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'It's not acceptable for the husband to stay at home'.

Taking a discourse analytical approach to capture the gendering of work

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Abstract

This paper illustrates some of the ways in which the notion of (paid) work is actively being gendered, and how these gendering processes take place not only through organisational practices but also in discourses that circulate outside an organisation in the private domain. Drawing on 15 in-depth interviews with women who opted out of their own professional career in order to accompany their husbands on their overseas work assignment to Hong Kong, we demonstrate some of the benefits of using a discourse analytical approach to capturing and identifying the processes through which these women actively (although not necessarily consciously) gender the notion of work, thereby reinforcing the gender order and its male bias. We argue that identifying and making visible these gendered and gendering practices is an important component of, and a potential trigger for change both in organisations as well as private contexts.

Keywords: gendering work, gendered work, discourse, conceptualisations of work, gender order, trailing spouses

Introduction

This paper focuses on the experiences and sense-making processes of a group of female 'trailing spouses[1']' who opted out of their professional careers[2] to accompany their husbands on their overseas work assignment to Hong Kong. We explore and critically discuss how these highly educated and often previously exceptionally successful women describe and make sense of their "lived experiences" (Creswell, 2013) as 'trailing spouses', and how through their personal verbal accounts, they actively (although not necessarily consciously) gender the very notion of work. They thereby at the same time uphold and reinforce the underlying gender order which – although in principle allowing professional opportunities for women and men – (still) has a masculine bias and often privileges masculine hegemony.

Taking a discourse analytical approach and focusing on *how* these women make sense of their experiences and negotiate their own standing (often in relation to their husbands) in the gender order, this paper provides new insights into the integrate processes through which the notion of work gets gendered. Such an approach thus helps to identify and describe – and eventually challenge and change – the often hidden processes through which these gendered and gendering activities are enacted by those who continue to be disadvantaged by them.

The gender order

Drawing on the work of Matthew (1984), Connell (1987) describes the gender order as "a historically constructed pattern of power relations between men and women and definitions of masculinity and femininity" (p. 168). These power relations and hegemonic notions of masculinity and femininity are reflected, for example, in the ways in which men and women are described and the roles which they are routinely assigned. For example, in many Western societies, the gender order seems to postulate that it is "normal" for married relationships to be heterosexual and subscribe to a relatively clear-cut role division with men pursuing (or being expected to pursue) a professional career and being the breadwinner, while women typically take on (or are expected to take on) caring responsibilities and do largely unpaid or possibly part-time work, or work in the home (e.g. Dush et al., 2018; Pocock, 2005; Wheatley, 2013). As a consequence, men's jobs often dictate the geographical location of the family – especially in international work assignments (Konopaske et al., 2005) – which often negatively impacts women's career progression.

Although the gender order has undergone some changes over the past decades with a notable permeation of previously much stricter gender segregations of career opportunities and career trajectories (Pocock, 2005), it nevertheless remains characterised by a male bias and tends to privilege masculine hegemony in professional contexts (Känsälä et al., 2015). The infamous glass ceiling and the pay gap are just two well-known global examples of this. The effects of the gender order are further reflected in professional mobility and expatriation patterns. Research in these areas has repeatedly pointed out that geographical mobility is primarily beneficial to the careers of men and often disadvantages the careers of women in a couple (Känsälä et al., 2015; Amcoff & Niedomysl, 2015; Valcour & Tolbert, 2003; van der Klis & Mulder, 2008). Numerous studies have shown how the "distinct gender dynamics" (Jöns, 2011) that mobility displays, disadvantage women – both, in terms of access to short-term as

well as long-term mobility (e.g.Wheatley, 2013; Lee et al., 2017; Varma & Russel, 2016, Brandén et al., 2016) – especially when they have children (Guillaume & Pochic, 2009, Waibel et al., 2018). Due to these observations and the fact that women tend to work closer to their home to enable them to fulfil their household responsibilities, they have been described as "spatially entrapped" (Wheatley, 2013, p. 720). Mobility is thus not a neutral concept but is characterised by a gender bias favouring masculine career trajectories, norms and practices, and a work-life model which is heavily based on a gender order that privileges masculine hegemony. With regards to (professional) mobility, it seems, women and men do not have the same opportunities and often experience the consequences rather differently.

Against this backdrop, it is perhaps not surprising that men are considerably more likely than women to initiate a couple's or a family's move overseas for a work assignment (Andresen & Margenfeld, 2015). These dynamics often position women as so-called 'trailing spouses', i.e. as accompanying their partners on an overseas work assignment – sometimes at the expense of their own career progression. The crucial role of 'trailing spouse' for the overall success of an overseas assignment has long been established (e.g. Cole and Nesbeth, 2014; Lauring & Selmer 2010; Collins and Bertone, 2017; Harvey, 1998; McNulty, 2012; Mäkelä et al., 2011; Konopaske et al., 2005), and difficulties of adjustment for 'trailing spouses' are widely acknowledged (e.g. Cole and Nesbeth, 2014; Collins and Bertone, 2017; Harvey, 1998; Mäkelä et al., 2011; McNulty, 2012; Shahnasarian, 1991). Thus, although, as Amcoff and Niedomysl (2015) maintain, 'trailing spouses' may "perceive additional, non-monetary, gains accruing from moving" (p. 872), they still often experience numerous disadvantages in terms of their own career progress and mental health (e.g. Schnurr et al., 2016; Collins and Bertone, 2017; Cole and Nesbeth, 2014; Shahnasarian, 1991).

Although male 'trailing spouses' do exist, and they also face a set of serious issues as a result of their expatriation and often new role within the family (e.g. Collins & Bertone, 2017; Cole,

2012; Harvey & Wiese, 1998; Selmer & Leung 2003), in this paper we focus exclusively on the experience of female 'trailing spouses', giving a voice to this largely under-researched group of women. In our analysis below, we illustrate that despite recent changes in organisational structure and practices, the notion of work continues to be actively gendered in the discourse of these women in ways that privilege (and normalise) masculine hegemony whilst systematically disadvantaging women. We thereby aim to make visible and challenge the dynamics of the gender order underlying these structures and practices, which considerably contribute to sustaining and, to some extent, creating gender inequalities in the work context.

Although most previous research has focused on identifying and describing some of the practices through which organisations and organisational life is gendered (e.g. Pocock, 2005; Smithson & Stokoe, 2005; North, 2016; Haynes, 2017), in this paper we take a discourse analytical approach and explore how the very notion of work is gendered in discourses that are closely related to work but that take place outside the workplace. These discourses, while mobilised, oriented to, and to some extent also produced by women who are not – strictly speaking – members of the (paid) workforce anymore, provide important insights into the dynamics of gendering the notion of work, which in turn is highly relevant for an understanding of the gendering of organisational life.

