



Gendered Occupational Shifts in the Transition to Parenthood: The Influence of Personal Networks

Sociology
2017, Vol. 51 (2) 429–449
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sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/0038038515601857
journals.sagepub.com/home/soc



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Abstract

This article investigates the influence of personal networks on changes of occupational rates of men and women becoming parents. It discusses and measures the effects of various interconnected dimensions of network structures and compositions, such as density, degree of overlap between partners' networks, geographical distance between network members, and types of relations (family, friendship, or others). A set of longitudinal analyses on 235 couples becoming parents in Switzerland shows that for women, higher density in emotional support triggers a reduction in occupational rates once the first child is born, while for men, a higher density in practical support is associated with an increase of occupational rates, with a resulting increase of gender inequalities in the division of paid labour. Results are valid both for intended changes and for changes observed in the transition, and they hold when controlling for parents' educational level, income and personal values about gender equality.

Keywords

Bott's hypothesis, division of labour, network's density, personal networks, transition to parenthood

Introduction

The transition to parenthood in Switzerland is associated with a shift toward the male breadwinner model (Korpi, 2000). Despite the fact that young adults *do* have egalitarian intentions and project themselves into an equal division of labour, once they become parents, they

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often adopt a gendered division of tasks. Most fathers continue to work full-time after the birth of their first child, while most mothers reduce (partially or completely, temporally or permanently) their participation in the labour market in order to assume the responsibilities associated with childcare (Cowan and Cowan, 1988, 2000; Davis and Greenstein, 2004; Giudici, 2011; Giudici and Gauthier, 2009; Krüger and Levy, 2001). The reasons for this divergence between intentions and practices have been identified in the institutional barriers that parents encounter (Bühlmann et al., 2010; Krüger and Levy, 2001), such as the lack of childcare institutions (Ballestri and Bonoli, 2003; Filippini and Iten, 2005) and the difference between the 16 weeks of maternal leave and the one to three days of paternal leave (Pylkänen and Smith, 2003). Reasons for the increased inequality between men and women in the transition to parenthood was also explained by normative factors (women, not men, are expected to take care of infants and toddlers) (Krüger and Levy, 2001; Piselli, 2009; Widmer and Ritschard, 2009).

Factors associated with personal networks may, however, also be important, as normative and institutional factors only explain a modest share of the variance of the gendered division of occupational tasks (Widmer et al., 2003). Personal networks are rarely considered as structural dimensions, and their effects may cumulate, through the transition to parenthood, along with the effects of cultural and economic capital of couples (Dannefer, 2003; Giudici, 2011). In this article, we hypothesize that the characteristics of personal networks impact on the extent to which men and women set up a gendered division of paid work during the transition to parenthood.

The case of Switzerland is particularly interesting for several reasons. Firstly, Switzerland is perceived as a European country with a 'liberal' attitude toward family policies (Armingeon et al., 2004; Bonoli, 2007; Korpi, 2000). In fact, social policies tend to avoid interfering with the family realm, and the 'choice' of women to continue to work or to drop out from the job market once they become mothers is considered a private issue. In such a context, in comparison with other Welfare State Regimes with more active family policies, personal networks may have a powerful impact on individual strategies about the division of paid activities.

Secondly, in Switzerland, the birth of a child is associated with a more important divergence between men's and women's professional careers than in other national contexts. Together with the Netherlands, Swiss mothers have the highest rate of part-time work among OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries (Baker, 2006). Part-time occupations are often presented as an opportunity for mothers to conciliate family and work. However, contrary to the Netherlands, where part-time occupations are protected by law and have similar conditions as full-time ones, in Switzerland, part-time jobs are associated with precarious work conditions, insufficient pension coverage, and lower wages per hour (Bonoli, 2007). Thus, the transition to parenthood represents a more critical shift for women's work trajectories in Switzerland than in many other countries, as this transition is considered a private matter with only little institutional support by the State. This set of constraints may promote the functional importance of personal networks for Swiss couples going through the transition to parenthood.

We first review the literature existing on personal networks and the transition to parenthood, and we underline the importance of the structural dimensions of such networks.

In that regard, we go back to the classical work of Elisabeth Bott on conjugal networks (1955, 1957, 1971), stressing its lasting value for the understanding of gendered arrangements of couple relationships. Bott's ideas about a systemic relationship between the density of personal networks of partners and their division of paid labour is then empirically considered by using a sample of Swiss couples with a longitudinal research design (Le Goff and Levy, 2010). The various effects that are determined to be significant are discussed within a configurational perspective on families (Widmer, 2010).

