity leave and five days of paid annual leave, before returning to work in his full capacity.

Aaron: I took a few days then back here, five days a week. Straight back into it, normal hours, normal everything. It was just never discussed, you come back to work, your job's there, off you go. I suppose it was a decision I made as well, coming back to work, I need to do the hours to get the job done, and just did it

In the cases of the permanently employed fathers, this explanation of their period of leave is highly representative. These fathers cited no problems with the length of leave from work that they took. The permanently employed men took some combination of paid paternity and paid annual leave, spanning between four and seventeen days. The average amount of leave from the permanently employed men was less than two weeks, as displayed in Table 8, below.
Table 8: Fathers: Household Earnings and Leave Details (at time of birth, first child)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alias</th>
<th>Pre-Child Salary / week</th>
<th>Employment Status</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Total Leave at Birth of First Child (Amount Paid in Brackets)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aaron</td>
<td>$1000-$1499</td>
<td>Permanent Employee</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>8 days (8 days)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aaron’s partner</td>
<td>$2000 or more</td>
<td>Permanent Employee</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>26 weeks (0 weeks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brett</td>
<td>$2000 or more</td>
<td>Permanent Employee</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>17 days (7 days)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brett’s partner</td>
<td>$700-$999</td>
<td>Permanent Employee</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>60 weeks (12 weeks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie</td>
<td>$2000 or more</td>
<td>Permanent Employee</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>5 days (5 days)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie’s partner</td>
<td>$1-$99</td>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>24 weeks (0 weeks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>$1000-$1499</td>
<td>Permanent Employee</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>10 days (5 days)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean’s partner</td>
<td>$300-$499</td>
<td>Self-Employed</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(no formal leave)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eli</td>
<td>$1500-$1999</td>
<td>Permanent Employee</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>4 days (4 days)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eli’s partner</td>
<td>$1000-$1499</td>
<td>Permanent Employee</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>14 weeks (7 weeks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred</td>
<td>$2000 or more</td>
<td>Permanent Employee</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>7 days (7 days)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred’s partner</td>
<td>$1000-$1499</td>
<td>Permanent Employee</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>59 weeks (9 weeks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greg</td>
<td>$2000 or more</td>
<td>Self-Employed</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(no formal leave)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greg’s partner</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Not in Labour Force</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry</td>
<td>$2000 or more</td>
<td>Self-Employed</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(no formal leave)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry’s partner</td>
<td>$2000 or more</td>
<td>Permanent Employee</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>34 weeks (14 weeks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ian</td>
<td>$2000 or more</td>
<td>Permanent Employee</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>5 days (5 days)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ian’s partner</td>
<td>$2000 or more</td>
<td>Permanent Employee</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>40 weeks (10 weeks)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 notes: The self-employed respondents indicated that they had no leave entitlements. Dean’s partner had 52 weeks outside the labour force. Harry indicated that he worked from home extensively and limited commitments for an extended period of time. Greg gave no details.

Once back from paternity leave, the permanently employed fathers were all back in their original, full-time capacity. Moreover, in some form or another, the type of economic logic used by Aaron is invoked by all of the fathers to explain the care and leave arrangements in their household. This quote from Charlie exemplifies how many of the fathers see the equation around responsibilities within the household.

Charlie: Kind of a done deal because she just wasn’t earning, I earn a lot more than she does, it’s pretty clear I should be the one going to work

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26 Regardless of type of leave
This straightforward relationship between earning income and household responsibilities is comfortable for the permanently employed fathers. One way of testing the idea that the split of tasks between responsibilities was decided on a purely economic exchange logic was to invite a discussion on the possibility of a role reversal should the female partner have been the higher income earner. In this regard, Charlie was at least happy to entertain the possibility of a role reversal. Even so, the response suggests that this is the first time the possibility had ever been considered. In the process, Charlie finds secondary considerations that might have over-ruled the economic imperative in his case.

Charlie: Yeah. That would be very interesting. I would probably [long pause]... I would have tried it, being a stay at home dad. She would have missed the kids terribly, though, that would have been harder. I think for mums, they have the attachment. I mean, it’s a function of the time she spends with them, you know, breastfeeding until a fairly late stage, so the connection she has with the kids is very strong.

The response of Charlie is remarkably consistent in the discussions with the permanently employed men. The men who are employed on a full-time permanent basis are the higher income earners at the time their partner takes leave, or will be once they become parents in the case of Aaron, and they are able to use their superior financial status to simplify any discussion about the care arrangements they have with their partners. In these cases, the outcome actually reflects an unspoken, unexpressed assumption on the part of the father that their partner will take leave and be responsible for the majority of care, while they become responsible for maintaining household income. Being the higher earner in the household is an explanation that allows this to exist as an unquestioned assumption, an economic reality related to the demands of the household. Exploring the assumption, the permanently employed fathers make it clear that no alternative has previously been considered. Indeed, most of the fathers have such a strong grounding of their own role as income provider and the household situation dependent on them performing that particular role, that speculating about the possibility of a role reversal is seen as a frivolous exercise. Fred is another case in point, simply ruling out a discussion when asked if he would consider the possibility of a role reversal, should his partner have been the higher income earner, by pointing to the reality of his partner’s earnings.
Fred: No. [My wife] is an early childhood nurse, even if she was working full-time she’d only bring home forty-five grand, which is ludicrous considering she has a thousand more qualifications than I do and has been in training for years and years. But there’s no way we could live on her salary, so there’s no way that I could give up work. Now maybe you could argue that, and there are times when I’ve wanted to give up work and take a different job, but you can’t really, or otherwise we’d have to rein in our lifestyle.

Throughout the interviews with the men in permanent employment, this particular line of reasoning is constant: ‘there’s no way I could give up work’ and ‘we’d have to rein in our lifestyle’. These men, exemplified by Fred, clearly see their primary role in their families as economic provider. For the fathers, the opportunities of their household and their own individual choices are enmeshed around a dependence on their income. In this sense, the fathers are likely to see their own paid work as a necessary priority for the household, and a barrier to their ability to perform other roles. This commitment to paid work continues to apply whether they actually want to perform any other roles or not, or, whether they actually want to be the primary economic provider. However, as Aaron and Charlie suggest above, the status of superior economic provider is also inextricably linked to gender in such a way that the male partner will be the superior economic provider regardless of actual earned income. In this sense, the objective ability to provide a greater income is not the determining factor, but rather the subjective suitability of fulfilling the gender role of income provider.

The two self-employed fathers differ only slightly from the rest of the group through this section. Indeed, through the same range of questions, the logic is virtually identical. However there is an important difference in their situation which seemingly derives from their self-employment, where the strategy for how and when each partner would take leave was actively discussed with their partners. In this discussion, the focus was on timing, rather than who would have primary responsibility for care, which was again assumed. This tied to concerns with a continuity of household earnings, rather than a definition of roles. To be clear, any negotiation that did occur was related to timing, and not a negotiation over responsibility, and is best understood simply as planning rather than bargaining or negotiation as such.

Both of the self-employed fathers had been in the early stages of establishing their business and consciously needed to plan and position their income earning capabilities with their partners before having children. These planning discussions with their
partners related to when they would become parents, rather than who would be responsible for which tasks. As with the permanently employed fathers, there is an assumption that they will be responsible for income earning throughout. Even so, the issue of timing introduced a degree of negotiation with their partners, and presents an opportunity to examine the underlying assumptions that the permanently employed fathers have avoided in their explanations tied to economic logic. This negotiation process might present a chance to examine the underlying assumptions that the permanently employed fathers have glossed over in their economic reasoning that points to their preference for female care. Moreover, the negotiation process also provides an opportunity to see if the underlying assumptions the permanently employed fathers express and bestow on their partners reflect actual household preferences. In the case of Greg this assumption is unquestionable, as he had become the sole breadwinner since the time of his marriage, and prior to becoming a parent. Harry, the other self-employed father, reiterates that the discussion centred on how to manage the transition to parenthood, with his employment continuing throughout.

**Harry:** When you start out you earn almost no money. Our arrangement was that when I started out, she would look after everything so that I wasn’t taking a big risk, but our rule of thumb was that, once I was up and running, now we can turn our mind, amongst other factors, to a family because she can take time out.

This response from Harry reiterates the logic of the permanently employed fathers, with at least his understanding of the household strategy dependent on his ability to earn income. Harry also indicates that in their case, the household strategy was a joint decision, so that his partner could be a primary caregiver while he continued his business in a full-time capacity.

The focus on the continuous provision of income on the part of the fathers introduced a clear delineation within the household over different responsibilities, with their partners assuming an increased responsibility for domestic work, including the additional task of childcare. Some made more significant contributions to domestic work and childcare than others, however the focus on taking responsibility for income earning increased with the presence of children. Ian described a pressure to continue earning in order to provide for his family.
Ian: I definitely feel that pressure. I did an MBA after [my daughter] was born which I just fitted in because I was home a lot more, you stop going out when you have children, and that was a way of developing a second career here, which I've done. But that's the reality of having a bit of 'luggage', you have to think about your prospects and your ability to keep generating the income so that they can all be clothed and housed and things. In my mind, where five years ago I would never have really thought about money, you know, a couple of degrees, job in a good firm, you always want more money but you know you have enough. With children and a mortgage and things, it's a pressure I definitely feel. It's not a day-to-day pressure, but it's a knowledge of responsibility about how you conduct your working life.

Although Ian is somewhat of an extreme example in that he used his additional time at home to develop his career, the point is that Ian feels a strong sense of awareness that income earning is his primary responsibility. The fathers all describe the period while their partners are on leave as a time of continuous attachment to paid employment, in the words of Aaron ‘straight back into it, normal hours, normal everything’. While their partners are on leave from work and caring for their newborn child, a well-defined split of household responsibilities is created, and during this time the fathers actively concentrated the majority of their efforts on earning income and consolidating their future income earning prospects. According to the responses of the fathers these arrangements broadly matched the unspoken preferences of the household, an assumption that at least partly derives from the fact that no alternative arrangement had been considered. The ability to provide income is seen as a legitimate reason for the household to organise into this arrangement, but only as long as the ability to provide income allows the man to fulfill the role of economic provider. Income is not seen as a legitimate reason for the household to organise around a female economic provider.

7.1.1.1: Fathers: One parent on leave from work and her return to work

The well-defined split between roles that the fathers had during the period of time while their partners were on leave changed when their partners returned to work. Again, the sample is virtually unanimous in its assessment of what challenges their respective households faced when their partners returned to work. In short, the changing demands of the household during their partner’s leave from work had established new norms of behaviour, and as their partner has been providing childcare ‘for free’, the movement into paid work also incurs an additional cost with payments for childcare. With this, the earned income of their partner now has a ‘relative’ element: is her after tax income more or less than the cost of childcare? Can the household ‘afford’ for her to go to
work? Dean explains how the cost of childcare limits the options he and his partner have around work.

Dean: She works, however, part-time shiftwork, and we try to avoid wherever possible putting [our daughter] into childcare from a money point of view, so that means she does a lot of weekend shifts, early morning shifts, night shifts, when I’m around to look after [our daughter]. So I get a fair share to look after her, mainly on the weekends when my wife works.

There’s always the option of childcare, but then there’s the cost and then you really start to think “is it worthwhile to go to work?” By the time you’ve spent the money on childcare, petrol to go to work, lunches, whatever you need, maybe you’re ahead twenty dollars. Do we really need those twenty dollars?

In his response, Dean provides an order of priorities in his household, whereby his ability to care for their child fits in around his workplace commitments, and her ability to work fits in around childcare commitments. This also impacts how childcare is perceived, which is as rational expense that enables their partner to return to work. In this trade-off, the ability of the mother to earn enough each day to cover the cost of childcare is seen as the limit in most cases, and weighed against her income specifically. The cost of childcare is a real issue weighing on the decisions for most of these families, even when it is only one child.

While Dean juggles childcare and work rosters with his wife in order to avoid paying for childcare, the cost of childcare has brought about a change in household strategy for Eli. The situation of Eli and his partner was unique in the sample, as Eli’s wife was the only partner who returned to full-time employment.

Eli: We thought we’d be able to have both of us working, spend time with him after work and earn double income. In hindsight we’d still take the pay cut and have one carer.

That didn’t happen because one, childcare is exorbitant and we couldn’t afford to have him in care five days a week, it was ridiculous, and two, we couldn’t get in, there’s not slots for five days anyway. We expected to have five days childcare and when that didn’t happen we changed our plans.

The response of Eli points to unanticipated problems finding both affordable childcare and the amount of childcare they desired, which would have enabled his wife to return to work on a full-time basis as they had planned. An additional factor in the case of Eli, whose extended family lives in another city and whose wife was born overseas, is that their living situation compels them to rely on formal care. This is not exceptional in the
sample, with Brett and Charlie in similar circumstances, with very similar outcomes in these cases. For Eli and his partner, the solution to their problem finding enough, affordable childcare was the resignation of his wife from her place of employment, and she remained responsible for providing care to their son. With hindsight, Eli also suggests that this decision reflects a subsequent change in preference, although the shift in preference reflects the lack of any actual alternative. The return to work was similarly delayed for longer than anticipated for the partners of Brett and Charlie. In these three cases where there was no extended family that could be relied upon to provide some informal care, their partners have returned to employment for no more than three days per week.

Excepting Greg, who is a male breadwinner, the households represented by the other five fathers in the sample also had to manage the return to work of their partners. These five households experienced relatively little disruption with the return to work of their partners. In the households of Aaron, Dean and Ian, a mix of formal childcare and an ability to rely heavily on informal care arrangements from extended family enabled their partners to initially return to part-time employment in accordance with their household plan. Only the households of Fred and Harry were totally reliant on formal childcare once their partners returned to work and successfully managed the return to work according to plan. This took substantial advance planning for Fred’s partner to return to work for three days per week, and even more so for Harry’s partner to return to employment for four days per week.

Harry: That’s all worked out very smoothly, primarily because of the amount of effort that [my wife] put in to the planning and organising of that. That was all quite stressful in the bedding down of that with her going back to work. We’re very lucky in that we can afford a combination of different nannies and day-care and whatever, because she earns enough that we can do that. How anyone that doesn’t earn anything like what she earns can manage, I just don’t know. To replicate our childcare arrangements you would need to earn well into six figures on a full-time equivalent to even make it worthwhile.

Yeah. If she was earning half or less than half of what she earns on her salary it wouldn’t be worth her working. It would probably be a straight financial decision. Her other potential career track, it would still be a borderline decision on childcare. Now, you could argue that we have an expensive childcare arrangement

Without relying on extended family, Harry and his partner spend substantially on several alternative care arrangements, ‘a combination of different nannies and day-care
and whatever’, in order for his partner to return to work for four days a week. However, although the particular outcome in their care arrangements is different to the earlier group, the cost of alternative care arrangements is rationalised in the same way, against her salary specifically. This logic again reveals an assumption about household responsibilities once children are present, at least on the part of the fathers, where his end of the bargain is to provide an income. On the other side of the bargain in the period since they have become parents, their wives have been responsible for providing care, and any costs associated with alternative care arrangements have become her responsibility. In this situation, the income of the female partner is relative, and only contributes to the household after meeting childcare expenses. This relative assessment of earned income does not apply to the income of the father. Childcare is not seen as a combined household expense, but the responsibility of the mother while the father continues in employment.

The perspective of the fathers continues to be on their responsibility for earning an income. This presents an interesting range of contradictory pressures for the fathers, who need to be seen as committed to their employers, and are also aware of additional responsibilities for childcare and unpaid work in their households. Ian earlier explained that pressures associated with breadwinning bring a ‘knowledge of responsibility about how you conduct your working life’. When asked if having a family at home impacted on their working day, all of the fathers agreed that they now had a very structured routine that emphasised productivity during work hours rather than being present for extended hours.

