

# “I Only Have to Ask Him and He Does It...” Active Fatherhood and (Perceptions of) Division of Family Labour in Slovenia

Alenka Švab<sup>\*</sup>  
Živa Humer<sup>\*\*</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

Western countries have been witnessing significant changes in the area of family life and care in the last few decades, along with the processes of relocation of care (Sevenhuijsen, 2003), e.g., from women to men and from the private to the public sphere (as seen in the institutionalization and commodification of care). These changes are also happening in Slovenia, although the division of care and family labour<sup>1</sup> remains highly gendered. One of the phenomena indicating changes in the relocation of care within the private sphere is the so-called new or active fatherhood. According to several studies, in recent decades men are believed to have been more involved in family labour, especially in child care, with this trend having begun already in the late 1980s (Arendell, 1997; Knijn and Mulder, 1987; Renner et al., 2008, Van Dongen, 1995; Wall and Arnold, 2007). In this context, active fatherhood is often interpreted as a result of wider social changes, especially the mass employment of women. However, expectations that changes in the labour market would be followed by changes in the private sphere leading towards a more egalitarian division of family labour have proven to be at least overoptimistic. This is also the case in Slovenia (Renner et al., 2008). While there is a long tradition of women fully participating in the labour market (promoted in the time of socialism from World War II onward), the division of family labour has remained practically unchanged. Changes in the private sphere are happening more slowly than those occurring in gender relationships in the public sphere.

Although changes in the gendered division of family labour have been called the “stalled revolution” (Hochschild, 1989), family life in Western countries including Slovenia has been experiencing radical changes in the last few decades (cf. Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Cheal, 2002; Morgan, 1996; Renner et al., 2006; Švab, 2001). New family trends can be seen in various demographic changes, such as a decline in marriage rates and fertility rates, an increase in divorce rates, the pluralisation of family forms and ways of family life etc. (Švab, 2001). Among others, there are also changes in family roles and fatherhood in particular is seen as a part of late-modern family trends (Renner et al., 2006).

---

<sup>\*</sup>Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, Kardeljeva pl. 5, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia.

<sup>\*\*</sup>Peace Institute – Institute for Contemporary Social and Political Studies, Metelkova, 6, 1000, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

<sup>1</sup> With family labour we refer to all activities necessary for the everyday functioning of a family and its members: household chores, child care, financial and administrative tasks (paying bills, shopping, communication with different institutions etc.), technical repairs (in the house, in the garden etc.), kinship labour (maintaining kinship relations and communication), and relational labour (maintaining relationships, solving problems and conflicts etc. in the family).

Based on qualitative empirical data from two qualitative studies, this paper discusses the phenomenon of the so-called new or active fatherhood in Slovenia, focusing particularly on the involvement of fathers in family labour and the gendered division of family labour. First the paper outlines the social context of the gendered division of family labour and the phenomenon of active fatherhood in Slovenia, especially the socialist heritage and the post-transitional time and related social changes. After describing the methodology and empirical material used in the paper, we present the results and discuss the characteristics of men's involvement in family labour as well as obstacles on the way to a more balanced division of family labour and the greater involvement of fathers in family labour, especially childcare. These are further addressed in the discussion and conclusion, highlighting similarities with Western countries along with Slovenian socio-cultural specificities in this respect.

### THE SOCIAL CONTEXT: SOCIALIST LEGACY AND POST-TRANSITIONAL REALITY

In Slovenia legal (gender) equality was granted already in the times of socialism by the state, with such state feminism including women's reproductive rights and social rights, coupled with many social provisions such as public kindergartens, health insurance, maternal and parental leave etc. This enabled women to participate in the labour sphere in the form of full-time employment (Jalušič, 1999). However, changes in the public sphere were not followed by changes in the private sphere. The division of family and care labour in the socialist period revealed a significantly gendered picture: women were the main care-takers and engaged in household labour, while men mostly took part in repairs and maintenance works at home. Men were more involved in child care, especially in tasks which are more pleasant, such as going for walks and playing (Ule, 1977).

#### The Gendered Division of Family Labour

The shift from state socialism to democracy in Slovenia in the early 1990s has not resulted in a change of traditional family patterns and traditional gender roles of women and men related to family expectations and normative perceptions. This is a barrier for women to enter the public sphere, in particular the highest positions in the sphere of paid labour and politics, as noted by feminist authors like Oakley (2000) and it also hinders men from entering the sphere of family life as caring masculinities. The traditional gendered division of family and care labour still prevails today in Slovenia (Humer, 2009; Renner et al., 2006; Sedmak and Medarič, 2007), although it has changed in terms of the labour force. In Slovenia, the full-time employment of women after World War II grew steadily from 33.2% of women *among all employed* in 1953 to 47.7% of women among all employed in 1997, while in 2010 the share of women in the active labour force was 49.5% (Kozmik and Jeram, 1997, p. 107; Office for Women's Politics, 1999, p. 25; Statistical Office of RS, 2011b). Besides, part-time female employment which has been more common in some Western countries has never prevailed in Slovenia.

Statistical data on the division of family labour paint an interesting picture. There is an increase in labour from the 1990s onward but the division of family labour remains traditional. Men used to spend an average of 7 hours per week doing domestic labour in the 1990s, and are nowadays more involved in family labour. An employed man with a full-time job spends an average of 14.5 hours on family labour every week. In contrast, women spend a weekly average of 25 hours on domestic labour (Office for Equal Opportunities, 2005). Results of an international study dealing with the issue of the reconciliation of family life and employment Also conducted in Slovenia (Sedmak and Medarič, 2007), confirmed that

young females in urban parts of Slovenia are much more involved in childcare and other "private" activities than young males, regardless of their employment status. In other words, young fully employed women spend more time on the household, childcare and caring for other family members than their partners and also in comparison with women in other European countries.

In this respect, the situation in Slovenia is similar to that in other Western countries. The rise in female labour market participation in the last few decades in Western countries, changes in the labour market (intensification of work and working conditions, precarious jobs etc.), together with demographic changes (a decrease in birth rates, an ageing population) and policy mechanisms such as paternity leave have not been followed by the greater involvement of men in the private sphere. The shift from the male breadwinner to the dual adult worker model in welfare states in the EU, accompanied by the generic restructuring of the private sphere in the late modernity (Giddens, 2000), also shown as new family patterns and family types, structural changes (new fatherhood, protective childhood, sensitive parenting, social parenthood, the return of paid domestic labour) of family life (Švab, 2001; 2006), raises many questions about gender equality in the family.

### **The Process of Redistributing Family Labour**

One factor that influences the gendered division of labour and changes is the redistribution of labour within informal/private (family) networks (unpaid work) and, increasingly, between the private and public sphere (paid work). In Slovenia, family life is characterized by well-developed family networks which traditionally offer informal support for families in everyday life, especially in the form of child care and domestic labour offered by grandmothers and other female relatives (Rener et al., 2006). One of the important characteristics that enable these networks to function is the geographical smallness of the country that allows relatively quick daily mobility enabling family support (e.g., in a form of childcare). Family networks represent important support especially in (post)transitional times in the context of changes in the labour market and intensified working conditions. In this context, the question of the reconciliation of family life and work has also become highly relevant in Slovenia.

