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Breadwinning as care? The meaning of paid work in mothers' and fathers' constructions of parenting

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ABSTRACT

As some scholars have argued for a distinct conceptualisation of breadwinning and for understanding breadwinning as a form of care, this study addresses parents' constructions of breadwinning and its connections to care. It is based on an in-depth interpretive analysis of multiple-perspective, qualitative longitudinal interviews with 22 Austrian mothers and fathers from three points in time during their transition to parenthood. The analysis revealed four different types of breadwinning concepts by considering the jointly constructed meaning of mothers' and fathers' paid work within a parental couple and further relied on Tronto's [(1993). *Moral boundaries. A political argument for an ethic of care*. New York, NY: Routledge] conceptualisation of care as a four-step process. The results indicate that respondents construct a clear difference between earning money and breadwinning. Additionally, a difference is made between breadwinning and *taking care of* the family's subsistence, predominantly so for mothers. In conclusion, breadwinning can definitely be considered a form of care and thus a form of involvement in parenting, but it cannot be regarded a form of involvement in care*giving*. The holistic picture of parents' joint constructions enabled us to contribute to the existing conceptualisations of breadwinning and of parental involvement, thus providing a novel perspective on matters of gender equality.

RESUMEN

El presente estudio retoma investigaciones que exigen una definición clara del concepto del sustento (= breadwinning) y de un entendimiento más amplio de sustento que incluye también el cuidado. El foco está tanto en las dimensiones del trabajo renumerado como en la dimensión del cuidado en la construcción parental de paternidad. Se basa en un análisis hermenéutico de entrevistas cualitativas - desde una perspectiva multilateral - y longitudinales hechas a 22 madres y padres austríacos que fueron encuestados en tres momentos durante la transición hacia la paternidad. Este análisis se basa en el concepto de Tronto (1993) del cuidado como proceso de cuatro etapas y lo tenía en cuenta en las estructuras del significado conjuntamente construídas sobre el trabajo renumerado de la madre y del padre. Se averiguaron

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cuatro diferentes tipos de sustento. Los resultados indican que los entrevistados construyen diferencias muy claras entre ganar dinero y el sustento. Las construcciones diferencian entre el sustento y el cuidado por el bienestar económico de la familia, especialmente con respecto al trabajo renumerado de la madre. Este estudio demuestra en consecuencia que el sustento puede ser considerado como forma del cuidado, y por lo tanto como participación en la paternidad, pero no como participación en el cuidado de los niños. Esta visión holística hacia los procesos constructivos conjuntos de los padres contribuye además al desarrollo de la conceptualización teórica del sustento y de la participación parental y ofrece así una nueva perspectiva en la igualdad de género de los padres.

Introduction

For a long time, parenthood in central Europe was characterised by fathers as exclusively responsible for the economic provision of their families and mothers as exclusively responsible for childcare and homework. This model of the sole male breadwinner has declined (Lewis, 2001) and work-care arrangements have become more diverse. Scholars have described this 'gender revolution' as comprising two distinct halves of structural changes: first, women's increased involvement in the public sphere of employment, and second, men's increased involvement in the private sphere of homework and childcare (Goldscheider, Bernhardt, & Lappegard, 2015). Nevertheless, across many European countries, the traditionally gendered division of breadwinning and caregiving is still evident (Dearing, 2016).

Scholars have sought to grasp the various ways in which fathers and mothers contribute to needs for subsistence and care, but research has been criticised for utilising inconsistent concepts of breadwinning (Warren, 2007). Regarding the connection between employment and breadwinning, scholars have suggested that earning an income is not a sufficient condition for being defined as a breadwinner (Hood, 1986), and that breadwinning also concerns the meaning accorded to the activity of earning money (Nadim, 2016). Although many studies applied a multiple-perspectives approach when researching gendered divisions of labour, the meaning that both father *and* mother within a parental couple attach to their paid work has hardly been investigated. Furthermore, scholars have challenged conceptualisations that regard breadwinning as opposite to parental care and have pleaded for considering breadwinning as a form of both parental involvement and care (Christiansen & Palkovitz, 2001). However, research has so far failed to make sound conceptual contributions to this question.

Consequently, this study followed a multiple-perspectives approach and analysed how *both* parents – in their narrations during and after the transition to parenthood – ascribe meaning to their own *and* their partner's paid work and how they *jointly* construct breadwinning in the context of parental care. Based on a concept of breadwinning as a specific meaning parents attach to their paid work, I pursued the question as to whether breadwinning is in opposition to care or whether it may be seen as involvement in care. I addressed the connection between parental concepts of breadwinning and care by relying on the influential concept of care proposed by Fisher and Tronto (1990) and Tronto (1993).

