Socialized choices: Labour market behaviour of Dutch mothers
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Chapter 4

The vital and stabilising role of work preferences within Dutch mothers’ labour market decisions

4.1 Introduction

There is a large body of research documenting the strong increase in female labour market participation, the substantial differences between female employment patterns across countries, and the influence of social policy and the prevailing gender and care culture as major explanatory factors (e.g. Aboim, 2010; Daly, 2000; Esping-Andersen, 1990; Kremer, 2007; Mandel, 2009; Pfau-effinger, 2006). Many studies emphasise that in order to understand women’s labour market activity, we need to look at institutional factors as well as cultural factors, given that institutional and cultural development can diverge (Steiber and Haas, 2012, p.249). However, institutions and cultural norms may not affect every woman in the same way. On the contrary, Steiber and Haas (2012) concluded, in their state-of-the-art research article on women’s employment patterns, that there is mounting evidence that institutions have different effects on different types of women (p.359). Consequently, in most Western countries the female employment pattern is rather heterogeneous.

Relatively few studies focus on the variation of employment patterns within a country. These studies usually start from the micro-economic assumption that the number of hours a person prefers to work is the result of a rational choice between income and leisure (Becker, 1965; Steiber and Haas, 2012). Recent studies usually also include attitudinal factors to explain differences in female employment (Cloin 2010; Kraaykamp, 2012; Steiber and Haas, 2009, 2012). This study builds on this scientific work and tries to combine both perspectives. This chapter’s main contribution is to shed more light on the causes of mother’s varying labour market behaviour in one country, viz. the Netherlands.

I consider the Netherlands an interesting case in which to study the variation at the individual level, for two reasons. Firstly, compared to other Western countries, the Netherlands exhibits a particular diverse female working pattern (table 1), especially among mothers. In 2010, 32.4 per cent of mothers were not in paid work, 42.5 per cent worked between 12 to 24 hours a week, 13.8 per cent worked 25 to 35 hours a week, and 11.3 per cent worked 36 hours or more (CBS Statline, 2011). Secondly, Dutch women appear to have more opportunities than

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36 This chapter is based on a paper, co-authored by Paul de Beer, and is submitted to a blind peer-reviewed journal.
those in other affluent countries to turn their work preferences into practice (Hakim 2003c; Plantenga, 2002). Working time laws and collective agreements between employers’ associations and trade unions at the industry level all facilitate part-time work (Kremer, 2007; Tijdens, 2006; Van Doorne-Huiskes and Schipper, 2010). Research has shown that also in other Western countries, many mothers would prefer part-time work if their employers would allow it (Fagan, 2001; Jacob, 2008; Portegijs et al., 2008b). Admittedly, this part-time preference must be viewed within the context of engendered societal expectations regarding parenting and work (Charles and Harris, 2007; Duncan, 2005; Halrynjo and Lyng, 2009). Nonetheless, not all Dutch mothers work part-time. Some have a full-time job, while others are not employed at all. It is therefore interesting to examine what factors explain these different choices.

This study contributes to the existing knowledge of female labour participation in three ways.

Firstly, this study makes both a theoretical and an empirical distinction between work preferences (operationalised as the preferred number of work hours), and personal gender and work attitudes. Most sociological studies do not distinguish between the more concrete work preferences on the one hand, and (personal) gender and work attitudes on the other. Although the concepts are certainly related, I argue, mainly based on theories of social psychology (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen and Fishbein, 1973, 2005), that work preferences and gender and work attitudes are different concepts and must be analysed separately. This study focuses on the mediating role of preferences between work and gender attitudes on the one hand, and actual labour market behaviour on the other.

Secondly, most studies of the relationship between attitudes and behaviour do not distinguish between people’s general values and their personal attitudes. General gender values refer to what people consider to be appropriate for other people regarding the division of tasks between spouses, while personal gender attitudes refer to a person’s ideal with respect to the division of labour in one’s own family life (Hakim 2000, 2003a and 2003b). Personal gender attitudes appear to be more strongly related to labour market behaviour than general gender values (Cloïn, 2010; Hakim, 2003a-c; Marks and Houston, 2002a; Risman et al., 1999). By including both types of attitudes in the analysis of Dutch mothers’ labour market preferences and behaviour, their relative impact can be compared.

Thirdly, labour market studies that include gender and work attitudes increasingly focus on the causality of the relationship between attitudes and behaviour (Cunningham et al., 2005; Himmelweit and Sigala, 2004; Jansen and Kalmijn, 2000; Kan, 2007; Kraaykamp, 2012; Steiber and Haas, 2009, 2012). Hakim (2003a, 2003b) claimed that women’s personal lifestyle preferences are important indicators of their future labour participation. Nonetheless, Steiber and Haas (2012) conclude in their cutting-edge research article that the process of adaptation of attitudes to actual behaviour is more common than the attitude-based choice of behaviours (p.347). This study tries to shed some light on the
stable components of attitudes and preferences, by including objective parental socializing factors that may have influenced mother’s attitudes and preference a priori of her entering the labour market.

The main research question is:

\[
\text{To what extent do heterogeneous general gender values and personal gender and work attitudes of Dutch mothers explain their number of preferred work hours, and in turn, to what extent can their preferred number of work hours explain their labour market behaviour?}
\]

I try to answer this question with a path analysis using data from a survey among a representative sample of Dutch mothers. For this study, a special questionnaire was completed in November 2010 by 935 mothers with at least one child below the age of 13 still living at home.

The main limitation of the study is that it is based on a cross sectional survey, meaning that behaviour and intentions (preferences and attitudes) are measured at the same moment. The path model that I test is based on the assumption that socializing factors influence attitudes and preferences, and thus preferences have some origins a priori of behaviour, which might act as a stabilising factor on work preferences. In the study it is acknowledged that there is also an opposite causal effect running from behaviours towards preferences and attitudes. The factual causality can only be determined with longitudinal data, which is, unfortunately, not available.

In the next sections I discuss three hypotheses based on a concise overview of the literature on the key concepts of this study: work preferences (preferred number of work hours), work and gender attitudes, and parental socialization.

4.2 Preferred number of work hours: cause or effect?

The first part of this section addresses the question of the extent to which work preferences influence labour market behaviour. Labour market behaviour of mothers can be split into the decision to work or stay at home, and subsequently the number of hours that mothers work. Work preferences are here defined as the number of hours mothers prefer to work, and not as mothers’ occupational choices. The main focus is to understand the variation on women’s labour participation, since this variation is particularly large in the Netherlands, and not their diverse choices of occupation.