In the process of changes in the division of family labour rather than in the gender distribution of family labour, a transfer is occurring within "gender" rather than between "genders", i.e., from female partners/mothers to other women, meaning either unpaid work (relatives, friends) or paid work (cleaning ladies, babysitters). Grand parenting is also gendered (Humer, 2009), as demonstrated by the fact that grandmothers are more involved in child-minding, caring and playing with grandchildren, whilst grandfathers are more involved with free-time play, outdoor activities, driving children to afternoon activities and other logistical matters. Informal childcare eases the pressures on working parents, particularly when children are sick. Further, it significantly lowers household costs as the childcare provided by grandparents is often free. However, such childcare is unpaid only in an economic sense since it is paid for with emotions, moral attachment, interdependency between parents and adult children and with the intergenerational relocation of responsibilities. Mutual expectations of support and caretaking show reciprocity in the relationship between the parents and children, and the perception that caretaking and the provision of care will be provided (as taken for granted) (Humer, 2009). This creates a *specific contradiction* of informal support networks which perform unpaid domestic labour representing indispensable help, while at the same time acting as an obstacle to changes within the family – towards a more balanced gender division of labour and active fathering.

However, in the wider contexts of employment conditions, longer working hours and the existing and deeply rooted structural gender inequality this situation still seems to be more a functional solution than a side-effect.

Research into new fatherhood in Slovenia (Rener et al., 2008) reveals that the use of unpaid work sources, at least where they are available, occurs more often than recourse to the use of paid services. A key factor in the redistribution of child care and family labour to paid work is the place of living. While in urban areas the hiring of household services (mainly to clean apartments) is quite common, in rural areas this practice is much less widespread.

Data on the redistribution of care between the private (family) and public sphere (paid domestic labour and child care) show that around 5% of Slovenian households hired domestic help in 2009. Household tasks represent the biggest share of paid domestic labour, representing 81% of hired help at home, while 10% is child care and 23% elderly care (Hrženjak, 2010). Hiring a domestic worker is also one of the strategies to solve the conflict between partners which arises from the (non)division of domestic labour on the precondition that they can actually afford it, while on the other hand it leaves the question of gender equality at home unresolved. The demand for paid domestic labour and child care is growing parallel to the arrival of children because the need for domestic labour, particularly for cleaning, increases when children are very young. Tijdens and others (2003) also found that families with small children between 4 and 12 years of age require the most domestic help, particularly with cleaning.

Although the division of family labour remains highly gendered, some changes are nevertheless present. Like in other Western countries, in Slovenia we are witnessing changes in fatherhood which reveal the more intensive involvement of men in child care and other forms of family labour. Yet whether these changes in fatherhood also mean the active involvement of the father in family labour and whether they affect the gendered division of labour remains open to debate.

### Family Policy

An important factor influencing the gender division of labour within the family and which can contribute to the promotion of active fathering is the state and its related policies. Slovenian family policy is known to be one of the most generous and favourable in Europe (Stropnik, Šircelj, 2008) as far as some measures are concerned, such as parental leave and family benefits and a public daily child care system. One indicator that the state does (like it already did in socialist times) pay a lot of attention to family well-being is the fact there is an explicit family policy. It is formed on the basis of the *Resolution on foundations for forming family policy in Slovenia* accepted by acclamation in 1993. The Resolution is based on a liberal understanding of families and family life, taking recent trends in family life (including the pluralisation of family forms) into account. It recognizes various forms of families as subjects of family policy, includes gender equality as a starting point of family policy and strives to create circumstances to enable the better reconciliation of family and work responsibilities. Nevertheless, the Resolution still implicitly presupposes that a heterosexual nuclear family is the predominant model of family life (Švab, 2003).<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, there are important changes going on the field of family law. The new family code, which is currently in the process of adoption, presupposes major changes in understanding family, marriage and extramarital partnership. Instead of promoting a heterosexual nuclear family it introduces a new broader definition of a family as a living arrangement of at least one adult taking care of children, and a new definition of marriage and extramarital partnership as a living arrangement of two adult individuals (regardless of their sex or sexual orientation).

Current family policy is based on some measures that date back to the period of socialism. Some of them are considered to be some of the most favourable and family-friendly ones in Europe, such as the system of parental leave that started in the 1970s. Slovenia also has a well-developed system of public child care that was introduced during socialism when the state promoted the full employment of women. A broad range of family payments is also in place, including generous funding for preschool care in public kindergartens.

Among measures that promote a balanced division of family labour and active fathering, especially within the reconciliation of family and work family policy we can find parental leave arrangements. Current family policy defines *four forms of parental leave: maternal leave, child care leave, paternal leave, and adoption leave*. *Maternal leave* lasts 105 days and is intended for preparations for birth and for caring for a child after birth. *Child care leave* lasts 260 days and starts right after maternal leave and can be used by either a mother or a father (but not both at the same time).<sup>3</sup> Together, these two forms of parental leave provide 365 days of full absence from work with full salary compensation. They were already introduced in 1978 to promote fathers' participation in child care, although this intention has not become a reality as only a minority of fathers uses it. For example, in 2007 just 5% of fathers took child care leave (Rener et al., 2008).

The most recent form of parental leave that seems to have a good impact on fathering is so-called *paternal leave* (intended solely for fathers) introduced by the Parental Care and Family Relations Act. It began gradual implementation in 2003 and became fully effective in January 2005. Since 2005, fathers are entitled to 90 days of paternal leave. The first 15 days have to be used before the child is 6 months old; the other 75 days represent the possibility of full leave from work and can be used until the child is three years old. There is full salary compensation for the first 15 days while compensation for the remainder is in the form of payments of social security contributions at the level of the minimum wage. The share of fathers taking the first 15 (fully compensated) days of paternal leave is rising (presently approximately 70%). The fully paid part of paternal leave was used by around 80% of fathers in 2009.<sup>4</sup>

Within measures for the reconciliation of family and work we can find a well-developed and long-standing system of day care for children.<sup>5</sup> Preschool education and child care are provided by public kindergartens and private concessionaires. Public kindergartens are the most widespread form of preschool child care and represent a form of daily care and education for young children that serves as a transition from home to the commencement of elementary schooling (at the age of six). Kindergartens are part of the preschool system of early childhood education. They are known for their high quality, working not only as daily child care institutions but also as educational institutions with official preschool educational

---

<sup>3</sup> 80.2% of full-time employed women return after 1 year of parental leave to their jobs for the same amount of working hours, while 14% of women and 5% of men leave labour market temporarily or permanently. Only small percentage of women (5.9%) and men (1.5%) work less hours in comparison with the time before parenthood (Stropnik, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> Our own calculations according to data on births and the number of fathers who took paternal leave.

<sup>5</sup> The first public kindergartens were introduced in 1946, but the system developed significantly in the 1960s and still represents the main form of daily child care in Slovenia as there are only a few private kindergartens (1.5% of all kindergartens). Preschool education and care is financed by public (local municipalities) and private funds. Parents' payments depend on their income level (per family member compared to the Slovenian average wage per employed person) and family assets. In addition to formal institutional kindergarten child care (available through public and private kindergartens), the state also provides home child care that is performed by persons with the qualifications of a home care provider of preschool children. Other children are included in different forms of informal day care carried out by babysitters, grandparents and other relatives.

curricula. Children can start attending kindergarten when they are 1 year old. Public kindergartens have a special nursery programme for children less than 3 years of age. In the school year 2010/11, the share of children included in kindergartens was 75.3%; however, the share varies according to the age of children. The share of 1-year-old children included in kindergartens is 40.8%, the share of 2-year-olds is 69% and the share of 3-year-olds is 84.6%. The share of children aged 5 to 6 years included in kindergartens is 91% (Statistical Office of the RS, 2011a).