Ian: Before children [my wife] and I worked however late we felt it was needed in order to get the job done. After having [our daughter] we both have an attitude, well, I know I want to get home by six o’clock because ‘a’- I want to see [my daughter], and ‘b’- I want to help out. I think it also changes how you work, you work far more effectively with children than people without children.

I can balance things pretty well. I don’t work particularly hard here, I have a set of skills which probably don’t necessitate long hours to add value to the enterprise, or at least I’m convincing people that. It can all change, probably a year ago I was working very hard on some specific projects, but at the moment I have plenty of time to hold up my end of the family pretty comfortably.
This response from Ian demonstrates the position of the fathers particularly well. While Ian is aware of additional responsibilities in the household, his first priority remains to hold up his ‘end of the family’. As a parent, when ‘some specific projects’ demanded more attention, Ian focussed on workplace commitments, and the additional family demands were fitted in around his work. With the responsibility he feels as an income earner Ian makes more effort to control his output at work, so that his working day does not intrude into his home life. In this sense, the fathers are trying to minimise the impact work has on their home life without jeopardising their image at their workplaces by placing a limit on the amount of time they are willing to spend in the office, although sometimes their working hours are not something the fathers have full control over.

These responses from the fathers revealed contradictory pressures about how they allocate their time between work and family. On the one hand, the fathers describe a pressure to ensure their income earning capabilities both now and in the future are not jeopardised in any way and seek to maintain a positive image in their workplaces in response to that pressure. On the other hand, the fathers try not to let their commitment to their work intrude into their family life, especially when they have control over their work. In addition to this, it was also clear that whether they had actively planned their current situations or not, the fathers had a prior expectation that they would assume the primary responsibility for income earning in the household once they had children. This raised the question of whether the fathers felt there were alternative ways to organise their households.

In regards to alternative ways to organise their households, the responses of the fathers were again very similar. All of the fathers felt that their household depended on their income earning capacity, and as such, they were now compelled to prioritise the provision of an unspecified but sufficient income for their household from their paid work. None of the fathers saw any alternatives to a household reliance on their capacity to provide income, which they viewed as the reality of being a parent. In essence, the fathers agreed that they were “locked in” to their careers, although this was not generally a source of dissatisfaction. As the fathers had all anticipated a breadwinning type role, their satisfaction with being locked in to breadwinning was not attached to their anticipation of such an arrangement, but rather their satisfaction with their own
employment conditions. Most of the fathers were broadly happy with their current situation, although some also pointed to fluctuations in satisfaction, for example Fred.

Fred: So there wouldn't be so much pressure on me to maintain this job if [my wife] earned more money. That's the sort of, from a salary perspective, I can't go backwards. I can guarantee you where there have been times when I've been like "[stuff] it, this is just stupid, I'm just working stupid hours", and you're in an environment with clients, some of them don't give a [stuff], and you wonder why you're working a hundred hours for someone who doesn't care. I wonder if I could take a role that was more personally fulfilling that wouldn't pay as much money, but I just don't have that option, we're stuck in that rat race.

The particular situation of Fred is not very typical among the fathers, however it points to potential problems that fathers may experience matching perceived earnings expectations and responding to simultaneous contradictory pressures to maintain their image and commitment at work and their family lives. To a lesser extent, both Brett and Charlie were feeling similar pressures, and both explained that they had alternative careers with fewer hours in the back of their minds, and would be considering their options if their current working arrangements deteriorated. The rest of the fathers in this particular sample generally express satisfaction with their ability to provide an income, which they had anticipated would be their responsibility, and had been able to maintain control over their working hours in order to meet competing demands.

7.1.2: Fathers: Summary

Overall the sample of fathers that were interviewed all experienced a very similar transition to parenthood, with all of the fathers making a full-time commitment to their paid work throughout, as their partners took leave from work around the birth of their child and their partners managed their own return to work. Aside from the degree of advance planning in the instances where the father was self-employed, the responses of the fathers indicate that everything simply fell into place in terms of the household responsibilities, without any bargaining or exchange process actually occurring. Interestingly, the fathers do use an economic logic in their explanations, whereby their majority contribution to household earnings indicates why they have the income earning responsibility in the household. However the fathers also rule out role reversal based on an economic logic, where secondary considerations allow their preference for a female caregiver and their status as economic provider to be maintained. All of the fathers...
anticipated that they would have a role as an income provider once they became parents and this assumption was reflected in the subsequent household arrangements, and they have become more aware of what they perceive to be broader responsibilities for providing an income.

The assumption of the responsibility for income earning within the household affects the fathers in at least two contradictory directions. Firstly, the fathers want to ensure their image with their employer as a committed worker is maintained, while simultaneously making efforts to spend more time at home. These pressures motivate the fathers to justify their behaviour in a number of ways, however they agree that they have no real alternative but to pursue an income earning role in their respective households, which matches their prior assumptions. As such, the fathers prioritise their work commitments, and any childcare commitments to fit in around their work, while their partners are expected to prioritise childcare and any work commitments are to fit in around childcare.

The fathers’ understanding of their responsibilities, their ‘end of the family’, also impacts on the way that they perceive the income contribution of their partners once the cost of childcare is considered with the return to work of their partners. Problems with childcare, such as finding enough days or an affordable rate, are weighed against the income contribution of the female partner specifically, and place limits on her ability to perform paid work. These problems were minimised when the households were able to rely heavily on informal care arrangements from extended family. Again, through the transition with their partners returning to work, the responses of the fathers suggest their current arrangements reflect the anticipated outcomes of themselves and their households.

7.2: Mothers

There is a considerable variety of positive and negative experiences in the transitions to parenthood and subsequent return to work within the sample of mothers interviewed. The mothers who were interviewed related a number of unanticipated problems that occurred at various stages of the transitional periods between paid work and care
considered here. Despite the attempt to create a reasonably uniform sample using specific criteria, each woman experienced a different set of pressures. Within each specific question there are consistencies within the group, however these consistencies do not apply across questions as the interview moves to address different issues. Overall the mothers interviewed were reasonably satisfied with their eventual household arrangements for income earning and childcare, although almost all of the women were dissatisfied with at least one aspect of the transition to parenthood.

7.2.1: Mothers: Prior to parenthood through one parent on leave from work

The general characteristics of the sample of mothers, prior to becoming parents, are reasonably consistent. Nine of the women were employed on a full-time equivalent basis in regards to hours prior to the birth of their first child, with one woman, Helen, employed as a casual in the same time period. In seven of these cases the participant had been employed in the private sector with a minimum of 35-39 hours per week, six as permanent employees and one on a fixed-term basis. The remaining three had been employed in the public sector, where Catherine was permanent full-time, Irene was full-time on a fixed term basis, and Helen casual. When the household earnings arrangement is considered, nine of the households had been dual earner type households with both partners in full-time employment, with one household that had been a modified male breadwinner type household with the male partner in full-time employment and the female partner in part-time employment.

By design, all ten of the mothers interviewed were university graduates, as were eight of their partners. Relative to average household income at the time, these were high income families, all falling into the fourth quintile or higher on the ABS Household Expenditure Survey in the applicable time period (ABS 2006 cat no: 6530.0). Household earnings ranged from more than 1.2\textsuperscript{27} to more than 3.1 times the average weekly household earnings, with the group average in excess of 2.0 times the Australian average for household earnings prior to the birth of any children. In four of the ten cases, the female partner had made the major contribution to household earnings in the

\textsuperscript{27} The (ABS) Household Expenditure Survey records the average household income in the in the relevant time period as $1128. Respondents were gave separate responses for their own and their partners’ incomes, within bands (indicated in Table 19), hence the range compared to the average.
period before they had their first child, and in a further two instances the household earnings were relatively equal. The male partner made the major contribution in terms of earned income in the remaining four households, prior to their first child.

Table 9: Mothers: Household Earnings and Leave Details (at time of birth, first child)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alias</th>
<th>Pre-Child Salary / week</th>
<th>Employment Status</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Total Leave at Birth of First Child (Amount Paid(^{28}) in Brackets)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alison</td>
<td>$1000-$1499</td>
<td>Permanent Employee</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>30 weeks (0 weeks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alison’s partner</td>
<td>$1500-$1999</td>
<td>Permanent Employee</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>10 days (10 days)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridget</td>
<td>$1000-$1499</td>
<td>Permanent Employee</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>41 weeks (12 weeks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridget’s partner</td>
<td>$700-$999</td>
<td>Permanent Employee</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>3 days (3 days)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine</td>
<td>$500-$699</td>
<td>Permanent Employee</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>56 weeks (22 weeks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine’s partner</td>
<td>$700-$999</td>
<td>Permanent Employee</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>14 days (14 days)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debra</td>
<td>$2000 or more</td>
<td>Permanent Employee</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>17 weeks (16 weeks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debra’s partner</td>
<td>$700-$999</td>
<td>Permanent Employee</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>5 days (5 days)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erin</td>
<td>$1000-$1499</td>
<td>Permanent Employee</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>20 weeks (0 weeks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erin’s partner</td>
<td>$1000-$1499</td>
<td>Permanent Employee</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>10 days (10 days)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiona</td>
<td>$2000 or more</td>
<td>Permanent Employee</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>26 weeks (12 weeks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiona’s partner</td>
<td>$1000-$1499</td>
<td>Permanent Employee</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>5 days (5 days)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genevieve</td>
<td>$1000-$1499</td>
<td>Permanent Employee</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>52 weeks (2 weeks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genevieve’s partner</td>
<td>$1000-$1499</td>
<td>Permanent Employee</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>5 days (5 days)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>$500-$699</td>
<td>Casual Employee</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>(no formal leave)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen’s partner</td>
<td>$2000 or more</td>
<td>Permanent Employee</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>5 days (5 days)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>$700-$999</td>
<td>Fixed Term Contract</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>(no formal leave)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene’s partner</td>
<td>$2000 or more</td>
<td>Permanent Employee</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>9 days (4 days)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>$1500-$1999</td>
<td>Fixed Term Contract</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>(no formal leave)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jane’s partner</td>
<td>$700-999</td>
<td>Self-Employed</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(no formal leave)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 notes: The self-employed, casual employee and fixed-term contractors indicated that they had no leave entitlements. Helen had 48 weeks outside the labour force. Irene had 51 weeks outside the labour force, although she had accrued entitlements for 11 weeks of paid sick and annual leave. Jane had 37 weeks outside the labour force, and Jane’s partner had 5 days of leave from work.

\(^{28}\) Regardless of type of leave
With regard to how decisions in the household about which partner would take leave and have the primary responsibility for childcare these women provided a number of different explanations. In eight of the ten households represented by the female respondents there was an unquestioned assumption that the female partner would take leave from work and have the major responsibility for childcare. In their explanations, these eight women invariably return to assumptions about which partner will have responsibilities for different tasks once there are children present in the household as the reason behind the assumption of female care. For example, Erin and Genevieve rejected the notion that financial concerns might have weighed on the decision over which partner would take leave to care for their child, demonstrated by Erin.

\textit{Erin:} Financially, it's not financial for me. I think mother has more attention to detail and looks after him better than husband.

The response of Erin makes it clear that a preference for the mother to be the primary caregiver outweighed any financial concerns in their household. In the cases of Erin and Genevieve, there was an assumed delineation between being the major care provider and the major income provider according to gender. According to the initial responses of the group, Erin and Genevieve were somewhat exceptional with these responses, as all of the other mothers mentioned financial concerns in their explanations for how the household settled on the particular care arrangements that eventuated. Interestingly, in the cases of Bridget, Irene and Jane, a financial logic was used even though they had been the major earner in the household prior to the arrival of children. Instead, the financial logic was attached to an increased emphasis on the career of their partner once they had children, as Bridget explained.

\textit{Bridget:} He's gone from working in community-based organisations to government. Now he's in local government. That's more stable, it's better pay, he doesn't have… like he's done that because of the kids really

This quote from Bridget reveals an implicit assumption about roles and responsibilities in a household with children, whereupon her partner has entered ‘more stable’ employment with ‘better pay’. As with Erin and Genevieve, an assumption existed within the household that a greater delineation between being the major care provider and the major income provider would develop, however the explanation relies on the
perceived future income earning capability of the father rather than the perceived care providing capability of the mother.

An alternative financial logic was used with a further three of the respondents, Alison, Catherine and Helen. All three of these women indicated that the greater income earning contribution of their partner meant that it made economic sense for them to be responsible for child care in their respective households. Subsequently, all three of these women rejected the possibility of a role reversal according to the same financial logic, and cited alternative reasons that the mother should be responsible for providing care.

Helen: Definitely, I would take responsibility, because he’s the one earning three or four times the amount I do. In that sense, financially… and plus, I mean, I think I’d cope better anyway, even if I was, if I was earning more, I think I’d cope better than my husband, being at home

I always wanted to be the one to stay home with the kids and I think my mother did it and I just think that I wanted to do that for my own children as well. I think it’s very important

As exemplified by Helen and her rejection of her own financial logic, the superior earnings of their partners allows the actual preference of these women for a female caregiver to exist as an unquestioned assumption. The financial logic is the most comfortable explanation in their situation, however the veracity of income as a determinant of who has responsibility for earning income and providing care is undermined with the rejection of the same financial logic once the situation is reversed to suggest female responsibility for earning and male responsibility for care.

As with the rest of the mothers interviewed the two highest earners in the group, Debra and Fiona, used a financial logic to justify their household allocation of responsibilities between income earnings and care giving around the birth of their first child. However in contrast to the rest of the group, the financial logic led both households to decide that the preference was for the male partner to take leave and care for the child. This preferred distribution of responsibilities between partners was not easy to achieve. Debra and her partner were not able to realise their preference for a male caregiver at home, with Debra citing a lack of available information on entitlements, particularly for men, as the reason she took virtually all of the total leave from work in her household.
Debra: He did not do the care because that policy, if there had been parental leave that sort of went on both sides, had not really come into play three years ago or three and a half years ago, it wasn’t really there. It has only sort of just started to become more in vogue now to have the parental leave, which is kind of like another type of… it is a paternity leave, which is the same sort of span as a mother would take. That has sort of just come into vogue in the last couple of years

At the time in 2003 that Debra and her partner were making the decision about who would take primary responsibility for providing care for their first child, their preference for a male care giver was not perceived to be an available option. The availability of a perceived alternative is the crucial difference between the two households who relied on a financial logic for their preference for male care. Fiona and her partner were only able to achieve their preference for a male caregiver in part, with a staggered period of twelve weeks of paid leave and fourteen weeks of unpaid leave for Fiona followed by eight weeks of paid leave for her partner. Even though in their case the higher earnings of Fiona influenced a household preference for a male caregiver, the financial logic only justified male care in the particular circumstance where after six months, Fiona had already been on unpaid maternity leave for fourteen weeks, and her husband was able to access paid leave for an extended period of time.

Although there was considerable variation in reasons provided for the combination of leave in the household, the experience of leave for the women was highly similar. During the time that they were on leave from work caring for their first child, all of the women performed an increased proportion and amount of unpaid domestic work, while their partners all returned to paid work in their original capacity after a week or two at home. The period of time while these new mothers were at home introduced a new delineation between responsibilities in the household. For example, Genevieve discussed managing the increased burden of domestic work, which has become her responsibility.

Genevieve: Mainly, but he does help me a lot. I guess it’s just like when you’re coming home at 7.30 at night, doesn’t leave a lot of time to do all that for your child.