Personal Networks and the Transition to Parenthood

The transition to parenthood represents a fateful moment of biographical reorientation (George, 1993; Heinz, 1999), which is particularly interesting to study as it may reveal how shifting individual resources influence the division of paid activities among partners (Giudici, 2011). During this transition, the newborn becomes a *focus point* (Belsky and Rovine, 1984; Feld, 1981; Rossi, 1968) around which social support and exchanges intensify (Belsky and Rovine, 1984). Changes to personal networks in this transition have an influence on the participation of new parents in paid work. Composed of the people who play a key role in the life of an individual and often referred to as egocentric networks (Campbell, 1991), entourages (Bonvalet and Lelièvre, 2013), family networks (Widmer, 2010), or convoys (Antonucci and Akiyama, 1995), the importance of personal networks in various life situations and transitions has been well documented (Bidard and Lavenu, 2005; Bryant and Conger, 1999; Cornwell, 2009; Falci and McNeely, 2009; Fiori et al., 2006; Szreter and Woolcock, 2004; Widmer, 2010). Social support is one central function of them, referring to their ability to respond to individuals' needs for assistance and comfort (Cohen and Wills, 1985). They do so either by way of material support, such as the provision of help with domestic chores or labour, or by the way of emotional support, such as the provision of companionship and psychological assistance (Agneessens et al., 2006).

The effect of social support during the transition to parenthood has been shown to protect people from depressive symptoms, stress, conjugal instability (Bost et al., 2002; Cutrona, 1984; Felmler, 2001), and to facilitate postpartum adjustment (Wandersman et al., 1980). Although the positive effect of social support on the transition to parenthood has been largely stressed by previous research, the structural dimensions of support during this transition – and its potentially contrasting effects – were never, to our knowledge, taken into account. Density is one such dimension that was shown to be of major importance in other life stages and transitions (Moren-Cross and Lin, 2006). It refers to the proportion of supportive ties (namely, a tie indicates a relationship of support existing between two people) over the number of the total possible ties existing in a personal network according to the number of persons present. For instance, a personal network composed of 10 people includes $9 \times 10 = 90$ potential supportive relationships. If only 45 of those relationships are described as supportive by the respondent, the density of the network is going to be 50 per cent. Density indicates the degree of tightness of interconnections among members of personal networks (Scott, 2000; Wasserman and Faust, 1994). A dense network is one where all, or almost all, network members are interconnected, whereas a non-dense network features only few ties among network members.

It may be expected that dense networks provide stronger informal childcare support necessary for women to return to their paid occupation in a national context where formal childcare is under-developed and expensive, as network members can collaborate in order to support new parents in their tasks (Iten, 2013). Informal childcare is usually provided by grandparents (or other close family members) when they have the necessary resources (such as time, good health, and appropriate living conditions) to look after their grandsons and granddaughters (Giudici, 2015). Informal childcare is sometimes preferred to formal childcare because it is more flexible and is included in a larger set of exchanges in kinship and family networks (Finch and Mason, 1993; Widmer, 2010). It has been shown that childcare provided by grandparents has a positive impact on the presence of mothers in the labour market (Garcia-Morán and Kuehn, 2012; Giudici, 2015; Gray, 2005).

However, personal networks carry values and models that exert informal social control on individuals' and couples' behaviour (Milardo and Allan, 2000; Widmer et al., 2009). For example, it can happen that caring grandparents interfere with parents' educational strategies or the time that a new mother devotes to a paid activity. The interference model, proposed by Johnson and Milardo (1984), suggests that discussions and negotiations with network members about the division of labour once the first child is born may, in many cases, lead to conflicts, both internal and external, for the couple (Widmer et al., 2009). Social control may be especially important when personal networks are composed of relatives (Treas, 2011). Despite the fact that the division of labour is one of the most studied dimensions in research on conjugal relationships (Coltrane, 2000), the impact of personal networks during the transition to parenthood is largely ignored (Cancian and Olicker, 2000).

Bott's Hypothesis

The influential work of Elisabeth Bott in the 1950s and 1960s (1955, 1957, 1971) represents a key contribution to the understanding of the effect that structural dimensions of personal networks have on conjugal lifestyles. Studying 20 London families, Bott claimed that 'the degree of segregation in the role-relationship of husband and wife varies directly with the connectedness of the family's social network' (1971: 60). She stressed that individuals in dense personal networks exercise a strong collective type of social control, leading couples to adopt the dominant conjugal style, namely a segregated conjugal relationship with a gendered division of labour in the British urban context of the 1950s (Wellman and Wellman, 1992). Bott also explained that dense personal networks provide greater amounts of practical and emotional support, leading individuals to diminish their need for a joint relationship with their partners.

According to Bott's hypothesis, we expect that partners with dense personal networks, independently of their intentions about the division of labour, more often modify their occupational investments in opposite directions when their first child is born. This happens because couples with network members forming a dense structure receive a coercive, homogeneous, and joint pressure to adopt a gendered division of paid work and domestic activities. Additionally, a dense personal network, where feelings of belonging to the group are high, is expected to lead women to be less attracted to occupational

careers, while, as far as family and domestic tasks are concerned, their male partners are expected to develop a less important 'need' to enter in a joint partnership and to value an equal division of labour within it.