## METHODOLOGY

The empirical data used in this article come from two empirical projects, the first is "New Trends in Family Life: Analysis of Fatherhood and Proposals for Policy in this Field",<sup>6</sup> while the second is a doctoral research project carried out by the co-author of this paper.<sup>7</sup> This chapter explains the researched topics, the process of data collection, the sample characteristics and the data analysis procedure in both projects.

In the first project the empirical material used in this article is taken from five same-sex focus groups with 28 mothers and fathers of preschool children. The aim of the project was to explore and analyze fathers' perceptions and understandings of the paternal role, the division of family labour and child care, and the reconciliation of work and family life in terms of their active role in family life. Besides, the project identifies main gender differences in the way partners divide family labour and child care, and reconcile work and family life.

The second empirical study is based on 60 semi-structured interviews with women and men – parents with small children, grandparents and nannies (Humer, 2009). For the purposes of this article, data from the interviews with women and men with preschool children are presented and analyzed. The central point of attention is the processes of the relocation of care and care practices within family life between genders and within the private and public spheres, with an emphasis on child care.

### Research Topics

The aim of the first study with the focus groups was to collect data on perceptions, experiences and the division of family labour with a stress on male partners' involvement in family labour, especially child care. The focus groups addressed the following topics (sets of questions): the period of pregnancy (development of a paternal identity), the use of paternal leave (factors that influence the use of paternal leave and the effects it has on active fathering), the division of labour during parental leave and particularly in the period of the mother's return to work after one-year parental leave (which is usually taken by mothers) and the reconciliation of family and work in this transition. The topic of the reconciliation of family and work was divided into two parts, namely issues regarding the workplace (questions regarding the meaning of career and priority which the partner gives to either the family or work and similar) and issues regarding family labour (the division of family labour between partners).

---

<sup>6</sup> The project lasted from 2004 to 2008. The research team: Tanja Renner (project leader), Alenka Švab, Tjaša Žakelj, Živa Humer; Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana; financed by the Research Agency of the Republic of Slovenia and the Office for Equal Opportunities of the Republic of Slovenia.

<sup>7</sup> Živa Humer, PhD thesis "Ethics of care, gender and family: processes of the relocation of care between private and public spheres", University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences, November 2009.

The second study aimed to research and analyze the relocation of care and care work in family life among genders, generations and private and public spheres. The individual interviews included sets of questions covering the following topics: perceptions of the term "care," the dynamics of family labour and care relations in families with a focus on child care, and reconciliation with paid work. The topic related to the dynamics of family labour included questions regarding who does what, when and how, whether there are any conflicts between partners due to family labour and what are the strategies to solve such conflicts. Questions regarding the care relations were divided into enquiries about child care and care for other family members. The topic related to paid work and the workplace focused on questions about relations in the workplace concerning caring obligations in families, the reconciliation of work and the family sphere and the possibilities for it in the workplace. The interviews also had a special focus on perceptions of care, family life and paid work, as well as perceptions and reflections of different individual roles (worker, parent, career etc.).

### **Data Collection**

In the first study data were collected through focus groups of mothers and fathers with at least one preschool child. Since one of the aims of the research was to study how the recently introduced paternal leave (described above) is being used, the sample was limited to those fathers who had taken paternal leave and those mothers whose partners had taken paternal leave. The focus groups were carried out in the period from 2006 to 2007; two were conducted with women and three with men. The average number of participants in focus groups was 4, ranging from 3 to 8 participants in the smallest and the largest focus group. The sampling was done with the snowball method and the starting sample was gathered through social networks (acquaintances, colleagues and friends).

In the second study semi-structured interviews were carried out between January and June 2008, including the participation of 36 parents with preschool children, 20 of whom were female and 16 of whom were male, mostly from the middle class, 12 grandparents who daily or occasionally look after grandchildren, and 12 nannies who do informal, paid childcare work. The number of interviews was limited by the saturation point.

### **Sample Characteristics**

In the first study, 28 parents (14 women and 14 men) with at least one preschool child participated in five focus groups. The average age of a participant was 31.95 years (32.4 for men and 31.5 for women). The majority of participants (12) lived in a bigger city, eight in a smaller town and eight came from rural areas. As far as education is concerned, two participants (one man and one woman) had a master's degree, 12 (eight women and four men) had a university degree, 11 (four women and seven men) had a secondary school degree and one (woman) had completed elementary school. The majority of participants (14) had one child; eleven had two children, while three participants had three children. All participants were employed and on average this reflects the situation in Slovenia where a great majority of women are fully employed. Regarding family form, all participants lived with their partners and children (i.e., dual-earner heterosexual nuclear family). We did not collect data about the marriage status since in Slovenia there is a trend of a decline in the social meaning of marriage which is partly due to legislation making married and unmarried couples equal that was introduced already in 1976. Today, 53% of children are born out of wedlock and marriage rates have been in decline since the 1970s.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> There were 8.3 marriages per 1,000 inhabitants in 1970, 6.5 in 1980, 4.3 in 1990, 3.6 in 2000 and 3.2 in 2009 (Statistical Office of the RS). This puts Slovenia in the group of countries with the lowest marriage rates in Europe.

The second study included 20 women and 16 men from two-parent and single-parent families, including 14 couples. Five couples were cohabitating, while nine couples were married. Besides, five people who participated in the interviews lived separated, three of them lived in new partnerships, while two people were single. Interviews were conducted with three married respondents whose partners did not take part in the empirical study. The average age of a respondent was 31.2 years; the youngest participant was a 25-year-old woman and the oldest participant was a 42-year-old man. Two female respondents had a master's or PhD degree, 20 respondents had a university degree (eight men and 12 women), 12 a secondary school degree (six women and six men), one male respondent had finished elementary school, while another male respondent had not finished elementary school. Among the respondents, 34 were employed (three female respondents work part-time due to family responsibilities) and two women were unemployed. The majority of participants (19) had one child, followed by those (15) who had two children and three respondents with three children. More than half of the participants (20) live in urban areas, six live in small towns and 10 respondents were in rural areas.

### Data Analysis

The method of analysis in the first study (focus groups) was drawn from Morgan (1997). Conceptual categories regarding the division of family labour, active fathering and the reconciliation of family and work were built prior to the analysis of the transcribed focus group discussions. Transcripts from each focus group were then independently analyzed and coded by three independent readers (researchers in the project) to ensure that all categories were represented in all focus groups. The next step was to identify recurrent themes within the categories and specific quotes within each theme.

In the second study, the qualitative analysis was based on the following research questions: how is care defined within everyday family life, which person takes care of whom, and what sort of care is taking place in families. Interviews were analyzed according to standards of qualitative methodology (Ritchie et al., 2006). The interviews were transcribed and, in order to preserve the respondents' anonymity, imaginary names are used as well as the names of people or places that the interviewees mentioned. The number next to a name signifies the age of the respondent. Colloquial language has been standardized, but the meaning and its different nuances have been preserved.

The data presented in the following section are combined from both studies in order to present as varied aspects of the phenomenon of new fatherhood and the gendered division of family labour as possible.