I guess it’s a little bit of give and take. But it’s hard for him because he’s the main breadwinner and I guess if you start to put too much pressure on him, then it can actually compromise his role as well. So I guess you don’t want to be doing that when he’s the main breadwinner
Aside from Debra, who was paid for virtually all of her leave from work and remained the major contributor to household income, the explanation of how different roles develop in the household offered by Genevieve was highly representative of the mothers interviewed. Overall the feeling of the mothers was that they had somehow landed in a routine which included a delineation of responsibilities within the household, as their partners continued virtually unabated in full-time work around the birth of the child. Although it was generally an implicit assumption, this split in household responsibilities with children present broadly matched the household preference in most cases. An additional implication is the need to insulate the career of the husband from time pressures associated with the family, in order to protect his status at work. Debra and Fiona, who preferred to have a female breadwinner and a male caregiver, experienced considerable difficulties carrying out their intended care arrangements around the birth of their child.

7.2.1.1: Mothers: One parent on leave from work and her return to work

The well-defined split between roles that arose during the period of time while the mothers were on leave changed as they returned to work. There was a high degree of variability within the sample of mothers in regards to these questions, with few discernible patterns taking shape. In some way, all of the women interviewed had unexpected complications with their return to work. Issues such as the maternity leave entitlements and its impact on the timing of their return to work, the actual terms of their return to work, and finding alternative care arrangements were all experienced differently by the mothers interviewed. In the instances where women experienced difficulties aligning the timing and terms of their return to work and alternative care arrangements, it impacted on their own capacity to perform paid work, and not their partners. The few women who did manage all of these aspects of their return to work in a way that they were satisfied with were able to access their desired amount of childcare without problems, or able to depend on informal care arrangements.

Before going on maternity leave, all of the women interviewed expected to return to work in at least some capacity once they had children. In regards to the length of their maternity leave, four of the women, Alison, Debra, Erin and Jane, were not satisfied
with their amount of leave. All of these women felt that they returned to paid work earlier than they would have preferred, and all nominated household income as a motivating factor in their return to work. In the cases of Alison, Erin and Jane, the entire period of their leave from work was unpaid, while Debra returned to work after seventeen weeks, a mere week after her eight weeks paid maternity leave and eight weeks of paid annual leave had lapsed. Their dissatisfaction over timing stemmed from their employers or work commitments.

Of the four women dissatisfied with their length of leave and felt they returned earlier than preferred due to financial pressure in the household, three had been permanently employed on a full-time basis, and returned on a full-time basis. These three had the shortest amount of leave from all of the women interviewed, Alison with thirty weeks, Erin with twenty weeks, and Debra as above, with seventeen weeks. The fourth woman in this group, Jane, also nominated financial pressure in the household as a motivating factor in her earlier than preferred return to paid work. The situation of Jane was further complicated by the fact she had been employed as a contractor, and had no right of return to her previous role. Jane began a new contract on a part-time basis after thirty-seven weeks outside the labour force after considerable uncertainty about how she would be able to return to work.

Jane: But the thing about it was, I think I needed to figure out how it would work or not work. Just make a firm decision about it. Because it was just in amongst when I was off, like the first six or seven months, I was thinking about it constantly; “how am I going to go back to it?” and “how will I make it work?” and all of that

The employment related concerns and uncertainty experienced by Jane were not unique within the sample of women, as Helen and Irene had also left non-permanent positions that did not have a right of return. However, Helen and Irene were among the six women who were happy with the amount of time they spent on leave, forty-eight and fifty-one weeks respectively. The three other five mothers who also had in excess of forty weeks leave before their return to work, Bridget, Catherine, and Genevieve also expressed satisfaction with their length of leave. The sixth in the group of mothers satisfied with their leave was Fiona, who returned to work after twenty-six weeks when her husband began twelve weeks of leave as the primary care giver.
There were several combinations of attributes and situational factors that may have allowed the six women who were ultimately satisfied with their leave to control the timing of their return to work. The ability to control the timing of their return to work depended on their workplace and the importance attached to their own income in the context of total household income. For example in the case of Fiona, although she made the greater contribution to household income and nominated financial pressure as a motivating factor in her return to work, her return to work was not earlier than planned, and followed a schedule between her workplace, her partner and his workplace. Fiona aside, these women did have one thing in common, which was that they did not nominate financial pressure at the household level pushing them back to work, and as a result they were able to schedule a favourable return date. These women described being able to afford take leave, as exemplified by Catherine.

Catherine: I pretty much approached taking my leave as “well I am entitled to this and I have all this leave accumulated, I am taking my leave”. There was never any real concern. Like our finances allowed that I could take all that time off

Control over the timing of their return to work was significant in relation to satisfaction with the length of leave. Being able to control their return dates not only depended on employers, but also on being able to source alternative providers of care for their children. This also impacted on the terms of their employment upon their return to work, and whether they were able to return as they had planned.

Any lack of available child care alternatives, formal or informal, restricted the subsequent terms of employment for the mothers interviewed. As with the timing of the return to work, there was a substantial range of strategies, hurdles and outcomes within the mothers in the sample. The one thing all of the women had in common was that if there was any problem aligning separate institutions of their workplace and childcare providers, it impacted on the women specifically, and not their partner. The actual experiences of the return to work varied significantly.

Five of the women who were interviewed had intended to return to work with a part-time working hours. The five who intended to return in a part-time hours capacity included Helen, who had worked part-time hours in a casual position prior to taking leave for her first child. Helen cited no problems finding the amount of formal childcare
she desired, initially one day, and structuring her return to work around the availability of childcare. She cited favour from the boss, who was willing to be flexible.

_Helen_: Because I’ve got a really good relationship with the boss, so that worked really well, so she was very good, very flexible

_Bridget, Genevieve, Irene and Jane_ were the other four women who intended to return to work in part-time hours after working full-time hours prior to taking leave to have their first child. All of these women anticipated that they would rely on formal childcare in order to return to work. In the cases of _Bridget_ and _Genevieve_, difficulty accessing childcare meant that they were compelled to rely on extended family to provide childcare in order to return to work. Even with the support of her extended family, _Genevieve_ struggled to return in the capacity she intended.

_Genevieve_: I definitely made it work because when I went back to work, I had to go back four days initially because my workplace wouldn’t allow me to do anything less.

But they weren’t very, what’s the word? Willing to sort of bend and be flexible. That whole employer, I don’t think anyone in the whole place was able to do part-time work. So I was one of the first actually, but I had to really fight for it.

Yeah, that’s tricky too, because you’ve got to put your name down in a thousand places and hope for the best, I guess. You don’t know until maybe a month before or two weeks before if you’re definitely going to get that spot. So you’re going along with all your plans in the hope that it all just works out and if not, then you try to get your family to support.

My career’s sort of put on hold. I knew that was going to happen with having children and I was ready to do that. But it does become a little bit tricky because my husband gets to do what he wants to do and I don’t

The responses of _Genevieve_ stand in stark contrast to those of _Helen_, above. _Genevieve_ makes clear that she had the responsibility of finding a way ‘make it work’ between an inflexible employer and any alternative childcare providers. Ultimately, _Genevieve_ turned to her family for childcare, before eventually resigning from her place of employment to try and find a more accommodating employer. _Genevieve_ subsequently describes her career since becoming a mother as ‘on hold’, which she resents. This is remarkably similar to the progression of _Bridget_, who was unable to find appropriate care and has subsequently put her career ‘on hold’ in a part-time position. _Bridget_ suggests that having her career ‘on hold’ now matches her preference, although it is difficult to judge if this preference simply reflects the lack of realistic care alternatives.
The other mothers who had intended to move from full-time to part-time work, *Irene* and *Jane*, also sought to rely on formal providers of child care around their return to work. For these women, a lack of a reliable child care alternative through extended family exacerbated the problems they had accessing child care, and restricting their return to work. *Irene* explained that finding child care was a major issue, with the added responsibility for juggling her return to work for two days a week between alternative care providers while her partner continued in his full-time work.

*Irene*: I was only returning two days a week at first, and I could get two half days in an occasional care centre, and I could get one full day in a family day care centre down the road.

It was very tricky because half of her days at this occasional care centre was, I can't remember whether it was three and a half or four hours, and half a day’s work is three and a half hours, so I could do the drop-off or the pick-up but I couldn’t do both because it would take me an hour to get to work, each way. So we have a very good friend who used to live in the area whose daughter would go to the same centre on one of those days, so she would do the pick-up for me on one day, and I’d get my mum to catch a bus over [on the other day].

No, he has his full-time job and I guess he didn’t feel he was in a position to be able to doing any of the picking up.

No, it’s not something we’ve really talked about, no. I mean we do talk about it, what I might do next and what have you, but we don’t really talk about it in terms of my career being on hold, and maybe if his was more on hold mine could be, and dah, dah, dah. But, yeah, mine could be going more places. We don’t really think of it in those terms. But I will talk about it, and what I might do once my girl’s at school and dah, dah, dah. We talk about it in those terms.

Definitely not what I imagined. I talk about that sometimes with friends, just how different it does work out to how you imagine it would be.

In the particular case of *Irene*, returning to work for just two days a week ‘was very tricky’ with the added responsibility for ensuring that someone performed the drop-off and pick-up of her daughter on the days she went to work. *Irene* was quite resentful of the way that the responsibilities for child care unfolded in her household, with her career ‘on hold’ and no realistic alternatives available. Again, this was very similar to another woman in the group, *Jane*, although the tone of the responses from *Jane* tended more towards resignation at the lack of alternatives, rather than the resentment expressed by *Irene* in her interview. In addition to this, throughout this transition, the working day of their partners was not affected at all. Indeed, this was the case with all of the partners, although the subsequent effects are magnified in the case of *Irene* and
Jane as they did not have access to alternative care providers and thus feel compelled to put their careers ‘on hold’.

This split in responsibilities was potentially more significant in the five households where the mothers had intended to return to work on a full-time basis. Alison, Catherine, Debra, Erin and Fiona expected to continue to contribute significantly to household earnings as dual-earners, with the households of Debra and Fiona planning to reverse the traditional roles and plan around a continuous career for the female partner rather than the male. However as parents, the mothers described other pressures that needed to be taken into consideration, in particular, the image that their partners had at their workplaces. This reflected a new order of priorities in the household, as described by Catherine.

Catherine: Like he tries to slot everything around work rather than move work around, whereas I am like “okay I have to be at work at such and such a time” and if something more pressing with family comes up, well it’s too bad.

But I can’t really see any other way of it working. I’ve got a permanent position and they are not going to get rid of me any time soon. If [my husband] suddenly took all this time off he might not have those assurances.

I know there was some discussion there because we were still on a waiting list for day care and [my son] had to go to [my husband’s] parents

The responses of Catherine demonstrate an order of priorities in her household, whereby her ability to work fits in around childcare commitments and his ability to care for their child fits in around his workplace commitments. Catherine also makes mention of a belief that her husband would not be as secure in his job if he was juggling work and care, with the type of an attempt to insulate his career from time pressures around family.

Again, the case of Catherine also demonstrates the reliance on informal care arrangements enabling the mothers’ return to work. While her son was still on a waiting list for day care, Catherine was able to rely on the informal care arrangements with extended family in order to return to work full-time. This reliance on informal care from their extended family in order to manage a return to full-time work also occurred in the cases of Debra and Erin, while Alison relied on a split between formal and informal care to return to work full-time. That is, four of the five mothers who returned to full-
time work relied heavily on informal care arrangements, at least until they were able to access a combination of child care for five days a week.

In total, there were five mothers who intended to return to full-time work. The fifth mother who intended to return full-time was Fiona, where caring responsibilities in the household were allocated to her husband in order for her to return to work full-time as the primary wage earner. In the case of Fiona, although the timing of her return to work went according to plan, her subsequent treatment upon her return to work prompted her to put her career ambitions ‘on hold’.

Fiona: I took six months maternity leave and I returned to the same area to work full time for three months because my husband was at home with the child. I was a money market dealer and I ran the whole Aussie book for the bank and when I returned they’d given my job to a bloke within the team and they told me it was just a repositioning of the team. So I didn’t actually get my job back so it was a bit dodgy. It then became four days a week because I wasn’t really happy in the role I was in and I wanted to be home more.

But I didn’t mention I’d been to HR and I complained and it got me absolutely nowhere and that’s when I realised well it’s put the career on hold and live this way for a little while and that’s why I’m now happy. I’ve decided that’s it. I’m not going to be career minded while I have young kids. What’s the point? My kids come first. So in that regard I am now content with what I am doing. I’m working three days. I still earn a decent wage on three days and that’s about it.

I thought we’d have a better balance but it does all sort of fall on me more than anyone. So before I had kids I thought there was a perfect world out there but, no, it sort of falls back to the traditional thing. It just happens that way. I mean he has to work full time. Guys don’t get three days a week, so I’ve got that flexibility, so I’m happy to take on more domestic work.

Well I think you have to balance it. You have to have one firm career in the household and with me only working three days it’s definitely not mine. So he is the stable breadwinner at the moment and I think we’ve got to keep that in tact. If he starts taking days off to look after kids and stuff he won’t have that reputable career. You know be it either him or me, if he could have three days a week, I guess he could but I prefer hanging out with the kids than he does so I guess if we did have the choice it would still be me because being around one year olds doesn’t excite him that much

Prior to becoming parents and during their period of staggered parental leave, the nominated strategy in the household of Fiona was to rely on her superior income earning capabilities while her male partner was responsible for providing care to their child. Within six months of her return to full-time work, Fiona went from five days per week at work, then to four days, and then three days per week as her partner returned to full-time work. Fiona makes it plain that she felt forced to realise that as a mother, her workplace expected her to put her career ‘on hold’. The household of Fiona has since
changed their strategy, reallocating the responsibilities for income earning and child care back into the traditional arrangement. With the career of Fiona on hold, they have now decided to try and protect her partner’s status as breadwinner in the household, insulating his workplace demands from additional care demands.

This reallocation of responsibilities moves Fiona and her partner away from a distribution of responsibilities determined by economic concerns, back to a traditional distribution of responsibilities in line with gender concerns. However the pressure for the change derives from the new status of Fiona in her workplace, where she is perceived as a mother first, and a worker second. The other household that intended to rely primarily on female earnings experienced similar difficulties, with Debra recounting changes in her workplace interactions once she became pregnant.

Debra: The guilt factor about being on leave? It was not more guilt. It was just frustration because you have worked, you have worked hard to get where you are and then you know what the ramifications are. For the sake of going on, you know, you have to go on leave to have your baby.

That was the other thing, you had been and left and they would not talk to you any more as a business person or as a colleague. It would be like, you know, uneasy kind of silence sort of thing and then maybe like, “how long to go?”. That sort of thing or “do you know if it is a boy or a girl?”. I mean you felt like having a draw card in front of you and just sort of saying, you know, “here you go”

It was kind of like the same repetitive questions and my new boss at the American bank, as I said, he did kind of make you feel guilty for being pregnant and I just do not know what you do about things like that.

It is also because it is very difficult for females in corporations. You have reached a level and then you drop out and that is exactly how they look at it. You have dropped out. You have gone down. Regardless of what they like to believe or what they say out there. You do, you go out in terms of the ladder. You are not seen. They might go ahead and sort of promote you whilst you are on maternity leave, but that is more to shut you up than anything else. It is not really because they actually think that you are doing a great job or something like that.

But in terms of development, I have taken a more relaxed approach because I am just going to die if I just keep up the pace that I am at and I am a very fast paced person because I have to be that way. I mean, this is the bank that I work for and you have got bankers that you work with who put in these bloody crazy hours in to their day and they expect really good work when they want it.

