

# VU Research Portal

## Out of Sync?

Taht, K.

2011

### **document version**

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication in VU Research Portal](#)

### **citation for published version (APA)**

Taht, K. (2011). *Out of Sync? The determinants and consequences of nonstandard schedules for family cohesion: The Netherlands within a comparative perspective*. [PhD-Thesis - Research and graduation internal, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam]. VU University Amsterdam.

### **General rights**

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal

### **Take down policy**

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

### **E-mail address:**

[vuresearchportal.ub@vu.nl](mailto:vuresearchportal.ub@vu.nl)

## Chapter 5

---

# Nonstandard work schedules and partnership dissolution: a comparison between The Netherlands and the United States

*This study examines the impact of nonstandard working schedules on partnership dissolution risk. Using panel data from the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (N=2,982) and the U.S. National Survey of Families and Households (N=4,919), the paper shows that working nonstandard schedules or having a nonstandard schedule worker in the household increases the partnership dissolution risk over time. The negative impact of nonstandard schedule work on partnership stability is the strongest in households where nonstandard schedules are worked in a desynchronized manner, such as one partner working nonstandard and the other standard schedules. The latter is, however, not a rare case for households with young children. In comparison to the U.S., in Netherlands where working time regulation is stricter and workers respectively more protected against the 'unhealthy' effect of these schedules, the detrimental effect of nonstandard schedule work on partnership dissolution seems somewhat weaker, however still present.*

### 5.1 Introduction

The role of paid work in separation and divorce has often been studied with a focus on women's labor market participation (G. Becker, 1981; Oppenheimer, 1997) and the number of hours spent in paid labor (Spitze & South, 1985) as one of the key factors in predicting the partnership dissolution risk. The few studies on the effect of men's employment practices on partnership stability focus mostly on the number of hours spent in work and its effect on partnership stability (Poortman, 2005). Next to *how much*, less attention has been placed on *when* the paid labor of either women or both partners takes place (Presser, 2000) and how this affects partnership dissolution risk. At the same time, work outside of the home during the nonstandard days and hours – evenings, nights, weekends,

bank holidays - is already not a rare phenomenon. According to Presser (2003), 28% of dual-earner couples in the U.S. have at least one spouse working other than a standard day schedule. According to Mills & Täht (2010), in The Netherlands the respective figure is even 29% .

Nonstandard schedules, which take normally place during the days and hours of 'standard' family time, imposes severe restrictions on joint time between partners, often reducing the level of partnership happiness or increasing levels of conflict and dissatisfaction (Mills & Täht, 2010; White & Keith, 1990). Many partners also use nonstandard working times as a way to arrange childcare (Carriero et al., 2009) - while one is working the other is taking care of children. This reduces the partners' time with each other even more and may respectively increase the strain on partnership cohesion (Wight et al., 2008).

Previous studies that have addressed the issue of the effect of nonstandard schedule work on partnership stability (Davis et al., 2008; Presser, 2000; White & Keith, 1990) showed an increase in partnership dissolution risk. However, it should be noted that these studies have been carried out in the U.S. and therefore we do not know whether the disruptive impact of nonstandard schedule work on partnership stability is actually a U.S. characteristic only. American work time regulations regarding nonstandard schedules associate these schedules to less advantaged labor market positions (Gornick & Meyers, 2003; Hamermesh, 1996), which may spill over to relationship quality (Wight et al., 2008) and increase the dissolution risk. In The Netherlands, just the opposite, working time is regulated more strictly (Jacobs, 2004) and workers of nonstandard schedules are respectively more protected against the unhealthy hours. Thus, the impact of nonstandard schedule work on partnership dissolution risk could be different here. Dutch country-context and work-time regulations has been one of the explanations for the rather modest negative effect of nonstandard schedule work on partnership quality in The Netherlands (Mills & Täht, 2010).

Thus, the main research question of the present study is the impact of nonstandard schedule work on partnership stability. More precisely, whether there exists a clear impact of nonstandard schedule work on partnership stability; and what is the role of country-specific institutional context in shaping it? For this, the paper takes a comparative approach and

compares the impact of nonstandard schedules on partnership dissolution in two different welfare and labor market regimes: the low-regulated and low-protected American work time context and a strictly regulated and well-protected Dutch work time regime. For this the study analyzes two nationally representative panel studies – the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (Dykstra et al., 2004, 2007) and the U.S. National Survey of Families and Households (Sweet & Bumpass, 1996; Sweet et al., 1988).

## **5.2 Work schedules and partnership stability**

### **5.2.1 The impact of nonstandard schedule work on partnership dissolution**

The most commonly proposed mechanisms regarding the nonstandard schedule work and partnership stability rely on the *time-restriction* argument and can be summarized by the ‘absence’, ‘attachment’ (for more see Presser, 2000), and ‘stress’ effect. The central idea of the *absence effect* is that being away from home due to work, especially in case of women, by itself increases partnership dissolution risk. When women are economically active, not enough hours are spent at home to assume many of the traditional homemaking responsibilities, which in turn creates marital conflict and in the long run may increase the partnership dissolution risk. Complementary to this argument is the *attachment effect* where the argument is that pleasurable shared time is marriage-specific capital that discourages divorce (Hill, 1988). Couples who work nonstandard schedules have a particularly high risk to spend less time together, which, in turn, increases their partnership dissolution risk. In addition, the strong negative physical and psychological effects of work in nonstandard schedules such as stress, tiredness and sleeping disorders (Jamal, 2004) foster the negative impact of nonstandard schedules on partnership even more (Fenwick & Tausig, 2001; Han, 2005), creating the *stress effect*. When summarized as the first main hypothesis, it can be expected that *working nonstandard schedules increases partnership dissolution risk* (H1).

Working nonstandard schedules means often missing various family activities such as joint leisure time or family dinners (Täht & Mills, 2012).

As especially women are still expected to be (Deutsch & Saxon, 1998) but also feel (van der Lippe, 2007) more devoted to family matters, when working nonstandard schedules they strongly deviate from their role. Therefore, it is expected that *women's nonstandard schedule work has a stronger negative impact on partnership dissolution risk compared to men's nonstandard schedule work* (H1.1).