## RESULTS

In comparison with previous generations we can clearly observe a shift from the traditional gendered division of family labour with men being more involved in family labour, especially child care (Renner et al., 2008). However, as mentioned, the division is far from being gender-balanced in *quantitative terms* as women are still doing much greater shares, and there are also *qualitative differences* in the ways men are doing their share of family labour and how they make agreements with their partners on sharing their work (Craig, 2006; Hochschild, 1989; Van Dongen, 1995; Wall and Arnold, 2007). Gender is still the main factor in different parenting practices, also when the partners share all tasks and where they are both employed, regardless of other socio-demographic characteristics (Craig, 2006) and this was confirmed in our studies (Humer, 2009; Renner et al., 2008).

On the basis of empirical data (Humer, 2009; Renner et al., 2008) we identified gender differences in parenting and domestic labour practices as well as some other characteristics of the gendered division of family labour. Some characteristics are similar or the same as those in other Western countries, e.g., besides the unbalanced division of family labour there is also a discrepancy between the perception of the division of labour on one hand and the actual share men take in family labour on the other, while other characteristics are typical of the Slovenian social and cultural context, e.g., well-developed family networks offering support to families with small children.

### Characteristics of Men's Involvement in Child Care

The two studies traced significant gender differences in the division of family labour (especially child care) and, respectively, characteristics in men's involvement in family labour. These can be divided into three groups, namely *which chores partners divide between themselves; how men carry out these chores in comparison to their female partners; and when partners do the family chores (especially child care).*

#### *What Fathers Do and Don't Do?*

Men do nicer and less routine tasks (conversations, reading, listening, and play) and perceive their father's role in more educative terms. More pleasant child care activities, often perceived as quality time, function therapeutically:

Well, yes, at our place the main play is with Lego bricks, and marbles have been in lately. And, yes, she (his daughter, author's note) has one big obsession, her favourite, well, basically I watch a lot of films, and at those times she immediately sticks close to me. . . . As I say, sometimes we draw, watch books. (Simon, male, 36) (Renner et al., 2008).

. . . when I come home from work, I spend two hours 100 percent with children, which is better for me as well, because it's also a relaxation and I relieve my partner so she can do other things" (Borut, male, 40) (Humer, 2009).

Another criterion in the division of family labour is what kind of work men prefer, i.e.; they usually do things they like more.

If it's necessary then he also does ironing, but in general we divide chores according to what someone prefers. Although sometimes I also don't prefer to do something but I nevertheless do it (Nataša, female, 35) (Renner et al., 2008).

Men do tasks which are less time-limited or are time-flexible or time-unlimited.

I'm dedicating myself to my child considerably, but as the rhythm of life dictates, unfortunately I am away often, yet I certainly find time when I engage myself in play with him . . . (Andrej, male, 31) (Renner et al., 2008).

Conversely, fathers are less likely to do direct child care or physical chores such as nursing, feeding, washing, clothing etc. This is usually done by women:

How much who, I don't know, maybe I even do a bit more, well with the part concerning the children being done by my wife. She dresses them in the morning, changes their nappies and packs their things away, and in the evenings puts them in their pyjamas,

washes them, puts them to bed. This is mainly her work (Simon, male, 36) (Reener et al., 2008).

#### *How do men do family labour?*

Male participation is supportive and helping, which means that men *help* but the main responsibility for care is borne by females. Therefore, women play the role of a manager; they carry the responsibility for planning and organising, even when the partners share the work relatively evenly:

I'm far behind her; she does the majority of work at home. Sometimes I help hang up washed clothes, sometimes I put dirty clothes in the washing machine, I clean something sometimes, once a month; for example I vacuum. We agreed that I work in the garden, this is my obligation, mowing, and similar. And I help with children, normally, to change the diapers, to put clothes on, and other things, which are logical to me that men need to do it (Rok, male, 31) (Humer, 2009).

Men often carry out child care as a primary activity, which means that when they do child care this is the only activity they do. In contrast, women often carry out child care as a simultaneous or secondary activity (cf. Craig, 2006):

While I cook my son is with me and he is reading books, which he likes and we both laugh together and daughter is in her chair 'washing the dishes' or something . . . (Lana, female, 30) (Humer, 2009).

My wife is able to do something and at the same time also take care of the daughter, or go for five minutes there and then come back, while I simply cannot do this (Marko, male, 40) (Reener et al., 2008).

#### *When do fathers do family labour?*

There is also great gender differences in terms of the time used for child care. Men have more options to negotiate with their partners on the time they will spend with their children.

. . . I try to discipline myself so that when I'm home I surely dedicate some time, planning it, to play (Marko, male, 40) (Reener et al., 2008).

We are both engaged in care for our daughter, but my wife spends more time with her . . . in the afternoon we read, while mommy makes lunch . . . I'm more engaged in trying to educate her . . . sometimes we go for a walk together with a dog and this is our quality time (Luka, male, 35) (Humer, 2009).

While child care (and household work) represents for women a continual practice and obligation, men on the other hand are usually more involved during weekends.

There's more play with children during the weekend when you are with a child from morning till evening when he/she goes to bed. It also depends on my other responsibilities; for example, we have a lot of educational courses at work, and these are all in the afternoons (Jernej, male, 33) (Reener et al., 2008).

My wife is definitely doing more of the child care as I'm absent; I'm studying something.

So I don't have much time during the weekdays. If there's time, then I dedicate my time, more or less by the way, so that we play together. Otherwise, I use weekends to be with the child, we play through the whole a.m. (Vlado, male, 30) (Renner et al., 2008).

Fathers usually take care of children when mothers cannot take care of them, for example when they are absent due to work or they have to do some household chores:

What does my partner do in the meantime? Well, if we are not playing together, it means she is either not home at all, that is, she's at work, or she is studying something or she is at a meeting or what, something like that; also probably some household chores, some ironing (Marko, male, 40) (Renner et al., 2008).

Fathers usually become more actively involved when the child is a little older (no longer a baby or toddler):

I often take her with me to basketball games. Now that she is older (she is four, comment by Ž. H.), I always take her, just the two of us go and I think, now that the child is not a baby anymore, I can give her much more attention (Luka, male, 35) (Humer, 2009).

### **The Gap between Perceptions and Practices of the Equal Division of Family Labour and Men's Involvement**

Past research on the gendered division of labour shows that changes in men's involvement in family labour and especially child care are mainly visible at the *identity level* (Hoschild, 1989; Renner et al., 2008; Van Dongen, 1995). Men as fathers wish to take more active care of their children, they enter into closer relationships with them than their fathers used to, and they are ready to increase their participation, especially if their female partners are employed. Yet a *considerable gap* exists between the paternal identity and the subjective perception of fatherhood on one side and the reality of everyday fathering practices and the division of labour on the other (Craig, 2006; Renner et al., 2008; Wall and Arnold, 2007). Many men understand participation as their willingness and capability to be involved in childcare, rather than actual practices or time spent with their children (Backett, in Ranson, 2001, p. 23). A well-known study on the sharing of family labour conducted by A. Hochschild (1989) revealed relatively small actual changes in the sharing of family labour, but clearly seen changes in couples' perceptions of it with most couples in her research expressing their wish for an equal division of labour, while at the same time they believed that their division of labour was even.

Something similar applies to *parenting*. Research shows that both men and women express egalitarian views of parenting, and men express a wish to spend more time with their children (Craig, 2006; Humer, 2009; Renner et al., 2008). Therefore, it is more about a change of rhetoric which does not expand to the actual division of tasks between partners (DeVault, 1994).