The experience Debra had through her maternity leave and return to work subsequently motivated her to resign and move to another company, where she continued in full-time employment with her extended family providing care for their children. As in the case of Fiona, the household of Debra had made its future plans around her income earning
capability, with a preference for a male primary carer. In both cases, the attempts to actually realise this preference have been significantly obstructed by their employers’ perceptions of them as mothers. The dissonance between their employers’ expectations and their own preferences is large enough that these women have reassessed their own career ambitions, at least while they have young children. Debra and Fiona experience dissonance between their own preferences and their employers’ expectations precisely because they desire to take the role of major income earner.

In this sense, Debra and Fiona represent the extreme examples of the general trend in the mothers interviewed. Throughout the period of time during which these women went on maternity leave and returned to work, whether planned or not, all of these households moved towards a greater delineation in household responsibilities which placed more emphasis on women performing unpaid work and care with a simultaneous greater dependence on male earnings in the household. The way that this movement towards a traditional distribution of responsibilities in the household impacted on these women depended on how closely this distribution matched their household strategy.

For Helen and her partner, who made their plans unequivocally around her as a carer and her male partner as an earner, the transition to maternity leave and back to work were experienced with relatively little adjustment for there was minimal difference between their plans and subsequent outcomes. The households of Debra and Fiona on the other hand, made their plans with the female partner taking on the responsibility for income earning and the male partner for caring. In these households, the pressure towards a more traditional split of responsibilities represented a substantial difference to their plans, and caused significant stress. In the household of Debra, these stresses were alleviated by the ability of her extended family to provide care, and her subsequent movement in the labour market, while in the household of Fiona they have reverted back to a more traditional allocation. The remaining women fell between the two extremes on the spectrum represented by Helen and Fiona, whereby the more the household planned to depend on female earnings, the more unhappy they were.

In her responses, Helen makes it clear that her household arrangement, where she has primary responsibility for domestic responsibilities, also matches her preference. Helen
had ‘always wanted to be the one to stay home with the kids’, and she feels that this delineation in responsibilities had always been assumed in their household. With this particular combination of planning and preference for a traditional split of household responsibilities, Helen is subsequently satisfied with the outcome.

Closest to Helen in this regard are Bridget and Jane. Both Bridget and Jane had intended to return to work, although they were unsure of how they would manage with the added responsibility of childcare. In both of these two cases, the female partner had made the primary contribution to household earnings prior to becoming parents, and both of their partners substantially increased their actual earnings during the transition to parenthood. Since becoming parents, both households have relied primarily on the earnings of the male partner, which was not the original plan. Both mothers had some difficulty accessing childcare, and neither mother has returned to full-time work. Both Bridget and Jane express satisfaction with the outcome, which now matches preferences.

Jane: I guess, initially, when we started trying to have children, I assumed that there would be the work I’d go back to. I’d either do it part-time for a period of time and then go back to full-time or just go back to full-time work, depending on our finances and stuff.

Once I kind of figured out what a rush and a hassle and just constant sort of stress it was, I thought “that’s not what we had the children for”. To be shoving them around and pushing and that sort of thing. Anyway, we both just thought, “well, we’re lucky that we’ve got the choice”. That’s all. A lot of people don’t have the choice to stay home

Although Jane describes feeling lucky that she had the choice to stay home and expresses satisfaction with the current arrangement, the choice only effected her working day, which was structured around the need for her to manage additional responsibilities. Ultimately, both Bridget and Jane were willing to put their careers ‘on hold’ while they cared for their children. While they argue that this reflects a changed preference since becoming parents, the satisfaction these women express with the current household delineation of responsibilities also reflects the lack of alternative choices.

An additional three mothers express broad satisfaction with the subsequent household delineation of responsibilities. Alison, Catherine and Erin all anticipated returning to
work full-time, and successfully managed this transition. All three intended to rely on at least some formal childcare to enable their return to work, and all three were eventually compelled to rely entirely on assistance from their extended families to provide child care for some period of time. These women anticipated temporarily putting their careers ‘on hold’ as they struggled between workplace demands and child care. As in the cases of Bridget and Jane, part of the reason Alison, Catherine and Erin were satisfied with their household arrangements was that there was a lack of real alternatives available, and they had somehow found a way to accommodate a combination of pressures between their workplaces and caring responsibilities without too much deviation from their intended household strategy.

Finally, there were four mothers who were very dissatisfied with the dissonance between their planned household arrangements, particularly around their own return to work, and the subsequent outcome. Debra, Fiona, Genevieve and Irene all agreed that their own career had temporarily been put ‘on hold’. In contrast to the other mothers interviewed, these four women did not anticipate a commitment to their work once they became mothers; they had no intention to put their careers on hold, and their subsequent household arrangements have been structured against their preference. In particular, the household strategy for Debra and Fiona depended on their major income contributions, and both households planned around the assumption that they could have the female partner assume the primary responsibility for providing household income and the male partner with the primary responsibility for providing childcare. All four of these women nominated employer expectations, whether too high or too low, as the main limit on their ability to organise their households as they preferred.

7.2.2: Mothers: Summary

There were very few consistencies within the sample of mothers throughout the transition to parenthood, with one parent initially on leave from work, and then after their return to work. Only in the instances where the mother was making a considerably more substantial contribution to household earnings, Debra and Fiona, was there any discussion over which parent would be responsible for providing care, and even then this was within limits. The majority of mothers spoke about an assumption that they
would be responsible for child care. When asked to explain the reason for this arrangement, eight of the mothers reverted to an economic logic. Six mothers citing their partners’ greater potential to contribute to household earnings, even in three cases where they themselves earned more, and all of these six dismissed the same logic if it suggested the male should be responsible for providing care. Only Debra and Fiona argued that greater earning potential meant their household planned around the female in the role of income provider, although they subsequently experienced considerable difficulties realising their household strategy.

The assumption of the responsibility for childcare within the household introduced a delineation of responsibilities for household tasks during the period of leave. The mothers interviewed described the new delineation of responsibilities as unintentional, as though they landed in it. This new delineation in responsibilities had a significant affect on the mothers when they sought to return to work. This impacted mothers in two ways, in regards to the terms of their employment after returning to work, and the timing of their return to work. There was a large degree of variability within the sample with regards to satisfaction with both of these issues.

Generally, the longer the period of maternity leave, the happier the mothers were with their maternity leave. Four mothers were unsatisfied with the length of time they spent on leave, and all felt they returned to work earlier than they would have preferred. All of these women cited household income as part of the reason for their earlier than preferred return to work. The six mothers who were satisfied with the length of their maternity leave had a greater ability to control their return to work date. This control had two dimensions, as they were not pushed back to work due to household finances, nor pulled back to work by employers.

There was also substantial variability in the terms of return to work. Five women planned to return to work on a part-time basis. Aside from Helen, who sought child care on one day per week and then structured her casual shifts around that, the four women who intended to return to work part-time all had trouble accessing their desired amount of childcare. For these women this meant complicated and strained child care regimes in order to return to work. In all four of these cases, the outcome was that these women felt
compelled to put their careers ‘on hold’ while they had primary responsibility for child care.

This trend continued with the mothers who planned to and successfully managed to return to work full-time. Aside from Fiona, who was initially able to rely on her partner to provide childcare in order for her to return to work, all four of the mothers returning to work full-time had to rely on their extended family to provide some or all of their child care. However, even the five mothers who returned to work full-time spoke about the feeling that their careers had been put ‘on hold’ while they had young children.

The overall trend in the households of the mothers interviewed was a pressure towards a traditional allocation of responsibilities between partners, with the male earning income and the female providing care. In the case of Helen, where the household strategy was planned in accordance with a traditional allocation of responsibilities, she expressed a high degree of satisfaction with all aspects of the transition to parenthood. However, Helen represented the extreme end of the spectrum, and all of the other mothers experienced more difficulties with their transition to parenthood. The remaining mothers cited the expectation of their workplace for them to downgrade their commitment to work. The degree to which these mothers also anticipated downgrading their careers, as parents, impacted on their subsequent satisfaction with putting their careers ‘on hold’. This was magnified most in the case of Fiona, whose household has abandoned their economic logic and reverted to a more traditional allocation of tasks, at their cost.

7.3: Conclusion

The results of the parent sample provide a detailed account of how the allocation of time has changed in these households. Both the mothers and fathers in the sample struggled to pinpoint actual decisions about distributing responsibilities between partners, and there was little support for the notion that household time allocations would have a clear and logical basis in terms of income or gender. Instead the parents in the sample talked much more consistently about how arrangements as parents simply ‘fell into place’, in accordance with a distribution of responsibilities that went an unspoken yet understood
by both partners. Invariably the parents talked about transition towards a greater
delineation of responsibilities for particular household tasks that represented a more
traditional gender order split of female care with male income earning responsibilities.
Households that sought alternative distributions of responsibility for tasks unexpectedly
found their options limited by further complicating factors from unsupportive labour
market institutions, with mothers in particular struggling to find solutions between a
limited range of choices provided by alternative child care providers and their
employers.

The results of the sample of parents present a number of problems for theories that
suppose a gender neutral distribution of resources is capable of explaining how decision
making occurs in the household. Much like the arguments of Acker (1990) and Connell
(1987), labour market institutions that maintain a gender order appear to be significant
in affecting the distribution of time within these households, posing problems for
theories that rely exclusively on the notion of either a unilateral or bilateral choice that
has no gender basis whatsoever. The results of the parents start to reveal the way in
which institutions surrounding paid work actively shape and construct particular
alternatives for households.
Chapter 8 – Analysis and Discussion

The preceding chapters have presented the results of interviews with men and women from three specifically selected sample groups. These sample groups, comprised of men and women who were undergraduates, graduates, and parents, were selected for their relevance to the research question and the opportunity to compare results through analysis. In accordance with the research methodology, this chapter presents a two-stage analysis of the results. The first section compares the results of men and women within each specific sample before the second section of the analysis makes comparisons across sample groups. Following the analysis the third section of the chapter returns to the research questions, drawing links back to the literature.

The overall findings point to the significance of both income and gender in how the decision making process is perceived and how decisions are actually made. However, the way that income and gender shape the decision making process does not follow the logic bestowed upon households in the explanatory frameworks considered in chapter three. The results in this study indicate that gender influences the expectations of individual men and women, who unconsciously pre-empt and shape the outcomes of the decision making process. In turn, these gendered expectations limit the extent to which income and preference can be used in any decisions about household allocations to paid and unpaid work.

This study demonstrates that the way individual men and women construct, and the process through which partners in the household make decisions about paid and unpaid work is vague, and is often justified in terms of income. The findings indicate that instead of being free to choose an allocation of time to tasks that maximises household utility through a bilateral decision making process based on an economic logic or preference, individual decisions and behaviour are grounded in gender role assumptions that are constructed over time, combining with further gender order pressures from institutions external to the household to restrict the range of possible allocations within the household. Through a countless series of interactions with the institutions of work over time, individuals construct and reconstruct their gender identities. The findings suggest that interactions between individuals and the institutions surrounding work
shape gender identities that subsequently play out in the household, pushing households towards an institutionally supported allocation of tasks within the household that resembles the male breadwinner model. Thus, although the findings broadly resemble the contentions at the outset of the empirical data collection, external, institutional constraints emerge as an important part of the explanation for the findings, rather than the internal, gender display imperatives that were anticipated. These findings go beyond arbitrating between income and gender as bases for household decisions to reveal how institutions actively shape the construction and availability of alternatives.

8.1: Comparative Analysis: Within the samples

Existing explanations for outcomes in the domestic division of labour were seen to rely on establishing a correlation between the individual characteristics of household members and the subsequent distribution of time to tasks between household members. This empirical problem meant that allocations of time in the domestic division of labour could only be inferred from the results, neglecting other possibilities not dependent on individual characteristics. Alternative explanations which advanced notions of autonomy and preference further underlined the potential significance of different life situations in the analysis. Three samples of people drawn from different life situations were selected accordingly.

8.1.1: Undergraduate Men and Women

The interviews with undergraduates revealed a number of differences between men and women in the sample, along gender lines. This was further complicated by a degree of internal inconsistency in the sample of undergraduate women. Despite the variability between the women in the sample, the general attitudes, values and concerns of the women remained identifiably different to those of the men in the sample.

In regards to their working futures the undergraduate men were very similar within their group. All of the undergraduate men believed that by entering an economics degree at university they were heading in some kind of general career direction. Economics degrees were attractive to these men because they were associated with reliable
employment and high incomes. Looking forward, they anticipate career progression over time, with an implicit assumption about a continuous attachment to the workforce.

All of the undergraduate men assumed that they would be forming families at a later date. These men were vague about time-lines for this issue in particular, although they were sure that they would eventually settle down. Only when the undergraduate men were invited to discuss future family formation did the discussion move away from their anticipated careers. Even in discussions centred on the topic of family, these men talked about the need to have stable careers, in order to provide for their family. Overall the undergraduate men had not given prior consideration to the possibility that demands from their family may interfere with their natural career progression. If anything, these men felt that the need to provide for their family would help drive their career.

When asked to consider both work and family simultaneously, the undergraduate men remained within a similar spectrum of results. These men were quite confident that they would not have the major responsibility for childcare or domestic work in their own households. Looking for a way to determine how a couple should decide on which partner is responsible for different tasks, the undergraduate men gave primacy to the economic concerns of the household by indicating earned income should be the arbiter. In relation to most questions about their future family, there was very little certainty in the responses of the undergraduate men, who preferred contingent explanations about household responsibilities. Throughout their interviews the undergraduate men revealed an assumption about their role in the household as an income earning provider, and it was evident that alternative futures have not been considered. When pressed to choose between a responsibility for income earning or care giving, all nominated earner.

The undergraduate women shared some of the values expressed by their male counterparts, however there were some important differences. The undergraduate women also believed that an economics degree would lead them towards a career of some kind. However, instead of an emphasis on earning income, the undergraduate women talked about finding a career they could be passionate about. When income was mentioned it was in reference to their independence. Looking forward in their careers, all of the young women imagined family formation might impact on their careers. This
is a marked contrast to the way their male counterparts anticipate a continuous attachment to the workforce and constant career progression.

All of the undergraduate women anticipated that they would be forming families in the future. In contrast to their male counterparts, the undergraduate women were comfortable talking about time-lines for finding a partner and becoming a parent. All of the women anticipated that family formation would impact on their careers. However there was a noticeable divide amongst the undergraduate women with regards to how they would manage the anticipated impact of family formation. One group of six in the sample were seen to be ‘postponing’ any decisions about combining work and family, while another group of five were seen to be actively ‘preparing’ to combine work and family.

When asked to consider both work and family, the undergraduate women tended to believe that they would, at least while they had young children, end up with the major responsibility for childcare and domestic work in their own households. Again, the undergraduate women spoke in quite specific terms about potential future household issues, suggesting that they would choose partners that would perform a share of household responsibilities. The undergraduate women did not see household task allocation on the basis of gender to be at all fair. These women suggested that household partners should negotiate the performance of tasks on the basis of their preferences unless economic concerns were paramount, in which case earned income should be a significant factor in the decision. When pressed to choose between being a full-time earner and a full-time carer, the majority of undergraduate women chose carer, with varying degrees of reluctance about being asked to make the choice.

8.1.2: Graduate Men and Women

As in the interviews with the undergraduates, there were differences in the responses of the men and women in the sample of graduates following gender lines. Also repeated in the results of the graduates was the added complication of internal inconsistency in the responses of the women. Despite the variability between the women in the sample, the
general attitudes, values and concerns remained identifiably different to those of the men in the sample of graduates.

The graduate men were very similar within their group in general. The graduate men believed that they had initially entered the field of economics at university for reasons associated with future employment opportunities, that they associated an economics degree with reliable employment and a high income, which was appealing to them. At present, paid work is of particular importance to the graduate men. Although they are generally satisfied with the initial challenges early in their careers, the graduate men are not happy with the amount of hours they are spending in the office each week. The graduate men considered their long hours in the office as necessary at present in order to advance and gain control over their hours in the future. Looking to their future careers, the graduate men discussed the potential impact of family on their willingness to spend time in the office. However, the graduate men also emphasised the economic demands that a family would create. The graduate men simply assume they will have a continuous attachment to the workforce and a role as income provider.