The expected relationship between work preferences and labour market behaviour is based on the theory of planned behaviour of Ajzen (1991) and Ajzen and Fishbein (1973, 2005). This theory assumes that in a given situation, a person holds or forms a specific intention towards his behaviour, which influences his successive overt behaviour (Ajzen and Fishbein 1973, p.42; Ajzen, 1991, p.182). In other words, intention is an aim that guides action to perform a single
behaviour. At the base lies the assumption that the stronger the intention for a certain behaviour, the more likely it is that a person will perform that behaviour. The overt behaviour in this study is labour market participation and the number of hours that a Dutch mother actually works. There is thus a high compatibility between the goal of the preferred behaviour and the action itself, viz. the number of work hours, and therefore a high correspondence between the preference and the behaviour can be expected. (Ajzen and Fishbein, 2005, p.183).

Many empirical psychological studies have demonstrated the predictive validity of behavioural intentions, for example in drugs or condom use, prisoners’ dilemmas, migration or in political voting (Sheeran, 2002). Sheeran (2002) reported in his meta-analysis of intent-behavioural studies, an overall correlation of .53 between intention and behaviour (also Irvine and Evans, 1995; Swanborn, 1996, p.37). In relation to labour market behaviour empirical studies on the relationship between intention and action/behaviour are scarce, although there are some studies on intentions of migration and entrepreneurship (Carr and Sequeira 2007; Kreuger, Reilly and Carsrud, 2000). Kreuger et al. (2000) for example showed in their empirical study among 97 North-American senior business students that intentions contribute to explaining why many entrepreneurs decide to start a business long before they learn about the opportunities.

There is a long-running scientific discourse about the causality: do intentions cause behaviour or do they rather reflect the evaluation of current or past behaviour (French et al., 2005; Plotnikoff, Lubans, Trih and Craig, 2012; Swanborn, 1996). According to Ajzen and Fishbein (2005), there is exceeding evidence, based especially on longitudinal studies, that shows that intentions have an important causal impact on behaviour (Ajzen and Fishbein, 2005, p.198). Nonetheless, Ajzen and Fishbein acknowledge that the relationship between intention and behaviour is reciprocal. Performing a particular behaviour can yield new insights in the consequences of that behaviour, the expectations of others, and the issue of control. This feedback in itself is likely to influence future intentions and behaviour (Ajzen and Fishbein, 2005, p.195). Nonetheless, Azjen and Fishbein argue that this insight still begs the question why people behaved previously in that particular way (Ajzen and Fishbein, 2005, p.201-202). Moreover, why is a particular situation perceived as an insurmountable stumbling block by one person and may present a stepping stone to someone else (Hakim, 2000, p.170). Put differently, why do women perceive similar situations differently?

Most sociological studies of people’s preferred number of work hours focus on the mismatch between preferred and actual work hours, and the negative consequences of these mismatches such as harmful effects on people’s lives and under-utilisation or over-employment of the labour force (Constant and Otterbach, 2011, p.1; Holmes et al., 2012; Reynolds, 2003). The upshot of these studies is that mismatches are caused by institutional and labour market constraints (e.g. lack of appropriate childcare, insufficient availability of suitable jobs), job characteristics (e.g. rigid standard working weeks, non-supportive...
supervisors) and socio-demographic factors (gender, age, educational level, ethnicity etc.) (Drago et al., 2009; Jacob, 2008; Reynolds, 2003; Stone, 2007).

Various studies have shown that a substantial proportion of working mothers prefer to work more or fewer hours than they actually do (Reynolds, 2003). Holmes et al. (2012) showed, in a quantitative longitudinal study among 1,141 North American families, spanning the first three years after the birth of their first child, that almost half of the mothers preferred part-time employment, but only 2 to 8 per cent realised their preference (p.509). Jacob (2008) demonstrates that only 36 per cent of the 1,777 American mothers in her sample were in their preferred work situation, many mothers preferred part-time work (p.222).

These studies of the mismatch between preferred and actual work hours demonstrate that most working mothers are not able to translate their preferences fully into behaviour, but neither do they adapt their work preferences fully to their actual work situation, as would be argued by cognitive-dissonant theorists (Festinger, Riecken and Schachter, 1956; Kroska and Elman, 2009; Stähli et al., 2009), since then we would not observe any mismatch. Whereas many sociological studies try to explain the mismatch between preferred and actual hours, this study concentrates on the correspondence between preferred and actual work hours. Theoretically, the study assumes that work preferences, measured as the preferred number of work hours, reflect the interplay of what mothers like, what they conceive as possible, and what they perceive others expect them to do.

Thus, the first hypothesis reads:

**A mother’s labour participation is largely determined by her preferred number of work hours.**

### 4.3 The impact of attitudes on preferences

The second aim of this study is to reveal the relationship between attitudes and work preferences. In this light, the theory of Ajzen and Fishbein (1973, 1991, 2005) appeared again relevant, and is therefore further explored. The first assumption of the theory of planned behaviour is, as described above, that intention forms the immediate antecedent of actual behaviour. In this study this is translated as: the preferred number of hours affect labour market. Secondly, intention (or preference) is, in its turn, affected by attitude toward behaviour, the subjective norm and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen and Fishbein, 2005, p.194). Within the scope of this study I only focus on the relationship between attitude towards behaviour and intention.

Attitude toward behaviour reflects the extent to which a person has a favourable or unfavourable evaluation or appraisal of the specific behaviour that is being examined. The concept takes account of instrumental (desirable-undesirable) and experiential (pleasant-unpleasant) aspects (Ajzen and Fishbein,
As a general rule, attitudes based on direct experience, which is – except for adolescents – mostly the case for labour market behaviour, are more predictive of subsequent behaviour than attitudes based on second-hand information (Ajzen and Fishbein, 2005, p.180). And the more positive and robust (consistent and easily accessible in memory) the attitude, the stronger will be the effect of the person’s preference on the performed behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). The theory acknowledges that attitudes can be influenced by various background factors, such as the educational level, income, religion, and personality.

Many empirical studies have demonstrated that women’s employment decisions depend on objective factors, like the household’s finances and the availability of suitable jobs, yet they are combined with subjective evaluations of these factors based on attitudes (Beets et al., 1997; Bolzendahl and Myers, 2004; Cloin, 2010; Cunningham et al. 2005; Himmelweit and Sigala, 2004; Hoffnung, 2004; Hooghiemstra, 2000; Kan, 2007; Steiber and Haas, 2009). However, as mentioned above, most sociological studies do not consider the intermediate factor of work preferences.