New fatherhood perceived as a social role is starting quite passively, especially concerning the basic care and nurture the newborn child needs:

... When the child is small, my role in the first five or six months is very secondary. The mother is the one, the first connection with the child and on one hand she is dominant as the mother ... now it's changing, the children are starting to communicate and parental roles are changing ... because before I was not that interested if the child cries a lot and

needs to have the diapers changed; this is physical work for me. And I wasn't like that, to sing a song to a child, to talk with him or her; it's just that you need to do the work. Now it's different, when there is a response, also my response is different (Bojan, male, 40) (Humer, 2009).

The gap between the perceptions, wishes, expectations and everyday situations of women and men is also seen in *negotiations regarding family and work responsibilities*. The perception of the need to choose between family and paid labour is evident and realized in a gendered way, where one of the partners builds a career (usually men) and the other (usually women) also takes care of the family in addition to paid work (Humer, 2009). The ideology of motherhood as a natural disposition of women plays an important role in "rational" decisions regarding paid labour.

... basically it's difficult to confront wishes and expectations with reality. Of course, I see my partner's active role in the family. But, on the other hand, I realize that he works a lot, that his work doesn't allow him to come home at 2pm. And the fact that he comes at 6 or 7 pm, ok, sometimes at 5 pm, I wish then, that he spends some time with the son. And he does. On the other hand, you realize you cannot have everything. ... On one hand, there is a wish that we're all one big happy family, while on the other hand I see that when he's at home, he is relaxed, doesn't think about his job and spends some time with our son (Teja, female, 30) (Humer, 2009).

Gender differences are also reflected in the perceptions and practices of domestic labour, childcare and similar which can lead to *disagreements between partners* (Humer, 2009; Renner et al., 2008). Often, women prefer to do the work themselves rather than asking their partner:

... I have a system which gives me and I think also my child a sense of security, and a routine which makes sense to me. Then I sort of expect that he will also function according to this principle. If he just does things his own way, with him being different and all, it is not that my little girl does not enjoy it when he does it, but I then ask 'did you wash her with this', 'No, I did not', and this makes me very upset. But I can see that essentially one needs to let go here, otherwise it will always be me bathing her (Špela, female, 32) (Renner et al., 2008).

Disagreements between partners appear because of the unequal division of domestic labour, partners' expectations related to doing domestic tasks and the time dimension in terms of when certain work should be done. Often female partners present a barrier for men to become more actively involved in domestic labour because of their control over the domestic sphere.

... I rarely go to the shop, only when we need fruit, because you cannot make a mistake when buying fruit. ... Or if the kids need new clothes, it's not that important for me if the clothes fit; I only buy upon [my wife's] order. She gives me coordinates ... what to buy. ... I also need to go back to the shop to replace an item I bought, which was not the right one. Sometimes I take a picture and send her an mms [message by mobile phone which includes a picture], if it's ok [what I would buy] (laughs) (Borut, male, 40) (Humer, 2009).

Men's limited share of domestic and care labour at home maintains and reproduces the gendered division of labour and maintains the status quo of men's role as helpers, assistants to their female partners in the domestic sphere. But searching for guilt in women for the

situation that men are only partially involved in domestic and care labour transfers the responsibility for domestic and care labour from men to women. On one hand, traditional gender roles still play an important part which puts more responsibility on women for taking care of the home and family and, on the other hand, it results in women's requests, wishes and demands for their partners to do domestic tasks. A common strategy for solving such conflicts involves paid domestic help and the strategy is usually employed by women, and suppresses their dissatisfaction for the sake of family harmony and the partners' relationship and to accept men's small share of domestic and care labour at home in terms of "at least it's better than nothing." It also includes an economy of gratitude (Hochschild, 1989) whereby women express their gratitude to their partners even though their share of domestic labour and child care is small and unequal.

. . . whatever he does [at home], I never comment, even though if it's not done thoroughly. What should I say if, for example, he doesn't wash the dishes properly? If I'm nagging, he'll stop doing it . . . because if he is happy with his job, if the salary is good, this makes him happy and it's fine with me [if he doesn't contribute that much at home] (Manca, female, 30) (Humer, 2009).

### **Factors and Obstacles Influencing the Extent of Fathers' Involvement in Child Care and Other Family Labour**

Both studies revealed several factors that influence the gendered division of family labour and above all the extent to which men are involved in family labour, especially childcare.

#### *The Social Construction of Motherhood as a Primary Parental Role*

In the context of gendered family labour, the key obstacles to active fatherhood relate to the *social construction of motherhood* and the mother-child relationship as the primary parental relationship. In this parental constellation, fathers mainly play *an assistant or supportive role* (Craig, 2006; Renner et al., 2008; Wall and Arnold, 2007) complementing and supporting the parental relationship between the mother and the child. In this role, the father acts as a surrogate parent who usually takes on an active role in the mother's place when she is unavailable or not present, and similar. According to Backett, the very cultural construction of fatherhood as a supportive parental role is creating beliefs and norms about who is an active father. In her opinion, today an active father is not identified by men and women as someone who evenly shares childcare with his partner or as someone who has built a direct and mother-independent relation with the child (Backett, in Smart, 1999).

The social construction of motherhood goes hand in hand with the gendered division of family labour and therefore also frames the role men play as fathers and partners. This constellation was confirmed in our studies. It can be seen in the very *perceptions* parents have (men as well as women) regarding parenting:

I think it's still considered that I'm the first and responsible for putting a child to sleep, to bathe her. . . . I think that when the children are older they have more contact with the father, so that he takes a greater share then, from bathing, washing teeth, and now even putting her to sleep (Metka, female, 28) (Renner et al., 2008).

. . . sometimes she [the daughter] also comes to me, but mothers are mothers, the number one for a child (Luka, male, 35) (Humer, 2009).

One participant also stressed the importance of the maternal role, especially with regard to emotional labour in the mother-child relationship:

When our son was born, at least in the first period, I had a primary role, at least in the period when I breastfed him . . . I think that this is right, that the mother is responsible for everything. Well, not for everything but for breastfeeding, cuddling . . . while my partner was there for other things like cleaning and similar (Petra, female, 32) (Renner et al., 2008).

Mothers are seen as primary caretakers especially when the child is small, i.e., when they can talk and play with the child as already mentioned above.

When the child is a baby . . . I was with a baby at home, my partner worked. At the beginning the child is more connected with the mother. Then, when the child starts to attend kindergarten, when this process of separation starts, then the father comes in with his parental role (Mirjana, female, 31) (Humer, 2009).

### *Women as Gatekeepers?*

Asymmetrical division of labour is sometimes understood also in a sense that women also act as gatekeepers to marshal their limited power and that this is potential obstacle for men to become more involved in family labour. Our studies have not confirmed this idea. Rather we could speak of a strategy of practical organization of everyday family life and above all task distribution. Being managers of the home and family, women sometimes find it simply easier to do the chores by themselves (or to relocate the tasks to their female relatives) than to negotiate about this constantly with their partners

As far as cleaning is concerned, it's like that: he does what I tell him. But I prefer to do it by myself and that he goes out with the kids in the meantime (Maja, female, 39) (Renner et al., 2008).

When he used to vacuum, I would go around and check and would tell him 'here is still some dust and there also'. From then on he rarely do the vacuuming as I'm nagging too much (Lana, female, 30) (Humer, 2009).