After introducing the current state of research and elaborating the theoretical framework and methodological approach, four types of parents' concepts of breadwinning are presented and analysed regarding their potential connection to care. The article thereby contributes to the issue of whether providing money as a parent can be conceptualised as providing care, and to the conceptualisation of paternal and maternal involvement in parenting and care. It further discusses the impact on the debate of gendered parental involvement and gender equality.

What is breadwinning?

Scholars have conceptualised breadwinning in various ways when examining the unequal division of breadwinning between genders: Gornick and Meyers (2008) differentiated between *male breadwinning* (full-time working man) and *dual earning* (both engaged in the labour market). Also, the distinction between *traditional breadwinner* and *egalitarian employment* (Haas, 2005) assigns breadwinning to a man within a traditional allocation of tasks, but dissociates an equal way of earning money from breadwinning. In contrast, Ciccia and Verloo (2012) distinguished between *male breadwinning* (men's primary responsibility for earning an income for the family) and *universal breadwinning* (both partners fully engaged in the labour market, but without considering their income). The concept of *male* and *dual breadwinning* (Pfau-Effinger, 2004) suggests a similar way of assigning breadwinning both to a sole and a shared way of earning money; others again clearly distinguish between *dual earning* and *dual breadwinning,* where earnings have to be equal (Warren, 2000). In conclusion, conceptualisations are inconsistent and their attribution of breadwinning is ambiguous (cf. Warren, 2007) and partly gendered. The inconsistency is reflected in the varying operationalisation of breadwinning in empirical research that is based on information the respondents with or without children had given them about either their contribution to the household income (Cha & Thébaud, 2009; Kanji & Samuel, 2015), the hours they spent at work (Dermott, 2006) or their own resp. their partners' assessment of who was the breadwinner (Kroska, 2008). Additionally, these studies mostly have not systematically distinguished between parents and childless couples. Even though parental status has an effect on working hours, particularly for women (Dermott, 2006), the impact of having children on breadwinning status or breadwinning identity still is not entirely clear (Cha & Thébaud, 2009; Hofmeister & Baur, 2015).

Hereof, another branch of research has concentrated on breadwinning as an aspect of gendered or parental identity and on the meaning ascribed by mothers and fathers to employment. Numerous studies have examined the connection between fathering and breadwinning, unanimously concluding that there is evidence for changing ideals and practices of fatherhood (Mooney, Brannen, Wigfall, & Parutis, 2013; Shirani, Henwood, & Coltart, 2012). Today's fathers long to be 'approachable providers' (Chin, Hall, & Daiches, 2011) who besides economic provision also provide emotional and social support (Bryan, 2013), who nurture and do the upbringing (Eerola, 2014). However, fathers seem to ultimately prioritise the provider role and continue to organise their caregiving responsibilities around the demands of their workplaces (Braun, Vincent, & Ball, 2011; Gatrell, Burnett, Cooper, & Sparrow, 2015). Prioritising employment is connected to notions of fathers as ideal workers (Holter, 2001), to structural constraints and attitudes (Steiber & Haas, 2010) and to ideals of masculinity (Charlebois, 2012; Holter, 2007; Schmidt, Rieder,

Zartler, Schadler, & Richter, 2015). Fathers seem to be required to develop fatherhood identities separately from the traditional male breadwinning identity (Höfner, Schadler, & Richter, 2011; Larsson & Björk, 2017). Accordingly, Christiansen and Palkovitz (2001) argued to consider breadwinning as fathers' involvement and their way to care for the needs of their families. Although paid work is usually performed in geographical distance from the families and thus invisible to them, breadwinning strongly affects their well-being. Thus the authors claimed that research should not focus only on the one domain of nurturing when exploring involvement.

Regarding the connection between mothering and breadwinning, results are clearly different: when mothers earn more or work more hours than their partners, they feel a sense of guilt and value their partner's support in childcare (Meisenbach, 2010); they justify their employment as being beneficial for their children too and still feel ultimately responsible for their children's well-being (Christopher, 2012). Some studies that examined the meaning mothers attached to their employment have pointed to its diversity, for example, work perceived as leisure activity, as intrinsically rewarding or as helpful to their partners (Nadim, 2016; Potuchek, 1992). This can be connected to results on the meaning fathers ascribe to their partners' employment, ranging from necessary support (Lyonette, Kaufman, & Crompton, 2011) to being beneficial for the children (Kaufman & White, 2016).

These results suggest that paid work and earning money is not necessarily the same as breadwinning and may be attached to different meanings, in particular when including perspectives of both mothers *and* fathers within one couple. They also do not give clear indication of its connection to dimensions of care. This study does not pre-classify a specific amount of (relative) working hours or earnings as breadwinning. Instead, in line with the qualitative paradigm, it defines breadwinning very broadly and de-gendered as a specific meaning parents attach to the money earned (i.e. to provide for the family) and focuses on how *both* parents within one couple construct this meaning. Further, and taking up Christiansen and Palkovitz (2001) claims, it systematically connects these constructions to different phases of care.