Hakim was one of the first scholars to argue that women’s decision on how much to work is based on their personal sex role attitudes and work preferences. Several follow-up studies have demonstrated the validity of attitudinal-behavioural theories (Marks and Houston, 2002a, 2002b; Risman et al., 1999; Van Well and Knijn, 2007). Beets et al. (1997) showed, in a longitudinal study among young Dutch adults (18 to 26 years old), between 1987 and 1991, that, besides the present characteristics of their job and their educational attainment, their earlier gender role orientation is an important predictor of their later intention to reconcile family and work roles. Hoffnung (2004) finds, based on a longitudinal study among 178 women of five New England (US) colleges and universities, that the plans of senior students regarding their future work and family life were significantly associated with their educational achievement and occupational status seven years later.

Opponents of these theories emphasise the number of barriers that people in their everyday lives come up against, which limit their choice (Debacker, 2008; Marck and Olsen, 1989; McDonald et al., 2006, p.472; Tomlinson, 2006, p.381). For example, when it comes to women’s choices, their educational attainment presumably has a bearing on their subsequent employment perspectives, as does their ethnic and social background, previous employment history and age (Crompton and Harris, 1998; Crompton, 2006; Kangas and Rostgaard, 2007). Moreover, care networks, work status, and the welfare policy context appear significant in shaping women’s abilities to carry out preferences (Tomlinson, 2006, p.381). And, choices are often shaped in the (often hidden) context of inequality as being a result of pre-existing gender values regarding women’s appropriate roles at home and in the labour market (Charles and Harris, 2007; Duncan, 2005; Everingham et al., 2007; Halarynjo and Lyng, 2009; Komter, 1999b; McDonald et al., 2006).
Hakim (2003) and Ajzen (1991) both acknowledged these constraining influences. For example, Hakim demonstrated that 41 per cent of home-centred women actually work full-time out of financial necessity (Hakim, 2003c, p.131). She claimed that both the structural and individual perspectives are necessary and complementary (Hakim, 2003c, p.237-240). Ajzen and Fishbein (2005) also reckoned that the theory of planned behaviour has its limits. For example, lack of volitional control can prevent people from carrying out an intended behaviour: unexpected events can lead to changes in intentions (Ajzen and Fishbein, 2005, p.208).

As mentioned, what most sociological studies miss is disentangling the more abstract concepts of work and gender attitudes and the more concrete number of hours a woman prefers to work. For example, Hakim (2000) assumed that different work life preferences automatically translate into a particular number of desired work hours (also Risman et al., 1999; Stähli, 2009). Home-centred women, who have traditional gender attitudes and do not perceive themselves as the main providers, are expected to desire no paid work at all. Work-centred women, who prefer symmetrical gender roles with their spouses, who perceive themselves as the household providers and who would still work in case they win the lottery, are assumed to prefer a full-time job (Hakim, 2003c).

In my view the concepts of work preferences and attitudes must be treated separately. The preferred number of work hours is, as mentioned above, to be interpreted as the concrete result of internal considerations of what a mother likes, what she conceives as possible, and what she perceives others expect her to do. This study perceives attitudes to be a set of conscious and unconscious ideas or moral views about various aspects of life in general. Moreover, I distinguish between general attitudes (or values) and personal attitudes (or lifestyle preferences) (Cloïn, 2010; Marks and Houston, 2002a; Risman et al., 1999). What is considered appropriate for others appears not always ideal for one-self. General gender values often seem vague and inconsistent with people’s own personal plans, and people’s answers to questions about their general values can be prone to social desirability (Ajzen and Fishbein, 2005, p.176; Hakim, 2003c, p.63; Marks and Houston 2002b, p.322; Smithson and Stoke, 2005). For example, women may believe that mothers should be free to return to work soon after childbirth, but may still be reluctant to return to work soon themselves. Research has shown that personal attitudes have a significant effect on labour market decisions, whereas more general gender values seem to have no effect (Risman et al., 1999) or a much smaller effect (Marks and Houston, 2002a, 2002b).

Furthermore, this paper distinguishes work attitudes from gender attitudes, since job ambitions and motherhood ideals often exist in different spheres. For example, Katchadourian and Boli (1994) concluded that women as well as men were better prepared for the world of work than they were for family life (in Hoffnung, 2004, p.712). Marks and Houston (2002a) found that work commitment was the attitudinal factor that best explained women’s employment behaviour, while women’s ideological views on motherhood did not differ: all
agreed that motherhood is more important than work. Work attitudes are, here, defined as a personal motivation to pursue paid work. Previous studies found that the intrinsic characteristics of work (self-development, colleagues) are more important for women than the extrinsic characteristics (pay, career-possibilities and status), than to men (Cloon, 2010; Merens et al., 2012).

This study assumes that general values and personal attitudes lead to preferences, which result in a particular behaviour. Situational circumstances and demographic factors also affect people’s preferences, although the hypothesis is that these factors have less impact on mother’s work preferences than values and attitudes. The second hypothesis reads:

A mother’s preferred number of work hours is primarily influenced by her general gender values and her personal gender and work attitudes.

4.4 Parental characteristics during childhood and its impact on mothers’ preferences and attitudes

As mentioned, a criticism against the attitudinal-behavioural relationship is that it draws the wrong conclusion regarding the causal direction (Crompton and Harris, 1998, p.140; Cunningham et al., 2005; Kan, 2005). These critics underline the reciprocal character of attitudes and behaviour: work experiences can reinforce or weaken original attitudes. With a cross-sectional analysis this kind of criticism cannot be refuted. Moreover, I do not dispute the fact that the relationship is reciprocal. Yet, I do aspire to revealing some of the origins of attitudes and preferences prior to mothers’ current life and work conditions, and thus unravelling the more stable parts of values, attitudes and preferences. In order to be able to understand these stable parts I make use of socialization theory. Socialization theory focuses on the relational context in which specific normative standards and expectations are transmitted (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). Through the process of socialization, people internalize society’s norms and values, and learn to perform their social role as a worker, a parent, a friend, a citizen, and so forth (Bandura, 1977; Handel, 2006; Wallace and Wolf, 2006). Berger and Luckmann (1967) distinguished between primary socialization during childhood and secondary socialization, which occurs throughout life. Primary socialization takes place in the period when children meet significant others, the parents (or other people who are in charge of upbringing the child), with whom they identify emotionally. Childhood is seen as the most important period in life, in which the basic structure of the individual’s objective social world is built, with which all later situations are compared.