The work of Bott received attention during the 1960s and the 1970s, and a series of researchers tried to replicate it with, at best, mixed results (for a review, see Milardo and Allan, 2000). Some researchers confirmed the significance of a network effect on conjugal interactions (Maryansky and Ishii-Kuntz, 1991; Nelson, 1966), while others did not (Aldous and Straus, 1966; Lloyd and Procidano, 1986; Udry and Hall, 1965). These studies, realized using a great variety of measures and methodologies, were usually based on small cross-sectional samples. Despite this rather limited series of evidence, the hypothesis of a dense personal network pushing new parents to adopt a male breadwinner-model is supported by two pieces of research, offering an alternative explanation to the normative pressure exercised by dense networks. First, scholars found that pioneering values and practices more often develop when personal networks are open because such networks offer a greater variety of lifestyle models (Rogers, 1995; Valente, 1995). This hypothesis is documented by research that studied the spread of information about the use of modern methods of contraception in Asia and Africa (Godley, 2001; Valente et al., 1997). Second, Granovetter's theory of weak ties (1983), and later the theory of structural holes (Burt, 1995), stressed that individuals bridging two or more separate communities by a weak tie receive more non-redundant information and have, therefore, more chances to get a new job. Weak ties have more chances to exist when personal networks are open and thus when density of personal networks is less important (Granovetter, 1983).

As stated above, a majority of mothers in Switzerland experience a long break from the labour market, which becomes economically less attractive, and redirecting their careers into low-paid, part-time occupations (Giudici, 2011; Giudici and Gauthier, 2009; Maruani, 2000). It is therefore expected that the density of personal networks has a significant influence on the position of new mothers in the labour market, and that a low density of personal networks is associated with greater job opportunities. As a matter of fact, Crowell (2004) found that weak ties of women increase their chances to find an appropriate occupation and reduce inequalities between men and women in the division of paid activities. Unfortunately, only one study by Treas (2011) considered Bott's hypothesis in the light of the division of domestic labour in intimate partnerships. This study confirmed the existence of a relation between dense personal networks and a gendered division of domestic labour by analysing data drawn from the International Social Survey Program (ISSP). The analyses, however, were based on a proxy for the division of domestic tasks measured only among women by asking them 'their preference for their kin over their husbands as household helpers or confidants' (Treas, 2011: 724) and using a measure of 'kin multiplexity' instead of network density, which was not available in the ISSP.

Alternative Explanations for the Network Effect

Because it produced mixed results, Bott's hypothesis received much criticism, which can also be extended to other studies considering the influence of personal networks on

partnerships. Part of this criticism concerns the measure of network density itself. Milardo and Allan (2000) stated that questions used to measure network density were at the origin of the inconsistent findings in the 1970s. In fact, various dimensions of social interactions, such as emotional support and practical support, may provide distinct explanations about the association between network density and a gendered division of labour among partners. Others proposed alternative measures of network structures. Hsung and colleagues (2006), for example, stated that one should focus on the couple as the unit of analysis and not on the individual. They showed that a higher overlap between partners' personal networks, and not their personal network's density, is associated with a gendered division of labour among them. In current research on conjugal relationships, the measure of 'partners' segregation' originally measured by Bott as the time that partners spend separately, also becomes problematic: in accordance with the advances in the sociology of the family, it is more appropriate to study the 'division of labour of paid or unpaid activities' as a specific dimension of the conjugal relationship (Coltrane, 2000; Widmer et al., 2003).

The most important criticism addressed to Bott, however, concerns the fact that her work exclusively considers the influence of network structures, without addressing the issue of network composition (Milardo and Allan, 2000; Treas, 2011). Treas (2011) stressed, for instance, that a dense network mostly composed of relatives and in-laws may exercise a stronger conservative influence than a dense network mostly constituted of friends. Similarly, a dense personal network composed of individuals living geographically close may have a more important influence compared to a network of individuals living some distance away. Even if dated, the study by Nelson (1966) revealed a strong relation between the level of personal network density and network composition. In this study, dense networks were more often composed of closer and less mobile people; they existed for a longer period, and, as a consequence, they carried a lower variety of lifestyles models. Partners with dense networks met each other through personal connections and had, therefore, a similar lifestyle ideal in regards to the division of tasks.

Summary and Hypotheses

Despite the near absence of empirical work considering the relation between personal networks and the division of labour in the transition to parenthood, Bott's hypothesis stresses the importance of weak ties and structural holes for job-seeking (Burt, 1995; Granovetter, 1983) as well as suggesting that dense personal networks lead couples to adopt a gendered division of paid activities once the first child is born. Accordingly, we expect that women with dense personal networks reduce the time devoted to an occupational activity once they become mothers, while men with dense networks increase their participation in paid work once they become fathers. As intentions about paid work participation expressed before the transition and the concrete changes in the occupational rates once the first child is born do not always match (Bühlmann et al., 2010), it is important to estimate the impact of the personal network both on intentions and on practices regarding participation in paid work.

In order to estimate the impact of social resources with accuracy, the relation between network density and changes in paid work for men and for women needs to be tested for

both emotional support and practical support while checking for alternative personal network characteristics underlined by the literature, such as partners' network overlap, the type of relationship that ties partners to their network members (relatives, friends, colleagues), as well as their spatial distance. It is also important to control for the effect of educational attainment and the couple's income. Lastly, because we assume that dense personal networks have an effect independently of values about the division of tasks, we also need to control for the presence of egalitarian values of partners before parenthood.