All of the graduate men assumed that they would be forming families at some time in the future. During discussion on the topic of family, the graduate men linked back to their careers, where high incomes were an integral part of the progression they imagine to home ownership and forming a family. Working hours are also drawn into the discussion when looking towards a future family, however, this is a secondary concern after income earning. Other potential factors related to raising a family, such as reduced working hours or even an interrupted career trajectory, have not been considered in any of the decisions graduate men have made about their future working lives. The graduate men make considerable efforts to explain that these arrangements depend on circumstance, while simultaneously only preparing for a future where they have a primary responsibility for income earning in their household.

The graduate men continued to provide contingent explanations dependent on circumstance as the discussion moved on to consider meeting dual demands from work and family. When looking for a way to decide who in the household should be responsible for particular tasks, the graduate men tended to nominate earned income and
consensus between partners based on preference. None of the graduate men believed they would have a major responsibility for childcare or domestic work in the future. However, these men did indicate that if it was in the best interests of the family for them to be responsible for childcare and domestic work, they would be happy to perform these roles. When asked to choose between being a full-time earner or carer, all nominated the earner. This continued the trend throughout the interviews with the graduate men, whose responses reveal an assumption about their role in the household as an income earning provider, and any alternative futures have not been considered.

The responses of the graduate women outlined a different set of concerns to those of the graduate men. The responses of the graduate women can be generalised in some instances, in particular the way they explained their reasons for choosing to study economics at university, which was motivated mainly by interest, but also in the knowledge that an economics degree would lead to a non-specific career outcome with some kind of income earning prospects. The graduate women were also similar in their descriptions of current experiences of paid work, which overall were seen in positive terms even though particular characteristics like working hours, job security and income were regularly cited as concerns. Independence was cited as an important thing, which they linked directly to their paid work. Interesting careers were considered to be important, although some saw work in pure dollar terms. All of the graduate women spoke about the impact that family formation would have on their careers in the discussion on paid work.

All of the graduate women believed that they would be forming families at a later date. As in the case of the graduate men, the graduate women linked the discussion on family formation back to their careers. There was a significant split between the women in the group, with four respondents labelled as ‘pessimists’ about combining work and family concerns in the future, with the remaining four in the group considered to be ‘optimists’.

As a sub-group, the four ‘pessimists’ were reasonably similar to one another. The pessimists nominated quite specific time-lines for finding a partner and becoming a parent. These women felt that any decision between work and family represented a choice between two mutually exclusive alternatives, that family formation entailed at
least temporarily leaving the workforce. These women also felt that intentionally or not, the responsibility for meeting household demands would fall to them, compounding their pessimism about the impact family formation would have on their careers.

The second sub-group, comprised of four ‘optimists’ were also easy to generalise. The optimists cited a vague development from partnership to parenthood, with several contingent possibilities considered. These women also felt that combining work responsibilities with the additional responsibilities of parenthood would be difficult. However, they were not deterministic about who in their household would have responsibility for child care in particular. The optimists believed that flexibility between their partners, families, child care providers and employers would create options that led to a suitable arrangement for providing care and earning income in the household.

When asked to consider both work and family, the graduate women continued to be split in their sub-groups of optimists and pessimists. All of the graduate women believed that tasks should be allocated in the household on the basis of preference and income, although the pessimists tended to believe that this ideal would not match the reality. All of the graduate women believed that they probably would end up with the major responsibility for child care and domestic work, although the optimists were less deterministic about this becoming reality. When pressed to choose between being a full-time earner and a full-time carer, the majority of graduate women chose carer, with varying degrees of reluctance about being asked to make the choice.

8.1.3: Mothers and Fathers

The differences along gender lines continued to be evident in the sample of new parents. As in the sample of graduates and undergraduates, the overall results of the fathers presented a relatively constant picture. In contrast, the mothers experienced highly varied combinations of problems in their attempts to realise their preferred outcomes through the transition to parenthood. The general attitudes, values and concerns of the mothers remained identifiably different to those of the fathers in the sample of parents.
The sample of fathers was broadly similar in their responses and outlook. The fathers believed that an implicit assumption about responsibility for income earning and care giving existed in their relationships with their partners. This assumption implied that once they had children, the fathers would have a major responsibility for providing household income, and no other alternatives had been genuinely considered. The assumption about maintaining household income motivated them to order their priorities around work demands first and household demands second. In this context, control over hours in employment was seen to be important. The more control over their own working hours the fathers had, the more they utilised flexibility. Those fathers without much control over their working hours sometimes felt they were locked in to their careers due to the household dependence on their earnings.

The fathers all rationalise the distribution of household tasks according to household preference, which is based on the superior contribution they themselves make to household income. However, the fathers also reject the possibility of a role reversal, should their partners have made the superior contribution to household income. In this sense the ability to be an income provider is inextricably linked to the role of fatherhood. This extends to the responsibilities of their partners, who assume responsibility for child care and domestic work. Any costs associated with child care are assessed by the fathers only in terms relative of the income contribution of their partner, while other costs are weighed against household benefit. In all cases, regardless of their prior earning responsibility, the households of the fathers placed a greater emphasis on their earnings after they became parents.

The sample of mothers contrasted strongly with the fathers. All of the women experienced the transition to parenthood in a different way. Two of the mothers indicated that economic concerns played no part in their household preference for a traditional allocation of tasks between a male income earner and a female care giver, and rejected the notion of a role reversal should they have made the primary contribution to household income. A further six mothers used an economic logic to explain their household allocation, and subsequently rejected the same logic if it resulted in a male care giver. In two cases, an economic logic did motivate a household preference for a male caregiver and female earner. In both of these cases there were
further difficulties realising this preference, which stemmed from employer perceptions of working mothers.

For most of the mothers, there was considerable difficulty aligning workplace requirements with child care alternatives. These problems affected the mothers, specifically, with some of the mothers talking about the need to insulate their partners’ careers from household demands. Only one mother was satisfied with both the length of her maternity leave and the terms of her return to work, for which she cited a lack of earnings pressure, which in turn granted her the opportunity to return as a casual with control over her working hours upon her return to work. Generally speaking, the longer the period of leave the mother took, the more likely they were to be satisfied with their length of leave. All of the mothers who felt they returned to work earlier than preferred nominated household income as a factor in their return.

Moreover, the length of their period of leave and the terms of their return to work for the mothers was directly limited by the accessibility and affordability of childcare alternatives. In all of the cases where the mother was compelled to depend on a formal child care provider there were further complications with accessing child care, which subsequently limited their ability to participate in paid work. All of the mothers who returned to work on a full-time basis relied on the ability of extended family members to provide care to some extent.

There was only one overarching trend in the sample of mothers, with all households placing greater emphasis on the earnings contribution of the father after they became parents. This reorientation of priorities around the male career happened in all households, regardless of preference, and was associated with having the female partners’ career on hold. This shift occurred in all of the households represented by the mothers, although to varying degrees. Notably, this shift also occurred in two households where the expressed preference was to have a greater emphasis on the earnings contribution of the female partner with the male partner becoming the primary carer. These two mothers experienced the most disruption through the transition to parenthood, which they entered with no intent of temporarily shelving their hopes of career progression. Indeed, only one mother in the sample anticipated putting her career
on hold during the period of time while she had a young child, and she expressed the most satisfaction with the subsequent household arrangement for income earning, child care and domestic work. The remaining mothers had varying degrees of resentment about feeling compelled to put their careers on hold, relative to their anticipation of this outcome and their preferences.

8.2: Comparative Analysis: Across the samples

The men and women interviewed were drawn from a sample of deliberately constructed groups so that the respondents shared a number of similar traits, attitudes and opportunities. The previous section considered the way that this purposive sample highlighted differences that could be attributed to gender in the interview responses. The purposive sample also pursued the research question in different cohorts in order to identify any trends across different life situations. Any similarities between men that occur regardless of life situation, and likewise similarities between women, lend weight to alternative explanations of the allocation of time between household members that rely on notions of autonomy, preference or gender.

8.2.1: Men as Undergraduates, Graduates and Fathers

Regardless of age, all three samples of men anticipated, or participated in, a career that involved full-time employment, with an assumption of a continuous attachment to the workforce over time. When providing their rationale for the selection of their career field, all three samples of men indicated that they valued high incomes and reliable employment very highly. All men in the undergraduate and graduate samples anticipated that they would form families at a later date and none of the undergraduate or graduate men expected that any of the additional demands that would emerge in their households as they became parents would impact significantly on their working day, which was a situation evident among the sample of fathers. All of the men in the three groups interviewed underlined the economic demands that were associated with having children. The planning of the men around reliable full-time employment with high incomes was connected to implicit assumptions about their role as economic provider and breadwinner in the household.
Implicit assumptions about being breadwinners continued throughout the interviews with all of the men. When asked to consider work and family concerns in the future, the undergraduate and graduate men point to the importance of maintaining household income, and argue that income and preference should determine the allocation of household tasks. Subsequently, all of the undergraduate and graduate men argue that their own future roles are contingent on a range of factors associated with income and preference, although if asked to make the choice, all of these men would prefer to be responsible for income earning in the household. Indeed, the responses of the undergraduate and graduate men make it clear that they have not previously considered any alternative role, they assume they will be breadwinners.

The responses of the fathers reflect these breadwinning assumptions. The fathers also point to the importance of maintaining household income, which has become their responsibility and their reality. These fathers argue that they became responsible for income earning through their greater contributions to household income, although they simultaneously reject the notion of a role reversal based on income. Rejecting the notion of a role reversal based on income shows the order of priorities of the fathers, where the role of income provider is attached to gender, best suited to the male partner who is usually the higher income earner, rather than the higher income earner who is usually the male partner. Overall the fathers are satisfied with the division of paid work and care in their households, where they are now primarily responsible for income earning, which they had prior assumed would be the case.

8.2.2: Women as Undergraduates, Graduates and Mothers

The responses of the three samples of women presented identifiably different concerns with regard to household task allocations. All three samples of women anticipated, or participated in, a career that involved some degree of full-time employment. There was considerable variety in how the women anticipated their future careers, as opposed to the continuous attachment to the workforce that all of the men anticipated. When providing their rationale for the selection of their career field, all three samples of women talked about finding an occupation that they found interesting or could be passionate about, with income as a secondary concern. Along with the mothers, the
undergraduate and graduate samples anticipated that they would form families at a later date and all of the women were aware of the possibility that becoming a mother might impact on their work careers. With regard to how they would combine work and family concerns, the perspectives of individuals in the sample varied significantly in all three life situations, with various strategies and possibilities being explored by the women to try and accommodate additional responsibilities in the future. All of the women believed that there was a degree of inevitability that they would have the major responsibility for care giving and domestic work in their households.

The perceived likelihood of being responsible for child care and domestic work influenced the way the women talked about future family formation. The undergraduate and graduate women were comfortable discussing timelines for finding a partner and becoming a parent. When asked to simultaneously consider work and family concerns in the future, there were two broad perspectives in the samples of undergraduate and graduate women. The first perspective was that contradictory demands from work and family presented alternatives for women to choose between, typified by undergraduates ‘preparing’ for work and family futures, and graduates who were ‘pessimistic’ about any attempt to combine work and family. The second broad perspective was that demands from work and family would be difficult to meet, but a flexible approach to numerous factors would create feasible alternatives, typified by the ‘postponing’ undergraduate and ‘optimistic’ graduates. Subsequently, when asked to make a choice between potentially being responsible for income earning or child care, almost all of the undergraduate and graduate women chose care giving.

The experiences of the mothers reveal a lack of real alternatives in precisely the situations the undergraduate and graduate women were concerned about. All of the mothers describe feeling compelled to put their careers on hold as they inevitably had the primary responsibility for care giving and domestic work in their households. In most, but not all cases the adoption of responsibility for child care and domestic work was an anticipated outcome with the transition to parenthood, and the new allocation of responsibility reflected household preferences. However, even mothers who preferred to have the major proportion of responsibility for child care and domestic work at a broad level were not satisfied with at least one aspect of the subsequent outcome. Some
mothers felt pressured to return to work earlier than they would otherwise have preferred in order to maintain their status at work. Several mothers also experienced significant trouble aligning the timing and the terms of their return to work with the availability of childcare, with the mothers themselves bound to bridge any shortfall on their own. Moreover, the problems continued for many mothers after they returned to work, and again the mothers themselves experienced the negative effects.

There were varying degrees of reluctance about the split in responsibility for tasks in the households of the mothers, dependent on how closely the outcomes reflected their prior expectations. Regardless of actual earnings, most of the mothers explained that their partners became responsible for income earning through the greater contribution their partners make to household income, although some of these women simultaneously reject the notion of a role reversal based on income. The notion of role reversal was not dismissed by all of the women however, and in two cases the households tried to organise household responsibilities around the career of the female partner. The two mothers who would have been breadwinners described substantially different treatment from their employers as mothers, that they were not perceived in the company as committed workers, reducing their own commitment in response and placing an increased emphasis on the careers of their male partners.

Despite the sheer variety of difficulties experienced by these mothers through the transition to motherhood and return to work there are a number of consistencies. Although there were a variety of reasons, all of the mothers describe at least temporarily having to put their careers on hold. Moreover, in any of the potential situations where there might have been difficulty accommodating demands on a number of fronts, the mothers themselves were responsible for bridging any shortfall. Whether they initially intended to or not, all of the households of the mothers were compelled to increase their dependence on male earnings through the early parenting phase. Although most of the mothers resented at least one aspect of the transition to parenthood and their return to work, overall the mothers were relatively satisfied with having the primary responsibility for childcare in their households.
Although very few of the respondents were willing to nominate gender as an important factor in any decisions they might make in the household, the significance of gender is evident throughout the results in a number of ways. In each living situation, there are specific and predictable differences between how the male and female respondents anticipate work and family concerns. The differences that arise between the male and female respondents are repeated in the three different sample group life stages, reinforcing that the differences are more likely to be attributable to gender rather than any other potential cause. Moreover, respondents also showed a willingness to reject alternative logics for household organisation when they did not conform to their gender expectations. For the mothers in particular, this gender logic was reinforced further by the expectations and behaviour of their employers, as well as other institutions surrounding the labour market. Despite the support for an Exchange Theory kind of bilateral decision making based on either income or preference in the responses of the interviewees, these findings consistently underline the significance of gender as an organising principle in the household, which occurs through a combination of internal and external gender order pressures that the available explanatory frameworks struggle to accommodate. In particular, the external gender order pressures on households that are driven by the labour market institutions that both partners in the household interact with are problematic for analysing households through the correlation of time distributions and the characteristics of household members.

Returning to the specific research question begins to address the significance of these findings in terms of the literature discussed in chapter three. The main research question asked: what is the decision making process when allocating time to paid and unpaid work in the household? Within this, two component questions followed, firstly: what type of decision is it – autonomous, unilateral, exchange or bargaining? And secondly: what is the basis for the decision – income, preference or gender? Here, the component questions are considered in turn, before addressing the broader question and further issues that arise from the study.
8.3.1: What is the basis for the decision – income, preference or gender?