Although taking place always outside the 'standard' family/couple time, different nonstandard schedule types are not exactly the same. In case of night work couples may spend less intimate time together (Mott et al., 1965), which does not need to be the case for weekend day work. Night work is also linked to perceptions of greater spillover of stress and fatigue to the home (Davis et al., 2008; Grosswald, 2003). Again, for the weekend work that often happens during the day hours the physical impact is smaller and the 'side-effects' mostly social. Respectively, weekend work has a potential to be less disruptive for marriage than night work (Davis et al., 2008; Presser, 2003). Therefore, *the impact of nonstandard schedule work on increasing partnership dissolution risk is expected to be more pronounced for evening/night work* (H1.2).

### **5.2.2 The moderating effect of household composition**

From the partnership point of view, couples who are economically active would be interested in synchronizing their working schedules (Lesnard, 2008), i.e. being away from home at the same time. Synchronizing the schedules – for partners working standard as well as nonstandard times – allows the creation of more shared time and this way working nonstandard schedules does not need to be as disruptive. At the same time, having partners' working schedules in a *desynchronized* (Carriero et al., 2009) mode – for example one working in standard and other in nonstandard days/hours – creates severe restrictions to their shared time and according to attachment argument increases partnership dissolution risk. Thus, for understanding the impact of nonstandard schedule work on partnership stability, both partners' schedules have to be considered. Moreover, the crucial element here is not only what schedules the other partner works, but how the working schedules of the two partners are combined. Thus, the other main hypothesis of current paper is that *desynchronized schedules*

*have a stronger negative effect on partnership stability than schedules which are 'in sync', even when being both worked in nonstandard times (H2).*

The above predicted gender-effect would be plausible also when work in nonstandard times is seen as both partners' working schedule combination. Traditional expectations towards woman's presence at home during the 'standard' family time translates in this case to the hypothesis that *couples where female partner is engaged in nonstandard schedule work – both in synchronized, but even more so in desynchronized schedule mode – faces a higher risk of partnership dissolution (H2.1).*

Another household composition aspect to be considered is the presence of children. Even when undesirable from a partnership point of view, the desynchronization of partners' schedules may still take place due to household reasons such as arranging childcare (Barnett & Gareis, 2007; Han, 2004; Mills & Täht, 2010). For various reasons (economic, cultural, etc.) partners may be not able or not willing to use child care facilities (Portegijs et al., 2006), and having young children who need childcare may encourage partners to shift partly to nonstandard schedules. This leads to tag-team parenting where one partner is taking care of the children while the other is working and the other way round (Han, 2004; Presser & Cox, 1997). Arranging child care in a desynchronized schedule manner may come, however, at the expense of other activities, including couple time (Wight et al., 2008). While having young children in the household usually decreases the risk of partnership dissolution (Waite & Lillard, 1991), it can be expected that *having (young) children makes the negative impact of partners' nonstandard schedules work on partnership dissolution risk even stronger (H2.2).*

### **5.2.3 Cross-national comparison: the role of country context**

Although partnership dissolution takes place on couple/household level, also wider contextual aspects play a significant role in the divorce probability (Levinger, 1965). Spouses who wish to end their marriages must overcome a variety of barriers which include moral or religious values, concerns about social stigma, legal restrictions, and financial dependence on one's spouse. In other words, the barriers shape how the spread, acceptability and accessibility of divorce is within a society (for summary see Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007).

In the comparison between the two studied countries, divorce is clearly more spread in the U.S. The U.S. divorce rate has been increasing steadily since the 1950s up to the 1980s, and has stayed relatively high since (Amato & Irving, 2005). Moreover, obtaining a divorce in the U.S. became less stigmatizing, costly and time-consuming today than before. In 2000, the divorce rate per 1,000 population aged 15-64 was 6.2 (Kats & Martin, 2003).

In The Netherlands, where the society can be considered as having also rather liberal tolerance towards divorce (Kalmijn, Graaf, & Poortman, 2004), the divorce rate compared to the U.S. is still remarkably low. In 2000, the divorce rate per 1,000 population aged 15-64 years in The Netherlands was 3.2 (Kats & Martin, 2003). Part of the fewer divorces in The Netherlands compared to the U.S. can be attributed to higher cohabitation and lower marriage rates of Dutch couples. In 2004, 7.6% of all couples in the U.S. and 13.3% of all couples in The Netherlands were cohabiters. Respectively, in 2005 the number of marriages per 1,000 unmarried women aged 15+ in the U.S. was 40.7 while in The Netherlands 22.6 (Popenoe, 2008). Next to different cohabitation rates, also the profiles of cohabiters of the two countries differ. In the U.S., cohabitation is more likely associated to lower social status and lower educational level (Lichter & Qian, 2008), which is not the case in The Netherlands (Hogerbrugge & Dykstra, 2009; Manting, 1996). Even when cohabitation in both countries can be considered as more unstable than marriages (Binstock & Thornton, 2003), American cohabiters are more likely to dissolve their partnerships than their Dutch counterparts.

Next to differences in divorce rates and culture, also working nonstandard schedules in the U.S. is not entirely similar to working these schedules in The Netherlands. Moderate working time regulation and lack of other regulatory mechanisms (collective agreements, trade unions, etc.) in the U.S. means that nonstandard schedule work is there associated with more disadvantaged labor market situation, such as lower level occupations and worse pay. The latter is not the case in The Netherlands, where work in nonstandard times is more regulated and workers of these schedules respectively more protected against the 'unhealthy' effect of working these days and hours. Taking into account the differences in divorce rates and culture as well as the role and meaning of nonstandard

schedule work of the both countries, it can be expected that *the negative impact of working nonstandard schedules is stronger in the U.S. compared to The Netherlands* (H3). The country-hypothesis is expected to be valid both when assessing the general effect of work in nonstandard schedules on partnership stability as well as when considering as the unit of analysis the schedule combinations of the partners.