Sample and Measures

The sample included 235 couples living in the French area of Switzerland, coming from the longitudinal study 'Becoming Parents' carried out at the University of Lausanne. Wave one (W1) took place between 2006 and 2008, between the third and the fifth months of pregnancy, and Wave two (W2) took place one year after the child's birth, where 74.3 per cent of the original sample ($n = 173$) was interviewed. The time between the two waves is a sufficient lapse in order to understand how parents have re-organized their professional careers. Men and women were interviewed separately with a face-to-face questionnaire. Table 1 and Table 2 present descriptive statistics for categorical and continuous variables used in the analyses. This sample is composed of volunteer couples, with an overrepresentation of individuals from the middle and upper-middle class (Le Goff and Levy, 2010).

The *dependent variable* is the occupational rate of employment of men and women measured by directly asking respondents to report their participation in paid work. Respondents could freely report their 'percentage of participation to paid work', a standardized way to measure the time individuals work for pay. For instance, a full-time job represents an occupational rate equal to 100 per cent, while a part-time job of 2.5 days per week corresponds to an occupational rate equal to 50 per cent. It is presented under three forms: 1) in the actual situation expressed in W1; 2) in the intended change, as the difference between the occupational rate expressed in W1 and the intended occupational rate once the first child will be born (asked in W1 with the question: 'Once your child will be born, at which occupational rate do you intend to continue to work?'); and 3) in the observed change, measured as the difference between W1 and W2. Change scores for intentional and observed changes are continuous variables and range from positive (the occupational rate increases) to stable (individuals have the same occupational rates before and after the birth of their first child) or negative (the occupational rate decreases).

Various measures of personal network composition and structure were included as independent variables and measured in W1. The network instrument 'Family Network Method' (Widmer and La Farga, 2000) was used to collect information about a maximum of 15 persons with the request: 'Please mention up to 15 persons that played an important role (positive or negative) in your life during the last year.' This instrument also collected information about the network's members, such as their sex, city of residence and postal code, age, and the precise type of relationship with respondents (e.g. mother, friend, mother's partner, etc.). A first measure derived from this grid is the *size of personal networks*, represented by the total number of individuals included in the

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for categorical variables for men and for women.

	Men		Women	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Density of emotional support				
Low	61	26.8	58	24.9
Medium	120	52.6	138	59.2
High	47	20.6	37	15.9
Total	228	100.0	233	100.0
Density of practical support				
Low	68	29.8	80	34.3
Medium	107	46.9	112	48.1
High	53	23.2	41	17.6
Total	228	100.0	233	100.0
Composition				
Multiplex	106	45.5	106	45.5
Friendship	90	38.6	90	38.6
Family	37	15.9	37	15.9
Total	233	100.0	233	100.0
Education				
Low	60	26.7	58	24.9
Middle	8	3.6	20	8.6
High	157	69.8	155	66.5
Total	225	100.0	233	100.0
Egalitarian Opinions				
Yes	113	49.8	106	45.5
No	114	50.2	127	54.5
Total	227	100.0	233	100.0
Household income*				
Low	61	27.5	61	27.5
Mean	48	21.6	48	21.6
High	113	50.9	113	50.9
Total	222	100.0	222	100.0

*Household income and Social Network's Overlap are couple's measure with equal values for men and women.

respondent's network. Respondents were additionally asked to describe, for the first six persons of the network, the structure of reciprocal support with ego and alter and between alters as a proxy of their emotional support (with the question: 'Who will provide to X emotional support in the event that he/she experiences light problems?'), and practical support ('Who will provide to X with important support at home in case of need?'). Based on this data, we computed network density, defined as 'the proportion of ties that are actually present in the network over the maximum possible number of ties that could be present if the network were complete' (Wassermann and Faust, 1994). Practical and emotional support densities were recoded into lower (from 0 to 0.33), medium (from

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for continuous variables for men and for women.

	Men					Women				
	<i>n</i>	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD	<i>n</i>	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
Size	235	0	15	8.46	3.89	235	0	15	8.39	3.60
Spatial distance	235	7	345	68.94	59.27	235	8	331	60.35	47.75
Overlap*	233	0	0.60	0.10	.11	233	0	0.60	0.10	0.11

*Household income and Social Network's Overlap are couple's measure with equal values for men and women.

0.34 to 0.66), and strong (from 0.67 to 1). We also computed *network overlap* between men and women, as the number of alters who were present in both of the partners' networks divided by the total size of the partners' networks. For instance, a couple in which the two partners cite fully different persons in their networks, has an overlap of zero, and a couple in which the two partners cite exactly the same persons in their network, has an overlap of one.