The influence of parents on adult attitudes and behaviour is confirmed by various empirical studies, although its character and strength may vary, for example by social class, the temperament of the child, and the reciprocity within the relationship (Grusec and Hastings, 2007; Kraaijkamp, 2009; Lareau, 2007).
Children of parents with ‘modern’ values appear to have a more egalitarian perspective on work and family roles themselves compared to children of parents with more traditional values (Barret and White, 2002; Cunningham, 2001; Moen et al., 1997; Trent and South, 1992; Van Wel and Knijn, 2006; De Valk, 2008). Having religious parents correlates with more traditional preferences among girls and boys (De Valk, 2008; Thompson, 1991, p.382). Adolescents tend to have a more egalitarian gender attitude when they had a working mother and grew up in a non-standard family arrangement (single parent or foster families) (De Valk 2008; also Marks and Houston 2002b, p.333). Weinshenker (2006) has shown, with a study among 194 middle class North American families, that the expectations of female adolescents’ (aged 12 to 18) about their future employment as a mother were associated with their own mothers’ employment histories and her support for gender egalitarianism. Several studies have also demonstrated that having a working mother has a significant and stimulating effect on the employment behaviour of their daughters (Cloïn, 2010; Sanders, 1997; Van Putten et al., 2008).

Socialization theory has a distinct view compared to the literature on stratification or intergenerational social mobility. Stratification theory in essence points to resource transfers from parents to children. What parents transmit is social status, by their educational level and occupation, and subsequent similarities in social structural position may generate attitudinal correspondence between parents and their kin (Bourdieu 1984; Glass, Bengston and Dunham, 1986, p.686; Kraaykamp, 2009; Liefbroer and Dijkstra, 2007; Van Putten et al., 2008, p.438).

Childhood background characteristics that are included in this study are the more objective features: the educational level of both parents, the parental division of paid and unpaid work (when the respondent was twelve years old or under), and whether the mother was in paid work. The third hypothesis of this chapter is:

* A mother’s preferred number of work hours, her general gender values and her personal gender and work attitudes are influenced by objective parental characteristics during childhood.

The three hypotheses are illustrated in figure 3.
The three hypotheses are tested by analysing data from the LISS (Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social Sciences) panel survey, administered by CentERdata of Tilburg University, the Netherlands. The LISS panel consists of a representative sample of the Dutch population who participate in monthly internet surveys. A longitudinal survey is conducted among the panel every year, covering a large variety of domains, including work, education, income, housing, time use, political views, values and personality. Apart from this annual survey, the respondents receive a different questionnaire each month which focuses on a particular topic.

For the analysis a special questionnaire for this study was conducted in November 2010 for mothers with at least one child of twelve years old or younger, living at home. In addition, several questions are used from the questionnaires ‘Politics and Values’ and ‘Work and Schooling’, also answered in November 2010. The questionnaire included 40 questions and was sent to a random selection of 1,374 mothers, of whom 948 returned a completed form (response rate 69%).

The composition of the sample of mothers with respect to age, number of children, education and work hours differs only slightly from the composition of the full population, as registered by Statistics Netherlands. The sample is therefore representative of the Dutch population of mothers with at least one child below the age of 13 living at home.

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37 Women and their Social Environment, Liss Panel, Centerdata, University of Tilburg, November 2010.
Analysis

As shown in figure 3, the theoretical model includes three dependent variables, the labour market decisions, labour market behaviour and work preference, which are simultaneously analysed with a structural path model. The advantage of a structural path model is that it enables to examine in one regression analysis the causal relationship between a number of independent variables and more than one dependent variable. Moreover, the analysis estimates the direct and the indirect impact of several independent variables, while controlling for their co-variances. In this way the relative importance of the total effect of various attitudes and personal characteristics on work preferences and on labour market behaviour can be compared. To perform the structural path analysis the study uses the software package Amos™ 19 (IBM SPSS®).

For a well-functioning path analysis, the number of variables included in the analysis must be limited. For this reason, a number of logistic and linear (OLS) regressions were performed with the dependent variables separately, in order to determine which independent variables have a significant effect on the dependent variables (see results regression analyses in appendix 2). Next, the most non-significant variables were removed from the analysis, until only the significant variables were left. Finally, all dependent variables and the significant independent variables were included in a structural path analysis. Within the regression analyses I also tested for multicollinearity, and based on the values (Vif) I could accept the variables. The path analysis is based on 935 cases. Based on the Bollen-stine bootstrap, a measure for the goodness-of-fit in case of non-normal data for a path model, the model is accepted (Arbuckle, 2010).

Dependent variables

Table 3 gives an overview of the descriptive statistics of the dependent variables and the background characteristics used in the analysis.

38 See also for appendix bilateral correlations of all dependent and independent variables.
39 Before I could perform a Bollen-Stine bootstrap I had to recode all the missing values into the mean values. After recoding the missing values, the model fitted better in 935 bootstrap samples - testing the null hypothesis that the model was correct – (Bollen-Stine bootstrap p = .001). However, for the missing values Amos computes maximum likelihood estimates. This is preferred to regular regression methods handling with missing values (listwise deletion, pairwise deletion or data imputation (Arbuckle, 2010, p.270). Therefore the model that is presented includes the missing values.
### Table 3. Descriptive Statistics variables included in model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Work yes or no</td>
<td>817</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.740</td>
<td>.439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Work hours</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>45.00</td>
<td>23.780</td>
<td>9.274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Preferred work hours</td>
<td>935</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>45.00</td>
<td>17.704</td>
<td>12.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Level of education</td>
<td>936</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>1.323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Attendance to religious gatherings</td>
<td>833</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>1.453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Age</td>
<td>935</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>43.52</td>
<td>8.337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Age2</td>
<td>935</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>40.96</td>
<td>19.634</td>
<td>7.289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Partner present</td>
<td>935</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Partner no income</td>
<td>935</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.081</td>
<td>.273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Income partner</td>
<td>842</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>8.99</td>
<td>6.949</td>
<td>2.251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Number of children</td>
<td>935</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>8.337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Age of youngest child &lt;4</td>
<td>935</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.236</td>
<td>.425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Age of youngest child &lt;8</td>
<td>935</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.258</td>
<td>.438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Age of youngest child &lt;12</td>
<td>935</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.218</td>
<td>.413</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Personal work attitudes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15. A good education is important.</td>
<td>934</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I want to fulfill my full potential.</td>
<td>934</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Caring for others is important</td>
<td>934</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I like to work.</td>
<td>934</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. I work to be valued by my social environment.</td>
<td>934</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. I only want to do what I really want.</td>
<td>934</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Work is above all a means to earn money.</td>
<td>934</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. I work to be financially independent of others.</td>
<td>934</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. I work to contribute to society.</td>
<td>934</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. When I do not do paid work. I feel less worthwhile.</td>
<td>934</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. I work to make a career.</td>
<td>934</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. General gender values</td>
<td>834</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>.506</td>
<td>.1371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Ideal family life</td>
<td>930</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>.694</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Educational level father.</td>
<td>837</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>1.177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Educational level mother</td>
<td>863</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>.996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Parental family life</td>
<td>934</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>.854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Did your mother have paid work when you were twelve years old?</td>
<td>935</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.302</td>
<td>.459</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The main dependent variable in the model is a mother’s labour participation. For both theoretical and empirical reasons this variable is split in two separate variables: whether the respondent has paid work or not (the *participation* variable) and the *number of hours* per week she works on average when she does have paid work. The theoretical reason for this distinction is that the decision to
work may be influenced by factors other than the number of work hours. The empirical reason is that the distribution of the number of work hours, including those who do not work, has a spike at zero hours and a more or less normal distribution for positive values, which complicates the estimation of the number of work hours with a linear regression analysis.