Background: The gendering of work

Although it is widely acknowledged that gender relations have dramatically changed over the past few decades (e.g. Casinowsky, 2013), many of these changes seem to have largely taken place on the surface with very little challenging and disruption of the underlying "gender order" (Connell, 1987). For example, despite a steadily increasing number of women entering

the (paid) workforce, there is abundant evidence to illustrate that women are still generally expected to be responsible for domestic work and childcare – often irrespective of their own professional trajectories (e.g. Yavorsky et al., 2015; Dush et al., 2018). Moreover, the number of female professionals opting out of their careers – often due to family and household responsibilities – is considerably higher than those of their male counterparts (Lovejoy & Stone, 2012). A further problem is that these disruptions of women's career trajectories challenge traditional expectations of linear career progression typically associated with male breadwinner family models (LaPointe, 2013, p. 142; Cole 2012; for alternative career descriptions see Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005). Such (male biased) career trajectories are thus a good example of how masculine structures, norms and practices in the work domain disadvantage women (e.g. Acker, 1990; Crawford & Mills, 2011; Pocock, 2005).

Empirical evidence of these claims is provided, for example, in a study by LaPointe (2013), who conducted interviews with Finnish female business graduates who were considering a career change. She observed that the discourses and narratives which these women drew on in their interviews often attached "gendered meanings to work and careers and specif[ied] who 'naturally' belongs to them" (p. 142). Through mobilising and orienting to these discourses and their underlying gender order, the interviewees upheld "the gendered dichotomies between family and career" while at the same time stereotyping specific positions, careers, and roles as "naturally" masculine and more suited for men (LaPointe, 2013, p. 142). The assumptions and the discursive practices described in LaPointe's study pose serious problems for women who in many countries are severely disadvantaged by pension policies which reflect a "heteropatriarchal welfare system" (Grady, 2015, p. 445). Another relevant study in this context is Duberley et al. (2014), who observed that masculine career models and trajectories are further reflected in perceptions of retirement. According to

their study conducted in the UK, even in retirement men are generally viewed as the main income generator based on "conventional male career as the norm" assumptions (p. 71).

Each of these observations supports the claim that the notion of work is gendered (e.g. Bozkurt, 2012), and that "complex gender hierarchies" continue to create gender inequalities and uphold traditional gendered images of women, men and work which are continuously built and reinforced (Sarıoğlu, 2013, p. 481; Haynes 2017; Mastracci & Arreola, 2016) – not only in work organisations, but also – as this study shows – outside the professional domain. The aim of this paper is thus to identify some of the discursive processes through which this gendering of work takes place, and more specifically, to illustrate how through their discourse, the 'trailing spouses' who participated in this study constantly uphold and reinforce the gender order which informs these processes of gendering and consequently, ultimately disadvantages these women.

To achieve this, we explore how various gendered and gendering discourses relating to work are appropriated and used by the female 'trailing spouses' who participated in our study in their attempts to recount and make sense of their "lived experience" (Creswell, 2013) relating to their life-changing move to accompany their husbands on their overseas work assignment to Hong Kong. A particular focus is how these women talk about coping with the many changes this move had for their own professional career, social life, well-being, identity, and mental health. As our analyses below illustrate, the women's way of speaking about their experiences, their career trajectories, and their current daily routines respond to and often reinforce traditional views of gender regarding divisions of labour, role expectations, and the dichotomy of public versus private domains.

The role of discourse

The central role of discourse in the formulation of social relations, and gender in particular, has been repeatedly emphasised (e.g. Sunderland, 2004). It has been established that "through language, certain expressions of gender [are constructed] as normative and desirable" (Toffoletti & Starr, 2016, p. 493). According to these socio-constructionist conceptualisations, language is not neutral but actively constructs and literally talks into being social and often patriarchal and hierarchical relationships, structures, values and beliefs, as well as norms and practices (Crawford & Mills, 2011).

In organisational contexts which tend to be characterised by masculine discourses, women are often marginalised and excluded (e.g. Acker, 1990; Crawford & Mills, 2011). This exclusion from organisational discourses has concrete implications for women, and may be reflected, for example, in their continuous underrepresentation in managerial and senior positions (e.g. OECD, 2017), their discrimination in organisational practices – for example, relating to maternity leave, retirement and promotion (e.g. Grady, 2015; Pocock, 2005), and the persistent pay gap between men and women (e.g. OECD, 2017). In this paper we argue that these (often discriminatory) discourses about gender and work are not only relevant in organisational contexts, but also circulate outside the work domain, impacting not only organisational structures and practices, but also larger social structures and relationships, such as the role differentiations and work divisions in families and couples. By routinely drawing on and reproducing these discourses – often in unproblematic ways – the underlying gender inequalities are also reproduced and established as taken-for-granted (Stobbe, 2005). In this sense, the gender order itself is produced, reproduced and often reinforced (as well as sometimes challenged) in and through discourse.

Like other scholars, we also believe that to achieve gender equality, it is necessary to challenge and change these dominant discourses of gender and work (e.g. Holmes, 2006; Williams, 2018; Schnurr et al., 2016; Knights, 2019). As Crawford and Mills (2011)

proclaim, "a change in discourse through language has the potential to change attitudes" (p. 104), and ultimately, improve gender relations inside and outside of organisations. Thus, focusing on language and understanding how certain discriminatory and marginalising discourses are oriented to, reinforced, and perhaps also sometimes challenged and resisted (Schnurr et al., 2016) is "not only a theoretical interest but [also] a vital component of and a potential trigger for organisational change." (Ross-Smith & Kornberger, 2004, p. 299)

Data and methodology

In this paper, we take a discourse analytical approach, acknowledging the crucial role of language in shaping and literally talking into being (organisational and other) realities. Our particular aim is to illustrate some of the discursive processes through which the notion of work is gendered by a group of 'trailing spouses' in Hong Kong. As Toffoletti and Starr (2016) maintain, "[a]s a mode of social analysis that critically interprets how language is used in light of the social context in which it is embedded, discourse analysis lends itself to a consideration of the relationship between language and the social order" (p. 496). It thus provides an excellent way of capturing the (discursive) processes through which these women construct and largely reinforce traditional gender and work relations, while at the same time enabling us researchers to take a critical stance towards these processes. Discourse analysis also equips us with the tools to identify and problematise the discourses on which these women draw and the underlying gender order they thereby orient to (and often reinforce).

The data which we explore in this paper consist of 15 interviews with 'trailing spouses', specifically women who have accompanied their husbands on their overseas work assignment to Hong Kong. The recruitment of participants involved a post on a local expatriate online forum and the "friend-of-a-friend" approach (Holmes, 1991; Milroy, 1987). Our sample

could thus be described as a "convenience sample" (Richards, 2003); and while this sample will not allow us to make grand generalisations, it does enable us to conduct an in-depth study, and identify and critically discuss some of the (discursive) processes through which these women orient to the gender order underlying their claims and explanations, which ultimately contribute to gendering the notion of work.