Network composition considers the type of relationships that links respondents to their network members. A cluster analysis was performed with answers from both men and women on the free listing of network members: 125 terms were used to identify the 3953 mentioned persons. Three types of compositions were found: 111 men and 106 women belong to the type *Multiplex*, characterized by the presence of the family of orientation, friends, and co-workers independent of their sex, in which the tendency to list female friends is pronounced. In the *Friendship* network, 64 men and 90 women have small personal networks, mainly characterized by the presence of friends, rather than family members. Finally, 53 men and 37 women have a *Kinship* network characterized by larger networks and the presence of both families of orientation and in-laws. Spatial *mean distance* between respondents and their alters, expressed in kilometres, was calculated using the postal codes of the cities of residence of all network members combined with a matrix of driving distances between cities in Switzerland.

Control variables include the *educational level*, which was recoded into three categories: low (compulsory schooling, secondary school and vocational training), middle (high school degree), and high (educational or professional superior school and university). *Household income* was recoded into low (CHF \leq 7999), mean (CHF 8000–9999), and high (CHF \geq 10,000), and *opinions about an egalitarian division of labour* were expressed in W1 with the following statement: 'Men have to provide the economic resources for the family, while women should take care of the children.' Answers to this question were dichotomized into 'completely disagree' versus 'others' (including 'completely agree', 'agree', 'neither agree nor disagree', and 'rather disagree').

Results

In a first step, we computed bivariate correlations between all network measures collected in W1 (Table 3). A higher overlap between men's and women's personal networks is associated with higher density in support and practical networks, larger network sizes,

Table 3. Pearson's Correlations between independent social network structural and compositional measures.

Men	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) Overlap	–				
(2) Density of emotional support	0.14*	–			
(3) Density of practical support	0.19**	0.50**	–		
(4) Size	0.29**	–0.01	0.10	–	
(5) Spatial distance	–0.31**	0.07	–0.02	–0.28**	–
(6) Multiplex (dummy)	–0.19**	0.05	–0.09	0.24**	–0.02
(7) Friendship (dummy)	–0.16*	–0.06	–0.09	–0.43**	0.02
(8) Kinship (dummy)	0.46**	0.00	0.21**	0.33**	–0.15*
Women					
(1) Overlap	–				
(2) Density of emotional support	0.25**	–			
(3) Density of practical support	0.20**	0.53**	–		
(4) Size	0.16*	–0.04	–0.03	–	
(5) Spatial distance	–0.15*	–0.02	–0.09	–0.12	–
(6) Multiplex (dummy)	–0.19**	–0.17*	–0.19**	0.06	0.04
(7) Friendship (dummy)	–0.16*	0.00	0.09	–0.11	–0.01
(8) Kinship (dummy)	0.46**	0.19**	0.11	0.02	–0.05

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Kinship classification, and less spatially widespread networks. Larger network sizes are present when members are geographically closer to respondents and in Kinship or Mixed networks. The geographical distance between respondents and their network members is lower in Kinship networks. Overall, network structures and composition were intercorrelated. Because of collinearity issues between emotional and practical support, both were considered separately in multivariate analyses. It is interesting to note that there are differences between men and women in the type of personal network density provided by the family: Kinship networks are associated with high levels of density of *practical* support for men, while for women, they are associated with high levels of density of *emotional* support.

We used multiple linear regressions in order to measure the impact of personal networks on intentions and observed changes in partners' rates of occupational participation in the labour market. A first cross-sectional model, presented in Table 4, tested the impact of network measures and control variables on the initial occupational rates in W1 of men and of women. Results showed that women with a lower density of practical support, a Kinship or a Multiplex personal network, and a lower overlap had higher initial rates of employment, while for men, more overlap between partners' networks and a spatially closer network was associated with higher occupational rates before parenthood. Overall, couples with a higher overlap between their personal networks had a more gendered division of paid labour before becoming parents.

Table 4. Multiple linear regressions on initial occupational rates (higher values indicate higher initial occupational rates).

	Men				Women							
	N = 216		N = 222		N = 227		N = 216		N = 227		N = 216	
	Stand B	t	Stand B	t	Stand B	t	Stand B	t	Stand B	t	Stand B	t
Emotional support density	Low	-0.03	-0.35			-0.11	-1.35					
	Mean	0.00	0.02			-0.03	-0.35					
Practical support density	High (REF)											
	Low			0.07	.86					-0.21	-2.45*	
Overlap	Mean			-0.05	-.62					-0.03	-0.36	
	High (REF)	0.14	1.91+	0.15	2.15*	-0.19	-2.72**	-0.21	-3.09**			
Composition	Size	-0.07	-0.93	-0.08	-1.06	-0.02	-0.34	-0.02	-0.29			
	Friendship (REF)											
Spatial distance	Multiplex	0.01	0.08	0.01	.19	0.27	3.77**	0.26	3.68**			
	Kinship	-0.08	-0.89	-0.06	-.75	0.17	2.36*	0.18	2.45			
Educational level	Low	-0.18	-2.64**	-0.17	-2.65**	-0.07	-1.15	-0.07	-1.13			
	Mean	0.01	0.17	0.01	.15	0.11	1.61	-0.11	-1.52			
Household income	High (REF)	-0.16	2.48**	-0.15	-2.50*	-0.04	-0.67	-0.12	-1.60			
	Low	0.33	4.24**	-0.29	-4.32**	-0.46	-6.93**	0.31	4.24**			
Egalitarian opinions	Mean	0.34	4.35**	0.06	.94	-0.15	-2.27*	0.54	7.25**			
	High (REF)											
Adjusted R ²		-0.10	-1.48	-0.10	-1.64	-0.01	-0.20	0.01	0.24			
		0.16		0.16		0.21		0.24				

*p < .05; **p < .01.