The second dependent variable, which also acts as an explanatory variable of the first dependent variable, is the preferred number of work hours. This is measured by the question: How many hours per week in total would you like to work?

**Independent variables: attitudinal factors**

The independent variables include three attitudinal variables. The first independent variable is a mother’s *general gender values*. The questions used for this variable are derived from the standard LISS-questionnaire ‘Politics and Values’ and are similar to questions in the European Values Studies (2009). I constructed a scale based on seven statements regarding the preferred role of mothers and fathers, such as ‘a child that is not yet attending school is likely to suffer the consequences if his or her mother has a job’ and ‘the father should earn money, while the mother takes care of the household and the family’ (see table 4 for a full list of the statements). The possible answers were: 1. fully disagree, 2. disagree, 3. neither agree nor disagree, 4. agree, 5. fully agree. A factor analysis showed that these variables load on one dimension. By adding the answers to each of the questions and rescaling, I created a variable ranging from 0 (the most traditional general gender value) to 1 (the most egalitarian). This scale is highly reliable (Cronbach’s Alpha 0.781).

**Table 4. General gender values: to what extent do you agree with the following propositions?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposition</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A working mother’s relationship with her children can be just as close and warm as that of a non-working mother</td>
<td>837</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>1.103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A child that is not yet attending school is likely to suffer the consequences if his or her mother has a job</td>
<td>837</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>1.193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Fathers ought to do more in terms of household work than they do at present</td>
<td>837</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>.857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Fathers ought to do more in terms of childcare than they do at present</td>
<td>837</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>.843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The father should earn money, while the mother takes care of the household and the family</td>
<td>837</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>.891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. A woman is more suited to rearing young children than a man</td>
<td>837</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>1.056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Overall, family life suffers the consequences if the mother has a full-time job</td>
<td>837</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>1.275</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: ‘Politics and Values’, University of Tilburg, November 2010.*

*a All items range from 1 (fully disagree) to 5 (fully agree), answers on question 1, 3 and 4 are*
reversed recoded and after computing the scale, the whole scale is reversed and rescaled, running from 0 (traditional) to 1 (egalitarian). Cronbach’s Alpha = 0.781.

The second independent variable is a mother’s personal gender attitude. This variable is based on one question, as suggested by Hakim (2000): ‘Which family life is closest to your ideal family life?’. The possible answers are shown in table 5. This variable is recoded into three categories, viz. a traditional ideal family life (answering option 1), an adaptive ideal family life (answering option 2) and an egalitarian ideal family life (answering categories 3 to 6). According to this question, only one in eight mothers has a traditional personal gender attitude, a little more than one third have adaptive personal gender attitudes and a little more than half of the mothers have egalitarian gender attitudes (table 5).

Table 5. Which family life is closest to your ideal family life?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>% agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A family in which my partner works fulltime and I take care of the</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>household tasks and child care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A family in which my partner works fulltime and I work part-time</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and take the main responsibility of the household tasks and child</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A family in which both parents share equally paid labour, household</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tasks and child care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. A family in which I work fulltime and my partner works part-time</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and he (or she) takes the main responsibility of the household tasks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and child care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. A family in which I work fulltime and my partner takes care of the</td>
<td>.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>household tasks and child care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. A single parent family in which I work and take care of the</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>household tasks and child care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. No children</td>
<td>.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 930

Source: ‘Women and their social environment’, Liss Panel, Centerdata, University of Tilburg, November 2010.

The third attitudinal variable refers to the respondents’ personal work-life attitude. This attitude is measured by asking each respondent to choose out of eleven propositions about work and life, (e.g. ‘I work in order to earn money’ and ‘I work to contribute to society’), the three answers that suited her most. The propositions also include life attitudes, like ‘a good education is important’, ‘caring for others is important’ and ‘I only want to do want I really want’. The first reason for this is that mothers who are not employed are also included in the sample, and inviting them to consider only work attitudes would be awkward and would make it difficult for them to choose their current attitudes. The second reason is that I expect if mothers are also invited to consider other important life values, the relative importance of specific work attitudes will be measured more accurately. The respondents could pick a maximum of three answers. In this way of questioning, it is assumed that only strong personal attitudes are chosen. Ajzen and Fishbein (2005) argue that the strength of an attitude is related to the strength
of the association, the stronger the attitude, the more automatically and frequently accessible the association is from memory.

The consequence of this way of questioning is that the different propositions could not be transformed straightforwardly into a single variable. The Cronbach’s Alpha of a set of attitudes selected by a factor analysis was too small to reduce the number of variables by constructing a scale variable. Therefore, I include each attitude that was mentioned as a separate dichotomous variable in the analysis (see table 2 for the full list).

**Independent variables: socialization factors**

In line with socialization theory and exposure-based theories, the respondents were asked questions about several parental background characteristics that might have influenced their current preferred number of work hours. These include the educational level of the respondent’s parents, measured in five categories, and the fact as to whether the respondent’s mother used to be in paid work when the respondent was aged 12. It is also expected in this study that the more egalitarian the division of labour between the respondent’s parents was, the more egalitarian her own (general and personal) gender attitude is (Putten, 2009, Schroeder, Blood and Maluso, 1997). Since a single mother can, by definition, not have an unequal division of roles with her spouse, it is assumed that being raised by a single parent also renders more egalitarian gender attitudes. Therefore, the actual division of labour between the parents at the time the respondent was 12 years old, was asked. The respondents could choose between a traditional breadwinner household (father worked, mother stayed at home), a modified breadwinner-household (father worked full-time, mother worked part-time), an egalitarian household (both parents worked and shares unpaid tasks equally), and a single parent family. The results in table 6 indicate that the vast majority (61.8 per cent) of Dutch mothers were raised in traditional households, 10.3 per cent had an egalitarian parental background, and 4.6 per cent of the mothers were raised in a single parent family.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6. Parental division of labour at twelve years old</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Traditional division of labour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. One-and-a-half breadwinner model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Egalitarian division of labour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Single parent family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: ‘Women and their social environment’, Liss Panel, Centerdata, University of Tilburg, November 2010.*
Independent variables: demographic and situational factors

To allow for objective background characteristics, several control variables are included. These variables allow weighing the importance of attitudinal factors as compared to objective characteristics. Moreover, the path analysis enables us to distinguish between the (direct) influence of these background characteristics on women’s labour market behaviour and the indirect influence through her work preferences.