Most of the women we spoke to were in their late twenties to mid-thirties. They were highly educated, and prior to moving to Hong Kong, many of them held prestigious and often well-paid jobs, which they opted out of due to the relocation. For example, among our interviewees were a corporate lawyer, a fashion designer, a director of an advertising agency, a manager of a billion US dollar portfolio, and a veterinarian. They come from different countries in Europe (including Italy, Ireland, the UK), Australia, well as the US, and various parts of Asia. Most of our participants did not have children prior to their relocation, and several of them decided to use this 'time out' as an opportunity to have children. Like many other expatriates in Hong Kong, the women we interviewed experienced a relatively privileged life-style typically characterised by considerable leisure time, relatively large amounts of spendable cash, and domestic help (usually a woman migrating from a country in South East Asia who is responsible for household maintenance and childcare, and who lives with the expatriate family). However, as we have argued elsewhere (Schnurr et al., 2016), despite these privileges, and in contrast to the Danish expatriates interviewed and observed by Lauring and Selmer (2010), the women who participated in our study only partially appreciated this "new" way of life and expressed various difficulties about adjusting and coping with their new situation (see also Cole and Nesbeth, 2014).

The interviews which we conducted were semi-structured and deliberately facilitated the scope for the women to "tell their story" rather than strictly adhering to pre-formulated questions. It was important to us to give these women a voice and to let them bring up and

dwell on issues that they considered important in relation to their experience of their relocation and its aftermath. The interviews lasted about an hour on average, resulting in over 20 hours of audio-recordings. They were conducted in English by female members of the research team who also live in Hong Kong and who share some characteristics with the subjects. The interviewers were expatriates themselves and – like many of our participants – they had relatively young children. These similarities facilitated rapport and contributed to creating a friendly, relaxed, and relatively informal setting in which the interviews took place. However, such insider status of the researchers also carries some potential risks, such as an increased empathy with the research subjects and their stories, which may potentially lead the researcher to take a personal rather than a professional stance, and which may also lead to a desire to share their own experiences and/or give advice, which may, in turn, potentially distract from the research goals. Thus, in our study particular attention was paid to framing the aim of the interviews as wanting to hear participants' views and personal stories, and great care was taken to allow the interviewees enough time (and interactional space) to develop and finish their own stories rather than attempting to finish them for them, which often happens in informal, casual encounters between friends. As a consequence, the interviewers' comments were largely restricted to minimal feedback and follow-up questions to ensure that they had 'understood' the women's stories. We refrained as much as possible from sharing our own experience, and also from giving advice to the women.

Although numerous studies on gender and work exist that take a broad discourse analytical approach (e.g. Toffoletti & Starr, 2016) – often with a focus on narratives (e.g. Heikkinen & Lämsä, 2017; Herman, 2015) – only relatively few studies conduct in-depth discourse analyses utilising the tools and procedures of discourse analysis to make sense of their data (e.g. Sørensen, 2017; Smithson & Stokoe, 2005). In our analyses in the next section, we do exactly this with the aim of identifying some of the discursive processes through which a

gendering of work occurs on the micro-level of interaction. Such a purely qualitative approach is particularly valuable as it avoids over-generalisations and instead focuses on the "lived experiences" (Creswell, 2013) and sense making processes of those who are actually affected by the very phenomena which they describe. Such an approach enabled us to gain insights into the practices through which these women construct their professional and social realities, and how they position themselves in relation to the larger discourses on which they draw in doing so.

The interviews were all transcribed verbatim, and in the first step of the analysis we read and re-read them several times to identify recurring themes and patterns across them. Specific themes and patterns emerged, for example, when different women brought up similar issues without us having specifically asked for them (such as their feeling of regret and a sense of having lost their identity as a result of giving up their job due to the relocation). Or themes recurred when our participants used similar terms to describe their experiences and practices (such as 'breadwinner'), or when they provided a relatively similar logic to answer our questions (e.g., that a particular way of segregating roles within the family 'makes sense'). Once we had identified these themes, we conducted a micro-analysis of the language the women used in order to identify the discursive processes through which these themes were recounted and discussed. We focused on, for example the women's choice of pronouns (e.g. the first person singular *I* or the first person singular *we* when talking about the decision to relocate), their use of explicit labels or identity categories (such as 'breadwinner', 'stay-at-home mum'), and their use of passive versus active voice (e.g. did they *make* the decision or *was it decided*). We argue that through these linguistic choices on the micro-level, the women actively (although probably not deliberately) – reinforce the gender order and its male bias, and also contribute to a gendering of work. For example, by talking about the sole-male-breadwinner as the 'natural' and 'logic' choice, and assigning agency over decision making

processes to others (e.g. through passive voice and choice of pronouns), they construct the professional domain as masculine, normalising traditional divisions of labour, and reinforce gendered role segregations. These processes take place not only in *what* these women say, but importantly in *how* they say it. We provide several concrete examples of how this is achieved in the next section, and by focusing on the *how* in addition to the *what,* we move considerably beyond previous qualitative research on trailing spouses which has largely captured the experiences of these women (and sometimes men) by largely focusing on what they say (e.g. Collins & Berone, 2017; Lauring & Selmer, 2010; Mäkelä et al., 2011).

As we have described elsewhere in more detail (Schnurr et al., 2016), throughout their interviews these women oriented to several cultural discourses of femininity (such as the discourse of motherhood, which is often contrasted with the discourse of professionality; and the discourse of change and adaptation, which is often linked to the discourse of regret). These cultural discourses (Foucault, 1972) enabled us to identify the taken-for-granted assumptions relating to gender which underlie their recounted experiences. However, in this paper, our main focus is not the cultural discourses of femininity which these women mobilise, but we are rather interested in the gendered and gendering discourses more broadly that they orient to. Thus, like Smithson and Stokoe (2005) we "trawled the data particularly for responses and descriptions in which gender was a crucial organizing feature and basis, explicitly or implicitly" (p. 152). As we illustrate in more detail below, this included instances where the interviewees explicitly mentioned gendered identity categories, such as *husband, woman* etc., but it also included instances where the reference to gender was more covert, for example when the women described the role segregation in their family. We also focused on the women's use of language and in addition to paying particular attention to their choice of reference terms for gendered identity categories, we also looked at their choice of pronouns, particles, qualifiers and choice of terminology. This procedure helped us identify

numerous episodes (of variable length) in which the women more or less explicitly oriented

to the gender order when recounting their experiences. We have grouped these episodes into

two – to some extent overlapping – themes, namely; i) normalising traditional divisions of

labour in public and private domains; and ii) orienting to traditional gender roles. Our

analyses below are structured along these themes and critically discuss three examples which,

we believe, adequately reflect the diversity of our data.

Findings

We have chosen three examples here to show how throughout the interviews, the 'trailing

spouses' frequently mobilise and orient to several gendered and gendering discourses relating

to work, and how they thereby normalise the underlying gender order on which these

discourses – and the gendered notion of work which they construct – are built. As Holmes

(2018) maintains, "[t]he gender order acts as a societal level constraint to which members of

society orient in their interactions, whether they conform to or contest it" (p. 34). However, it

is noteworthy that in our data, the women which we spoke to largely conformed to and

accepted the gender order and drew on a range of gendered and gendering discourses usually

without questioning and challenging the underlying assumptions. This acceptance and

compliance, however, is problematic as it contributes to constructing and accepting gendered

realities in which opportunities for women are highly restricted and limited by gender

stereotypes and gendered assumptions and expectations. This does of course not mean that no

other discourses exist in Hong Kong, it just means that these alternative discourses did not

feature prominently in the interviews with our participants.