In the first stage of the results analysis it appears possible to separate the influence of gender in the decision making process within households, with income considered to be the only fair arbiter in task allocation. All of the sixty respondents rejected the idea that gender should be the basis for the allocation of household tasks within households. Following from this, all of the respondents argued that tasks should be allocated within the household according to the contribution to household income made by each partner or according to a preference based consensus. For all but two of the nineteen parents, earned income was the justification used for the allocation of tasks in their own households. For these couples, the income based rationalisation over task distribution was seen to be the fairest, most objective way of allocating tasks between partners. The strength of the income based rationalisation as a reasonable way to allocate tasks is further underlined by the fact that some couples whose actual task allocation behaviour was contrary to an income explanation, with the higher earning female partner responsible for providing care, maintained that their household task allocation was based on income. These initial findings suggest that there is support for the notion that households organise themselves on the basis of income, as in the Resource Theory, Exchange Theory and NHE.

Testing the veracity of the association between income and task allocation involved a question about role reversal on the basis of income. Specifically, respondents were asked whether, in situations where the female partner makes the larger contribution to household income, the household should organise to have the male partner responsible for child care and domestic work while the female partner has responsibility for earning income. In the undergraduate and graduate samples, the responses indicated that this logic was seen to be fair, although a proportion of respondents pointed to additional reasons that household should ensure that each partner was responsible for tasks associated with their traditional gender role. A majority of the parents rejected the income based logic if it dictated a role reversal, and reverted to arguments that relied on the notion of gender roles.
This finding suggests that people are most comfortable explaining their current arrangements within the household as if they had been decided by income. In this sense, income is perceived as a justifiable basis to determine the organisation of household tasks, while using gender as a basis to determine household tasks is perceived as invalid. With gender perceived to be an invalid basis for allocating tasks, respondents are unwilling to nominate that their own plans centre on expectations about the gender roles of mothers and fathers in the household, and provide income as the alternative, objective basis. As long as the income earning arrangement in the household allows the household to organise tasks in line with the expectations of both partners, the gendered nature of the decision can exist unquestioned. The actual behaviour of the respondents in the sample thus rejects the objective, income based organisation of household tasks that underpins the Resource Theory, Exchange Theories and NHE. Instead income and other household resources are considered to be valid as long as other household organising principles that are grounded in gender can be maintained. This suggests that gender is the primary basis for task allocation in these households. These notions of how households rationalise the distribution of time in the household starts to support a similar relation to the gender display argument of Berk (1985), the ‘family myth’ argument of Hochschild (1989).

Simultaneously, individual men and women had somewhat contrary preferences for their own lives, which could be generalised on the basis of gender. Although all of the undergraduate and graduate respondents anticipated forming families in the future, the men and women in these sample groups had different preferences for particular roles in a household with children. The undergraduate and graduate men all expressed a preference for the task of earning income in their future households, and ruled out a preference for providing care. The preferences of the fathers were consistent with the undergraduate and graduate men. Presented with a choice between work ‘or’ family, these men all selected work, in line with behaviour considered to be gender normal for men. In this sense the rationalisations of decisions provided by the men and the futures they endeavour to construct are grounded in a notion of filling the male gender role of breadwinning for the household.
The expressed preferences of the men contrasted with those of the women. The undergraduate and graduate women expressed a preference for at least temporary responsibility for the task of providing care in their households while they have young children. As in many of the responses, there was considerable variation amongst the women overall, with the preference of these women best understood as a desire to provide care without compromising career aspirations. These preferences were broadly consistent with those of the mothers, although there was considerably more variation within the sample of mothers with regard to the ideal allocation of household responsibilities. Rather than strictly choosing between work ‘or’ family, the women tended towards a compromise preference, with responsibility for work and family, and assistance from their partners, employers and the state to enable this preference. Again the actual behaviour of the respondents, with the men and women constructing and pursuing alternative gender roles in the household, contradicts the notion that households allocate tasks on the basis of income that is advanced in NHE, as well as both Resource and Exchange Theory.

The anticipated and actual behaviour of households relied on gendered expectations in a number of ways. To some extent, this is evident in the general differences in the responses between men and women in each sample category. This is highlighted further when considering the results of men and women across each of the sample categories. Particular points of difference occur repeatedly in the three stages of work and family formation, especially with reference to implicit assumptions individuals have about their role as a parent. Consequently the findings in this study suggest that the basis of task allocation in the household is rooted in gender, further reinforced by external institutions. Individuals in the sample can be seen to be constructing their own gender identities over time, making decisions about their future prospects and interacting with institutions related to their careers in a way that shapes and constructs the subsequent choices available to them. In terms of the basis for decisions these findings lend support to the only explanatory framework that has a gendered logic, Dependency Theory, as well as lending some support to explanations that rely on a contingent relationship between income contributions and gender display.
8.3.2: What type of decision is it – autonomous, unilateral, exchange or bargaining?

At a very broad level, the preferences of individual men and women in the three sample groups were shared with regard to how people should allocate time to tasks within households. Almost all of the sixty respondents agreed that partners in a household should allocate tasks between themselves on the basis of earned income, which was perceived as an objective, measurable arbiter which also served the combined interests of the household. An acceptable alternative to income was an agreed consensus based on the willingness or preference of each partner to perform particular tasks. Both the income and preference based decisions rely on a bilateral economic exchange or bargaining logic for decision making. However, the previous section has demonstrated that the income and preference based decisions are ideals that do not eventuate.

Very few of the respondents considered the gender of each partner to be a valid basis for partners in a household to allocate tasks between household members. Nevertheless the expected outcomes for the respondents closely follow gendered patterns for particular responsibilities in the household. The men interviewed consistently make it clear that they are planning around an implied assumption about their responsibility for income earning in their households. This implied assumption on the part of the men is particularly robust, with decisions about study and careers deduced from their perceived need to provide a continuous, stable income for their families. Many of the men make it clear that they have not previously considered any alternative role in a household than a responsibility for income earning, with some fathers refusing to enter a discussion on the possibility of alternative roles. That these decisions are constant in a range of life situations reiterates the notion of gender expectations as the basis for decisions and lend weight to a type of decision making process that resembles the Autonomy Theory advanced by Gupta (2006). The men and women in the sample, both prior to and post-household formation, are positioning themselves for a combination of household tasks independent of one another: there is no apparent need for either a bilateral or a unilateral decision that binds the other partner to particular household responsibilities.

The women interviewed also expected particular outcomes in the delineation of responsibilities between household members. In contrast to the singular focus of the
men, the women expected a range of outcomes within a particular spectrum of possibilities. The range of outcomes anticipated stemmed from an assumption that they themselves were likely to have primary responsibility for at least early child care due to their gender, irrespective of any other factor. From this assumption, the expected outcomes of the women depended on their perception of further factors that would enable them to participate in paid work and maintain their child care responsibilities. Generally, those women who did not perceive realistic alternatives for reconciling their paid employment and child care in conjunction with their partners, relatives, employers and the state, expected a larger reduction in the hours they would commit to paid work as parents. Conversely the women who expected to find alternatives that would reconcile their paid employment and childcare, somehow, expected to commit a greater amount of time to paid work as parents. Even so, all of the women expected to continue in some form of employment as parents, without expressing the same certainty about the terms and continuity of their employment as their male counterparts. Although the women hope to pursue a bilateral exchange-type relationship in the future, based on income or preference, it remains that these decisions are being pre-empted without the presence of a partner in an autonomous manner on the basis of gender.

These findings indicate that gender constraints temper the expectations and realisation of preferences by individuals in the sample. Interestingly, these limits seemed to operate in different ways for the men and women interviewed. When testing the limits of the preferences, the men generally reject the notion of a role reversal. This rejection is in two forms, with some of the men refining the reasons behind their expressed preference and reiterating the need for them to be responsible for income earning for additional reasons, and others simply unwilling to take a primary responsibility for child care or domestic work regardless of the reason. In this sense, the men choose to restrict their own behaviour through their own attitudes to gender roles in the household. The results of the fathers indicate that some men realise these expectations, lending further weight to the idea of an autonomous decision making process.

The majority of the women interviewed were willing to consider the notion of a role reversal, even if it did not match their expressed preference. Rather than a self-imposed limit to their preferences however, women in the study were limited by constraints on
their choices, which depend on a range of alternatives. This is best illustrated in the instance of mothers returning to work, where mothers were required to find a solution between any potential child care alternatives and their employers, with the mothers themselves compelled to take responsibility for child care in the instances where there was any shortfall. Each of the interactions the mothers had with partners, extended family, child care providers and their employers all had the potential to constrain the range of choices available to the mothers, and dictate their preferences. For women then, there is no real exchange or bargaining evident, and when further factors outside the household are considered, autonomous types of expectant, independent decision making provide the start of an adequate explanation.

8.3.3: What is the decision making process when allocating time to paid and unpaid work in the household?

The component questions contribute to the broader research question, which aimed to shed light on the decision making process subsumed within the theories reviewed in chapter three which have been used to explain the allocation of time in households. The results of this study point to a countless series of pre-emptive, independent decisions based on implied assumptions that are rooted in gender by individual men and women that subsequently combine to pre-determine the allocation of time within their households. These assumptions by men and women interviewed in the study take the form of expectations tied to gender roles that they will perform in their own households. In addition to individual level perspectives of appropriate gender roles, institutional inflexibility on the part of employers and the provision of affordable and accessible child care services by the state further reinforce the notion of a particular allocation of responsibilities within the household along gender lines. As a result, men and women in the household setting only perceive a narrow band of possible options to choose from when deciding how to manage demands that relate to work and family. The findings indicate that this is best understood as an autonomous decision making process, on the basis of gender.

The recurrent nature of the implied assumptions by men and women in the study emphasised the significance of gender in the results. With regard to how individuals
anticipated work and family there were identifiable differences between men and women in each of the sample groups in the study which related to a particular delineation of responsibilities in the household. Moreover for both samples of undergraduates, the men and women with very limited experiences of the workforce and with no children of their own anticipated work and family concerns in a similar way to the graduates and parents of the same gender.

The way that men and women plan around assumptions that are grounded in particular gender roles is significant for a variety of reasons. In the first instance, assumptions about gender roles are economically irrational, deterministic and self-fulfilling. In the examples of the men, implied assumptions about the role of breadwinner in their households have informed previous, current and future plans about their careers. Without considering any alternatives, these men seek a delineation of tasks within the household where they have responsibility for earning income. In this sense the men take it upon themselves to be breadwinners, regardless of numerous further factors that might be considered in a rational decision on household organisation that considered best interests of household members. As a result, the men internalise a type of hyper-commitment to paid employment. With this focus on their role of economic provider through their paid employment, the men overlook potential opportunities to make provisions for the impact of family demands on their careers. The corollary of this is that men will rely on their partners to meet additional demands in the family sphere.

In contrast to the men, the women interviewed are seen to be making accommodations for the possibility that additional demands from the family domain may impact on their work. In the case of the women an expectation about the responsibility for child care has led them to implied assumptions about the tasks they will be responsible for in their future households, which have informed previous, current and future plans about their careers. These women are considering as many alternatives as possible in order to find a solution that allows them to have some proportion of responsibility for child care and maintain some commitment to their careers. Even though the women interviewed anticipate assistance from partners, alternative child care providers and their employers, they are also are taking it upon themselves to find a suitable solution for child care, which may not be readily available.
Significantly, the men and women interviewed in the study were making assumptions about work and family independent of one another, pre-empting decisions they might otherwise make in conjunction with their partners. These gendered expectations do not necessarily preclude households from making decisions together as a unit. However, any decision making process between partners is grounded in the gendered expectations of each partner, limiting the range of real and perceived alternatives that can be considered by the household and posing problems for the explanatory frameworks that rely on income as a neutral value basis for decisions. There was little evidence of any bargaining or exchange taking place in these decisions. Rather, implicit assumptions became explicit reality.

Furthermore, there are also institutional limits that constrain the range of choices that can be considered by the household and which reinforce the need for a delineation of tasks within the household, increasing the likelihood that one partner will take responsibility for providing child care, implicitly the female. This is demonstrated in the return to work of the mothers in the study as responsibility for child care becomes responsibility for finding alternative child care arrangements that not only suit their preferences but also their available employment options. The costs and accessibility of relying only on formal child care provided very limited options for these women, and any women returning full-time had to rely on informal child care assistance from extended families to at least some degree. Women who returned to work full-time found that, as mothers, employers no longer perceived them to be committed workers. Faced with limited real options between their partners, alternative child care providers and their employers, these women chose, or felt compelled, to put their careers on hold. Rather than a single notion of choice, whatever the type or basis, the outcomes for the households in this study represent the culmination of a series of pre-emptive decisions made independently by male and female partners about their own gender roles in the household. This series of decisions is based on a gender logic that is continually constructed and reconstructed as individuals negotiate their own interactions with the institutions of and around paid work.

Overall the findings of the study suggest understanding the ‘blackbox’ in the available explanatory frameworks, the decision making process, offers an insight into the lack of
response to the increase in female labour force participation. This alternative explanation is in two parts, both of which rely on gender. The first part of the explanation, developed here, is that men and women have implicit assumptions about the role they will have in their households and prepare accordingly. These implicit assumptions conspire to limit the range of options men and women perceive when they have to make decisions between work and family, which prevent income or preference based decisions made through unilateral determination, bargaining or exchange from taking place. Instead these decisions are best understood as autonomous and related to expectations grounded in gender. Moreover, the delineation of responsibilities along gender lines is supported by the institutional framework within which any choices between work and family are made, further reinforcing the limits of choice.
Chapter 9 – Conclusions

Work and family issues are of increasing importance in the Australian political environment and are linked to several policy challenges in the Australian economy and labour market. At the outset, this thesis sought to explain apparently contradictory trends between work and family in Australia, with no evidence for a changed distribution of time spent in paid and unpaid work between partners in households, despite the substantial increase in female labour force participation in the last thirty years. In pursuit of explanations for these paradoxical trends, the focus became the unquestioned and unaddressed assumptions about the decision making process between partners in households. This final chapter reiterates the logical progression of the research project through a summary of the thesis, leading to the identification of contributions to the literature, implications from the findings and concluding remarks.

Aggregate data presented in chapter two demonstrated evidence of a significant change in the sphere of paid work over the previous thirty years, with increased proportions of non-standard employment overall and a constant increase in the proportion of women in the labour force. Throughout this period of change however, the position of men in the Australian labour market remained relatively constant. Men continue to be concentrated in full-time employment and there is little variation in male labour force participation according to age or the presence of children. Further complicating the trend in the sphere of paid work is that it appears on average that men have not increased the amount of time spent on unpaid work in the home. This lack of response in the sphere of unpaid work, provides evidence that there has been no real redistribution of time between partners devoted to paid and unpaid work within households.

A review of the literature proceeded with the objective of finding an explanatory framework that accounted for why the increase in female labour force participation had not brought about a redistribution of time spent in paid and unpaid work between partners. Four explanatory frameworks were considered for their potential to explain interactions across the spheres of paid and unpaid work and subsequent outcomes within the household. All four of these theories, Resource, Exchange, Dependency and NHE, build from assumptions about the decision making process between partners to
explain the domestic division of labour in terms of relative resources, however defined. This review led to the identification of the decision making process as a theoretical problem. This theoretical problem was seen to lead to an empirical problem, where outcomes in the domestic division of labour are understood by correlation with some measure of relative resources, which become inseparable from the individual characteristics of household members. The interpretation of empirical results thus relies on the validity of assumptions about the decision making process itself, which is not established empirically.

The review of the literature also considered studies that have tested the explanatory power of relative resources in the domestic division of labour. The results of these studies repeatedly point to the significance of income as a determinant of the division of labour in the household, but only in the instances where men earn more than women, and gender as a determinant of the division of labour in the instances where women earn more than men. Returning to the form of the explanatory frameworks, it was argued that this explanation relies on an association between the characteristics of individual household members and the subsequent allocation of time within the household, with assumptions about the decision making process between partners again overlooked. Thus an empirical investigation of the decision making process itself became the purpose of the research project.