What is care?

Examining the question of whether breadwinning can be conceptualised as care requires a theoretical framework of care. By focusing on the activity of care and by including private and public forms of care, Fisher and Tronto (1990) have reconceptualised caring in a comprehensive and integrative way, taking needs of others as starting point. These authors define caring as an 'activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue and repair our "world" so that we can live in it as well as possible' (Fisher & Tronto, 1990, p. 40). Thus, not all human activity is care. Furthermore, care is also a disposition (Tronto, 1993). A caring activity that lacks a disposition to care may not be defined as care.

As a conceptual, analytical tool for examining parental responsibilities (e.g. Doucet, 2015; Philip, 2013), care has been seen as a process of four subsequent single activities in which each activity is a precondition for the next (Fisher & Tronto, 1990; Tronto, 1993): First, *caring about* involves an individual who perceives the existence of a certain need and recognises that care is necessary. This individual pays attention to the world by focusing on continuity, maintenance and repair, while caring about the people in

this world. Second, this individual may be *taking care of* this need by assuming the responsibility for the identified need, recognising that he or she can act to address this need and by determining how to respond to it. The third step in this process is *caregiving,* involving the concrete, hands-on activity intended to ensure maintenance and repair. An individual who directly meets the previously identified need for care has to come into face-to-face contact with care receivers and has to have certain competencies and basic resources available. Within this element of the caring process, the disposition to care is most evident. Thus, 'ideal' caregiving may be identified in informal caregiving when care is offered in privatised settings without receiving compensation; rather, it can be construed as 'labour of love' and thus needs no extrinsic rewards (Abel & Nelson, 1990). Fourth, and completing the process of care, *care-receiving* is central as care needs 'the others' who respond to the care they have received. Caregivers have to be 'sensitive to the suffering, desires and needs of those persons' (Coltrane, 1998, p. 77) and to assess whether needs have actually been met within this part of the process.

Care also depends on one's perceived gender roles and ascribed competence regarding who *cares about*, who *takes care of*, who is *caregiving* and who is in contact with the *receivers of care*. The nature of what is needed to maintain, continue and repair our world is historically, culturally, class-specifically and contextually variable (Fisher & Tronto, 1990). Care is embedded in a set of implicit cultural practices of recognising the needs of others, feeling responsible for addressing these needs and their fulfilment.

The Austrian context

Compared to other European countries, Austria is characterised by strong normative and cultural attitudes towards male workers and female caretakers or part-time workers. The majority of the population agrees that fathers should work full-time and provide money for their families, that is, their partners and children, whereas mothers should care for children and the household and should not be full-time employed as long as they have preschool children who may suffer a loss if their mothers work full-time (Steiber & Haas, 2010; Wernhart & Neuwirth, 2007). As a result, most Austrian parents realise the 'male breadwinner model' in the first years after their babies' birth (Berghammer, 2014), supported by a highly flexible parental leave system.

This system provides employed parents with the privilege of a lengthy period of job-guaranteed parental leave from their workplace (up to their children's second birthday), along with a comparatively flexible payment scheme: all parents – regardless of their occupational status – may choose between five different options of childcare allowance. One income-dependent model replaces 80% of the previous income for 12(+2) months (additional months in brackets are paid if both partners share the total period of leave). The remaining four models provide fixed monthly rates that are paid for different durations after birth. Parents may choose between a total of 12(+2), 15(+3), 20(+4) or 30 (+6) months of drawing a benefit (again with additional months in brackets). The longer the model, the lower the monthly benefit, although in total, the longest is paid the best. Parents are additionally allowed to earn up to a certain threshold and thus be on part-time leave (Austrian Federal Chancellery, 2015).

In connection with the dominant cultural values outlined above, Austria exhibits a rather underdeveloped childcare infrastructure, especially for children under the age of

three (Austrian Chamber of Labour, 2015; Dörfler, Blum, & Kaindl, 2014), and a comparatively high estimated gender pay gap of 21% (OECD, 2014). Additionally, the parental leave system rather reinforces than neutralises gender inequality, as its long duration, optionality and asymmetric designation (i.e. 30 + 6) enables parents to live according to their culturally shaped preferences and thus to reproduce existing inequality between them (Dearing, 2016; Doucet, 2013; Leibetseder, 2013; Schmidt & Rieder, 2016). Consequently, parents tend to realise traditional parenting roles and largely (65%) opt for leave duration of at least 24 months, mainly taken by mothers (BMFJ, 2016). Fathers tend to work full-time no matter how old their children are (Statistics Austria, 2014). For about 19% of fathers in Austria (and about 30% of fathers in Vienna), such full-time employment is interrupted by a parental leave, in most cases for the minimum duration of two months (BMFJ, 2016). After the period of parental leave, the gendered division is perpetuated: Austrian parents predominantly opt for the 'modernised male breadwinner model', most mothers return to the labour market thereafter by taking up part-time work (Berghammer, 2014).