## **5.3 Data and method**

### **5.3.1 Data**

The Dutch data comes from the first and second waves of the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study [NKPS] (Dykstra et al., 2004, 2007), collected in 2002/04 and 2007. It is a panel study and the data is collected from a random probability sample of individuals within private households in The Netherlands, aged 18 to 79. During the first wave, 8,161 main respondents were interviewed face-to-face. By the second wave the sample had reduced to 6,091 cases (drop-out of 25.4%). The U.S. data comes from the first and second waves of U.S. National Survey of Families and Households [NSFH] (Sweet & Bumpass, 1996; Sweet et al., 1988) and the data was respectively collected in 1987/88 and 1992. It has a national probability sample where in the first wave 13,007 men and women aged 19 and over were interviewed. By the second wave, the sample had reduced to 10,005 cases (drop-out of 23.1%). As the NKPS study was designed based on the NSHF, the two data sets are to great extent comparable both in terms of study-design as well as studied items.

The effective sub-samples of the current study are drawn from the first wave data and consists of 18-64 years old heterosexual, married or cohabiting co-residential couples where at least one of the partners is working (for more details on sampling see Appendix Table A5.1). The analysis is restricted to heterosexual couples due to the central role of gender in discussions of the impact of employment on partnership dissolution. Due to the fact that we are dealing with couple-data (not all couples have filled out their questionnaire), we have to count with a considerable number of missing cases. In the U.S. data, partner's employment information was missing in 19.4% of those who report having



a co-residential couple. In the Dutch data the respective figures was 24.0% (data not shown in tables). The final sample selection criterion considers the information on both partners' employment status and excludes the cases with missing information. Taken together, this leaves for analysis 2,982 Dutch couples and 4,919 American couples.

The biggest source of missing cases in the analysis is the drop-outs between the two panel waves – for the effective sub-samples, for The Netherlands 14.4% (430 cases) and for the U.S. 15.7% (771 cases) of couples from the sub-sample selection in first wave did not participate in data collection of second wave. The impact of the panel attrition on the sample is in the Dutch case considered as rather minor. Refusal rates are slightly higher for younger (18-30 years), single, and lower educated respondents. The return-rate of self-completion questionnaire that contains the detailed schedule information was tested against the quality of the relationship of the main respondent to the partner and it showed no significant bias (Dykstra et al., 2007). Similar conclusions about the drop-out can be drawn for the American data (Sweet & Bumpass, 1996). The rest of data loss in the (sub)sample is related to missing values in the collected data, and here the data for The Netherlands and the U.S. behave in fairly similar way (see also Appendix A5.2).

### **5.3.2 Measures and analytical techniques**

The dependent variable of the analysis is a binary variable indicating whether the co-residential partnership (marriage or cohabitation) of wave 1 is still lasting or has been dissolved (divorced or separated) by wave 2. From the analysis have been excluded partnership dissolutions due to the death of partner (widowhood). As the time difference between two data collection points (wave 1 and wave 2) is about four years, the statistical assessment is made for partnership dissolution probability within the four year period. In the Dutch data, the number of dissolved partnerships between the two data collections is 109 cases (4% of all co-residential couples in the first wave), where 52 of these cases originate from cohabiting unions and 57 cases from marriages. In the U.S., the number of dissolved partnerships is 604 cases (15% of all co-residential couples of wave 1), where 120 are from cohabitations and 484 are from marriages. In line with previous findings (Binstock & Thornton, 2003), in both countries

cohabiting unions are more unstable *per se*. As the levels of cohabitation and partnership dissolutions differ remarkably between the two countries, the analysis controls always for the partnership type. Also, we should keep in mind that due to the sheer numbers (105 versus 604), the analysis is much more statistically powerful in the US than in The Netherlands<sup>3</sup>.

All the independent variables are measured at the time of first wave, and the models assess how the occupational and household situation in time point 1 has affected the partnership dissolution risk by time point 2. Although the data provides some information on the timing of partnership dissolution, no time reference is available about when the nonstandard schedule work arrangements were entered or terminated. Strong assumptions of the study thus are that time order dominates the causality among the events (so no reverse causation due to anticipation) and also that nonstandard work schedule arrangements are rather stable (while actually people can leave or (re-)enter the schedules between the two sample waves).

The central independent variables are nonstandard schedules, which are measured in two dimensions: *nonstandard shifts* and *nonstandard days*. In the Dutch data, the variables are constructed from the actual working hours of the *week prior* to data collection. In the U.S. data, schedules are reconstructed from the *usual* actual working hours. The classification of nonstandard shifts applies the 'majority definition' where "at least half of the hours worked most days in the prior week must fall outside 08:00 and 16:00" (see also Presser, 2003). When majority of hours fall between 16:00 and 24:00, the person is regarded as working evening shifts; when between 00:00 and 08:00 night shifts; and when no dominant pattern in nonstandard shifts exist the shifts are varying. Due to low number of cases, in the analysis reported here all shift types are collapsed into one category of nonstandard shifts. Nonstandard days refer to work in day shift hours, whereas some or all of this work is carried out during the weekend days, i.e. Saturday and/or Sunday. Working nonstandard shifts or nonstandard days are thus mutually exclusive categories. Conversely, the reference

---

<sup>3</sup> Note that in binomial analysis, not the sample size, but number of successes dominates statistical power (Agresti, 2002).

category indicating the standard schedule working time refers to day shift work that is worked only during weekdays (between Monday and Friday).

In addition to schedule type, the models also control for both partners' employment statuses in general and this is measured as follows: not employed (not working or working less than 12 hours a week); employed part-time (12-32 hours a week) or employed full-time (more than 32 hours a week). Presence and age of children are measured by number of children living in the household and the age of the youngest child. As partnership stability probability is not constant over time, the models control for partnership duration. Partnership duration is measured in years and refers to the length of co-residential partnership by the interview time of first wave of data collection. Similarly, partnership dissolution risk has been also related to socioeconomic status (Bumpass, Martin, & Sweet, 1991; White, 1991), and so is working nonstandard schedules in different countries (see above). Therefore, all the models control for household's socioeconomic status. The latter is measured as a mean of both partner's statuses on International Socio-Economic Index of occupational status [ISEI] (Ganzeboom et al., 1992). The ISEI measure has been rescaled from the original 16 to 96 range to a 1-9 range.