Although the two themes listed above overlap and build on each other to some extent, we

describe each of them separately. The traditional divisions of labour which are described in

the first theme, provide the larger context and background against which the second theme, i.e. orienting to traditional gender roles, is set. While some similarities exists between these themes – in the sense that traditional gender roles are often located in the private versus public domains set up by the first theme – they are sufficiently distinct from each other in their focus (on domains versus roles) to warrant treating them as different themes. Our particular focus in the analysis below is on how presenting and talking about these themes in specific ways actively contributes to a gendering of work.

Normalising traditional divisions of labour in public and private domains

According to Acker (1990), "the construction of divisions along lines of gender" (p. 146), including divisions of labour and physical space, is one of the processes through which gendering occurs (see also Law, 1999). This can also be seen throughout the interviews which we conducted, where all respondents constructed and upheld a clear division of labour and segregation of spheres of activities – with women being firmly positioned within the private domain, and men being mainly portrayed in the public domain albeit with some access to the private domain. While this division of labour may at least partly be related to the fact that many of our participants had children during their stay in Hong Kong and chose to be stay-at-home mothers, it is nevertheless a reflection of their limited choices and an adherence to and normalisation of very traditional divisions of labour. This distinction is not new, and these binary oppositions between "'male/female' and 'public/private' are both salient principles of social organization" as Cameron (2006, p. 4) maintains. During the interviews, this binary often served as a structuring principle to make sense of and provide an explanation for the current "lived experience" (Creswell, 2013) of the women we spoke to, as Example 1 illustrates.

<u>Example 1</u>

This interview was conducted with a woman who used to work as a veterinarian in the United States of America before relocating to Hong Kong. She has had two babies since moving to Hong Kong just over four years ago. In the excerpt below she describes the clear division of responsibility between her husband and herself.

1. Respondent: Like he's the primary <u>breadwinner</u>. He's the one that <u>brought</u> us here.

2.   Um, my job is second seat to his, so I was

3.   like, right, in the house with the kids <u>I'm</u> the boss, you're my

4.   employee, like you support me, but <u>I</u> set the plans, <u>I</u> set the schedule.

5.   'Cause it <u>works</u>. My babies are happy, they're on a <u>good</u> schedule

6.   [and]=

7. Interviewer: [Uhhm].

8. Respondent: =as long as long as everyone just follows the rules I put down,

((several lines omitted))

9. Respondent: Because he is a good dad, but he has to kind of like (.) be a good: (.),

10.   like setting a schedule is not his strong suit, you know. Um, playing

11.   games and stuff like that is more his strong suit, and so I guess that's

12.   what I'd say he is, I'm in charge of the house, he's in charge outside of

13.   the house.

14. Interviewer: Uhhm.

15. Respondent: So, balance it out.

In this short excerpt the interviewee describes a clear division of labour between herself and her husband who each work and are in charge of a different domain: 'I'm in charge of the house, he's in charge outside of the house' (lines 12 and 13). Supported by the syntactic

structure of her utterance, these domains are set in opposition to each other. In line with this

opposition, she positions her husband as 'the primary breadwinner' (line 1), which she again

sets in opposition to her own localised role 'in the house with the kids' (line 3). It is

important to note that at this point the interviewee does not explicitly assign herself a role but

rather defines her own role and identity by the location in which she places herself and in

relation to her children.

Such discourses, which are based on "a clear division of gender roles", were also observed in

previous research. For example, in a study of male managers in Finland, Heikkinen and

Lämsä (2017) observed that the men drew on traditional as well as more modern discourses

of masculinity to emphasise their own "role as breadwinner (in the public sphere) and the

woman's role as primary care provider (in the private sphere)" (p. 176). Similarly, in

interviews with stay-at-home mothers, Lovejoy and Stone (2012) also found that after the

women had opted out of work the "material conditions at home" changed considerably

including "the emergence of a more gendered division of household labour" (p. 640).

In the interview excerpt above, our respondent claims agency for what happens in the home

while acknowledging that it was her husband 'who brought us here' (line 1), thereby

assigning agency to him and once more reflecting and talking into being a traditional division

of labour where women's realm of influence and action is confined to the home (lines 4

following). Through the categorical particle 'right' (which often marks directives, commands

and categorical statements) at the beginning of her explanations (line 3), together with the

me-versus-you dichotomy that she creates throughout (e.g. 'I'm the boss' vs. 'you're my

employee' (lines 3 and 4)), and her choice of pronouns (e.g. 'my babies' (line 5)), she claims

agency for this domain. This is further reflected in her categorical statement that 'everyone just follows the rules I put down' (line 8).

This traditional division of domains along gender lines (i.e. public versus private/domestic) is continued when the interviewee describes the role relationship with her husband at home, where she positions herself as clearly in charge and her husband as her subordinate ('I'm the boss, you're my employee' (lines 3 and 4). It is noteworthy that she uses professional vocabulary ('employee' rather than 'helper' or 'supporter') when describing their relationship, and she utters these role categories with an emphasis, thereby strengthening the illocutionary force of these claims. Interestingly, from about line 9 onwards she modifies and somewhat down-tones her initial claims about such a strict division of labour in the public versus private domains by also portraying her husband as 'a good dad' (line 9). Drawing on discourses of modern fatherhood – combining work and children (e.g. Ranson, 2012) – like many of the women we interviewed, she emphasises that despite her husband's main role as the breadwinner, he is also involved with the children. This behaviour is reminiscent of the parents researched by Emslie and Hunt (2009), who also "used coping mechanisms to help maintain a belief in the fairness of division of labour in the household, despite evidence that fathers remained peripheral to family life: for example, a belief that fathers were willing, and available, to help at home sustained most families" (p. 154).

In line with these conceptualisations of modern fatherhood, our interviewee portrays her husband as an ideal modern father who enjoys 'playing games and stuff like that' (line 11) but who leaves 'setting a schedule' (line 10) and other (less fun) organising activities to his wife. The interviewee thereby orients to a heteronormative family ideal with a working father and a stay-at-home mother who each perform a distinct (rather than shared) set of

responsibilities. These responsibilities are in line with the gender order and reflect and reinforce traditional gendered views of women as caring and of men as the breadwinner (Connell, 1987).

Although our interviewee evaluates this division of labour positively ('Cause it works. My babies are happy' (line 5)), such a family model is generally problematic in the sense that it disadvantages women by offering them a very limited set of career choices (all restricted to the home), thereby positioning them – just like our respondent does – in a 'second seat to his'. These discourses that the women regularly "draw upon and insert themselves into are underpinned by socio-cultural expectations and gender norms about […] [paid] work and unpaid work" (Toffoletti & Starr, 2016, p. 502). Thus, by orienting to this traditional family model with its relatively strict division of labour along gender lines, the interviewee at the same time actively (although not necessarily consciously) contributes to gendering the very notion of work. This is achieved by attaching "gendered meanings to work and careers and specify[ing] who 'naturally' belongs to them" (LaPointe, 2013, p. 135). At the same time, the taken-for-granted assumptions of gendered divisions of labour propagated by the gender order are naturalised. Although this reinforcing of the gender order and the naturalisation of gendered divisions is most likely not done deliberately, by talking about her own experience in this way, the interviewee accomplishes these processes.