The third section of the literature review considered alternative explanations outside the existing frameworks, in the process providing the initial propositions for the study to consider. This demonstrated the need to consider the perceptions and preferences of individuals separately, to establish whether decisions about time allocations to paid and unpaid work are made autonomously, and the need to take account of alternative stages of work and family formation in addition to the household. With consideration given to the factors identified in both the established and more recent literature, the research pursued one overarching question: what is the decision making process when allocating time to paid and unpaid work in the household? Two component questions contributed to the pursuit of this question, firstly; what type of decision is it – autonomous, unilateral, exchange or bargaining? And secondly; what is the basis for the decision – income, preference or gender?
The method chapter focussed on the construction of an innovative, interview based, qualitative study that would provide a means with which to investigate the decision making process with consideration to established and alternative explanations. Three sample groups were identified specifically due to their proximity to decisions about work and family. These three groups comprised undergraduates, graduates and parents, with further sub-groups of men and women in each sample group. This sample construction allowed for comparison in the analysis between men and women in each sample group while simultaneously facilitating comparison across sample groups.

Three separate results chapters presented the findings from the interviews, classified by sample type. Within all three samples, men and women had specific assumptions about the role they will fulfil in their present and future households, and likewise, assumptions about the role their partners would fulfil. These assumptions were implicit, and related to specific gender roles in the household. Moreover, these assumptions were recurrent in the three sample groups and evidently grounded in the gender of the respondents.

Across all three sample groups, men had implicit assumptions about work and family. All of the men interviewed expressed expectations about fulfilling the role of breadwinner in their households, assumptions inextricably linked to gender. The responses of the undergraduate and graduate men made it clear that they have made previous decisions, and continued to make plans, on the basis of an assumption that they would be breadwinners in their households, and have not previously considered any other possibility. These assumptions motivated the undergraduate and graduate men to concentrate on their careers, to plan around a continuous attachment to the workforce, and to disregard any potential impact on their work day stemming from family concerns. This career attachment is reflected in the outcomes for the fathers interviewed, who have taken a greater responsibility for providing household income since becoming fathers, which matched their prior expectations.

All three samples of women also had implicit assumptions about work and family. All of the women interviewed believed there was a degree of inevitability that they would have the major proportion of responsibility for child care and unpaid work in their households. With assumptions about family responsibilities, a variety of possibilities
and strategies were considered by women in all three life situations, with women in the study taking it upon themselves to create unique solutions between their employers, alternative child care providers and their partners. Whether in accordance with preference or not, all of the mothers subsequently felt that they had been compelled to put their careers ‘on hold’ in order to maintain family responsibilities, a problem which was magnified in the instances where informal, unpaid childcare arrangements were unavailable.

In response to the research questions which focus on the type and basis for decisions as part of a more detailed understanding of the decision making process, this study found that individual and separate assumptions by men and women that are linked to gendered expectations in the household conspire to limit the range of options considered when making decisions in the context of the household life situation. Any joint decision making that did occur between partners only considered a narrow range of options that were limited by these gendered expectations, even though these decisions may have been discussed in terms of income. No real bargaining or exchange took place between partners. Instead, the findings indicate individuals made autonomous types of decisions on the basis of gender. Moreover, there were further institutional limits rooted in public policy and the labour market which further reinforce a division of responsibilities in accordance with gendered expectations.

9.1: Contributions and Key Findings

With the identification of the decision making as an unquestioned and unaddressed assumption in the explanatory frameworks that consider the division of labour in the household, and the subsequent examination of the decision making process, this research makes a number of contributions. Addressing the decision making process as a theoretical problem and as the empirical object of a study fills a gap in the literature on the domestic division of labour, which has developed with assumptions about the process that occurs between partners.

This research contributes an alternative understanding of how time and tasks are distributed within the household by highlighting assumptions about how decisions
regarding paid and unpaid work are made in the existing explanatory frameworks. While the literature reviewed in chapter three relies on establishing correlations between outcomes and the particular characteristics of household members, this study has adopted a different conceptual standpoint by giving consideration to the expectations of individuals. In doing so, this reveals the gendered expectations of individuals about their distribution of responsibilities between work and family in the household. This alternative understanding of how implicit gendered assumptions by individuals preemptively constrain the range of choices in the household living situation remedies a weakness in existing explanations. This offers considerable insight into the household, where the outcomes of decisions between work and family are the subject of considerable attention from policy makers.

Moreover, this research has also contributed to the development of an alternative methodological approach to the study of the work and family, which does not rely on a quantitative association between the individual characteristics of household members and subsequent outcomes in the division of labour. This has been achieved by directly accessing the expectations and perceptions of individuals. Examining these expectations across different samples of undergraduates, graduates and parents establishes a sense of how these expectations are modified or reinforced by participation in the labour market. The study of work and family expectations in these alternative stages of work and family formation highlights the way that the institutions of paid work act to constrain the range of choices in the household, further reinforcing a division of labour between partners.

Key findings that emerge from the research also make contributions to the literature. All of the sixty respondents rejected the notion that gender should be the basis for the allocation of tasks within households. Instead, income and preference were perceived as a justifiable basis for the determination of household tasks, with further implications about the suitability of a joint decision making process between partners. However, analysis of the results reveals that these ideals about household decisions, made together on the basis of income or preference, are not realised in the actual behaviour of the respondents.
The rejection of the expressed preference for decisions made together on the basis of income or preference is due to gendered expectations about responsibilities in the household. Expectations related to gender were pervasive in all groups in the study, as men sought paid work in order to be breadwinners, and women sought options between work and family. The undergraduate and graduate men all anticipate a career that involves full-time employment, with an assumption of a continuous attachment to the workforce over time, expectations that appear to be borne out in the experience of the fathers.

The women had identifiably different expectations and experiences, with an additional factor of variety amongst women themselves. The undergraduate and graduate women did not assume a continuous attachment to the workforce, and instead sought ways to accommodate additional responsibilities of care giving and domestic work, which they anticipated with a sense of inevitability. Many of the difficulties aligning responsibilities between work and family were borne out in the experiences of the mothers.

In particular, the mothers experienced considerable problems realising preferences through the transition to parenthood and return to work, directly impacting on their level of labour market engagement. Several mothers returned to work earlier than preferred, citing either concerns over household income while on unpaid maternity leave, or pressure from their employers. Moreover, several mothers were unable to realise their preferred terms of employment upon their return to work, with some mothers experiencing considerable trouble aligning the availability of alternative child care providers with their employment conditions. As a result, willingly or not, all of the mothers felt compelled to put their careers on hold in order to provide care for the child, with households shifting responsibilities and placing greater emphasis on male earnings.

The shift towards a more pronounced delineation of responsibilities occurs repeatedly in the sample of parents and regardless of preference, underlining the limited range of options for meeting a combination of work and family demands. Difficulty finding a solution that did meet work and family demands was not for lack of trying. Men and women in the sample of parents interviewed were trying to create the prototypical
flexible, individual solution that is repeatedly heralded as the answer to work and family demands, and the type of solutions that the undergraduate and graduate samples anticipate creating. In the instances where the mothers depended on their employers, they were unable to reliably access the policies they sought in order to return to work. These difficulties were compounded for any household that depended on market based child care, where inaccessibility prevented mothers from returning to work. As it stands, these households, and the women in particular, paid for the failure of public policy to provide genuine alternatives through decreased labour market engagement. These costs are magnified for the household when women earn more than their partners and cannot engage with the labour market in the manner that they prefer.

Moreover, the sampling logic employed in this study purposefully focussed on a particular socioeconomic group, would be and actual degree holding professionals, for their perceived ability to choose between work and family alternatives. The sample of parents interviewed in this study, unable to access workplace policies and child care places, represented households from the fourth and fifth quintiles of the household earning spectrum in Australia (ABS 2006, cat. no. 6530.0). As such, this purposefully sample contains the well educated and high income households that are often acclaimed for their ability to exert some control over their careers, and are commonly perceived to be the type of valuable as employees who warrant flexible solutions from employers. Without generalising too much, these attributes did not seem to help the female partners in the sample of parents.

9.2: Limitations and Further Research

The findings of this study are limited to some extent by the methodology employed in the study. In order to unpack assumptions about how decisions are actually made and gain a deeper understanding of these processes of decision making it was necessary to have a specific sample, which limits the ability to make broad generalisations. The samples in the study demonstrate the pervasiveness of implicit, gendered assumptions about the domestic division of labour, which operate in an independent, autonomous manner. These findings present a number of challenges for how we understand household responses to public policy and as a result the statistical representativeness of
these findings should be established. In particular, similar studies should pursue the way that different types of households and households within different age groups make decisions.

Although the findings broadly concur with the related literature and can be advanced with some confidence as a result, there is a potential bias in terms of class and education in the sample. This bias was deliberately created in order to highlight the affects of gender and income in the decision making process. Economic necessity may significantly affect the actual decision making process between partners in households and the subsequent distribution of time between paid and unpaid work, although it should not affect the implicit assumptions individual men and women have, and the subsequent preparations individuals make in advance of these decisions. Although they have deliberately been avoided here, questions about how economic necessity impacts the decision making process and subsequent outcomes should also be explored in further studies.

Studies of a longitudinal nature would also offer considerable scope for the investigation of these issues. Again, deliberately imposed limits on this study prevented this possible approach from being considered here. Tracking individuals over time would add significant insight about interactions between individuals, households, and the broader institutional framework in particular. Ideally longitudinal methods would be employed in part or entirely in any further studies of these particular research questions. Such research would also add considerably for its accordance with established research methods for the analysis of households. The research questions here sought to examine the construction of alternatives that would shape household decision making and subsequently pursued a method that does not align naturally with the established research in the literature, making direct comparison difficult.

There were also aspects of the research method that ultimately contributed little in the analysis of the findings. The use of a hypothetical scenario based line of questioning in the interviews with the undergraduates and graduates simply reiterated the answers provided by the respondents in the long answer section of the interview. This was useful for its contribution as confirmation, in addition to the attitude sketch and long answers,
although it did not lead to the more substantial or complex rationalisations that the scenarios were designed to uncover.

The real import of policy in a number of domains is difficult to measure with any precision and this is exacerbated when trying to consider an additional range of dynamics that occur within households. However, there is a clear interdependence between individual perspectives, subsequent household preferences, and the broader institutional framework. Developing further questions and methods to resolve these problems requires some reconciliation between the predominantly quantitative approaches in the existing literature and the qualitative approach employed in this study, and, ideally, should include relevant longitudinal data as well. Answering further questions should allow for theoretical development to overcome the particularly blunt ways of analysing households in the current explanatory frameworks. Understanding these interactions in households, how they are shaped and their outcomes, should be a priority in the burgeoning work and family literature.

9.3: Implications

The experiences of men and women in this sample suggest that changes in labour market policy can impact on the way that decisions about work and family are made within households in a positive manner. The evidence in this study points to the way that gendered expectations about combining work and family responsibilities are reinforced through employer policies that have inconsistent coverage and application. These findings indicate that universal minimum standards for paid maternity leave, a minimum and mandatory standard for paid paternity leave, coupled with the right to request part-time work to meet caring responsibilities, represent some ways to provide realistic alternatives for households making decisions between work and family.

In the results of this study, unpaid maternity leave reinforces an implied assumption about which partner will be responsible for caring in the household and increases household dependence on male earnings, leading to an extreme delineation of responsibility between partners in the household. These decisions are made continually through implicit assumptions and reinforced through policy and by employers, making
the ‘baby bonus’ irrelevant in decisions over the distribution of paid and unpaid work in the household. Findings in the experiences of parents in this sample suggest that only very particular household types, reliant on the earnings of male breadwinners, benefit in the current policy framework.

Poor labour market outcomes for mothers in this study were compounded by the dearth of child care places. The failure to provide sufficiently accessible and affordable child care limited the decisions that could be made in the household over the distribution of paid and unpaid work, reinforcing implied assumptions over household responsibilities and preventing carers from engaging with the labour market. Again, only very particular types of household in this study managed to bridge the shortfall that arose from the failure of public policy to provide child care places. These households relied upon informal arrangements with extended family, or could afford to rely on the only alternative available, with female care dependent on a male breadwinner.

These findings highlight the way that a real lack of alternatives for households obstructs any redistribution of responsibilities between partners. The interviews in this study reveal that a decision resting on an implied assumption between partners about who will be responsible for childcare, and the constraints of institutional support, lead to extreme delineations of responsibility in the household with little reciprocity, resulting in mothers who feel their careers are on hold, and fathers who feel locked in to their careers. These extremes are determined by gendered expectations, and obstruct any solutions households might seek in accordance with their economic needs and preferences.

9.4: Conclusion

This thesis has examined the way that individuals perceive, anticipate and make decisions between work and family. Existing explanatory frameworks that consider the distribution of paid and unpaid work within the household contain assumptions about the decision making process between partners. This research addresses this gap in the literature, developing a method for the investigation of the decision making process in
different life situations which also accounts for alternative explanations grounded in autonomy, preference and lagged adaptation.

The findings in the research indicate that gender is pervasive in the decision making process, and starts to take effect before any actual decision is made. Men and women have implicit assumptions about how they will manage demands in work and family which pre-empt decisions they might otherwise make in conjunction with their partners. These implicit assumptions occur between men and women independently of one another and can be seen to lead to autonomous decisions that are grounded in gender which conspire to limit the range of options perceived in the household decisions about work and family need to be made.

Moreover, the broader institutional framework reinforces the need for a delineation of tasks within the household, further limiting the range of alternatives that can be considered by the household. In households with dependent children present, this increases the likelihood that one partner will take responsibility for providing child care, implicitly the female. This combination of gender effects, individual and institutional, prevents households from finding a combination of paid and unpaid work responsibilities between partners that is in accordance with their economic needs and preferences.
Appendix 1

Participant Background Information Sheet

Section 1
Surname:________________ First Name(s):____________________ Date of Birth:_______
Sex

Male □ Female □

Section 2
Residential details: (mark all that apply)

Paying rent □ Paying mortgage □ Family owned □ Self owned □
With parents □ With partner □ With friends □

Section 3
Do you perform any unpaid household work in your residence?

Yes, cooking □ Yes, cleaning □ No □ (go to Section 4)
Yes, caring □ Yes, maintenance □ Yes, other □
If other, please give details________________________________________________________
Estimated total hours per week _____

Section 4
Marital Status:

Married □ De facto □ Single □
Children:

Yes □ No □
If yes, how many? __________
Section 5

Main Occupation (if any) ____________________

Status Main Occupation:

Full Time □ Part Time □ Casual □

Average hours per week in Main Occupation __________

Second Occupation (if any) ____________________

Status Second Occupation:

Full Time □ Part Time □ Casual □

Average hours per week in Second Occupation __________

Section 6

Are you from a religious background?

Yes □ No □

If yes, please give detail ____________________

Are either of your parents from a religious background?

Yes, both □ Yes, mother □ Yes, father □ No □

If yes, please give detail ____________________

Section 7

Are you from a Non-English Speaking background?

Yes □ No □

If yes, please give detail ____________________

Are either of your parents from a Non-English Speaking background?

