Who Works the System?
Investigating Gender Differences
in Client Behavior
in Child Visitation Disputes

Mette Bisgaard

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PhD Dissertation

Table of Contents

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Danish-English Glossary

In the dissertation, I use several context-specific concepts. The table below shows how I translated the concepts into English. Some of the concepts are well known in English speaking countries, while others are specific for the Danish context.

Danish	English
Bopælsforælder	Resident parent
Børnesagkyndig	Child specialist
Børnesagkyndig undersøgelse	Child welfare investigation
Børnesamtale	Child interview
Erstatningssamvær	Compensation visitation
Forældreansvarsloven	The Parental Responsibility Act
Samarbejdsmøde	Cooperation meetings
Samværsaftale	Visitation agreement
Samværsforælder	Non-resident parent
Samværsordning	Visitation schedule
Samværskonflikt	Child visitation disputes
Samværssager	Child visitation rights cases
Sagsbehandler	Caseworker
Tværfagligt møde	Interdisciplinary meeting

Chapter 1.
Introduction

It's a precarious environment to be in. As father/man you feel dismissed.
It's not necessarily the staff but rather the rules, customs and norms. My fear is
clearly that the administration is biased. You feel that you're lagging behind
(A father's description in the survey, 2017).

This dissertation examines how mothers and fathers interact with the Danish State Administration (SA) in child visitation disputes. The SA is a government agency under the Danish Ministry of Children and Social Affairs. If divorced or separated parents are unable to agree on child visitation arrangements, they may contact the SA's section for family law. The SA enforces the Parental Responsibility Act and helps parents find solutions in custody, residence and visitation rights cases. The main goal at the encounter is to reach an agreement between the parents. If they do not succeed, the law-educated caseworker can make a legal decision about visitation rights. In recent years, gender inequalities in the outcome of visitation arrangements have been discussed widely in the mass media, TV documentaries, and by the NGO the Danish Father's Association (Foreningen Far). According to a poll of a representative sample of the Danish population under age 50, fathers' positions in child visitation rights cases is one of today's greatest gender inequality issues (Politiken 2014). The quote above captures how many fathers feel about their meeting with the SA; they feel anxious about the encounter and they fear bias in the decision-making. As the father explains, it is not necessarily because of the professionals, but rather the regulatory framework and the social norms. Although social norms and the fathers' role have changed during the last decades, is still more common that children of divorced parents live with their mother and have different visitation arrangements with their father.

This PhD project is part of the project "Visitation Rights and Discrimination against Fathers: Bias or a Myth?" While the two other sub-projects focus on caseworkers and organizational explanations of discrimination against fathers, I focus on the other side of the table: on the two conflicting clients – a mother and a father who are fighting over child visitation. In the dissertation, I examine whether mothers and fathers have different gendered strategies and behaviors when they interact with the Danish State Administration. Moreover, I look at how they evaluate the meeting: do fathers feel they are treated differently than the mothers? Recent public administration research mainly focuses on bias in public authorities' decision-making, but we know very little about

how clients interact with bureaucracy and how they try to influence the process and the decision-making. Therefore, I focus on the clients and their interaction with bureaucracy. It is possible that caseworkers are biased in favor of the mothers in child visitation rights disputes; however, another explanation is that mothers and fathers have different resources to influence the decision-making due to their parental and legal roles. Research of this notion is important. Resolving gender discrimination against fathers calls for radically different policy interventions if such bias is rooted in differences in clients' capabilities to navigate "the system" rather than in features of the caseworkers or the SA. I draw on sociological literature about welfare encounters, street-level bureaucracy literature as well as sociological and psychological theory on gender differences as the overall theoretical framework to study this research question. I use different types of data, i.e., observations of meetings, semi-structured interviews with parents, survey data on parents, as well as different analytical strategies to analyze the overall research question. In this chapter, I first unfold the research questions and discuss the relevance of this empirically founded project in public administration research more broadly. Finally, I explain the structure of the dissertation.