Educational attainment. Many studies have shown that the higher the educational level attained, the higher the labour market participation of women (Merens et al., 2011). Higher educated women more frequently continue to work after giving birth than low educated women, because the former earn a higher wage, which allows them to pay for child-care facilities (Doorewaard et al., 2004, p.11). Furthermore, it is known that women’s and men’s educations are positively associated with egalitarianism (Kroska and Elman, 2009, p.373,), which might be the result of exposure to ideas about equality or the establishment of career-oriented networks (Cunningham et al., 2005, p.887). Thus, the study expects higher educated mothers to (prefer to) work more hours than lower educated mothers.40

Number and age of children. It is expected that the larger the number of children, and the younger their age, the lower the mother’s (preferred) number of work hours will be. The age of youngest child is measured in three categories: 0 to 4 years, 5 to 8 years, and 9 to 12 years.

Age. Age may refer to the life phase as well as to the generation (birth cohort) of the respondent. In a cross-sectional analysis it is not possible to distinguish between age and cohort effects. Recent research has shown that the number of hours women work after giving birth to their first child is higher for younger generations than for older ones (Lut, Van Galen and Latten, 2010). Younger mothers are expected to work more hours than older mothers. Yet, the older a mother is, the older her children tend to be, and so her caring tasks diminish. Thus, the number of work hours older mothers prefer is expected to be higher than the number younger mothers prefer. After a certain age, as mothers approach retirement, their preferred labour market orientation may change again (Román et al., 2007). To account for this possible non-linear relationship between age and labour participation, the variable age squared (divided by 100) is included in the analyses.

Partner. A partner can affect his spouse’s employment decisions in various ways: his income, the number of hours he works, his career perspectives, his attitude towards her income and her career perspectives, and his acceptance or

40 The categories are: 1: primary school, 2: VMBO (intermediate secondary education (equivalent to US: junior high school); 3: HAVO/WVO (higher secondary education/preparatory university; 4: MBO (intermediate vocational education, equivalent to US junior college); 5: HBO (higher vocational education, equivalent to US college); 6: WO (university).
rejection of the male breadwinner model may all influence a mother’s labour market preferences and behaviour (Hoffnung and Williams, 2013; Kangas and Rostgaard, 2007; Van Wel and Knijn, 2006). I expect that cohabiting mothers work fewer hours than single mothers, since single women cannot financially rely on a partner and, thus, have to work more hours in order to earn a living. And yet the preferred number of work hours for single mothers might be lower because they cannot share their caring tasks with a partner.

In line with microeconomic theory, the higher the income of the partner, the fewer hours his wife works, because his income is sufficient to make ends meet. Moreover, a strongly career-oriented husband, with high earnings, may work long hours and leave the bulk of household responsibilities to his wife, which may hinder her labour participation (Cloïn, 2010). However, a high income might not necessarily reduce a mother’s work preference, which might be higher than one would expect in view of her partners’ income.

Religion. Religiosity is also expected to coincide with more traditional general and personal gender attitudes, since most religions endorse traditional views on the role of women (Bolzendahl and Meyers, 2004; Cunningham, 2001; De Valk, 2008; Kraaykamp, 2012; Thompson, 1991). I thus expect that religious mothers have lower work preferences and more traditional general values and personal attitudes. The respondents were asked how often, aside from special occasions such as weddings and funerals, they attend religious gatherings nowadays: 1: every day; 2: more than once a week; 3: once a week; 4: at least once a week; 5: only on special religious days; 6: less often; 7: never.

4.6 Results

Hypothesis 1:
A mother’s labour participation is largely determined by her preferred number of work hours.

Participation decision

Initially, all relevant demographic variables and the number of preferred work hours are included in the analysis, in order to examine which variables affect whether a mother has a paid job or not. Remarkably, only the number of preferred work hours exerts a direct significant effect on participation in paid work (beta .673) (table 6). Work preference explains 45 per cent of the variance of the participation. In itself, this is not very surprising, but the impact of this variable is so strong that the background characteristics of the mother, such as age, educational level, the number of children, the presence and the income of a

41 Since we include the log of the income of the partner in the analysis, we imputed a value of zero for the log of zero income, which does not exist. To correct for this, we added a dummy variable of one when the partner has no income.
partner, do not have any direct significant influence at all, despite the fact that these variables play a crucial role in most sociological and economic theories of labour market behaviour. To the extent that these factors do matter, their influence is fully mediated by the work preference of the mother.

Furthermore, the data indicates that 54.9 per cent of the mothers work exactly the number of hours they prefer, 22.3 per cent want to work more hours (on average 10.6 hours) and 22.8 per cent desire less hours at work (on average 6.6 hours). Previous Dutch research already revealed (Van Wel and Knijn, 2006) that most Dutch women (60%) do not want to work more or fewer hours per week than they actually do; one in five would like to work fewer hours per week, and one in five would like to work more. In particular, women with a lower education would like to work more (Van Wel and Knijn, 2006, p.646). By comparison, only roughly one third of American women succeed in working their preferred number of hours (Jacob, 2008; Fagan, 2001; Reynolds, 2003). Therefore, the results seem to confirm the expectation that, compared to other affluent societies, Dutch mothers have more opportunities to work their preferred number of hours (Hakim, 2003c; Plantenga, 2002).

**Number of hours worked**

Next, the study examines which variables affect the number of hours a mother works if she has paid work (table 6). The Squared Multiple Correlation of the regression analysis of work hours is 0.69. As expected, older mothers work fewer hours than younger mothers, but the positive sign of age squared shows that the number of hours increases again beyond the age of 44. Consistent with previous research, we see that higher educated mothers work more hours than lower educated mothers. As expected, mothers who consider themselves to be religious work fewer hours. In line with microeconomic theory, the income of her partner exerts a negative influence on the hours a mother works. Unexpectedly, the presence of a partner and the number and the age of her children do not affect the actual hours in paid work.