Data, sample and methods

This study is based on a qualitative longitudinal study of the gendered transition to parenthood in Austria. From 2013 to 2015, we conducted a total of 66 face-to-face interviews, separately with 22 mothers and fathers living in Vienna and its surroundings, once before the birth of their children, then six months and two years after childbirth. This multiple-perspective approach (Deković & Buist, 2005; Zartler, 2010) allowed for richer data and deeper insights into *joint* constructions of meaning within parental couples. Problem-centred interviews (Witzel, 2000) facilitated a focus on a specific phase in private life, oriented at the respondents' relevancies and narrations related to an initial question. Later in the interview, the interviewees were asked to specify particular experiences and topics previously referred to, including questions from a more theory-driven interview guide. Interviewing parents three times enabled us to systematically analyse the mechanisms and changes in the construction of parental responsibilities. However, changes were not an important aspect of the resulting typology and are thus not systematically reflected in this paper.

Respondents were recruited during pregnancy by different means in order to reach a large variety of cases. First, we presented our study in various prenatal courses to reach parents with diverse socio-demographic backgrounds. Second, we displayed leaflets in gynaecology clinics and in information and advice centres for parents in different districts. Third, in order to increase the variation of the sample, we attempted to reach parents with low educational attainment and poor economic background by emphasising expense allowance in the leaflets.

From those volunteering for the study, 22 mothers and fathers were chosen (see Table 1), aged between 25 and 42. Education levels ranged from upper secondary education to tertiary education second stage. The sample quality was assured through data saturation, as the analysis of additional interviews did not reveal new topics or dimensions (Glaser & Strauss, 2009). The 11 cases were contrasting regarding the respondents' occupational statuses over the examined period and their allocation of parental leave periods – dimensions we considered crucial when exploring the meaning of parents' paid work in the given cultural context. However, despite diverse recruitment strategies and efforts to include parents

Table 1. Sample characteristics.

Interviewee pseudonyms		Family status	Employment			Parental leave (in months)
			During pregnancy wave 1	Six months after birth wave 2	Two years after birth wave 3	
1	Tina	Cohabiting	Full-time	Parental leave	Full-time	12, full-time
	Tom		Full-time	Full-time	Full-time	6, full-time 2, part-time
2	Rita	Cohabiting	Temporary full-time	Parental leave	Contractor of work and services (max. 20 h)	20, full-time
	Robert		Full-time	Full-time	Full-time	0
3	Bianca	Separated	Full-time	Parental leave	Full-time	8, full-time
	Bob		Full-time	Full-time	Full-time	8, full-time
4	Anna	Married	Full-time	Parental leave	Part-time (30 h)	20, full-time
	Alex		Full-time, graduating from high school	Full-time	Full-time	0, full-time
5	Olivia	Married	Full-time	Parental leave	Parental leave	22, full-time
	Otto		Full-time	Full-time	Full-time	2, full-time
6	Maria	Married	Self-employment (full-time)	Marginally self-employed	Vocational training	Not entitled
	Max		Full-time	Full-time	Full-time	2, full-time
7	Dana	Married	Full-time	Parental leave	Part-time (20 h)	12, full-time
	David		Full-time	Full-time	Full-time	6, full-time
8	Linda	Married	Unemployed	Unemployed	Part-time (18 h)	Not entitled
	Lucas		Unemployed	Full-time	Full-time	Not entitled
9	Julia	Married	Full-time	Parental leave	Marginally employed (10 h)	14, full-time
	Jim		Independent contractor, bachelor's programme	Full-time, master's programme	Full-time	0
10	Emma	Cohabiting	Full-time	Parental leave working half day/ week	Part-time (32 h)	5, full-time 7, part-time
	Emil		Full-time	Full-time	Full-time	2, full-time
11	Claudia	Married	Vocational training	Vocational training	Part-time (20 h)	0
	Chris		Full-time	Parental leave working 1 day/ weekends	Full-time	18, full-time

of lower socio-economic strata, the sample was rather homogenous: mainly Austrian, middle-class, with high educational attainment. As a consequence, the sample does not fully reflect prevalent leave durations – preferably taken by lower educated parents (Steiber, Berghammer, & Haas, 2016) – and typical division of labour in Austria.

After a thematic analysis of all tape-recorded interviews and verbatim transcripts, an in-depth interpretive analysis was applied following a social-constructivist and hermeneutic approach. The points of departure were narratives about the families' finances, financial considerations, narratives about the female or male partners' paid work and workplaces and about their interruption of and re-entry to work. On a case level, the following questions were addressed: How can the passage be paraphrased? Which intentions inspired the respondent to verbalise this statement? Which latent preconditions and implicit assumptions led to it? Which actors are involved and what are their tasks and roles? What are possible consequences of presented strategies and attitudes? (Froschauer & Lueger, 2003; Oevermann, 2001). The extensive analysis enabled us to reconstruct latent meanings and parents' sense-making regarding their paid work at different time points which potentially had not been explicitly mentioned by the couples in the sample.