We next turn to changes in occupational rates across waves. There was an important divergence between men and women in that respect, as the mean change for men was a two-point percentage, going from an average 92 per cent employment rate in W1 to a 90 per cent employment rate in W2, while for women, the change was a -23-point percentage, going from 80 per cent in W1 to 57 per cent in W2. These descriptive statistics show that, whilst men experienced little change in the time they devote to paid work during the transition to parenthood, women faced a significant reduction.

According to Johnson (2005), linear regression models are an adequate method to analyse the impact of independent variables in W1 on the change observed between W1 and W2. We applied this method in order to identify the significant factors that can explain the changes in occupational rates between W1 and W2. This method also enabled us to take into account the initial value of the dependent variable in W1. For example, if an independent variable has a significant impact on the change in the occupational rate when controlling for initial occupational rates, this means that it exerts a significant influence on the variation of the dependent variable across waves.

Table 5 for men and Table 6 for women report the results of the regression models used to test the impact of independent variables on the intentions of individuals relative to their occupational rates in the future, the observed changes in occupational rates, and the observed changes in occupational rates when controlling for the initially expressed intentions. The first model (I) shows that women with a greater emotional support network intend more often to reduce their occupational time than others. For men, emotional support networks have no effect on their professional plans.

These results hold when controlling for the initial occupational rate, household income, and educational level, which all prove significant in the women's model; women with a lower educational level (compared to a higher one) or women living in higher income households (compared to mean income households) intend to reduce their occupational rates more significantly, a result that is independent of their initial occupational rate. For men, a mean household income (compared to a High one), as well as non-traditional values in the division of tasks, are associated with the intention to reduce the time devoted to a paid job.

The second model (IIa) considers how personal networks affect *observed changes* in occupational rates later in the transition to parenthood. A higher density of emotional support was associated with decreasing occupational rates for women; while for men, a higher density of practical support was associated with higher occupational rates (or the intention to 'not reduce' when they were already working full-time) between W1 and W2. Personal network density, therefore, promotes a traditional division of paid activities between men and women. This effect is independent of the composition of personal networks, which has no effect on changes in occupational rates, neither for women nor men. As a matter of fact, if we run the same regression by excluding personal network densities, network composition does not have a significant effect either on intended or observed changes.

The strong and negative relationship between changes in employment rates and the initial rate of employment in W1 means there is a convergence in occupational rates throughout the transition to parenthood for individuals, both in intentional and observed changes. In other words, individuals with higher occupational rates before parenthood

Table 5. Men: Multiple linear regression with change as dependent variable: I) intentional change in occupational rates (expressed in W1); IIa) practical change in occupational rates (W2-W1); IIb) practical change in occupational rates (W2-W1) controlling for intentional change expressed in W1. Emotional support density and practical support density are tested separately.

	I		IIa		IIb		I		IIa		IIb	
	Stand	t	Stand	t	Stand	t	Stand	t	Stand	t	Stand	t
	N = 208		N = 155		N = 155		N = 208		N = 155		N = 155	
Emotional support density												
Low	-0.04	-0.80	-0.23	-2.50*	-0.21	-2.43*	-0.03	-0.49	-0.15	-1.56	-0.11	-1.25
Mean	-0.08	-1.51	-0.12	-1.33	-0.06	-0.77	-0.06	-0.99	-0.06	-0.64	-0.02	-0.25
High (REF)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Practical support density												
Low	0.03	0.63	-0.06	-0.8	-0.09	-1.23	0.03	0.65	-0.05	-0.59	-0.08	-0.98
Mean	0.02	0.38	0.1	1.17	0.07	0.85	0.03	0.61	0.12	1.36	0.08	0.94
High (REF)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Overlap												
Size	-0.02	-0.39	-0.02	-0.22	-0.01	-0.2	-0.04	-0.66	-0.04	-0.40	-0.02	-0.23
Composition	0.03	0.47	-0.11	-1.05	-0.13	-1.38	0.02	0.38	-0.10	-0.94	-0.12	-1.21
Friendship (REF)	0.02	0.60	-0.06	-0.84	-0.09	-1.25	0.03	0.64	-0.08	-0.95	-0.10	-1.38
Multiplex	-0.02	-0.42	-0.02	-0.38	0.00	0.05	-0.02	-0.33	0.04	0.51	0.00	0.05
Kinship	0.06	1.32	0.03	0.45	0.00	0.13	0.05	1.19	0.03	0.40	0.00	0.00
Spatial distance												
Low	-0.03	-0.74	-0.1	-1.37	-0.07	-1.02	-0.09	-1.54	0.05	0.47	0.08	0.88
Mean	-0.12	-2.58**	-0.07	-1.02	-0.01	-0.14	0.04	0.63	0.13	1.30	0.09	0.99
High (REF)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Household income												
Low	-0.13	-3.01**	-0.06	-0.78	0.01	0.14	-0.13	-2.88**	-0.03	-0.42	0.03	0.42
Mean	-0.75	-15.06**	-0.47	-5.87**	-0.14	-1.43	-0.75	-15.04**	-0.48	-6.00**	-0.16	-1.68+
High (REF)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Egalitarian opinions in W1												
Intentions in W1	0.60		0.19		0.49	5.13**	.61		0.19		0.49	5.02**
Adjusted R ²					0.31						0.31	
Δ Adjusted R ²					0.12						0.12	