Couples' working schedule *combinations* are constructed from the source variables of both partners' employment statuses and working schedules. The combinations cover three dimensions: employment status (working/not working), number of hours (full-time/part-time), and schedule type (standard schedule/nonstandard shift/nonstandard day). As especially in case of women the number of working hours is a relevant employment feature, in the construction of schedule combination categories, the differentiation between part- and full-time work has been maintained for most of the cases of female partner's employment status. For male partners, the two categories of working time are lumped together. The variety of 48 possible combinations has been collapsed into 13 different partners' working time combinations (See Table 5.1 in Results section).

Logistic regression models were estimated with partnership dissolution as a dependent variable. The impact of working schedules on partnership dissolution risk is studied both in pooled models where the data of both countries are combined and in country-specific models.

Significance of the differences between the effects of the two countries are tested via a country interaction term.

## **5.4 Results**

### **5.4.1 Nonstandard schedule work among co-residential couples**

The prevalence of nonstandard schedule work among co-residential couples is high for both female and male partners in both countries (see first half of Table 5.1). 25.4% of the employed female and 26.1% of the employed male partners in The Netherlands are engaged in nonstandard schedules. In America the respective figures are reaching as high as 34.7% for female and 43.1% for male partners.

The share of nonstandard day (weekend) work is higher than nonstandard shift work across both genders in both countries (see first half of Table 5.1). The nonstandard schedule working women work about one and half times more likely in nonstandard days than in nonstandard shifts; the nonstandard schedule working men work about two and half to three times more likely nonstandard days than shifts.

The prevalence of nonstandard schedule work in the households is even higher when considering both partners' working schedule (see second half of Table 5.1): 36.1% of Dutch and 51.9% in American households of co-residential couples have at least one of the partners working in nonstandard shifts and/or days. The most widespread schedule combination with nonstandard working time in it are: one of the partners (no matter whether male or female) works nonstandard schedules, while the other works a standard schedule (20.5% of Dutch couples and 24.2% of American couples); and male partner works a nonstandard schedule and female partner does not work (8.2% of couples in The Netherlands, 14.7% of couples in the U.S.). It is also not uncommon that both partners are engaged in nonstandard schedules at the same time (5.3 % in The Netherlands and 10.5 % in the U.S.).

An important country difference regarding the couples' working schedule combinations is the high prevalence of part-time work in The Netherlands, especially among Dutch women. The latter provides the Dutch couples with a potential 'buffer'-mechanism against the negative side-effects related to longer working hours and work in unhealthy nonstandard

days and hours. American couples, in turn, are temporally more likely exposed to the risks related to nonstandard schedule work.

Table 5.1 Couples' employment status and working schedules in The Netherlands (N = 2,982) and in the United States (N = 4,919), %

Employment and schedule type	Netherlands	United States
Employed partner's working schedule <sup>a</sup>		
<i>Female, works nonstandard shift<sup>e</sup></i>	10.4	13.3
<i>Female, works weekend day<sup>c</sup></i>	15.0	21.4
<i>Female, works standard schedules<sup>d</sup></i>	74.6	65.3
Total, female	100.0	100.0
<i>Male, works nonstandard shift<sup>e</sup></i>	6.1	12.7
<i>Male, works weekend days<sup>c</sup></i>	19.9	30.4
<i>Male, works standard schedules<sup>d</sup></i>	73.9	56.9
Total, male	100.0	100.0
Partners' schedule combinations <sup>e</sup>		
<i>Combination 1: Male/Female NS shift/day PT/FT</i>	5.3	10.5
<i>Combination 2: Male S PT/FT; Female NS shift PT/FT</i>	4.2	3.8
<i>Combination 3: Male S PT/FT; Female NS day FT</i>	2.9	4.9
<i>Combination 4: Male S PT/FT; Female NS day PT</i>	2.7	1.0
<i>Combination 5: Male NS shift PT/FT; Female S PT/FT</i>	2.6	3.9
<i>Combination 6: Male NS day PT/FT; Female S FT</i>	2.9	8.6
<i>Combination 7: Male NS day PT/FT; Female S PT</i>	5.3	2.1
<i>Combination 8: Male NW; Female NS shift/day PT/FT</i>	2.1	2.5
<i>Combination 9: Male NS shift/day PT/FT; Female NW</i>	8.2	14.7
<i>Combination 10: Male S PT/FT; Female S FT</i>	13.3	19.4
<i>Combination 11: Male S PT/FT; Female S PT</i>	22.8	4.0
<i>Combination 12: Male NW; Female S PT/FT</i>	4.5	4.8
<i>Combination 13: Male S PT/FT; Female NW</i>	23.2	19.8
Total, combinations	100.0	100.0

Data: Netherlands: NKPS wave 1 (2002-4); United States: NSFH wave 1 (1987-88). Author's calculations

Notes: Sample: 18-64 years old population, heterosexual co-residential couple where at least one of the partners works minimum 12 hours a week. a - refers to working (minimum 12 hours a week) members only; b - includes fixed evening shift, fixed night shift and hours vary shift; c - day shift hours that are worked also in weekends; d - day hours that are worked on weekdays (Monday to Friday) only.

Abbreviations: NS - nonstandard; S - standard; PT - part-time (12-32 hours a week); FT - full-time (32 and more hours a week); NW - no work (0 - 12 hours a week).

### **5.4.2 The impact of nonstandard schedule work on partnership dissolution**

As predicted (H1), working nonstandard schedules significantly increases the risk of partnership dissolution. The pooled model (see Model 1 in Table 5.2) of the regression analysis shows that working nonstandard schedules (both shifts and days) has a significant impact on the probability for the partnership to dissolve in time.

The negative impact of working nonstandard schedules on partnership dissolution is in general true both when worked by men or women. However, the findings do not fully support the hypothesis which predicted the negative impact to be stronger for nonstandard schedule working women (H1.1). In line with the gender hypothesis, for women work in nonstandard shift has a stronger impact on partnership dissolution risk (respective odds ratios are 1.39 for women and 1.28 for men; see Model 1 in Table 5.2). In contrary to the gender hypothesis, nonstandard day work increases the partnership dissolution risk more for men (respective odds ratios for men 1.39 and for women 1.26).