1.1. Research Questions and Relevance for Public Administration Research

The overall aim of this dissertation is to examine gender differences in mothers and fathers' behaviors and strategies when they interact with the Danish State Administration in child visitation disputes. The goal is not to explain why men and women behave differently in general but to understand how they interact in the empirical context of child visitation disputes and what characterizes the differences in their behavior. I argue that in policy areas concerning family and children like child visitation rights cases, the mothers are in a more powerful position compared to fathers due to their roles as mothers and their legal role as resident parents. I study the mothers and fathers' behavior before, during, and after the encounter with the SA to get a comprehensive understanding of the parents as actors in these cases. To answer the overall research question about gender differences in mothers and fathers' behavior in child visitation disputes, I investigate the following questions:

- **Before the encounter:** How do mothers and fathers feel and prepare before the encounter with the Danish State Administration?
- **The encounter:** How do mothers and fathers perform during the encounter with the Danish State Administration? What characterizes their interaction behavior?

- **After the encounter:** Do mothers and fathers have different perceptions of substantive and procedural justice related to their meeting in the SA?

Research on this empirical topic is important. Deciding how much time parents are allowed to spend with their child must be characterized as one of the most invasive decisions public authorities can make. The outcome of these meetings has a major impact on parents' and children's everyday lives and happiness. Therefore, it is relevant to study parents' behavior and whether mothers and fathers have different resources to influence the decision outcome. If fathers feel less capable of navigating "the system" there is a risk of reproducing social inequalities, and they may lose trust in the SA.

This PhD project is thus also relevant for public administration research more broadly. Administrative and legal equity is a core value in any democratic state (Jørgensen and Bozeman 2007) and a foundation for citizens'[1] trust in government and society's social cohesion (Tyler and Huo 2002). We know from the public administration literature that street-level bureaucrats may cause inequalities because their individual characteristics affect their behavior and decision-making (Nielsen 2015, 2002; Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003; S. C. Winter and May 2001). Furthermore, citizens' characteristics and behaviors affect how street-level bureaucrats make decisions (Soss, Fording, and Schram 2011; Schneider and Ingram 1993; Goodsell 1981; Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003; Nielsen 2002; Scott 1997). However, we do not know much about citizens' behavior in face-to-face interactions with street-level bureaucrats and about what explains differences in their behavior. Threshold theory and street-level bureaucracy scholars emphasize that "not being able to play the rules of the system" is a subtle kind of discrimination (Jacobsen, Jensen, and Aarseth 1981; Smith 1988; Lipsky 1980). Not all groups of citizens have the same resources to influence decision-making. In the context of child visitation disputes, parents' gender, parental role and legal role as resident or non-resident parents may explain some of the differences in their behavior. Hence, I argue, that to get a full picture of the implementation of public policies and a more nuanced understanding of what may cause different decision outcomes, we need to pay attention to both street-level bureaucrats and citizens. We must also pay attention to the process by focusing on what happens before and during the encounter. The process has been neglected in the public administration literature in favor of a focus on outcomes (Hand and Catlaw 2019; Brodkin, Marston, and Adler 2013).

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[1] The terms 'citizens' and 'clients' are used interchangeably through the dissertation.

In mainstream public administration research, the role of the citizen is still rather limited (Jakobsen et al. 2016), especially when it comes to citizens' behavior in face-to-face interactions with the state. Street-level bureaucracy literature mostly focuses on the administrative side of the coin. However, studies of citizens' behavior are more widespread in the sociological, socio-legal and regulatory literature. In the dissertation, I bring these literatures together and contribute with a client perspective on the public administration literature and new concepts to study citizen behavior. I investigate how citizens' different roles and resources influence their behavior and the process at the meeting. Furthermore, I contribute to the literature with knowledge from another type of encounter, namely an institutional set-up where not only one, but two conflicting clients interact with public authorities. In the dissertation's empirical context of child visitation disputes, gender is particularly salient since the two conflicting clients in the majority of the cases are a mother and a father. The dissertation thus introduces a gender perspective to the study of public encounters.

1.2. The Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation is a combination of articles and this monograph. Table 1.1 gives an overview of the three articles. The articles are briefly presented in this monograph or used to discuss the findings. In the following, I describe the structure of the dissertation.