In the course of a subsequent cross-case analysis, the theoretical concept of care (Tronto, 1993) allowed us to consider dimensions of *caring about*, *taking care of*, *giving*

care and *receiving care*. The following two-step approach was applied: (1) What meanings do parents in a given couple ascribe to the mother's and father's paid work and earned income? How do the partners in the couple conceptualise breadwinning? (2) Can this conception of breadwinning be understood as a form of care? This analytical procedure resulted in four types that differed with regard to conceptions of breadwinning. Further analysis of these conceptions revealed that breadwinning was connected to care, albeit not to each step of the entire process of care.

Results

The respondents ascribed meaning to mothers' and fathers' paid work in four different ways. The manifestations within the distinguishable types of breadwinning further focus on the dimensions of care analysed within breadwinning. Underpinned by typical quotes, they will be elucidated below.

Shared breadwinning

The first type involved parental couples (1, 3 and 10) who congruently constructed both the fathers' and the mothers' paid work as breadwinning, by which they meant that they both earned money in order to ensure the family's subsistence, for example, when parents wanted to maintain their 'standard of living' (Tom), when both partners deemed their income necessary to be able 'to afford their newly built house' (Emil), when they considered the money earned as necessary to 'secure everything economically' (Bianca), to make life 'affordable' (Bianca), and 'needed even more by somebody else now' (Bob). This conception of their paid work and their notion of joint breadwinning had already been established before pregnancy and was constructed continuously over the entire period under examination. Moreover, the latent meaning reconstructed from several interview passages reflected that both felt responsible and able to address the need of securing the family's financial situation also in the long term regardless of whether they were working full-time or part-time. In this sense, they both *cared about* and *took care of* securing the economic situation of their family – in line with the first two phases of care in Tronto's (1993) model.

As one typical example, both Tina and Tom planned their future according to their evaluation of the financial situation. They worried about being able to afford things and attempted to overcome financial obstacles the family faced. Tina assumed responsibility and *took care of* financial security, for example, when she considered having more children only if the family was 'not to face financial troubles', further stating: 'Well, we both do earn, and well enough, so that we're not, don't have to worry about the income' (wave 3). Similarly, Tom assessed their dual full-time employment after the period of parental leave (wave 3) as an ideal arrangement as they 'don't have to worry about finances, so to say, which isn't bad either'. His way of assuming the responsibility and *taking care of* the family's financial security was reflected in his assessment of the couple's future 'financial scope', for example. As his employment was less stable and more precarious than hers, Tom stated that their financial situation 'depends on how things go on with me. If all goes well, we should just about manage'.

Couples of this type not only shared breadwinning, but also both individually felt responsible and able to address the financial needs of their family. In this sense, they can also be characterised as parents who shared *taking care of* finances.

Supplemented breadwinning

The second type involved couples (7 and 11) who congruently constructed the fathers' work as the main breadwinning activity: the money he earned was meant to secure the family's subsistence. Additionally, the father was constructed as *caring about* financial ability and *taking care of* the family's economic security. For a father of this type, such as Chris, working full-time was necessary in order to, as he put it: 'earn more, so I'm able to afford more for the child' (wave 3). When reflecting on having more than one child, Chris assumed responsibility for their economic well-being and stressed his wish to afford certain things for them: 'I want to be able to provide for my child and that's why I think, okay, then I have just two kids, but I can provide for them' (wave 1).

This dimension of care through breadwinning was not constructed as a mother's responsibility by parents of this type. However, the mothers were part of breadwinning as well and earned money that was designated for the family. In contrast to the 'shared breadwinning' type, the mother's breadwinning was conceptualised more as supplementary to the father's earnings: she had to work as much as necessary to provide this support without neglecting her main task of *caregiving*. Consequently, both partners actively ascribed responsibility for *taking care of* the family's financial well-being solely to the father, even though both were involved in breadwinning. Even in times when fathers were on parental leave and mothers were breadwinning through full-time or part-time work, neither of them ascribed responsibility to *take care of* the financial situation to the mother in the sense of feeling responsible for addressing the need for financial subsistence. Rather, their 'focus was the family' (Dana, wave 3), even during times when they were 'forced to work full-time' (Dana, wave 2). Conversely, the father was constructed as the one who was 'glad about working full-time' (Dana, wave 3).