The gender effect also emerges when it comes to the hypothesis that predicted the superiority of nonstandard shift work over nonstandard day work in increasing the partnership dissolution risk (H1.2). The schedule type hypothesis is, however, only partly supported by the data. It turns out to hold only in case of women, whereas for men it is the work in nonstandard days rather than shifts that show higher impact on partnership dissolution risk (see Model 1 in Table 5.2). One of the explanations to that could be the somewhat different nature of nonstandard schedule work for men and women – especially in case of men, nonstandard day work is strongly associated working long hours (overwork) which means that they are out of home due to work commitments not only longer hours during the working week, but also in the weekends. The latter reduces the possibility for partners' to spend time together even more.

Table 5.2 Summary of logistic regression analysis for variables predicting partnership dissolution for The Netherlands and United States

	General model			Country models						
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			<i>Dif<sup>a</sup></i>
	All			Netherlands			United States			
	B	SE B	<i>e<sup>B</sup></i>	B	SE B	<i>e<sup>B</sup></i>	B	SE B	<i>e<sup>B</sup></i>	
Female partner's schedule <sup>b</sup> ( <i>Ref=day shift, weekdays only</i> )										
<i>Nonstandard shift (evening, night, hours vary)</i>	0.33*	0.15	1.39	-0.01	0.43	0.99	0.40*	0.16	1.48	
<i>Nonstandard day (weekend days)</i>	0.23+	0.13	1.26	0.28	0.32	1.32	0.23	0.14	1.26	
Male partner's schedule <sup>b</sup> ( <i>Ref = day shift, weekdays only</i> )										
<i>Nonstandard shift (evening, night, hours vary)</i>	0.25+	0.14	1.28	-0.29	0.49	0.75	0.30*	0.15	1.35	
<i>Nonstandard day (weekend days)</i>	0.33**	0.10	1.39	0.38	0.26	1.46	0.32**	0.11	1.38	
Female partner's employment <sup>b</sup> ( <i>Ref=full-time; 32+ hours</i> )										
<i>Not employed (0-12 hours)</i>	-0.03	0.12	0.97	-0.12	0.34	0.89	-0.02	0.13	0.98	
<i>Part-time employed (12-32 hours)</i>	-0.15	0.13	0.86	-0.03	0.27	0.97	-0.21	0.16	0.81	
Male partner's employment <sup>b</sup> ( <i>Ref = full-time; 32+ hours</i> )										
<i>Not employed (0-12 hours)</i>	0.52**	0.18	1.69	0.73*	0.38	2.08	0.45*	0.21	1.56	
<i>Part-time employed (12-32 hours)</i>	0.51**	0.18	1.66	0.55+	0.33	1.73	0.50*	0.21	1.65	
Age of youngest child <sup>e</sup> ( <i>Ref = no children</i> )										
<i>0-3 years old</i>	0.10	0.12	1.10	-0.06	0.34	0.94	0.11	0.13	1.11	
<i>4+ years old</i>	0.29*	0.12	1.34	0.76*	0.31	2.15	0.19	0.13	1.21	+
Household mean socio-economic status <sup>c</sup>	-0.08*	0.04	0.92	0.04	0.08	1.04	-0.12**	0.04	0.89	
Partnership status: cohabitation ( <i>Ref = marriage</i> )	0.75**	0.13	2.13	0.99**	0.26	2.68	0.67**	0.14	1.96	+
Partnership duration (years) <sup>d</sup>	-0.07**	0.01	0.93	-0.07**	0.02	0.93	-0.07**	0.01	0.93	
Country ( <i>Ref = U.S.</i> )										
<i>Netherlands</i>	-1.10**	0.13	0.33							
Nagelkerke Rsq		.17			.11			.13		
N of valid cases		5,910			2,390			3,520		

*Data:* Netherlands – NKPS; w1 (2003), w2 (2007); US – NSFH; w1 (1987/88), w2 (1992). Author's calculations

*Notes:* Sample: 18-64 years old, heterosexual co-residential couple, at least one works min. 12 hours a week (NL: N = 2,982; U.S.: N = 4,9191). Dependent variable: dissolution *versus* continuation of the co-residential partnership of w1 by time of w2; a - statistical significance test of the country interactions; b - coded as dummies; c - ISEI/10 scale based on current or previous job; d - duration of partnership by wave 1; e - age of youngest child in wave 1. Sig: +*p* < .10. \**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01

Increased partnership dissolution risk due to nonstandard schedule work is present even after controlling other relevant characteristics such as partnership type and duration, socio-economic status of the household and presence and age of children. A separate analysis was also run (not presented here, but available upon request) including a covariate that measured the self-assessed partnership quality during the first wave. Also in this case, the impact of nonstandard schedules on partnership remained virtually unchanged.

#### **5.4.3 The effect of household composition**

The analysis that focuses on only either male or female partner's working schedule ignores the fact that couples' working schedules form specific schedule combinations, whereas the impact of different combinations on partnership dissolution risk might not be the same. The analysis on the impact of partners' schedule combinations (see Model 1 in Table 5.3) shows in line with respective hypothesis (H2) that having one or both of the couples working nonstandard schedules significantly increases partnership dissolution risk – only two combinations out of nine with nonstandard schedule work show no significant impact on partnership dissolution risk. Moreover, as predicted (H2), stronger effects can be observed in cases where partners are working clearly 'out of sync' with one another, such as male partner working standard schedules and female partner working full-time nonstandard days (combination 3), and male partner working nonstandard shifts while female partner works standard schedules (combination 5) with respective odd ratios of 1.93 and 1.86. From all the schedule combinations with at least one nonstandard schedule worker in it that had a significant impact on increasing partnership dissolution risk, the weakest was the effect of synchronized nonstandard schedules (odds ratio 1.6).

The predicted gender effect – schedule combinations where women work nonstandard schedule was expected to create stronger impact on partnership dissolution probability (H2.1) – finds only partial support here. A significant negative impact on partnership stability can be observed (see Model 1 in Table 5.3) both in combinations where nonstandard schedule is worked only male partner as well in combinations where it was worked by



female partner. A more important factor in the gender effect seems to be, however, the female partner's number of working hours. Partnership dissolution risks are higher in cases where female partners were working full-time such as schedule combination 3 (male standard schedule / female nonstandard days in full-time), schedule combination 5 (male nonstandard shift / female full-time standard schedule) or schedule combination 6 (male nonstandard day / female standard schedule full-time).