Of most interest for the study is the significant effect of a mother’s preferred number of work hours on her actual number of work hours (beta .790). In line with the hypothesis, within this path analysis there is not a significant effect running from actual work hours to preferred work hours. Moreover, it is noteworthy that the standardised coefficient of the preferred work hours is much larger than the standardised coefficients of the background characteristics, which means that the influence of work preference outweighs the other influences. The results, therefore, confirm the first hypothesis.

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42 The standardised coefficients of age and age squared are comparable with work preference, but because they have opposite signs they largely cancel each other out.
Chapter 4 - The vital and stabilising role of work preferences

Hypothesis 2:
A mother’s preferred number of work hours is primarily influenced by her general gender values and her personal gender and work attitudes.

Which variables explain the number of hours a mother prefers to work? A number of background characteristics contribute to explaining their preferred number of work hours (table 7).

As expected, the older a mother is, the more hours she wishes to work, although, as shown above, she actually works fewer hours. Apparently, her older age makes it more difficult to put her preference into practice. Next, the more children a mother has, the fewer hours she prefers to work. The age of her children has no additional effect. Higher educated mother prefer to work more hours than lower educated mothers. Religiousness has no effect on her preferred number of work hours, whereas it has on her actual number of work hours. Neither the presence nor the income of her partner has an effect on a mother’s preferred hours, although her partner’s income does, as we have seen, significantly reduce her actual work hours.

Secondly, included in the path model are the attitudinal factors, which can be used in order to explain the number of preferred work hours. If attitudinal factors are included in the analysis, they seem more important than the impact of these demographic situational factors, which confirms the second hypothesis (table 7).

The more egalitarian a mother’s general gender values, the more hours she prefers to work (beta .130). As expected, the personal ideal family life has a stronger impact on the preferred number of hours than more general moral views on the gender division of labor (beta .235). In addition, personal work attitudes matter as well. Nevertheless, only two work-life attitudes out of the eleven options affect a mother’s preferred number of work hours significantly. A mother who chooses “I like to work” and “I work in order to be economically independent of others” prefers to work 2 to 3 hours more per week (beta .101 and .117, respectively) compared to a mother who does not endorse these propositions.43

Hypothesis 3:
A mother’s preferred number of work hours, her general gender values and her personal gender and work attitudes are influenced by parental characteristics during childhood.

In order to examine the third hypothesis, the path model needed to be extended to include four attitudinal variables that appeared to have a significant relationship with preferred number of work hours. These four attitudinal factors are: general

43 The other possibilities remained insignificant if “I like to work” and “I work in order to be economically independent of others” were removed from the analysis.
gender values, personal ideal family life, “I work in order to be economically independent”, and “I like to work”. They are included as dependent variables in the model, which increases the total number of dependent variables to seven. As independent variables, the objective parental characteristics during childhood were included, so as to examine whether the numbers of preferred work hours, gender values and (personal) gender and work attitudes have origins a priori of labour market behaviour. The parental educational level and the parental division of labour appear to have no additional effect (beyond the respondent’s own educational level and personal ideal division of labour) on a mother’s current preferred number of work hours, nor on her current gender and work attitudes. Yet, corresponding with earlier research, in cases where the respondent’s own mother had a paid job when her daughter was 12 years old, the now-adult daughter prefers to work almost 3 hours more than if her mother had not worked (beta .254). In addition, having had a mother in paid work also exerts influence on a mother’s current general gender values (beta .109), her personal ideal family life (beta .162) and the work attitude “I work in order to be economically independent” (beta .162) (tables 7a and 7b).
Table 7. Results of a path analysis of the dependent variables: work (yes or no), number of work hours, preferred number of work hours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model 3: Including parental characteristics</th>
<th>Work preference</th>
<th>Work hours</th>
<th>Preferred work hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>B (s.e.)</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>B (s.e.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Work preference</td>
<td>.673</td>
<td>.025***</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Age</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>-.971</td>
<td>-.948 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Age2</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>1.012</td>
<td>1.067 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Education</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>.140</td>
<td>.919 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Partner present</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Income partner</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>-5.56</td>
<td>-1.080 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. No income</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>-.701</td>
<td>-8.042 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Religiousness</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>-.053</td>
<td>-.609 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Number of children</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>-.105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Age of children &lt;4*</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Age of children &lt;8</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Ideal family Life</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>.254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. General gender values</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>.130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Economic Independence</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>.117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I like to work</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>.101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Mother in paid work</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>.254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>.269</td>
<td>27.366</td>
<td>37.475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squared Multiple corr, (R2)</td>
<td>.453</td>
<td>.692</td>
<td>.192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of Freedom</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bollen-stine bootstrap P=0.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Age of children < 13 years reference group.
2. Beta: standardized regression coefficient.
4. S.E: standard error.
5. *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001
6. Bollen-stine bootstrap is a measure for the goodness-of-fit in case of non normal data for a path model. Based on this outcome the model can be accepted.
Table 7a. - continued: results of the path analysis (table 7) showing dependent variables, Ideal family life and general gender values.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Egalitarian</th>
<th>Ideal family life</th>
<th>Egalitarian</th>
<th>General gender attitude</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>B (s.e.)</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>B (s.e.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Age</td>
<td>1.405</td>
<td>1.296</td>
<td>.015***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.023)</td>
<td>(.026)</td>
<td>(.005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Age2</td>
<td>-.1417</td>
<td>-1.304</td>
<td>-.016***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.026)</td>
<td>(.005)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Education</td>
<td>.294</td>
<td>.360</td>
<td>.028 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.016)</td>
<td>(.003)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Religiousness</td>
<td>-.100</td>
<td>-1.59</td>
<td>-.022***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.023)</td>
<td>(.004)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Partner</td>
<td>-.379</td>
<td>-.269***</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.047)</td>
<td>(.006)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Mother in paid work</td>
<td>.162</td>
<td>.115 **</td>
<td>.015 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.039)</td>
<td>(.006)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>-.147</td>
<td>-.109</td>
<td>.070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.492)</td>
<td>(.100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Squared Multiple corr, (R2)  .160  .154

1. Age of children < 13 years reference group.
2. Beta: standardized regression coefficient.
4. S.E.: standard error.
5. *p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001

Table 7b. - continued: results of the path analysis (table 7) showing dependent variables, the work attitudes: ‘I work in order to be economically independent’ and ‘I like to work’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic independence</th>
<th>I like to work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>B (s.e.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Age</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Age2</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Education</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Religiousness</td>
<td>-.068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Partner</td>
<td>-.275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.027)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Mother in paid work</td>
<td>.162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.027)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>.195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.099)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Squared Multiple corr, (R2)  .182  .126

1. Age of children < 13 years reference group.
2. Beta: standardized regression coefficient.
4. S.E.: standard error.
5. *p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001

As noted above, an advantage of a path analysis is that it enables us to estimate both the direct and the indirect impact of several independent variables, resulting in the total standardized effects (table 8). These results indicate that the influence of a working mother in childhood affects not only her daughter’s work preference, but also her daughter’s gender and work attitudes, which increases the total effect of a working mother on work preferences substantially (beta .325). The impact on her daughter’s labour market activity of a working mother seems therefore more significant than previous Dutch research has shown (Cloïn, 2010; Lut, Van Galen and Latten, 2010; Sanders, 1997; Van Putten et al., 2008), since this impact runs directly through her work preferences as well as indirectly through a mother’s current values and attitudes.