Both Chris and Claudia, for example, continued to consider her employment as a way of earning some extra money in addition to his childcare allowance. Even in Chris' parental leave phase after this allowance had expired, Claudia put it like this:

> And I then started in February, ten hours a week, always on weekends, Saturday, Sunday, five hours each day. So that we earn a bit of extra money. But he was very much looking forward to work. Because I noticed that, he, to bring home the money, that he had really missed it. (Wave 3)

One couple of this type typically tried to overcome the traditional allocation of parental tasks of caregiving (e.g. parental leave) and breadwinning and were both involved in both tasks. Nevertheless, only the father was considered responsible for *taking care of* his family's overall financial subsistence over the entire examined period.

Sole breadwinning

Couples of this type (4, 8 and 9) congruently constructed fathers' work exclusively as breadwinning activity and fathers as the ones assuming sole responsibility to secure their families' subsistence. When asked about a second child, Alex, for example, stated

in wave 2 when he was the sole earner: 'for that we should win the lottery'. Further, he aimed at being promoted to a higher position in order to earn more than Anna and not 'to be forced to send her to work again after one year'. Similarly, Jim pursued the goal of finishing his master studies in order to have 'greater job opportunities which consequently is better for the family again' (wave 2).

In contrast to 'supplemented breadwinning', the mothers' work – if they were in paid work at all – was not seen as breadwinning, but as the realisation of the visions, wishes and demands they imposed on their (future) occupations: The mothers in this type typically waited for a good job offer that would come along. They re-entered the labour market because they enjoyed working and step by step when they wished to return. Additionally, their re-entry was realised in accordance with their *caregiving* responsibilities as mothers and with circumstances that required or allowed it (e.g. in the presence of adequate childcare or if leave regulations were compatible). Thus, they did not *take care of* economic family needs, even if they pursued paid work.

Linda, a mother within a couple representing this type, emphasised her plans to find an adequate and satisfying job that she was comfortable with, while her partner was *taking care of* the economic well-being of the family:

> Well, I said to myself, I will not start working again until I've found something where I'm sure that I like the work. Well, I, I claim this for myself, for some months, I lowered my expectations anyway, but at the least, I would want to know I'd enjoy doing it. And my husband also supported me to stay at home longer. (Wave 2)

Both partners in a couple of this type perceived her work as fulfilling in a mother's daily routine of caregiving. This is how Alex, a father within another couple of this type, put it:

> She wants it too, yes, if it works with childcare. Well, it must be definitely demanding, being a mom for twenty-four hours a day, only the baby and nothing else. I can imagine that it's a welcomed change to do something else again. And she previously enjoyed going to work. (Wave 2)

Parents jointly constructed the fathers as sole breadwinners for their children and partners assuming the responsibility for securing the family's subsistence and thus *taking care of* the financial situation (second phase of care in Tronto's model), whereas the mothers' work was neither constructed as necessary for breadwinning nor as *taking care of* the finances. The traditional ascription of breadwinning responsibility to the fathers was more and more apparent across the transition to parenthood even if the parents did not explicitly aim at such an arrangement during pregnancy.

Reluctant breadwinning

The fourth type represents couples (2, 5 and 6) who, in contrast to the previous types, had a rather incongruent conception of breadwinning. During pregnancy, the parents ascribed responsibility for earning money for the family mainly to the fathers, albeit mothers were conceptualised as earners as well. Even if a father's full-time employment was interrupted by his use of parental leave, it was constructed to secure his family's financial situation. The father was continuously and increasingly expected to *take care of* subsistence. If mothers were involved in paid work after their parental leave, they did not participate in breadwinning in the sense of designating their income to the family.

In contrast to all other types, fathers here were dissatisfied with experiencing sole responsibility 'with no end in sight' (Max), and began wishing for their partners to support them by making substantial contributions to the family income. This typical mechanism is exemplified by the following accounts by Maria and Max:

> It's ideal because right now, I'm fortunate not to be forced to earn anything. I mean, it was the plan and it would be better, of course. But, it, it is not the case that I absolutely have to. If I were to rely on that, I would rather be employed. (Maria, wave 3).

> But Maria has to, well, somehow prepare for another admissions exam. But ultimately, it doesn't really matter, because, because others work part-time. So, it is, somehow- Either you have a job or you don't. (Max, wave 3)

Fathers of this type could hardly find arguments to support their wish to share breadwinning with their partners because both partners saw no objective necessity for additional income. Moreover, none of them ever thought that anybody but the father was responsible for the family income. This is how Otto, another father of this type, put it: 'In this respect I would prefer staying at home, but a lottery win is just still long time coming' (wave 2). Olivia was aware that her partner was not satisfied with the situation, but thought that:

> It's not a problem in the first year when I'm at home, more or less unpaid. Afterwards, I really cannot say what it will look like, need to see and discuss then. If my husband says he can't carry this burden anymore because he's suffering, then there's no question, of course, that I would work again. As long as it's possible, I'd like to stay with my daughter. (Wave 2)

The fathers here found themselves in the position of sole responsibility for the financial security of their children and partners. They often tried to motivate their partners to start to work again and to earn some money. Robert, for example in wave 3, wanted Rita to find an adequate job again, but was about to give in: 'We discuss it all the time, I made some nice documents for her, smartened up her CV but I said to her, she is the only one who can apply, I can't do that for her'. Rita, on the other hand, saw no need to start to work soon as it might be 'too stressful. Why should I do that?'. These fathers' constructions reflected reluctance against exclusive responsibility, which also challenged the meaning of *taking care of* the families' subsistence as there was a lack of disposition within this activity (see Tronto, 1993).