Similarly, the two schedule combinations where at least one of the partners is working nonstandard schedules that did not show any significant effect on partnership dissolution risk were the ones with female partner working part-time: combination 7 (male nonstandard days / female standard schedules part-time), and combination 4 (male partner standard schedules / female partner nonstandard days part-time).

The hypothesis that predicted that having young children increases the already negative effect of nonstandard schedule work on partnership stability (H2.1) is not fully supported by the data. The interaction effects show that in general having (young) children and combining working schedules tends to reduce partnership dissolution risk. Also the only significant interaction terms of youngest child's age with schedule combination show that the positive main effects become actually weaker (presented in Figure 5.1) – this the case for schedule combinations where the male partner works nonstandard schedules and female partner is not working; and where both partners work nonstandard schedules. This effect may be due to partners working the nonstandard schedules because of children and/or childcare, and once the combined effect of children's age and partners' schedules is controlled for, main effects become less important.

Also here, the increased partnership dissolution risk when having at least one nonstandard schedule worker in the household is present even after controlling other relevant characteristics such as partnership type and duration, socio-economic status of the household and presence and age of children.

Table 5.3 Summary of logistic regression analysis for variables predicting partnership dissolution for The Netherlands and United States

	General model			Country models						
	All			Netherlands			United States			Dif <sup>a</sup>
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			
	B	SE B	e <sup>B</sup>	B	SE B	e <sup>B</sup>	B	SE B	e <sup>B</sup>	
Schedules (Ref = Cmb10: Male S PT/FT; Female S FT)										
<i>Cmb1: Male/Female NS shift/day PT/FT</i>	0.47**	0.17	1.60	0.48	0.49	1.62	0.46**	0.18	1.58	
<i>Cmb2: Male S PT/FT; Female NS shift PT/FT</i>	0.62**	0.22	1.86	0.67	0.53	1.96	0.61*	0.25	1.85	
<i>Cmb3: Male S PT/FT; Female NS day FT</i>	0.66**	0.21	1.93	0.98+	0.52	2.66	0.62**	0.23	1.86	
<i>Cmb4: Male S PT/FT; Female NS day PT</i>	0.29	0.40	1.33	0.49	0.68	1.63	0.18	0.51	1.19	
<i>Cmb5: Male NS shift PT/FT; Female S PT/FT</i>	0.62**	0.23	1.86	-0.49	0.78	0.62	0.78**	0.24	2.18	*
<i>Cmb6: Male NS day PT/FT; Female S FT</i>	0.52**	0.18	1.69	1.01*	0.47	2.74	0.46*	0.20	1.58	
<i>Cmb7: Male NS day PT/FT; Female S PT</i>	0.06	0.32	1.06	0.03	0.60	1.03	0.04	0.39	1.04	
<i>Cmb8&amp;12: Male NW; Female S, NS shift/day PT/FT</i>	0.69**	0.20	2.00	0.91*	0.45	2.48	0.61**	0.22	1.84	
<i>Cmb9: Male NS shift/day PT/FT; Female NW</i>	0.49**	0.17	1.63	0.55	0.49	1.73	0.46*	0.18	1.58	
<i>Cmb11: Male S PT/FT; Female S PT</i>	0.08	0.22	1.08	0.18	0.39	1.20	-0.04	0.32	0.96	
<i>Cmb13: Male S PT/FT; Female NW</i>	0.03	0.16	1.03	-0.03	0.42	0.97	0.02	0.18	1.02	
Age of youngest child <sup>d</sup> (Ref = no children)										
<i>0-3 years old</i>	0.08	0.12	1.09	-0.01	0.35	0.99	0.09	0.13	1.09	
<i>4+ years old</i>	0.29*	0.12	1.33	0.87**	0.31	2.38	0.18	0.13	1.19	
Household mean socio-economic status <sup>b</sup>	-0.08*	0.04	0.93	0.07	0.08	1.07	-0.12**	0.04	0.89	*
Partnership status: cohabitation (Ref = married)	0.78**	0.13	2.18	1.04**	0.27	2.83	0.70**	0.14	2.02	
Partnership duration (years) <sup>c</sup>	-0.07**	0.01	0.93	-0.07**	0.02	0.93	-0.07**	0.01	0.93	
Country (Ref = U.S.)										
<i>Netherlands</i>	-1.11**	0.13	0.33							
Nagelkerke Rsq		.17			.12			.13		
N of valid cases		5,910			2,390			3,520		

*Data:* Netherlands – NKPS, wave 1 (2002-4) and wave 2 (2007); US – NSFH, wave 1 (1987-88) and wave 2 (1992). Author's calculations  
*Note:* Sample: 18-64 years old population, heterosexual co-residential couple where at least one works minimum 12 hours a week (NL: N = 2,982; US: N = 4,9191). Dependent variable – dissolution *versus* continuation of the co-residential partnership of wave 1 by time of wave 2.  
a - statistical significance test of the country interactions; b - ISEI/10 scale based on current or previous job; c - duration of partnership by wave 1; d - age of youngest child in wave 1. Sig: +*p* < .10. \**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01