According to our interviewee, and many of the other women we spoke to, (paid) work outside the home is often unquestionably assigned to the husband who is typically portrayed as 'the primary breadwinner' (line 1). In this family model, the women are depicted as taking 'a back seat' (as one of our other interviewees commented) and as having to find their place in the family dynamics without equal access to the (paid) work domain. In line with the underlying gender order, women often tend to adapt traditional divisions of labour, which offers them a

very restricted set of roles, and does not encourage them to question or challenge these models as possibly being unfair and perhaps even "a form of exploitation." (Hilbrecht, 2008, p. 454) Accordingly, this division of labour in different domains is presented here, and in many other interviews, as an ideal scenario where women and men perform equally important roles leading to a balanced relationship (line 15) and 'happy' children (line 5). Such a clear role-differentiation between men and women is also reflected in the examples discussed in the next section, where we further illustrate that "the relationship between work and the family has traditionally been a context of highly gender-specific roles" (Heikkinen & Lämsä, 2017, p. 172).

Orienting to traditional gendered roles

Throughout the interviews, we observed a similarly distinct differentiation along gender lines with regards to the roles that the women explicitly or implicitly ascribed to themselves and their husbands (see also Schnurr et al., 2016 for more examples). More specifically, the women made explicit reference to specific roles, such as breadwinner, father, and husband, and they also described specific activities performed by either themselves or their husbands, which (more implicitly) index specific roles, such as playing with the kids which indexes the role of a (good) father, or working long hours which indexes the role of a committed, hard-working professional. Given our discussions above, it is perhaps not surprising that most of the activities and roles which the women assigned to themselves were related to the private domain, while the activities they assigned to their husbands were mainly located in the public domain but also sometimes transgressed public and private domains. Among the activities which the women portrayed themselves as performing were traditionally feminine activities, such as bearing and raising children, overseeing the household (which in most expatriate

homes in Hong Kong is supported by a live-in domestic helper, typically from a woman from a South East Asian country), and engaging in different social activities (which were often structured around their children's busy social schedules). The activities which the women assigned to their husbands, on the other hand, included work-related activities (such as frequent travelling, working long hours), as well as contributing to activities around family life (such as helping the women with their chores and playing with the children).

Drawing on these gendered and gendering activities, the women actively (although not necessarily consciously) index specific roles and role models, which are largely based on gender-specific role models for men and women. For example, they tend to describe themselves as mothers and caregivers, while positioning their husbands as breadwinners (a term which many of them used) *and* good fathers. Through this positioning they thus allow (and often facilitate) dual-roles for their husbands which they do not mention as a possibility for themselves. In other words, whilst they often portrayed their husbands as being successful in both their professional career and their family life (as a good father and husband), during the interviews none of the women considered this dual-role as a feasibly achievable or viable option in the short to medium term for themselves (perhaps with an exception of the interviewee in Example 1 who worked part-time in Hong Kong).

We analyse and discuss two examples here to illustrate this role-differentiation between women and men. The first example is taken from an interview with an expatriate woman from Australia who used to pursue a career in marketing. She moved to Hong Kong less than a year before data collection. Unlike many of the expatriate women we interviewed, at the time of data collection, she did not have any children.

Example 2

Just before the excerpt below, we asked the respondent about what she considers to be her husband's role in their relationship.

1. Respondent:	Essentially, at the moment, he's definitely the <u>bread</u>winner=
2. Interviewer:	Right.
3. Respondent:	= um, which I've kind, I've, I'm starting to accept more, 'cause I'm
4.	quite, um, eh, what's the word? Like I: (2) I, I don't like that I'm not
5.	earning money myself, [like]=
6. Interviewer:	[Uhhm].
7. Respondent:	= that is, that really does bother me=
8. Interviewer:	Uhhm.
9. Respondent:	=um, because I, I like to have my own money that I feel like I can go
10.	and buy whatever I want,

((several lines omitted))

11. Respondent:	And I have to ask my husband for money which I [find]=
12. Interviewer:	[Right].
13. Respondent:	=very demeaning.
14. Interviewer:	Right.
15. Respondent:	Um, so I guess going back to the question, yeah, I see his job here is,
16.	eh, at the moment the breadwinner and, oh, like I'm here I guess to
17.	nurture his [career]=
18. Interviewer:	[Uhhm, uhhm].
19. Respondent:	= like I try and make things, um, as easy as possible for him which
20.	again is hard because I look back at my life in ((city in Australia)) and
21.	everything was equal, like, you know, we both went to work, we both

22.   worked just as hard and you know, daily chores and everything were

23.   spread out evenly and [ex]pectations=

24. Interviewer: [Um].

25. Respondent: =were the same. Whereas here, like, I feel like, well, you know, just

26.   because ((name of husband)) works all the time, like all the crappy

27.   stuff, I have to do, [you know]=

28. Interviewer: [Ri::ght].

29. Respondent: =it's (there's not much for us to do)=

30. Interviewer: Yeah.

32. Respondent: =even though I am busy [doing]=

32. Interviewer: [Yeah].

33. Respondent: =things, um, but like ((husband's name)) is quite good, he does do

34.   things to help out and he's not like=

35. Interviewer: Like what?

36. Respondent: =um, like he'll go and get the groceries sometimes on the weekend

37.   [because] he knows I hate [doing] it.

38. Interviewer: [Uhhm] [Uhhm]

39. Respondent: Um, you know, he'll do some washing and hang it out. He doesn't do

40.   as much as he would have done at home=

41. Interviewer: Uhhm.

42. Respondent: =but he is pretty good.

Like in the previous example, the interviewee here also describes her husband as the 'breadwinner' (line 1), a role which has a male bias and is often associated with a traditional heteronormative family model as described above. The utterance-initial 'essentially' and the

adverb 'definitely' could be interpreted as strengthening this claim, which is to some extent counterbalanced by the temporal description 'at the moment' (line 1), which indicates that this role distribution is considered to be temporary. Like in Example 1, this respondent also positions herself in relation to her husband in a supporting role ('I'm here I guess to nurture his career' (lines 16 and 17)). This observation is in line with previous research which also attests that "men's careers are more frequently given priority when decisions are made that affect both spouses' careers" (Valcour & Tolbert, 2003, p. 771; Heikkinen & Lämsä, 2017). Similarly, Mäkelä et al. (2011) observed that in the interviews they conducted with Finish dual career couples who relocated, the spouses often took on supportive roles, largely looking after housework and childcare. The same applies to our sample, where none of the women described herself as having an "equal partner" role in which "both partners were advancing their career equally" (Mäkelä et al., 2011: 194). Similarly, Lauring and Selmer (2010) in their observations of and interviews with Danish female 'trailing spouses' who temporarily lived in Saudi Arabia also found that the women's roles were largely to support their working husbands and take over traditional roles refined to the private domain. However, unlike the women in our sample, the participants in their study seemed relatively content with their new roles and uttered only very little criticism. We would argue that these different findings could, at least partly, be explained by the fact that in Lauring and Selmer's (2010) study the interviewer was male while in our study she was female, which arguably facilitated the opening up of our female participants and perhaps encouraged them to be more critical about their husbands, their new roles, and their overall level of discontent with the new situation.