Discussion: is breadwinning care?

The main answers to the questions raised in this article were that paid work is not necessarily constructed as breadwinning. The narratives reflected the different stages ranging from (1) simply earning some money via some kind of paid work, (2) seeing it as a form of self-realisation, (3) providing necessary support for the partners in their breadwinning responsibilities to (4) ascribing the sense of breadwinning to paid work when money is earned with the aim of securing the family's economic status. Additionally, the analysis revealed a clear difference between breadwinning in the sense of, first, earning a relevant and necessary amount of money designated for the family and, second, *caring about* family's subsistence; feeling and assuming a responsibility to recognise and fulfil this family need, thus *taking care of* the family's economic well-being and status by earning a sufficient income (see Tronto, 1993). Only if one parent's narratives

reflected that he or she felt and assumed responsibility for the family's economic well-being was it reconstructed as a form of care in this sense. Although activities of *caregiving* and *care-receiving* were systematically considered in the analysis, they were not reflected in parents' constructions of paid work, thus were not systematically considered in this paper. The same applies to the concordance between the partners and changes in the constructions over time: they occurred in the process of analysis, but were only a defining aspect in the 'reluctant breadwinning' type, as constructions became incongruent over time.

Regarding the question of whether breadwinning might be considered care, the analysis showed that the relationship between breadwinning and care is contingent on the couple's *joint* constructions and sense-making of their both paid work. In the sample of this study, breadwinning could only be located in the first two phases of care, namely *caring about* and taking care *of* (see Tronto, 1993), as the one who feels responsible for and provides the money (e.g. for nappies) may not necessarily perceive the actual need (e.g. for nappy changing) due to the lack of co-presence, may not do the *caregiving* (e.g. changing nappies) and may not assess whether his or her activity (e.g. of changing) was the right response to baby's needs (*care-receiving*), although he or she had provided the money to enable the response. Thus, breadwinning can indeed be a form of care, although it cannot automatically be equated with this form of care. Particularly when a parent's breadwinning activity lacks a caring disposition when assuming responsibility for securing finances (like the mothers in the 'supplemented breadwinning' type, or like the fathers in the 'reluctant breadwinning' type), breadwinning is not necessarily a form of care.

Conclusions

In light of research that has studied breadwinning with predefined and inconsistent concepts (Warren, 2007) and scholars who have pleaded for recognising breadwinning as a form of parental involvement and care (Christiansen & Palkovitz, 2001), this study was concerned with the question of whether parents' paid work should necessarily be seen as breadwinning and, further, of how breadwinning is associated with care. The analysis was based on longitudinal data consisting of parents' narratives conducted once before and twice after the birth of their first child. Hermeneutic techniques made it possible to grasp and understand the variety of parents' joint subjective conceptualisation of breadwinning and its connection to a theoretical framework of care (see Tronto, 1993) that distinguishes between the four phases of *caring about, taking care of*, *caregiving* and *care-receiving*.

The in-depth analysis resulted in a typology that captures the differences between breadwinning when designating earnings for the family and *caring about* resp. *taking care of* unmet needs regarding the family's financial well-being. Parents in the 'shared breadwinning' category congruently conceptualised both partners' paid work as breadwinning, that is, the money earned was predominantly designated for the families' subsistence. In contrast to previous research that has measured breadwinning by income or working hours (Cha & Thébaud, 2009; Dermott, 2006; Kanji & Samuel, 2015), both parents acted as breadwinners regardless of the weekly working hours or their contributions to the household income. Additionally, both parents felt capable and assumed

responsibility for securing the families' financial subsistence and development, thus *took care of* the need for economic well-being.