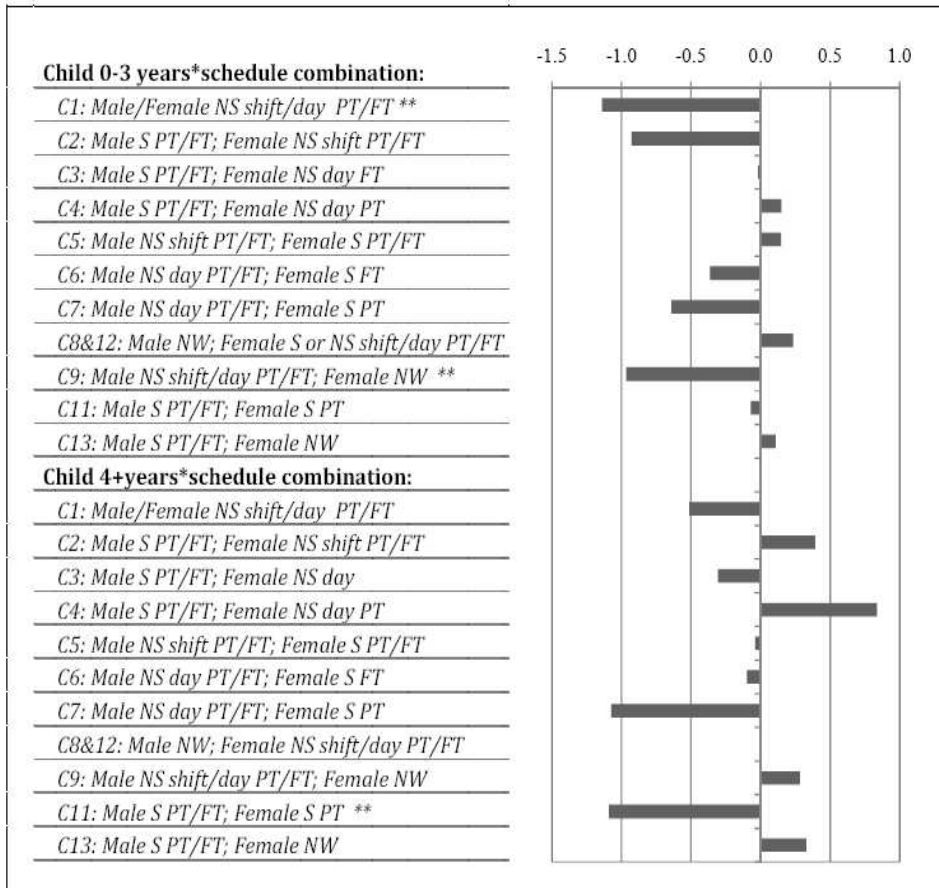
#### **5.4.4 Cross-national comparison: The effect of country context**

Next to general trends, the analysis has been carried out also for both countries separately. The country-specific analysis (Models 2 and 3 in Table 5.2 and 5.3) shows that the general findings are partly driven by specific country patterns. The statistically significant pooled effect of nonstandard schedule work, worker's gender, and schedule type on partnership dissolution risk presented in Table 5.2, and couples' schedule combinations presented in Table 5.3 are to great extent a U.S. finding. In the Dutch study, the general schedule effects (Model 2 in Table 5.2) as well as schedule combination effects (Model 2 in Table 5.3) are almost absent.

The only significant schedule combination effects that clearly increases partnership dissolution risk in The Netherlands are schedule combination 6 (male working nonstandard days, female working full-time standard schedules), schedule combination 3 (male partner working standard schedules, female partner working full-time weekend schedules), and schedule combination 8&12 (male not working, female working any possible schedule type). One common denominator of these schedule combinations is next to nonstandard schedule work that female partner is working full-time. As pointed out already earlier, female partner's full-time work seems to be one of the risk factors for partnership stability, especially in case of The Netherlands where most of women work part-time.

When comparing the two countries statistically (using country interactions), at first sight it seems that in the Dutch case the impact of working those schedules is rather weak or absent. However, in closer look the findings of the two countries do not differ much from the systematic negative impact of nonstandard schedule work on partnership stability in America. Statistical difference between the two country cases exists only for the schedule combination 5 (male nonstandard shift / female standard schedule; see Model 2 and 3 in Table 5.3) – while in the U.S. this schedule combination clearly increases partnership dissolution risk, this is not the case in The Netherlands. Part of these weak or almost absent country differences could be attributed to the size of the sample – for Dutch cases both the number of dissolutions as well as nonstandard schedule workers is smaller than in the U.S.

Figure 5.1 Summary of interaction effects of partner's schedule combinations and age of youngest child on partnership dissolution risk in The Netherlands and United States, logistic regression coefficients



Data: Netherlands – NKPS, wave 1 (2002-4) and wave 2 (2007); US – NSFH, wave 1 (1987/88) and wave 2 (1992). Author's calculations.

Note: Sample: 18-64 years old population, heterosexual co-residential couple where at least one works minimum 12 hours a week (NL: N = 2,982; US: N = 4,919). Pooled country data; regression model controls for country, household mean ISEI, partnership status and partnership duration. Main effects on partnership dissolution risk: Youngest child aged 0-3 = .44; youngest child aged 4+ = .46+. Sig: +p < .10. \*p < .05. \*\*p < .01

However, also the look at the size of the coefficients suggests once more the lack of dramatic differences between the two countries in the impact of nonstandard schedule work on partnership stability. While in the analysis of general impact of nonstandard schedule work (Models 2 and 3 in Table 5.2) country coefficients for nonstandard shift work show considerable differences, the majority of schedule combinations in Table 5.3 (Models 2 and 3) show striking similarities between the two countries.

## **5.5 Discussion**

The aim of this study was to inquire whether work in nonstandard schedules affects partnership dissolution risk and to what extent is this effect shaped by country context such as divorce culture/rate and work time regulation. In line with previous research (Presser, 2000; White & Keith, 1990), the central findings showed that work in nonstandard schedules tends to increase partnership dissolution risk. The latter is true both when looking only at the 'individually' worked nonstandard schedule, meaning disregarding what schedules does the co-residential couple work at the same time, as well as when looking both partner's schedules as a combination. Both the theoretical arguments as well as the findings also suggest that there do exist factors that shape the impact of nonstandard schedules on partnership dissolution risk to be stronger or weaker, such as which schedules are combined between the couples, the gender of nonstandard schedule worker, the working time arrangement, and presence of (young) children in the household. Contrary to the expectations, the impact seems only very modestly shaped by the divorce, labor market and welfare regime context of the country where these scheduled are worked.

The first main conclusion of current study is that when working nonstandard schedules or having a nonstandard schedule worker in the household increases the risk for the partnership to dissolve in time. The already wide-spread and partly increasing prevalence of nonstandard schedule work can, thus, lead to the increase of partnership dissolutions due to partner's working time arrangements. The risk for partnership dissolution risk is somewhat higher when nonstandard schedules are

worked by women, suggesting the still predominant traditional expectation towards women regarding combining household and paid work. Moreover, the gender effect comes even more clear when considering the number of working hours – increase in partnership dissolution risk seems even more strongly be affected by women’s full-time engagement in labor market, no matter whether in nonstandard or standard schedules, being the second main conclusion of the study.