*p < .05; **p < .01.

Table 6. Women: Multiple linear regression with change as dependent variable: I) intentional change in occupational rates (expressed in W1); IIa) practical change in occupational rates (W2-W1); IIb) practical change in occupational rates (W2-W1) controlling for intentional change expressed in W1. Emotional support density and practical support density are tested in two different models.

	I		IIa		IIb		I		IIa		IIb	
	Stand B	t	Stand B	t	Stand B	t	Stand B	t	Stand B	t	Stand B	t
Emotional support density												
Low							.12	1.74+	0.20	2.05*	0.10	1.11
Mean							.14	2.11*	0.26	2.75**	0.18	2.12*
High (REF)							-	-	-	-	-	-
Practical support density												
Low	0.04	0.57	-0.04	-0.37	-0.06	-0.69						
Mean	-0.01	-0.16	-0.07	-0.73	-0.05	-0.58						
High (REF)												
Overlap	0.07	1.25+	-0.04	-0.54	0.03	0.42	-0.08	-1.54	0.01	0.16	0.07	0.92
Size	0.09	1.47	0.09	1.21	0.11	1.65	-0.05	-0.98	0.07	1.06	0.10	1.51
Composition												
Friendship (REF)												
Multiplex	0.01	0.19	0.05	0.65	0.02	0.23	.07	1.32	0.07	0.86	0.03	0.49
Kinship	-0.11	-1.96	0.03	0.33	-0.01	-0.19	.09	1.51	0.05	0.61	0.01	0.07
Spatial distance	-0.05	-0.93	0.17	2.45*	0.13	2.02*	.02	.44	0.18	2.63**	0.13	2.16*
Educational level												
Low	-0.14	-2.52*	-0.12	-1.63	-0.05	-0.78	-1.13	-2.48*	-0.07	-1.41	-0.05	-0.73
Mean	-0.15	-2.94**	-0.16	-2.51	-0.08	-1.35	-1.13	-2.70**	0.12	-2.29*	0.04	0.56
High (REF)												
Household income												
Low	0.11	1.86+	0.03	0.36	-0.01	-0.14	-0.01	-0.07	0.01	0.11	-0.03	-0.41
Mean	0.02	0.22	-0.06	-0.65	-0.04	-0.45	.10	2.07*	-0.08	-0.89	-0.06	-0.70
High (REF)												
Egalitarian opinions	0.03	0.56	0.09	1.41	0.06	0.94	.03	.62	0.08	1.25	0.04	0.72
Occupational rate in W1	-0.74	-13.12**	-0.60	-8.00**	-0.25	-2.73**	-0.74	-13.47**	-0.59	-8.09**	-0.26	-2.86**
Intentions in W1												
Adjusted R ²	0.57		0.38		0.50	5.80**	.55		0.41		0.48	5.54**
Δ Adjusted R ²					0.50						0.51	
					0.12						0.10	

*p < .05; **p < .01.

reduced their rate of participation in the labour market more often, while individuals with lower initial occupational rates less often reduced participation in the labour market later on. This association is valid both for men and women. However, as the variation in occupational rates before and after childbirth is more important for women, the extent of the convergence is greater for them. As a last step, intention changes were included in model IIb, in order to test whether or not practical changes fully or only partially corresponded to what was intended. All significant effects were maintained, meaning that, independently of the individual's intentions before parenthood, density of emotional support for women and density of practical support for men will lead individuals to adopt an unequal division of paid activities once their first child is born.

Discussion

Based on a longitudinal assessment, this study has provided evidence that density of personal networks, measured before the birth of a child, shapes, to a significant extent, the participation of individuals in paid work during the transition to parenthood. Women in a personal network with a high density of emotional support experienced a more important reduction of their rate of participation in paid work during this transition. Alternatively, men in a personal network with a high density of practical support had a lower likelihood of reducing their occupational rate. Additionally, for women, a dense emotional support network was also associated with intentions to reduce their occupational rates expressed before the transition. Interestingly, the effects of personal networks are gendered: density of *practical* support is significant for men, while density of *emotional* support is important for women. The conservative organization of the labour market in Switzerland pushes men to invest in paid work unless they have personal networks where no instrumental support circulates, whereas women feel a stronger pressure to fulfil the role of non-working mother when emotional support circulates among their network members. This suggests that personal networks contribute to the shaping of gender inequalities during the transition to parenthood.