However, interestingly, unlike our interviewee in Example 1, this respondent takes a more critical stance towards this and portrays herself as struggling with this arrangement – especially with the financial dependency associated with it, which she describes as 'very demeaning' (line

13) and as bothering her (line 7). Like the female full-time domestic caretakers researched by Lovejoy and Stone (2012, p. 641), our interviewee also experienced a "loss of bargaining power" which seemed to further constrain her options, and which in some interviews was used as a rationale to justify the husband's increasing focus on his professional career. Moreover, like the female and male 'trailing spouses' interviewed by Collins and Bertone (2017), our participants also ascribed the stress and dissatisfaction with their relocation to changed roles and identities.

Throughout the excerpt, this interviewee contrasts her current "lived experience" (Creswell, 2013) with her memories of the past prior to the relocation. She initially describes the relationship with her husband in the past as 'equal' (line 21) where both pursued a professional career and contributed equally to the household chores (lines 22 and 23). However, she then moves on to the "here and now" (De Fina, 2013, p. 44), in which she depicts their role relationship is asymmetrical with her husband holding the financial power ('I have to ask my husband for money' (line 11)) and her taking on the traditionally female role of nurturing (his career) (line 17). These observations are in line with previous research findings which claim that "in general, women who make more money and who are well-educated enjoy a more equal division of labour" (Casinowsky, 2013). In contrast to her relationship in the temporal past and at a different location (Australia), her current relationship, by implication, is constructed as unequal. Interestingly, she makes – albeit brief – reference to the 'expectations' (lines 23) which have changed. Like the interviewee in Example 1, she also positions herself as accommodating her husband's career, but unlike in the previous excerpt, she more explicitly laments the implications of this: 'like, well, you know, just because ((name of husband)) works all the time, like all the crappy stuff, I have to do, [you know]=' (lines 25-27). Her critical comment is hedged considerably by the numerous pragmatic particles ('like', 'well', 'you

know', and 'just') which occur immediately after each other. However, the core of her statement ('all the crappy stuff, I have to do') – albeit being preceded and followed by more pragmatic particles ('just' and 'you know') – constitutes a critique of the current arrangements and perhaps even of the underlying gender order.

Interestingly, and in line with our observations in the other interviews, the respondent does not blame her husband for this situation, but rather mentions relatively abstract 'expectations' (line 23), which seem to have altered, and the fact that he 'works all the time' (line 26) – thereby blurring the focus and source of the inequalities. Her husband is not assigned an active role at home in this current arrangement. On the contrary, she portrays him very positively as being 'quite good' and 'help[ing] out' (lines 33 and 34). Similar to the previous example, the interviewee here also depicts her husband as someone who does not only pursue a successful career, but additionally as someone who is at least partly involved in the housework and who is trying hard to support his wife (e.g. by taking over chores she does not like, such as grocery shopping and hanging out the laundry (lines 36 and 37, 39 and 40)). And although, as our respondent admits, 'He doesn't do as much as he would have done at home' (lines 39 and 40), 'he is pretty good' (line 42).

So overall, as in the previous example, we see a relatively clear role differentiation between husband and wife aligned with, and thereby reinforcing, the gender order. The woman's roles and responsibilities are firmly located in the private domain, while the husband skillfully and effectively manages to contribute to both: he is a successful and hard-working professional *and* a good husband who supports his wife. Such a role differentiation was also observed in the interviews conducted by Collins and Bertone (2017) where some of the (male and female) 'trailing spouses' who relocated to Malaysia and who participated in their study lamented the

loss of their professional career (and by implication identity). The next example further illustrates this gendered and gendering role differentiation. It is taken from an interview with a woman who used to work as a corporate lawyer in the UK before moving to Hong Kong just over five years ago. At the time of recording she had two young children.

<u>Example 3</u>

At this point in the interview, we asked the interviewee whether she thinks that her husband would have followed her if she had been given a comparable opportunity to advance her professional career.

1. Interviewer:	Would he have followed you ((chuckles))?
2. Respondent:	I think he would have struggled.
3. Interviewer:	He would have struggled.
4. Respondent:	I think he would have struggled.
5. Interviewer:	Because=
6. Respondent:	Yup, sorry, he doesn't want to be a house husband.
7. Interviewer:	Right.
8. Respondent:	Um, he doesn't wanna be a house husband, to be fair, I don't want a
9.	house husband, because, um, that was an option in one of my
10.	previous relationships, and=
11. Interviewer:	Right.
12. Respondent:	= I know that I couldn't, I couldn't be that person who went out to
13.	work while he looked after the kids. I just can't (.) do it. That's just
14.	my make-up.

((several lines omitted))

15. Respondent:	I think partly because I just, I <u>am</u> very hands-on as a mum, and I knew
16.	I was going to be hands-on as a mum. I couldn't (.) leave somebody
17.	else to do it, even if it is the dad=
18. Interviewer:	Right.
19. Respondent:	=um, which is (.) not very helpful for my career, by the way, um, and I
20.	do have friends back in ((city in UK)) who do have house husbands,
21.	who have made that decision that they are going to be
22.	very high-flying in their career in [the of]fice=
23. Interviewer:	[Yeah].
24. Respondent:	=I'm going to stay at home, but I knew that wasn't going to work for
25.	me, and I know that with my husband, um, he wouldn't be able to do
26.	it. He would go crazy.
27. Interviewer:	Because he's on a career path or he's very, he's a workaholic? What is
28.	it?
29. Respondent:	He's a workaholic, he's also, (.) although he has a very outspoken,
30.	educated wife=
31. Interviewer:	((laughs))
32. Respondent:	=in that sense, he is very traditional. It's, It's not acceptable for (.) the
33.	husband to stay at home.
34. Interviewer:	Right.
35. Respondent:	He doesn't know anybody like that. He would, yeah, I mean, he is
36.	Mainland Chinese and it's just not done, I don't think.
37. Interviewer:	Right.

38. Respondent: And, I mean even at home, it's relatively rare. (.) There are more and

39.   more here, definitely seeing it, and you know, at schools and things,

40.   but my, my husband wouldn't be able to cope. I think he'd feel, I

41.   think he'd feel emasculated by it.

One of the questions we routinely asked during the interviews was whether our respondents thought that their husbands would have accompanied them if they had been offered a similar opportunity to further their own careers overseas. While most of our interviewees responded in the affirmative (but see Schnurr et al., 2016 for a more critical discussion of this), the respondent in Example 3 is one of the few who took a rather different stance and negated this possibility. In explaining her answer, she mainly follows two lines of argument: using her and her husband's personal preferences and making reference to larger societal and cultural expectations. In both lines of argument, she relies on traditional role expectations for men and women, and thereby orients to and upholds the underlying gender order.