On the other hand, some women have certain standards regarding how to carry out a certain chore and are not satisfied if the way their partners carry out chores is not in accordance with their own way:

I have a system of my own that gives me a feeling of security and I think also to the child; this is a sort of routine that I think makes sense. And I therefore expect that he will work in accordance with this principle. . . . And if he doesn't then I'm upset; but I realize that I have to comply, otherwise I'll have to do it (Nina, female, 32) (Renner et al., 2008).

Well it's true that there is a problem with some women who are not satisfied with how men, for example, hang out the clothes or something like that. He constantly warns me to leave him to do things as he wants; because if he's prepared to help and I go after him and correct him, he's going to lose all interest (Teja, female, 31) (Renner et al., 2008).

Nevertheless, this quote also indicates how optional it is for men to participate in family labour and how low women's expectations can be regarding their participation.

*Reservations Toward Paid Domestic Work*

One of the interesting findings from our two studies is that paid domestic work is not a common practice in the homes of the female participants in our focus groups. In the contrast to Western countries where this form of relocation of domestic work is quite wide spread (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2003; Williams 2008), our studies show certain reservations to use paid domestic help. This could be partly explained by the limited financial resources as this means an additional financial burden for family budget, however, in our studies another two reasons appeared to be more important. One is emotional reason as some women are simply not willing to turn over the tasks to an unknown person outside the family, especially not for babysitting.

... It seems to me that I'm the only one who knows how to do it best. What seems acceptable for me is ironing the shirts [that someone else could do it], which I'm planning to use in the near future (Katka, female, 32) (Rener et al., 2008).

In my opinion, I do things in the way that makes me satisfied because I have a small apartment where everything has its own place. When I wasn't able to do it anymore and my family went out without me and we didn't spend any time together on weekends, I lowered the criteria. But I don't want someone else to come to our home and touch our things (Nina, female, 32) (Rener et al., 2008).

Another reason is social control, sometimes characteristic for rural areas. Traditional beliefs held in rural areas are that care for the home and family are the duties of the woman/housewife, and any hiring of cleaning services indicates her incompetence in this respect (Rener et al., 2008):

If I hired somebody to do household chores this means in our environment that I'm incapable; that I take an hour for myself and go running for example, and that we have somebody else in the house to do cleaning, this would be a shame (Suzana, female, 28) (Rener et al., 2008).

*The Father's Involvement After Childbirth – the use of Paternal Leave and Falling Back to the Traditional Division of Labour*

As mentioned, Slovenia recently introduced paternal leave that has been well accepted by men as a great majority of them actually uses at least the first 15 (fully compensated) days of paternal leave. A survey on the use of paternal leave after the birth of a child (Rener et al., 2008) showed that men who take paternal leave right after the birth of a child are usually involved in such a way that they *help* their female partners at that time, e.g., with household chores, shopping or they take care of an older child, while female partners are in charge of the newborn child, nursing and feeding etc. This also confirms that motherhood is seen as a primary parental role and that in this constellation male partners are seen as assistants to female partners who are in need of help.

The division of family labour in this sense is not related to the idea of the equal division of labour but to the mentioned perceptions of parenthood (especially the perception of motherhood as a primary parenting role). This is confirmed by the division of labour right after fathers return to work after their 15 days of paternal leave. Namely, the division of labour immediately falls back to the traditional gendered pattern (Rener et al., 2008).

Right after the birth he did everything regarding the household, everything while I took care of the baby. When he was at home, he sometimes even woke up in the middle of the night and gave her a bottle; but after he went back to work (after the paternal leave) he never did it again (Milena, female, 35) (Rener et al., 2008).

When he went back to work, I took over all the night watch and gradually all of the household chores (Nataša, female, 35) (Rener et al., 2008).

### *Informal Family Networks as an Obstacle on the Path to Active Parenthood*

Informal family networks play an important role for families with small children in providing important support, especially as far as daily child care is concerned but often also in the form of services such as cooking and cleaning. This support has been particularly important in the last few decades as working conditions have rapidly changed. Employment is becoming less secure and work schedules are becoming stretched for both men and women. However, as our two studies show, these networks are at the same time also becoming an obstacle to developing a more balanced division of family labour between partners. As men and women are more burdened by job responsibilities, since men are those who usually give priority to their jobs and careers (instead of family obligations), and as family labour and parenting is still seen as primarily a female responsibility, it is usually the family network that takes over some of the family labour (that cannot be carried out by mothers alone) rather than men. Some male interviewees mentioned they felt somewhat excluded when the baby was born and women relatives, especially grandmothers, took over care for the mother and newborn child.

Men are, or at least as I have talked with other guys, more or less on the sidelines. I was disturbed by the fact that grandmothers were first to take care of the child, in a 'you don't know how' way. I didn't expect it like that (Dare, male, 33) (Humer, 2009).

We live in the same apartment [together with the parents], so they have had an important role in education from the beginning and with other things too, but we get along well, there are no conflicts. Now, she [the grandmother] babysits her so the daughter does not attend kindergarten, and also his parents would help if we need babysitting. We are really lucky (Katja, female, 30) (Rener et al., 2008).

Informal family networks providing support in child care and in household work enable the easier reconciliation of work and family life for employed parents. Different forms of child care, such as taking care of ill grandchildren (so that the parents do not need to take sick leave), afternoon child care or all-day child care, which is sometimes followed by a cooked meal for parents, importantly reduces the pressure of long working hours and burdens in the workplace.

### *The Reconciliation of Family and Work*

Both studies showed that the reconciliation of family and work has two fundamental characteristics. First, it is primarily understood as a woman's task and responsibility and, second, in the majority of cases it means adjusting family life and responsibilities to the work sphere. Since policies for creating family-friendly workplaces are not well-developed (only a few companies and institutions have the so-called family-friendly company certificate that was introduced as a family policy measure a few years ago), this also means that women are those who usually adjust their employment (career) while priority is given to the male

partner's career. In this sense, the reconciliation of family and work is not related to the notion of a balanced division of labour and equal opportunities but is organized by the rational principle of who is available for certain tasks.

If I was on maternity leave for three years [for three children] and now I'm back at work after maternity leave working part-time in my father's restaurant, it seems logical to me that if I spend more time at home, that I do more household work and consequentially my husband brings in more money, but he also works more. For me, this is a fair correlation that I do more household work and I also enjoy being at home. My husband likes his job more than I do mine. He didn't take as much sick leave when the kids were sick as I did (Nataša, female, 31) (Humer, 2009).

The reconciliation of family and work is stressful for many women. Female participants in both studies described returning to work after the one-year parental leave (which, as mentioned, is used in the majority by women) as especially burdening and stressful for them (women). It represents a transition from one life period to another where, besides family responsibilities, they also have to deal with work responsibilities. Although the majority of women were happy to return to work after one year of parental leave, they also described stress and fear concerning how they would manage all the tasks.

It was really hard for me because during the time of the leave you only have to take care of the child and when you come back to work, there are also responsibilities there; and in the afternoon family responsibilities again (Tina, female, 36) (Renner et al., 2008).

However, this does not mean that women are unwilling to go back to work. Apart from the fact that women's full participation in employment is highly valued in Slovenia and has a long tradition, women also see work as a sort of retreat from home and the obligations there:

Today I was really satisfied when I went to work as you also 'refill your batteries' at work so that you can be better at home. My job is important for me. I think it functions well. I wouldn't be satisfied with being a mother only, even though I like being a mother, but I also need to do other things (Jelka, female, 39) (Humer, 2009).