Table 8. Standardized total effects of dependent variables, work, work hours, preferred work hours, gender values, ideal family life, and the work attitudes: ‘I work in order to be economically independent’ and ‘I like to work’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Work Hours</th>
<th>Work preference</th>
<th>Ideal family life</th>
<th>General gender values</th>
<th>Economic Independence</th>
<th>I like to work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Education</td>
<td>.154</td>
<td>.321</td>
<td>.229</td>
<td>.294</td>
<td>.360</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Number of children</td>
<td>-.071</td>
<td>-.079</td>
<td>-.105</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Partner present</td>
<td>-.064</td>
<td>-.075</td>
<td>-.095</td>
<td>-.379</td>
<td>-.275</td>
<td>.263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Income partner</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-.556</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. No income</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-.701</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Age</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>.961</td>
<td>2.448</td>
<td>1.296</td>
<td>1.296</td>
<td>1.283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Age squared</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>-.1033</td>
<td>-2.589</td>
<td>-1.417</td>
<td>-1.304</td>
<td>-1.329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Religiousness</td>
<td>-.035</td>
<td>-.094</td>
<td>-.052</td>
<td>-.100</td>
<td>-.159</td>
<td>-.068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Work preference</td>
<td>.673</td>
<td>.790</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Ideal family life</td>
<td>.158</td>
<td>.186</td>
<td>.231</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Gender values</td>
<td>.088</td>
<td>.103</td>
<td>.130</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I like to work</td>
<td>.068</td>
<td>.079</td>
<td>.101</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Economic independence</td>
<td>.078</td>
<td>.092</td>
<td>.117</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Mother paid work</td>
<td>.219</td>
<td>.257</td>
<td>.325</td>
<td>.162</td>
<td>.109</td>
<td>.162</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


4.7 Conclusion and discussion

This chapter has examined the extent to which differences in gender values and gender and work attitudes of Dutch mothers explain the variations in their preferred number of work hours, and, consequently, their diverse labour market
behaviour. In contrast to previous research, the concept of preferred work hours is distinguished from (general and personal) attitudes, both theoretically and empirically. Theoretically, the study assumes that work preference, measured as the preferred number of work hours, reflects the interplay of what mothers like, what they conceive as possible, and what they perceive others expect them to do. By conducting a path analysis, the link between attitudes, preferences and actual labour market behaviour could be established, while controlling for the influence of background characteristics.

The results show that the preferred number of work hours is the only factor that exerts a direct significant effect on the participation decision. Contrary to most other theoretical and empirical studies, the background characteristics of the mothers do not have any direct effect on their participation decisions (although indirectly they do play some role). This might be explained by the fact that most other studies of labour market behaviour have no control for the influence of preferred work hours.

Regarding the number of hours a mother works, the preferred number of work hours has by far the strongest correlation with the number of hours a mother actually works. The analysis also gives support to the influence of a number of background characteristics that play an important role in microeconomic theories of labour market behaviour. Educational level has a positive effect on the actual number of work hours, and the income of the partner a negative effect, just as microeconomic theory predicts. Age has a curvilinear effect: up until the age of 44, work hours decline, and after that age they increase again. In addition, religiousness tends to reduce the number of work hours.

The hypothesis that the preferred number of work hours primarily corresponds with general values and personal attitudes is also supported by the empirical analysis. Moreover, if attitudinal (especially personal) factors are included in the analysis, they prevail over demographic and situational factors. If a mother’s ideal is to be a full-time homemaker, her preferred number of work hours is considerably smaller than if her ideal is an equal division of paid and unpaid work between both partners. More egalitarian general gender values also boost the preferred number of work hours, although the effect is smaller than that of her ideal family life.

As expected, a mother’s personal work attitude relates to her work preference. But only two specific work attitudes have an additional positive effect on a mother’s work preference, namely “I like to work” and “I work in order to be economically independent of others”. This might be a consequence of the fact that in the questionnaire mothers could only choose to answer in three categories, which had the advantage of forcing them to choose their most relevant attitudes. It is preferable to utilise this method of questioning rather than scoring all possible attitudes with a Likert-scale, such as is the questioning method in most social surveys, so as to avoid the risk of social desirability. Hakim claims that this type of public opinion surveys often reveal apparently contradictory general
attitudes, especially in highly tolerant societies such as the Netherlands, 
*as if all behaviours are regarded as acceptable* (Hakim, 2003c, p.341).

Education has a similar effect on a mother’s preferred number of work hours as on her actual work hours. However, the effect of age is the opposite. As the years pass, a mother prefers to work more hours, up till the age of 43, after which she prefers fewer work hours. The reason for this different impact of age on actual work hours and preferred work hours is not clear, and would be an interesting subject for future research. Possibly, it is related to a growing discrepancy between preferences and actual labour market opportunities as women become older. Remarkably, neither the presence nor the income of a partner relates to a mother’s preferred number of work hours.

Finally, the analysis shows a profound effect of the presence of a working mother during the respondent’s childhood on the subsequent work preference and the gender and work attitudes of the now-adult daughter. Other recent Dutch studies already demonstrated that having had a working mother affects Dutch mothers’ work hours (Lut, Van Galen and Latten, 2010; Van Putten et al., 2008) and their participation decision (Cloïn, 2010). The analysis confirms these results. The effect of a mother in paid work seems especially mediated by her daughter’s work preference. Moreover, the results suggest that the presence of a working mother in childhood is more significant than previous studies have shown, since a working mother during childhood (up to the age of 12) also affects her daughter’s general gender values and personal gender and work attitudes, corresponding with work preferences. This makes the total effect of a working mother in childhood on the respondent’s work preferences significantly large. The result is not only interesting in and of itself, but also reveals the constant role played by preferences, which might otherwise be much more subject to changing circumstances. Based on the results, I assume that in the Netherlands, the preferred number of hours can be – to a certain extent – a valuable predictor of a mother’s employment activity.