While the respondent initially states her husband's preferences as a reason for their current, traditional, division of labour (e.g. 'he doesn't want to be a house husband' (line 6), which she repeats in line 8), she then clarifies this by giving further explanations in which the responsibility for the decision to relocate in support of her husband's career is shifted to her and away from her husband ('to be fair, I don't want a house husband' (lines 9 and 10)). In particular with the utterance-initial 'to be fair', she reframes her line of argument as her personal choice. She thereby constructs the role of stay-at-home husband as dispreferred – by both herself and husband. These judgments and evaluations are in line with observations made by Cole (2012) who argues that male 'trailing spouses' or female breadwinner families tend to be perceived negatively – both by their home and their host culture. However,

interestingly, in the interviews she conducted with a few male 'trailing spouses' they were all very supportive of their wives' career and none of them explicitly mentioned "gender role concerns" (Cole, 2012 p. 137). In contrast to this, and like in the Examples above, our respondent here heavily relies on traditional role differentiations which position women as full-time mothers and carers, and the husband as the one to pursue paid work. This interviewee embraces this traditional and heavily gendered role of full-time mother enthusiastically by claiming that 'I couldn't, I couldn't be that person who went out to work while he looked after the kids' (lines 12 and 13). Especially the repetition of the negative 'I couldn't' and the preceding categorical exclamation 'I know that' strengthen the illocutionary force of this utterance. The respondent does this – at this point – by firmly structuring the argument around her own role as 'a hands-on mum' (lines 15 and 16), which allows her to repeatedly reject other, non-traditional role models (which might see the father staying at home).

Whilst she admits that this decision is 'not very helpful for my career' (line 19), and she also points to alternative family models by making reference to some anonymous friends in her home town (lines 19-22), she returns to her initial assessment that these alternative models would not be the right choice for her or her husband (who, according to her, 'would go crazy' (line 26)). Throughout these explanations, the respondent thus repeatedly draws on gendered role differentiations and portrays them as her and her husband's personal preferences. However, it is important to acknowledge that although "women's choices and priorities may be expressed as personal and individual preferences" they are nevertheless "informed and constrained by gendered norms within their own lives" (Herman, 2015, p. 327). This interpretation is supported when the respondent's line of argument changes in her subsequent utterances.

After having been prompted by the interviewer – the respondent describes her husband as 'a workaholic' (line 29) and 'very traditional' (line 32), and herself as 'a very outspoken, educated wife=' (lines 29 and 30). Like in Excerpt 1, she thereby creates a "me-versus-you" dichotomy portraying her husband – perhaps with slightly negative connotations – as old-fashioned and herself as more modern. However, it is interesting to note here that she does not talk about herself in the first person singular ('I'), but rather uses a distancing and to some extent neutralising role description which is closely related to her husband and that cognitively assigns agency to him rather than her (i.e. 'he has a very outspoken, educated wife' rather than 'I am very outspoken, educated'). The interviewee then further elaborates this line of argument, and implicitly refers to relatively abstract norms and expectations (which reflect the gender order) when justifying the traditional role differentiation in her family. More specifically, by stating that 'It's not acceptable for (.) the husband to stay at home.' (line 32), she categorically rules out this alternative way of sharing roles in the family. She further strengthens her argument by making reference to her husband's socio-cultural background which is often described as patriarchal (Chee & West, 2004; Cullen, 1999; Lee, 2004; Ladegaard, 2012; Schnurr and Zayts, 2017): 'he is Mainland Chinese and it's just not done' (lines 35 and 36). Through these references to abstract norms and expectations, and by using the passive voice when making these claims, together with the pragmatic particle 'just', our interviewee constructs them as naturalised, taken-for-granted, and unchangeable. Even towards the end of this excerpt, when she acknowledges that these traditional norms and expectations of gendered role differentiations are changing elsewhere (lines 38 and 39), she insists that they are not an option for her husband, this time explicitly mentioning gender: 'I think he'd feel, I think he'd feel emasculated by it' (lines 40 and 41). This is a strong claim – although it is somewhat softened by the restart ('I think he'd feel, I think he'd feel') –

through which the roles of stay-at-home parent and breadwinner are explicitly gendered, with the former being positioned as feminine, resulting in an emasculation if performed by men. These claims are also reflected in a study of female breadwinner families with male 'trailing spouses' conducted by Cole (2012), who argues that "[b]readwinner status has been strongly linked to masculine identity" so that alternative models are often seen as threats to the male partner's masculinity. This choice of terminology in the example above – 'emasculated' – thus creates a strong link between a specific role and the gender order which postulates whether this is a traditionally male or female role. This excerpt is thus an excellent example to illustrate how the gendering of roles takes place in situ – in and through people's discourse – and how the gender order is regularly oriented to and upheld in the accounts of these highly educated women who prior to their relocation were pursuing flourishing professional careers.

Overall, the examples discussed in this and the previous section have illustrated and discussed some of the (discursive) processes through which these women actively (although not necessarily consciously) gender the notion of work. Through their accounts of traditional divisions of labour in the public and private domain, and by assigning specific – gendered and gendering – roles to their husbands and themselves and presenting these choices as normalised and unquestionable, these women also orient to, uphold and largely reinforce the gender order. Many of these gendered (and gendering) assumptions are "deeply embedded in more traditional organizational discourse" (Ross-Smith & Kornberger, 2004, p. 280) and have migrated into discourses of work outside organisations. This drawing on dominant discourses of gender and work is problematic as it constructs the women's limited role choices and their lack of agency as normative and acceptable, which ultimately contributes to sustaining gender inequalities and masculine hegemony in relation to work.

Conclusion

It was the aim of this paper to illustrate some of the benefits of taking a discourse analytical approach to gain new insights into the processes through which a gendering of work takes place. By focusing not only on *what* the 'trailing spouses' who participated in this study said in the interviews, but rather paying close attention to *how* meaning was constructed and negotiated, we were able to capture and identify some of the processes through which gendered and gendering assumptions about work and role segregations were oriented to and largely reinforced. Such an approach thus helps to identify and describe – and eventually challenge and change – the often hidden processes through which these gendered and gendering activities are enacted by those who continue to be disadvantaged by them.

By orienting to and mobilising – more or less explicitly – traditional gender expectations about available and acceptable roles for men and women, and by locating men and women in distinct public versus private domains, our participants constantly oriented to the gender order in unproblematic ways, reinforcing and upholding rather than questioning and challenging its discriminatory assumptions. These women thereby through their use of language, support and reinforce the dominant social structures of the gender order (Crawford & Mills, 2011). Such unproblematised assumptions, as Toffoletti and Starr (2016) show in their study on the work-life balance discourses produced by Australian female academics, illustrate how "the normalization of highly gendered attitudes about paid work and unpaid care that predominate" among this group of women "create[s] additional burdens" (p. 490) for them to navigate the already difficult situation in which they find themselves. The same can be said about the 'trailing spouses' who participated in this study, and who struggled to come to terms with the psycho-social and employment consequences of their relocation to Hong Kong – including the loss of their own job and social network, as well as financial

independence, and an identity crisis (McNulty, 2012; Schnurr et al., 2016). Many have told us in the interviews how they struggled emotionally (and sometimes physically) to adjust to the new situation, and several of them have explicitly described their situation as a 'loss of identity' or an 'identity crisis'.