Nevertheless, men have priority in deciding on a job and career:

... I would like to spend more time with my family but, on the other hand, I'm very ambitious. For me, private and career life is one, it's mine. Family life is family life and I know how important it is for my wife, how important it is that we're together. She told me that the first day and I respect that, and I also gave a commitment when we got married. When we met, she asked me if I intend to work 24 hours a day. I told her no, but that I intend to work a lot and I try to stick with it (Dare, male, 33) (Humer, 2009).

This is also reflected in who takes care of a child when they are sick. In these circumstances, it is usually women who take sick leave.

I take sick leave when children are sick ... because then children really need you ... sometime also my mother helps and took care of them ... so, I usually combine taking care of sick kids with my mother (Marjeta, female, 40) (Humer, 2009).

It's always me who takes sick leave for the child; because, I don't know, it's somehow self-understood that he cannot take leave as he works in a private company ... (Nina, female, 33) (Renner et al., 2008).

But there are also examples of negotiating about who will use sick leave to take care of a child:

Well, at the beginning my husband expected, of course, that it will be me who will take sick leave for the child. But as I was constantly on sick leave my boss said 'Let him take sick leave' ... So after this we divided this (Maja, female, 32) (Renner et al., 2008).

Although this last quote gives an impression that employers can also "contribute" to the issue of a more balanced division of family labour between partners, both of our studies revealed that working conditions are becoming ever more demanding for both parents and in many cases employers apply pressure in order to adjust family responsibilities to the working sphere. This situation is certainly not creating an atmosphere for active fatherhood to develop together with idea of a gender-balanced division of family labour.

## DISCUSSION

Aiming at exploring changes in the gendered division of family labour between women and men in Slovenia in relation to the active fatherhood phenomenon, we have argued that the changes are more clearly visible in people's perceptions and values than in actual practices of parenting and the division of family labour. Gender inequality in family labour is not only seen in the allocation of domestic labour and childcare as such, but also in the allocation of responsibilities, strategies of negotiation etc. This means that women usually take over organisation and management of the home, planning, and the implementation of domestic labour, while men take on the role of helpers, "assistants", who become involved in family and care practices also on their partner's request (Humer, 2009). Caring practices involve a shift among women to informal social networks, especially their grandmothers, sisters and aunts, and paid domestic workers (for household tasks and childcare).

We have identified three *Slovenian specificities* that put the active fatherhood phenomenon or men's involvement in family labour in a socially and culturally specific context and therefore also influence the future development of active fatherhood and a balanced division of family labour in a specific way.

*First*, in comparison with Western countries there is a *tradition of full-time female employment*. This is simultaneously specificity and a paradox as neither the long tradition of full-time female employment nor the state promotion of gender equality have affected the gendered division of family labour and therefore changes in the private sphere. On the one hand, we therefore face the same situation as in Western countries, i.e., women being double burdened by family and work responsibilities while, on the other hand, there is a *second Slovenian specificity*, namely that the relocation of family labour and care (especially child care) to other females, especially women from *informal kinship networks* (e.g., grandmothers and other close relatives) and also (especially in urban places) to paid services which is largely also carried out by women (cleaning ladies and nannies).

*Third*, as a result of changes in the public sphere during socialist times men are not understood as sole material providers (breadwinners) in terms of the Western pattern. In this respect, the prevailing model of fatherhood in Slovenia seems to be a *supportive model* that does not rest on the idea that males are breadwinners. In this model, male partners are more involved in family labour, especially child care; however, the work is not balanced between the partners. Child care and other family chores are understood as primarily a female responsibility, although paradoxically there is a perception among both women and men that

male partners are actively involved in family labour. In this constellation, male partners function as supporters and assistants with the underlying argument that female partners are too burdened by work and need help in order to successfully carry out their (unquestioned) social role as mothers.

Another relevant question that arises here is what the implications of these findings *for policymakers are*. The research shows that the active fatherhood phenomenon is certainly not a simple one. On the contrary, the phenomenon is complex so the solutions of family policy should also go in this direction. Family policy makers' efforts to promote active fatherhood, e.g., in the form of paternal leave, have proven to be a right path, although these measures have to be developed further, among others with such a form of paternal leave that is more generous on the part of the state (in terms of longer leave with full salary compensation) and more obligatory on the part of fathers. As our studies demonstrate, this is the only (albeit slow) way that can not only directly promote active fatherhood but also dismantle persistent cultural notions of the division of family labour and parenthood. However, it is not only fathers who have to be addressed by the state with policy measures. Another big problem is employers who are rarely willing to listen to the demands of the family sphere. We might argue that this is also currently the weakest point of Slovenian family policy.

## CONCLUSION

Trends in the division of family labour between women and men are more significant in changes in the values and expectations of individuals (Humer, 2009; Renner et al., 2008). Women expect greater involvement from their partners with domestic labour and care practices in both the quantity of labour undertaken and the organising and planning of everyday family responsibilities. Inequality in the allocation of labour at home means that women not only undertake a greater share of family labour, but also have greater control over the home, organising and managing it, the course and implementation of domestic labour and childcare practices. This enables men to easily coordinate their responsibilities with their professional lives, whilst every day women juggle paid work with family life and experience it as a stress and effort (Humer, 2009).

The relocation of family labour between women and men also occurs in parenting. In particular, the emotional part of caring has become the domain of both parents. New fatherhood in Slovenia mainly takes the form of a supporting role which strengthens and maintains the position of motherhood as the primary family role, and puts fatherhood into a secondary, supportive parental role. The relocation of family labour is more obvious between women in the context of the commodification of household and care labour. Besides informal social networks, particularly grandparents, hired domestic workers provide an easier way for middle and upper class families to reconcile their family and work responsibilities (Humer, 2009).

The structural factors that influence the gendered division of family labour include employment and labour market conditions and requirements. The neo-liberal market with its imperative of an independent employed individual brings insecurity into work life, which applies to both men and women (Hearn and Pringle, 2006). Family life is subjected to professional life not only for men but also for women, and this is one of the key obstacles to changes in the gendered division of family labour (Renner et al., 2008). In this context, active fatherhood actually stems from the need to balance work and the family and not from the idea of a balanced gender division of labour. Paradoxically, this is more an obstacle to than

encouragement for active fatherhood and changes in the asymmetrical division of family labour.

In an attempt to identify the obstacles to the equal division of family labour, what seems fatal is the very combination of these different factors. Structural gender inequalities go hand in hand with the limiting factors of neo-liberal capitalism (the precariousness of employment and intensified work requirements), creating conditions which are anything but supportive of an equal division of family labour between partners. In addition, this constellation creates an idea about the self-evidence of equality whereby the highly gendered division of family labour and its implications for women are not questioned. And the phenomenon of new or active fatherhood is a good example showing a great discrepancy between perceptions and practices of active fatherhood and men's actual involvement in family labour.