The third main conclusion of the study is that the impact of nonstandard schedule work on partnership stability is stronger when partners work clearly *desynchronized* schedules, such as one in standard and the other in nonstandard times. This effect becomes especially relevant in the backdrop of households strong tendency to consciously *desynchronize* their schedules (so-called tag-team parenting) in order to arrange child-care (Carriero et al., 2009; Mills & Täht, 2010). Contrary to the expectations, however, current study showed that in the households where parents who have young children work nonstandard schedule, the partnership dissolution risk actually weakens, being the fourth main conclusion of the study. One of the explanations for this is that when the schedules seem to have a certain function for the household, the impact on the partnership is not as destructive. However, the fact that the main effect of nonstandard schedule work on partnership dissolution risk is still positive should not be ignored here – even when working nonstandard schedules due to child-care reasons, still in long run the partners face the higher risk for partnership dissolution. Unfortunately current data does not allow a test to measure what extent these schedules and schedule combinations were actually used to arrange childcare or fulfill other household needs.

The findings regarding country-effect stay due to data limitations partly blurred. Working time regulation mechanisms can provide the households with various buffer-mechanisms and flexibility in order to deal better with the negative consequences of nonstandard schedule work and this way reduce the strain that working this schedules puts on families. Still, the risk for increased partnership dissolution is still there, even when work in these schedules may be chosen intentionally/voluntarily. As the findings show, on the one hand, the Dutch country-context regarding nonstandard schedule work provides the workers with more protection, remuneration

and flexibility, and the workers and their partnerships suffer less from the negative consequences of nonstandard schedule work. The American couples, just the opposite, are more at the risk of partnership dissolution when being engaged in nonstandard schedule work. Moreover, due to the more disadvantaged and marginal labor market position of nonstandard schedule work in the U.S., American households are in the higher risk of accumulation of negative consequences of nonstandard schedule work in the household situation and also this way increase the partnership dissolution risk. On the other hand, despite the more protective and regulated working schedule environment, Dutch couples are still at significant risk of experiencing partnership dissolution when having nonstandard schedule worker(s) in the family. The risk is especially high when nonstandard schedules are worked in desynchronized mode.

## 5.6 Appendix

Table A5.1 Description of sample selection and missing data

	Netherlands (wave 1: N = 8,161)				United States (wave 1: N = 13,007)			
	Ex- cluded <sup>1</sup>	Mis- sing	Se- lected <sup>2</sup>	Panel attrition <sup>3</sup>	Ex- cluded <sup>1</sup>	Mis- sing	Se- lected <sup>2</sup>	Panel attrition <sup>3</sup>
Number of cases (%)			8,161 (100)	2,070 (25.4)			13,007 (100)	3,002 (23.1)
Age group 18-64	1,213	-	6,948	1,681 (24.2)	2,024	-	10,983	2,160 (19.7)
Co-residential couple (%)	2,309 (33.2)	2 (0.0)	4,637 (66.8)	960 (20.7)	4,357 (39.7)	1 (0.0)	6,625 (60.3)	1,225 (18.5)
Heterosexual couple (%)	79 (1.7)	-	4,558 (98.3)	945 (20.7)	7 (0.1)	21 (0.3)	6,597 (99.6)	1,221 (18.5)
At least one working (%)	370 (8.1)	1,206 (26.5)	<b>2,982</b> (65.4)	430 (14.4)	395 (6.0)	1,283 (19.4)	<b>4,919</b> (74.6)	771 (15.7)

Data: Netherlands – NKPS, 1<sup>st</sup> wave (2002-4) and 2<sup>nd</sup> wave (2007); United States – NSFH, 1<sup>st</sup> wave (1987-88) and 2<sup>nd</sup> wave (1992); Author's calculations

Note: 1 – excluded due to sample selection criteria; 2 – cases selected to sub-sample after applying sample selection criteria; Excluded, missing and selected cases add up to 100%; 3 – Report on data losses in respective group due to panel attrition in wave 2.



Table A5.2 Description of working hours and schedules of co-residential couples in The Netherlands and in United States

	Netherlands (N = 2,982)		United States (N = 4,919)	
	Mean	N	Mean	N
Wave 1:				
Female partner				
<i>Not employed<sup>a</sup></i>	0.31	2,982	0.33	4,919
<i>Part-time employed<sup>b</sup></i>	0.43	2,895	0.14	4,620
<i>Nonstandard shift<sup>c</sup></i>	0.07	2,895	0.09	4,620
<i>Nonstandard day<sup>d</sup></i>	0.10	2,895	0.14	4,620
Male partner				
<i>Not employed<sup>a</sup></i>	0.07	2,982	0.07	4,919
<i>Part-time employed<sup>b</sup></i>	0.08	2,880	0.05	4,541
<i>Nonstandard shift<sup>c</sup></i>	0.06	2,880	0.12	4,541
<i>Nonstandard day<sup>d</sup></i>	0.19	2,880	0.28	4,541
Household socioeconomic status <sup>a</sup>	50.72	2,982	44.26	4,919
Partnership status: cohabitation	0.19	2,982	0.09	4,919
Partnership duration (years) <sup>e</sup>	16.74	2,982	11.74	4,905
Youngest child				
<i>0-3 years old</i>	0.19	2,982	0.26	4,919
<i>4+ years old</i>	0.60	2,982	0.40	4,919
Wave 2:				
Partnership dissolution <sup>f</sup>	0.04	2,542	0.15	4,052
Valid N (listwise)		2,390		3,520

Data: Netherlands – NKPS, 1<sup>st</sup> wave (2002/4) and 2<sup>nd</sup> wave (2007); United States – NSFH, 1<sup>st</sup> wave (1987/8) and 2<sup>nd</sup> wave (1992);

Note: a – 0–12 hours a week; b – 12–32 hours a week; c – includes fixed evening shift, fixed night shift and hours vary shift; d – refers to working fixed day shift that is worked also in weekends; g – fixed day schedule that is workers on weekdays (Monday to Friday) only; e – partners' mean ISEI; f – partnership status of wave 1 in wave 2; under dissolution is meant partnerships that have been divorced or separated; widows excluded from the analysis