Yes, both □ Yes, mother □ Yes, father □ No □

If yes, please give detail ____________________
Appendix 2

Interview Schedule Section 1 – Attitude Statements

1.1a Do you think it is important for women to have full time paid work?
□ Yes □ Sometimes □ Don’t Know □ Not Necessarily □ No

1.2a Do you think being a woman is an advantage for getting a job?
□ Yes □ Sometimes □ Don’t Know □ Not Necessarily □ No

1.3a Do you think being a woman is an advantage for getting a promotion at work?
□ Yes □ Sometimes □ Don’t Know □ Not Necessarily □ No

1.4a Do you think it is appropriate that mothers who choose not to work receive family benefit payments?
□ Yes □ Sometimes □ Don’t Know □ Not Necessarily □ No

1.1b Do you think it is important for men to have full time paid work?
□ Yes □ Sometimes □ Don’t Know □ Not Necessarily □ No

1.2b Do you think being a man is an advantage for getting a job?
□ Yes □ Sometimes □ Don’t Know □ Not Necessarily □ No

1.3b Do you think being a man is an advantage for getting a promotion at work?
□ Yes □ Sometimes □ Don’t Know □ Not Necessarily □ No

1.4b Do you think it is appropriate that fathers who choose not to work receive family benefit payments?
□ Yes □ Sometimes □ Don’t Know □ Not Necessarily □ No

1.5 Do you think having two parents working full time has a negative effect on children?
□ Yes □ Sometimes □ Don’t Know □ Not Necessarily □ No

1.6 Do you think having two parents working full time has a positive effect on parents?
□ Yes □ Sometimes □ Don’t Know □ Not Necessarily □ No
1.7 Do you think it is important for two parents to live together when they have children?

☐ Yes  ☐ Sometimes  ☐ Don’t Know  ☐ Not Necessarily  ☐ No

1.8 Do you think at least one parent should work full time?

☐ Yes  ☐ Sometimes  ☐ Don’t Know  ☐ Not Necessarily  ☐ No

1.9 If only one parent works full time, do you think it matters which parent it is?

☐ Yes  ☐ Sometimes  ☐ Don’t Know  ☐ Not Necessarily  ☐ No

1.10 If only one parent can work full time, which parent should work full time?

☐ Male  ☐ High Earner  ☐ Preference  ☐ Social Contribution  ☐ Female

1.11 Do you think men or women should be responsible for ensuring housework is done?

☐ Men  ☐ Both/Neither  ☐ Lower Earner  ☐ Women

1.12 Do you think men or women should be responsible for children are looked after?

☐ Men  ☐ Both/Neither  ☐ Lower Earner  ☐ Women

1.13 Do you think men or women should be responsible for ensuring a family has an adequate income?

☐ Men  ☐ Both/Neither  ☐ Lower Earner  ☐ Women
2.1 What are the most important things in the lives of you and the people you know?

☐ Achievement  ☐ Career  ☐ Education  ☐ Family  ☐ Friends
☐ Fun  ☐ Fulfillment  ☐ Happiness  ☐ Health  ☐ Relationships
☐ Religion  ☐ Social Aware  ☐ Sports  ☐ Study  ☐ Volunteer
☐ Other…………

2.2 Have these important things changed for you in the last few years?

YES  Probe: How have they changed?
NO   Next question

2.3 Do you think they are likely to change for you in the next 5 years?

YES  Probe: How do you think they might change?
NO   Next question

2.4 Do you think these important things are different for men and women?

YES  Probe: In what ways are the different?
NO   Next question

2.5 For you as an individual, do you think it is important to be able to support yourself financially?

YES  Probe: Why is it important?
NO   Next question

2.6 In regards to supporting yourself financially, do you think it’s different for men and women?

YES  Probe: Why is different for men and women?
NO   Next question
Interview Schedule Section 3 – University

3.1 Was economics your first choice at university?

YES  Probe: What made you choose economics?

NO   Probe A: What was your first choice?

Probe B: What made you choose _____?

Probe C: What brought you to economics?

Made you choose / brought you to economics
☐ Education  ☐ Family Expect  ☐ Financial Gain  ☐ Fun  ☐ Job Pressure
☐ Job Prospects  ☐ Other Advice  ☐ Other Expect  ☐ Other Pressure

3.1a What would you say was the most significant influence on the choice that you made?

☐ Internal, self-determining  ☐ External, others determining

3.1b Were there any other factors that meant you could not take another course?

ALL  Probe: internal/external factors, especially parents

3.2 When you chose the university course you entered, did you have a particular occupation in mind?

YES  Probe A: What is it about being a ________ that appealed to you when you made the choice to study economics? (List)

☐ Education  ☐ Family Expect  ☐ Financial Gain  ☐ Fun  ☐ Job Pressure
☐ Job Prospects  ☐ Other Advice  ☐ Other Expect  ☐ Other Pressure

Probe B: What would you say is main motivation behind your desire to try and become a ________?

NO   Probe C: Do you think it is important to have a particular career outcome in mind when you make decisions about your studies?

Probe D: What are the main attributes that appealed to you about your future employment opportunities when you choosing your course at university? (List)

☐ Education  ☐ Family Expect  ☐ Financial Gain  ☐ Fun  ☐ Job Pressure
☐ Job Prospects  ☐ Other Advice  ☐ Other Expect  ☐ Other Pressure
3.3 When entering economics at university, were there particular minimum standards that you had in mind about your career, after graduation? Can you list some of the job characteristics that were important to you at the time, if there were any?

- Advancement
- Autonomy
- Balance
- Challenge
- Contribution
- Experience
- Flexibility
- Good Hours
- Holidays
- Income
- Lifestyle
- Prestige
- Profile
- Security
- Stability
- Other

Probe A: You mentioned ______, was there a particular value or amount about ______ that you had in mind?

Probe B: Why was ______ an important factor in your decisions about a future career?

Probe C: Repeat Probe A and B for listed factors

Probe D: (If individual factors not mentioned and related to ‘Balance’, ‘Contribution’, ‘Flexibility’, ‘Income’, ‘Security’): At the time you were choosing your course, did you consider that ______ might be an important issue in your future career? Why/why not?
Interview Schedule Section 4 – Paid Work (Now)

(From background information, if respondent not currently in employment)

Have you been in paid employment before?

YES 4.1 “When you were…”

NO Go to 4.7

4.1 You have indicated that you work ____ hours a week. Are you happy with your working arrangements?

4.2 What are some of the positives of your current working arrangements, as you see them?

☐ Advancement ☐ Autonomy ☐ Balance ☐ Challenge ☐ Contribution
☐ Experience ☐ Flexibility ☐ Good Hours ☐ Holidays ☐ Income
☐ Lifestyle ☐ Prestige ☐ Profile ☐ Security ☐ Stability
☐ Other…………

4.3 Are you happy with your income?

4.3a Do you think it is a ‘fair’ income for what you do?

4.4 Do you worry about job security in your current job? Why/why not?

4.5 Are you happy with your hours?

4.5a How are your hours decided?

4.5b Do you have much control over how your hours are decided?

4.6 Overall, do you feel committed to your work? Why/why not?

ALL Probe: Incentives

4.6a Could management do anything to make you feel more committed?

4.6b Has your experience of work changed the way that you respond to incentives from management?
Interview Schedule Section 4A – Paid Work (Future)

4.7 For you, what’s the most important thing about having a job?

- Advancement
- Autonomy
- Balance
- Challenge
- Contribution
- Experience
- Flexibility
- Good Hours
- Holidays
- Income
- Lifestyle
- Prestige
- Profile
- Security
- Stability
- Other

Probe A: Why is _____ important to you in your career? What does it give you?

Probe B: Repeat Probe A for listed factors


4.8 Do you think the values that are important in your future career will change over time?

YES Can you describe what will happen to change these values?
- career impacts on life
- family impacts on career
- personal life impacts on career
- income impacts on choices
- hours impact on choices
- other...

NO Are there any external pressures that might influence the way that you undertake work?

YES Go to 4.8a

NO Go to 4.9

4.8a What kind of effect on your career do you think _____ might have?

4.8b Do you think ____ would place you under any particular pressures?

4.8c What effect do you think that pressure would have on your willingness to work?

4.8d (repeat 3.8a-3.8c for nominated impacts)

4.9 What do you think makes people work long hours?

4.9a Would you work long hours?

4.9b Do you anticipate being able to control your hours in future?

4.9c Are you at all concerned about the amount of control you might have over your hours?

4.10 In terms of your career, ideally, where would you like to be in five years’ time?

4.10a What factors might impede the realisation of your goals?
4.10b  Do you think you will be in just one job between now and then?

4.10c  Taking potential hurdles for your career into account, where do you think you will be, in five years’ time?

4.10d  And the last question in this section is an invitation to describe the way your ideal job in ten years’ time
Interview Schedule Section 5 – Parents

5.1 Thinking back to when you were 14 years old, did either, or both, of your parents work?

Probe A: What did your mother do?

Probe B: Approximately how many hours a week do you think she worked?

Probe C: What did your father do?

Probe D: Approximately how many hours a week do you think he worked?

5.1b What do you think motivated your parent/s to organise their working lives the way that they did?

5.2 Was either of your parents responsible for ensuring the housework was done?

5.2a Why do you think they had that arrangement for housework?

5.3 Was either of your parents responsible for looking after you?

5.3a Why do you think they had that arrangement for childcare?

5.4 Do you think your mother or father earned more of the household income?

5.4a Do you think it influenced how things were done around the house, in regards to housework and childcare?

5.5 Do you see any differences between your parent’s life and what you expect for yourself?

Probe General Discussion: Process through which it is decided who does what in the house and paid work… distribution of work between unpaid and paid

5.5a Do you think there is anything you might be able to do in a better way than the way your parents managed things?
Interview Schedule Section 6 – Balancing Demands

6.1 At the moment, aside from paid work/study, are there any other demands on your time?

6.1a Do you expect that to change?

YES How?

NO Go to 5.2

6.2 When you think about your future, do you imagine yourself with a partner?

6.2a Do you have a particular timeline, or deadline for that?

Do you see yourself having kids one day?

YES Probe A: When do you think you would like to have kids? (deadline/timeline)?

Probe B: Family-wise, would you need to have anything in place before you have kids?

Probe C: Career-wise, would you need to have anything in place before you have kids?

NO Probe D: When do you think is a good time for people to have kids? (deadline/timeline)?

Probe E: Family-wise, do you think people need to have anything in place before you have kids?

Probe F: Career-wise, do you think people need to have anything in place before you have kids?

6.4 How do you imagine your life with kids, or life should be with kids?

6.4a Do you think you will continue to work?

Probe: Same job, full time/part time, career break

6.4b Do you think your partner will continue to work?

Probe: Same job, full time/part time, career break

6.4c Do you think having kids at home puts pressure on your working life?

Probe: Career, earnings, time pressures

6.4d Do you think your commitment to work might change after kids? How?

Probe: more or less willing to work, demands from kids seen as what kind of pressure, and who is responsible?

6.4e What about at a household level, does having kids put any kind of pressure the working lives of parents as a unit?

6.4f Do you think there would be any difficulty combining work and children?
6.4g Does having two parents in full time paid work have an impact on kids?
Probe: Is it negative? Are there positives?

6.4h Does having two parents in full time paid work have an impact on parents?
Probe: Is it negative? Are there positives?

6.4i Is it important for parents to be in paid employment?

6.5 Between you and your partner, do you imagine the major share of childcare might become your responsibility one day? Why/why not?

6.5a Do you imagine the major share of housework might become your responsibility? Why/why not?

6.6 Do you think having two parents working long hours has an effect on family life? How?

6.6a Is it more efficient to have one parent dedicated to earning money, and the other to childcare/household work?

6.6b If you only have one full-time earner in a couple with kids, how should it be decided which parent does what?

6.6c If you had to make the choice, do you think you'd prefer to be the full-time earner or the full-time carer?

6.6d If only one parent is in full-time paid work, does it matter if it is the mother earning the money?

6.6e Is there a problem if mothers end up working long hours?

6.6f If only one parent is in full-time paid work, does it matter if it is the father earning the money?

6.6g Is there a problem if fathers end up working long hours?

6.7 Do you think it is important for children to see how parents divide their time between tasks, such as housework and childcare?
Probe: Process through which it is decided who does what in the house and paid work… distribution of work between unpaid and paid

6.7a Do you think it matters to the children which parent is responsible for different tasks, either around the house or in paid work?
Probe: Would they get upset if dad did the cooking and picked them up from school

6.7b What factors need to be considered when making decisions about who should be responsible for tasks like housework and childcare?
Probe: Decision making process, income a factor?
The following part of the interview is about the lives of an imaginary married couple, Michael and Mary. I’m going to provide you with some decisions that they have to make, and I’d like you to explain what you think the right decision is. It may help to think of how you would like things to pan out if you were Michael/Mary. I will present a broad description of the scenario, which you can use to indicate the best course of action, and you can also ask for more information about contributing factors if you believe they are relevant to how the decision should be made.

Michael and Mary are both 27, work full time in the CBD, and love their jobs. They are on a similar career track, progressing up the ladder and with good future prospects. They have no kids, and are only recently married. As it happens, they have just opened a joint bank account. Michael notices for the first time that Mary earns more than he does, with her income contributing about 60% of the household income. Mary does not think this is an issue, but Michael thinks that ‘everything would be easier’ if he earned a larger slice of the household income than he does now.

7.1 Do you agree with Michael?

7.1a Do you think Michael has a valid argument?

7.2 Not long after this discussion, Michael gets offered a promotion, but it means moving to Melbourne. What do you think they should do?

(secondary factors if requested)
- The total household income may drop slightly after relocation
- Both of their extended families live in Darwin
- They are renting an apartment in Sydney
- Michael will earn approximately 55% of household income after relocation

7.2a What are their options?

7.2b What factors do they need to consider?

In the end, Mary also gets offered a promotion, and Michael’s company finds a way for him to take on the new role in Sydney.

Not long after this, Michael initiates a discussion about the couple having their first child. Although both have full-time jobs, neither has access to paid leave around the birth of the child. They cannot afford full-time child care, and can only afford for one of them to take unpaid leave at any one time. Mary is not confident about childcare and argues that her marginally higher earnings mean it makes sense for Michael to be the primary carer for the child. Michael is not confident about childcare either, but thinks the child should be with its mother.

7.3 What do you think they should do?

7.3a What choices are available to them?

7.3b What do you think they need to worry about when making this decision?

Mary ends up returning to work soon after the birth of the child, claiming her career takes precedence at this stage, and Michael is the primary carer until, soon after, they come across a community child care centre they can afford.

Michael soon returns to full time work, and between the two they are soon working a combined total of over 90 hours a week in the office. Despite being able to afford child care, they are struggling to keep up with the additional demands on their time. One
thing they had not considered is that the amount of unpaid domestic work has increased dramatically with a child. They are only just managing to pay for childcare, and cannot afford to pay for domestic help as well.

7.4 What do you think they should do?

7.4a What are their options?

7.4b What do you think they need to consider when making the decision?

They eventually convince Mary’s retired parents to move to Sydney. They are not very mobile and can’t keep up with a child, but they solve the domestic work problem for the time being. Michael and Mary continue in this fashion, with full time jobs and paying for full time childcare, for a few more years. Eventually, their child is old enough for school, removing their childcare costs and allowing Mary’s parents to return to their retirement.

With their child progressing comfortably through kindergarten and good reports from the school, everything seems to be going well for Michael and Mary. Inevitably, there is an accident at the school one day, and the child needs to be picked up.

7.5 Who should be responsible for this?

7.5a What needs to be taken into consideration?

Michael ends up leaving a meeting to pick up the child. A discussion that night leads them to decide that they should only have one of them in paid work, a specialist money earner, and the other a specialist in household demands. They decide to prioritise Mary’s career over Michael’s, and Michael should become a stay-at-home father.

7.6 What do you think about this decision?

7.6a Do you think prioritising one career over another is the right decision in this instance?

7.6b Did they choose the correct career to prioritise? Why/Why not?

7.6c If they are planning further children, does that change the logic behind the decision to prioritise Mary’s career over Michael’s?

7.7 Over the course of the scenarios, how do you think the decisions were handled fairly?

7.7a What do you think they could have done differently?

7.7b Do you think they made their decisions as a family unit?
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