In contrast, parental couples of the 'supplemented breadwinning' type conceptualised the money they both earned to be provided for the family (i.e. breadwinning), but the fathers were constructed as *taking care of*, that is, recognising the need for subsistence, understanding it as needing to be addressed, and assuming responsibility to fulfil this need. Even during phases in which the mothers were the only earners, they did not *take care of* the family's economic situation even though they acted as breadwinners. Rather, parents congruently constructed the mothers' breadwinning as more or less necessary to support the fathers in their breadwinning (see also Nadim, 2016; Potuchek, 1992). Within parental couples of the third type, parents congruently constructed solely the money fathers earned as being necessary and designated for the family, whereas the mothers' paid work was constructed as primarily individually fulfilling and as not necessary for securing the family income. The fathers thus were both 'sole breadwinners' and the ones who were *taking care of* securing the family's economic well-being. The fourth type of 'reluctant breadwinning' consisted of couples that were rather incongruent in the meaning they attached to the money both of them earned or could have earned. The mothers assumed no responsibility for breadwinning, whereas the 'expectant egalitarian' fathers (Kaufman & White, 2016) considered themselves to be forced to do the breadwinning alone and wanted their partners to be more involved in this parental task. Similar to Potuchek's (1992) type of female 'reluctant traditionals', they did so because they saw no other option. This also challenged the concept of breadwinning as a form of care since these fathers did the breadwinning without any detectable disposition.

Two main conclusions can be drawn from these results: First, these results contribute to a wider focus on paternal and maternal involvement in parenting by examining the question of whether having a job as a parent may also be conceptualised as parental involvement or even as care. In view of Christiansen and Palkovitz's (2001) critique of research ignoring fathers' breadwinning as one part of paternal involvement and as care, the results show: Breadwinning may indeed be part of involvement in parenting – not only for fathers as *caring about* and assuming the responsibility of *taking care of* one's family's financial situation by breadwinning represent the first two steps of the process of care (Tronto, 1993). Thus, when focusing on a definition of involvement in parenting in its entirety, a parent who is at work all day long may be defined as involved and as *taking care of* the family's subsistence. *Caregiving*, in contrast, involves parents who identify the needs of their children and partners in face-to-face interaction and who meet these identified needs. Since direct needs (e.g. nourishment) are not met by earning money, breadwinning cannot be seen as involvement in *caregiving* and assessing *care-receiving*.

Secondly, conclusions can be drawn regarding parental gender relations. When focusing on gender equality in general, *caring about* and *taking care of* the family's subsistence and providing non-remunerated *caregiving* resp. assessing *care-receiving* at home cannot be put on the same level in defining parental involvement (see Christiansen & Palkovitz, 2001). Although 'money does not solve human needs' (Tronto, 1993, p. 107), autonomy and power are still guaranteed by paid work (Fisher & Tronto, 1990; Yarwood & Locke, 2016), and breadwinning enables a parent 'to predict, to

judge and to command resources' (Tronto, 1993, p. 43). When examining one parent's involvement, research has to take into account the marked difference between involvement in parental care in its entirety and involvement in direct, hands-on and mostly not reimbursed caregiving. Across all types in this study, gendered responsibilities were clearly reflected. Parents considered breadwinning to be a father's main responsibility. Additionally, fathers – more strongly and much earlier than mothers – *cared about* the need for subsistence, ultimately *took care of* this need and determined the ways in which to respond to it (e.g. by seeking appropriate jobs before pregnancy, concentrating on finishing studies before childbirth in order to make better earnings). Although breadwinning may not be sufficient for fathers' identities (Eerola, 2014), it was optional for men to be part of *caregiving*. Vice versa, mothers' main responsibility was *caregiving*, whereas breadwinning was optional and highly variable for them: they did it when possible, when necessary or when fulfilling, but not necessarily because they *took care of* the family's subsistence. Parents' constructions well reflected Austria's policies and traditional gender role attitudes (Berghammer, 2014; Ciccia & Verloo, 2012), even though the sample and respondents' work-care arrangements did not necessarily suggest it.

The design of this study facilitated an exploration of changes in parents' constructions over the entire period under examination. Nevertheless, change was not reflected in all types, and thus not considered systematically in this paper. Establishing a typology based on multiple perspectives and longitudinal interviews turned out to be more complex than expected and would require a larger number of cases to be well saturated. Further research should address these methodological challenges of analysing the several dimensions of longitudinal and multiple-perspective qualitative data. Specifically, for deeper saturation, it may be fruitful to include couples resident in rural areas in which childcare facilities are generally far less elaborated than in larger cities and to conduct similar research in other national or cultural contexts. Research should further include more contrasting cases, for example, with mothers as main earners, when examining the question as to the connection of breadwinning and care. Attempts to include female breadwinners as highly relevant contrasting cases in the sample were devoid of purpose: even in the contrast case of the stay-at-home father, no conceptualisation of sole female breadwinning was revealed.

Concerning the results emerging from this study, mothers – with the exception of those in the 'shared breadwinning' type – did not *take care of* the need for subsistence by assuming responsibility for addressing it properly. The fathers were constructed as better suited to meet this need because of their higher incomes, their overt responsibilities for income or because of their explicit visions of an economically secure life for their children and partners. As competence in care is one central ethical element of care (Tronto, 2005), it would consequently need a strong, explicit, joint and ongoing conceptualisation and conviction of both mothers and fathers within couples to be competent to share not only childcare but care for finances in order to oppose the traditional allocation of responsibilities.

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