## REFERENCES

- Arendell, T. (1997). A social constructionist approach to parenting. In T. Arendell, (Ed.), *Contemporary parenting. Challenges and issues* (pp. 1-44). Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Beck-Gernsheim, E. (2002). *Reinventing the family. In the search of new lifestyles*. Cambridge, Oxford, Malden: Polity Press.
- Cheal, D. (2002). *Sociology of family life*. New York: Palgrave.
- Craig, L. (2006). Does father care mean fathers share? A comparison of how mothers and fathers in intact families spend time with children. *Gender & Society*, 20, 2, 259–281.
- DeVault, M. L. (1994). *Feeding the family: The social organization of caring as gendered work*. Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press.
- Ehrenreich, B., Hochschild, A. (eds.) (2003). *Global Women: Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy*. London: Granta Books.
- Eurostat (2008). *The life of women and men in Europe. A statistical portrait*. Luxembourg: European Commission. <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>
- Giddens, A. (2000). *Preobrazba intimnosti: spolnost, ljubezen in erotika v sodobnih družbah* (The transformation of intimacy: sex, love and eroticism in modern societies). Ljubljana: \*cf.
- Hearn, J., Pringle, K. (2006). Men, masculinities and children: some European perspectives. *Critical Social Policy*, 26, 2, 365–389.
- Hochschild, A. (1989). *The second shift*. New York: Avon Books.
- Hrženjak, M. (2010). (Ne)formalno skrbstveno delo in družbene neenakosti ((Informal) care work and social inequalities). *Teorija in praksa*, 47, 1, 156–171.
- Humer, Ž. (2009). *Etika skrbi, spol in družina: procesi relokacije skrbi med zasebno in javno sfero*. Doktorska disertacija (Ethics of care, gender and family: the processes of the relocation of care between private and public spheres. PhD thesis). Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede.
- Jalušič, V. (1999). Women in Post-Socialist Slovenia: Socially Adapted, Politically Marginalized. In P. S. Ramet, (Ed.), *Gender politics in the Western Balkans: women and society in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav successor states* (pp. 109-131). University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Knijin, T., Mulder, A. C. (eds.) (1987). *Unravelling Fatherhood*. Amsterdam: Foris Publications.
- Kozmik, V., Jeram, J. (eds.) (1997). *Položaj žensk v Sloveniji v devetdesetih* (Women in Slovenia in the 1990s). Poročilo Urada za žensko politiko za obdobje 1990-1995 (Report of the Office for Women's Politics for the period 1990–1995). Ljubljana: Urad za žensko politiko (Office for Women's Politics).

- Morgan, D. H. J. (1996). *Family Connections*. Cambridge, Oxford: Polity Press.
- Morgan, D. L. (1997). *Focus groups as qualitative research* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Oakley, A. (2000). *Gospodinja* (Housewife). Ljubljana: \*cf.
- Office of RS for Equal Opportunities (2005). Analiza stanja. Podlaga za Predlog Resolucije o nacionalnem programu za enake možnosti žensk in moških (2005-2013) (Situation Analysis. The Basis for the Proposal of the Resolution on the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2005–2013). Accessed: [http://www.uem-rs.si/slo/NPZEMZM\\_analiza.pdf](http://www.uem-rs.si/slo/NPZEMZM_analiza.pdf)
- Office of RS for Women's Politics (1999). Second Periodic Report of the Republic of Slovenia on the Implementation of the Convention of Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Ljubljana: Office for Equal Opportunities.
- Ranson, G. (2001). Men at work: change – or no change? – in the era of the “new father”. *Men and Masculinities*, 4, 1, 3–26.
- Rener, T., Sedmak, M., Švab, A., Urek, M. (2006). Družine in družinsko življenje v Sloveniji (Families and Family Life in Slovenia). Koper: Annales.
- Rener, T., Švab, A., Žakelj, T., Humer, Ž., Vezovnik, A. (2008). Novi trendi v starševstvu: analiza očetovstva ter predlogi za izboljšave družinske politike na tem področju (New trends in parenthood: Analysis of fatherhood and proposals for improving family policy in the field), Research report. Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede, Center za socialno psihologijo.
- Ritchie, J., Spencer, L., O'Connor, W. (2006). Carrying out qualitative analysis. In J. Ritchie, J. Lewis, (eds.), *Qualitative research practice. A guide for social science studies and researches*, (pp. 219-263). London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Sedmak, M., Medarič, Z. (2007). Vpliv zaposlitve na družinske odločitve in družinsko življenje (The Influence of Employment on Family Decision-making and Family Life). In M. Sedmak, Z. Medarič, (eds.), *Med javnim in zasebnim: ženske na trgu dela* (Between Public and Private: Women in the Labour Market), (pp. 75-100). Koper: Annales.
- Sevenhuijsen, S. (2003). The place of care: The relevance of the ethics of care for social policy. In S. Sevenhuijsen, A. Švab, (eds.), *Labyrinths of care. The relevance of the ethics of care perspective for social policy*, (pp. 53-77). Ljubljana: The Peace Institute.
- Smart, C. (1999). The “new” parenthood: Fathers in mothers after divorce. In E. B. Silva, C. Smart, (eds.), *The New Family?*, (pp. 100-114). London, Thousand oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (2011a). Predšolska vzgoja in izobraževanje v vrtcih, Slovenija, šolsko leto 2010/11 - končni podatki (Preschool education in kindergartens, Slovenia, school year 2010/11 - final data). [http://www.stat.si/novica\\_prikazi.aspx?id=3813](http://www.stat.si/novica_prikazi.aspx?id=3813)
- Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (2011b). Active population, Slovenija, 2010 – final results. [http://www.stat.si/novica\\_prikazi.aspx?id=3809](http://www.stat.si/novica_prikazi.aspx?id=3809)
- Stropnik, N. (2001). Reliability of a policy acceptance and attitude survey for formulating family and population policy. Paper presented at the IUSSP XXIV General Population Conference, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, 20-24 August 2001.
- Stropnik, N., Šircelj, M. (2008). Slovenia : generous family policy without evidence of any fertility impact. *Demographic research*, 19, 26, 1019–1058.
- Švab, A. (2001). Družina: od modernosti k postmodernosti (Family: from modernity to postmodernity). Ljubljana: Znanstveno in publicistično središče.
- Švab, A. (2003). Does the state really care? Conceptualisation of care in family policy in Slovenia. In S. Sevenhuijsen, A. Švab, (eds.), *Labyrinths of care. The relevance of the ethics of care perspective for social policy*, (pp. 51-73). Ljubljana: The Peace Institute.
- Švab, A. (2006). Družinske spremembe (Family changes). In T. Rener, M. Sedmak, A. Švab and M. Urek, (eds.), *Družine in družinsko življenje v Sloveniji* (Families and family life in Slovenia), (pp. 63-89). Koper: Annales.

Tijdens, K., Lippe, T., Ruijter, E. (2003). Working women's choices for domestic help. The Effects of Financial and Time Resources. Working Paper 03/17. Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Labour Studies: Universiteit van Amsterdam. <http://www.wageindicator.org/documents/publicationslist/w17/view>

Ule, M. (1977). Družbeno uveljavljanje žensk. Raziskovalno poročilo. Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede.

Van Dongen, M.C.P. (1995). Men's aspirations concerning child care: The extent to which they are realized. In M.C.P. Van Dongen, G.A.B Frinking and M.J.G. Jacobs, (eds.), *Changing Fatherhood: a multidisciplinary perspective*, (pp. 91-105). Amsterdam: Thesis Publishers.

Wall, G., Arnold, S. (2007). How involved is involved fathering?: An exploration of the contemporary culture of fatherhood. *Gender & Society*, 21, 4, 508–527.

Williams, F. (2008). Care, Migration and Citizenship: The Case of Migration and Home-based Care in the Western Welfare States. Paper presented at the international conference Gender theories of citizenship: Europeanization and Care, 2. – 3. April 2008, University of Roskilde, Denmark.

Copyright of Journal of Comparative Family Studies is the property of Journal of Comparative Family Studies and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.