Our analyses have also shown that "the gender segregation of work, including divisions between paid and unpaid work" is not only "created through organizational practices" (Acker, 1990, p. 140), but is actually upheld and reinforced in the discourses of these women *outside* an organisation. Taking a discourse analytical approach, as we have done in this study, provides further evidence to support claims that gender inequalities which affect organisational structures and practices are often produced and reinforced, and – more importantly – normalised, in other non-organisational contexts. This normalisation of gendered and gendering discourses around work and role segregations are highly problematic as they may limit women's access to organisations, specific career paths, and (paid) work. As this study has shown, these discourses circulate not only inside many organisations (e.g. Crawford & Mills, 2011; Smithson & Stokoe, 2005), but also outside organisations, where they structure and legitimise gendered relationship dynamics in the private realm. It has been argued that "[a]nalysing the gendered assumptions underlying rationality captures the 'other factors' that silently and powerfully structure human relations." (Ross-Smith and Kornberger, 2004, p. 299) And as our study has shown, using discourse analytical tools processes enables researchers capture these assumptions as they are being produced.

We would argue that identifying and making visible the gendered assumptions on which the 'trailing spouses' in our data draw when constructing (and often at the same time gendering) reality is not only important to understand their life and career choices. Such an understanding also has the potential to initiate change with regards to the construction and enactment of gender and the gender order, both in organisations as well as in personal

relationships. More specifically, raising awareness of the processes through which gendering takes place on the micro-level, i.e. in the way people talk about (traditional) divisions of labour in public and private domains, and a traditional role segregation in their relationships, provides concrete avenues for change. For example, by making women aware that their experiences with regards to these issues are not the default and normalised option, but are rather (discriminating) effects of a gender order that is still characterised by a male bias and tends to privilege masculine hegemony, taken-for-granted practices can be challenged and opportunities for alternative choices and trajectories are created.

We thus hope that our research will contribute to attempts to de-gender the notion of work and to trouble the gender order – for example by questioning and contesting normalised and normalising hegemonic discourses which construct work and the work domain as masculine (Hughes et al., 2002). To do this, however, it is important to understand what discourses of work are actually used by these 'trailing spouses' and other social groups who are marginalised and excluded from access to organisations and (paid) work by the hegemonic masculine notions of work which they uphold and reinforce. We need to gain a better understanding of how – through repeatedly mobilising and orienting to specific gendered and gendering discourses – interlocutors at the same time actively (although most likely unconsciously and unintentionally) contribute to gendering the notion of work and upholding the gender order. As Smithson and Stokoe (2005) maintain, "[b]y investigating the ways that participants construct and negotiate ideas about the role of gender in the workplace, we can begin to understand how organizations become gendered and are maintained as gendered" (p. 154). This does not only apply to the gendering of workplaces and organisations, but also to the gendering of the very notion of work, as we have shown.

Thus, to break out of this cycle of reinforcing gender stereotypes and (re-)gendering the notion of work, we believe that it is necessary to highlight and create awareness of the

gendering processes they (most likely unconsciously) participate in, and to point them towards alternative discourses to draw on when telling their stories and making sense of their "lived experience" (Creswell, 2013). For example, in a study of Finnish female business graduates who were considering a career change, LaPointe (2013) observed how these women managed to successfully talk about their career change in ways that enabled them to "mov[e] away from a victim position and adopt a temporary position as an active and heroic career actor" (p. 137). For the 'trailing spouses' who we interviewed, possible alternative ways of re-telling their stories may involve, for example, positioning themselves as agents rather than as taking a 'second seat' (Example 1) or portraying themselves as 'nurtur[ing]' their husband's career (Example 2). Our interviewee in Example 3 does this to some extent by (at least partly) claiming that the current role divisions between herself and her husband also reflect her own preferences to be 'very hands-on as a mum'. Moreover, this raising of awareness would also include demonstrating to the women that the struggles which they are experiencing are actually not individual struggles (resulting from perceived personal incompetence) but are rather symptomatic of more complex gender dynamics, affecting many women in similar situations.

Taking a discourse analytical approach and focusing on the role of language in this context is promising because, as Crawford and Mills (2011, p. 94; p. 105-6) point out, "language is a powerful tool and can play a significant role in organizational change" by identifying and ultimately breaking down and removing the barriers that many women experience in their organisational and private lives. This would also involve challenging the taken-for-granted assumptions about divisions of labour in public and private domains, as well as specific role segregations – as reflected in the interviews with the 'trailing spouses'. It would ultimately imply contesting normalised and taken-for-granted meanings of work as gendered, which, subsequently would contribute to a de-gendering of the notion of work creating more equal

professional opportunities and egalitarian organisational structures for men and women. These changes and proposed models of action are important if we want to de-gender the notion of work and make relationships and social structures and dynamics – inside and outside organisations – more equal for men and women. As we have shown, to work towards this goal it is crucial to avoid an exclusive focus on organisational discourses, but also consider those work-related discourses which people draw on outside of organisations. Future research should thus more systematically explore this side of gender, work, and organisation, and should make more use of the numerous benefits of discourse analytical approaches – in particular, to capture and identify further processes through which gendered and gendering activities are enacted. More specifically, we would hope that future research would address some of the limitations of this study and explore, for example, the discourse of male 'trailing spouses' to see whether they engage in similarly gendered and gendering activities. Another concrete avenue for future research would be to do an in-depth analysis of 'trailing spouses' in other geographical locations (such as the Middle-East, Africa, South America), and to also listen to the voices of other marginalised and often discriminated groups (such as ethnic and/or religious minorities). We believe that the discourse analytical tools and processes that we have introduced here in the context of female 'trailing spouses' provide a useful approach for such endeavours, and we hope that future research will find them useful.

Notes

1. Although we acknowledge that the term 'trailing spouses' is highly contested as it devalues these women and positions them outside of the workforce, leaving little room for them to be anywhere but in the private domain, we have decided to use this term in this paper as it is the term that the group of women who participated in our study used to describe themselves. However, to acknowledge the problematic nature of the term, we put it in inverted commas.

2. We understand careers here as 'the evolving sequence of a person's work experiences over time' (Arthur et al., 1989, p. 8).

Transcription conventions

?	rising intonation
.	a stopping fall in tone
,	continuing intonation (like when enumerating things)
(.)	just noticeable pause
(0.2)	measurable pause; the number inside the brackets indicates the duration of the pause in seconds
::	prolongation of sound
((xxx))	transcriber's comments
=	latching on of two utterances without a pause
<u>love</u>	word spoken with emphasis
[	the beginning of an overlapping word or utterance
]	the end of an overlapping word or utterance

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