Contrary to some expectations based on literature, density effects remain significant while controlling for network composition. Unfortunately, the sample is not large enough to test interaction effects between density and network composition. Such a test would make it possible to examine whether network density has a larger effect on occupational changes when network members are mainly relatives compared to cases when they are mostly friends. Other control variables were significant. While the educational level and the household income account for a significant share of the intended changes, only the education of women was found to be a decisive factor for explaining changes and stability of employment observed throughout the transition. In other words, the obligation for women to work to sustain the family income does not play a significant role, but the drive of women with higher educational levels to invest their credentials in paid work does. Higher education is, therefore, an important resource for women to avoid a gendered division of their professional career at the birth of their first child.

This set of results shows that dense personal networks push future parents to adjust to an unequal division of paid work in their relationship, independently of the effect of all the considered control variables. On the other hand, for those individuals who intend to

enter into an equal division of labour, dense personal networks represent a structural barrier that is difficult to bypass in a context such as Switzerland, where institutions and social norms have so far discouraged extra-family child care. It is striking that, independently of initial intentions, couples with dense networks adopt a more gendered division of paid labour and thus develop conservative models of family relationships, despite their preference for alternative models. Several mechanisms, derived from the literature, can account for this conservative effect of dense personal networks. First, individuals in dense networks more often share widely spread values and norms. Social control is more efficient within such networks as their members exercise a joint and coherent pressure to adopt socially dominant normative models (Bott, 1971; Coleman, 1988). The current dominant model in Switzerland indeed states that infants need their mothers at home and that men have to carry the main responsibility for paid work in nuclear families (Giudici, 2011; Krüger and Levy, 2001; Levy and Widmer, 2013). Such ideas are widespread, especially in older generations, and young couples in dense networks may face a net of interconnected conservative influences from their parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts. As a matter of fact, individuals in dense networks less often share innovative and alternative models of the division of labour (Rogers, 1995). Second, dense networks provide much of the practical and emotional support women may need when facing the transition to parenthood in such a conservative normative context and, to some extent, may replace the male partners. Therefore, the need to enter a joint conjugal relationship once the first child is born may be lower, as the alternative, represented by gender-homophilous sociability, in which mothers interact with women relatives and friends while fathers interact with male friends and relatives, becomes more appealing. Such gendered networks are well known for their conservative effect, also in the labour market (Ibarra, 1992; McPherson et al., 2001). Indeed, dense networks more often carry redundant information and offer fewer job opportunities for women. Unfortunately, one limit of this research is that these mechanisms cannot be fully tested with the data at hand. Other sets of scales are needed to separately test the effect of social control and social support, as well as to test the presence and impact of structural holes or open versus closed personal networks. Lastly, the transition to parenthood is associated with an increase in the density of personal networks (Sapin and Widmer, in press). The present study aimed to measure the impact of personal networks on couples' behaviour during the transition to parenthood, but we are aware that personal networks also change during this transition. The birth of grandchildren is a fateful moment in which intergenerational solidarity activates (Coenen-Huther et al., 1994; Giddens, 1991) with consequences for the full network of kinship and friendship relationships, which become more interconnected. Those changes might be related to the organization of the couple before the transition to parenthood. Other studies should therefore consider inverse causality testing, the impact of couples' functioning prior to the transition to parenthood on changes of personal network structures during the transition.

In any case, the results of this study bring attention to the fact that personal networks should not be regarded as promoting women's employment by providing additional resources, thereby enabling them to stay active in the labour market. On the contrary, a higher density of social support is related to increased gendering of the couple's division of labour, especially when the partners are becoming parents. This result has some

consequences in terms of family policies. Projects aimed at developing informal support as a solution to the costs represented by the institutional care of children and the elderly are currently under way in various western countries facing economic hardship or following a neoliberal agenda (Robila, 2014). Such projects may have unintended consequences on women's employment and the division of household and family work. Couples that increase their functional dependence on their parents and other kinship members by granting them an active role in childcare are likely to see the density of their personal networks increase and, as a consequence, fall into the trap of the aforementioned mechanisms. As such, the informalization of support may have concealed costs for society as a whole, as it contradicts the emphasis on equal professional opportunities for women and men. The effects of personal networks associated with the transition to parenthood belong to a larger group of well documented pervasive network effects – seldom addressed by policy makers – accounting for unequal career opportunities for women and men. They may be more consequential in the transition to parenthood than at other times in the life course, as this transition is usually made when individuals have to over-invest in work in order to make a career (Sapin et al., 2014).

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank for their precious contribution to the realization of the article, Dr Gil Viry, Dr Marlène Sapin, Professor Felix Bühlmann, and Professor René Levy, as well as the anonymous reviewers.

Funding

This research was supported by grants #PBLAP1_136804, #130233, and #100012-113598 of the Swiss National Science Foundation and by the NCCR Lives 'Overcoming Vulnerability: Life Course Perspectives'.

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Date submitted March 2014

Date accepted June 2015