Table 1.1. The articles of the dissertation

Article	Author(s) and title	Short title	Status
A	Mette Bisgaard (n.d.). Dealing with Bureaucracy: Measuring Citizens' Bureaucratic Self-Efficacy	Bureaucratic Self-Efficacy	In review
B	Mette Bisgaard & Vibeke Lehmann Nielsen (n.d.). Bureaucratic Self-Efficacy And Spillover Effects Between Neighboring Bureaucratic Areas	Bureaucratic Self-Efficacy and Spillover Effects	In review
C	Mette Bisgaard & Mogens Jin Pedersen (n.d). Women Cry, Men Get Angry: How Street-level Bureaucrats Respond When Clients Exhibit Counter-Stereotypical Behavior	Women Cry, Men get Angry	Invited for revise and resubmit in *Public Administration Review*

The dissertation consists of ten chapters. In chapter 2, I explain the empirical context of child visitation rights cases. I describe the institutional setting of the Danish State Administration and the legal framework in order to give an understanding of the empirical context of this project. In chapter 3, I present

the theoretical framework. Combining theoretical insights from public administration literature on street-level bureaucracy and citizen-state interactions, the sociological literature on welfare encounters and sociological and psychological literature on gender differences, I argue that mothers and fathers have different gendered strategies in the context of child visitation disputes. Mothers have more agency than fathers in child-related policy areas due to differences in their parental and legal roles. In chapter 4, I present the methodological framework of the dissertation. First, I explain that I apply two different logics of inquiry depending on the specific research question I asked in the particular chapter or article. After this, I explain my qualitative and quantitative data collection.

After these four chapters follow three analytical parts. In the first part (chapter 5), I examine the parents' behavior before the encounter with the SA by analyzing gender differences in the preparatory strategies and in bureaucratic self-efficacy – a concept I develop in Article A. The second analytical part, the encounter, is divided into three chapters. First, I analyze conversational dominance by investigating whether mothers talk and interrupt more than fathers. Second, I investigate how mothers and fathers position themselves and challenge their counterparty's position by analyzing their arguments at the meeting. Third, I examine gender differences in mothers and fathers' interaction behavior when they present their case and negotiate a new visitation agreement.

In the third analytical part (chapter 9), I investigate gender differences in perceived substantial and procedural justice. Finally, in chapter 10, I sum up and discuss the overall and the practical implications of the dissertation.

Chapter 2.
Child Visitation Disputes in Denmark

> Previously, custody was awarded to the mother, and you could look up the
> father's visitation rights in a chart. Today, we look at each family individually.
> Previously, conflicts did not necessarily come to light. Now, fathers want to
> play a larger role in their children's lives, and I think that is positive.
> However, it also means a sense of loss when the parents separate.
> Then you have to share, and that can be difficult
> (Former Head of Department for Family Law,
> the Danish State Administration, Jyllands-Posten, 2015).

The number of mothers and fathers fighting about child visitation has increased over the last four decades in Denmark. From 1973 to 2015, the number of divorced parents who apply for help at the Danish State Administration[2] has increased from 3,000 to 28,000 (Jyllands-Posten 2015). The reason for this increase has not been investigated, but it could be a result of the rising divorce rate. Today, 46 pct. of all marriages end in divorce (Statistics Denmark 2018). Moreover, the role of father has changed. As described in the introductory quote, fathers want to be a bigger part of their children's lives and play an active role in their development. They are no longer satisfied with the role as "weekend dads". Today, 25-30 pct. of all parents who divorce or separate apply for help in the SA either in connection with the divorce or later if a conflict arises between them (Ottosen, Dahl, and Boserup 2017). A report from the Danish Center for Social Science Research concludes that this percentage has been relatively stable since the 1980s (Ottosen 2016). However, it is reasonable to believe that the content of the disputes has changed with time and that several parents – especially fathers – apply for more equal visitation arrangements compared to earlier. Today, it is more common than just a decade ago that children in divorced families in Denmark live fifty-fifty with their mother and father. A Danish study shows that round 16 pct. practiced a 7/7 or 6/8

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[2] From 1 April 2019, The Agency of Family Law replaces the Danish State Administration. It is still an agency under the Ministry of Children and Social Affairs. Although the system has changed, the question about gender difference in client behavior in these cases is still present and important.

visitation schedule[3] in 2009 compared to 37 pct. in 2017 (Ottosen et al. 2018). The Parental Responsibility Act from 2007 made it possible to share the time equally between the residential and non-residential parent in a 7/7 visitation schedule. The amendment of the law and its signal value play a role, but the explanation also must be found in changing family roles and an increasingly equal parenthood, which means that more parents find it natural that the child has continued contact with both parents. Despite its increasing prevalence, the 7/7 agreement is primarily an urban middleclass phenomenon (Ottosen 2016). The development does not change the fact that the most common visitation agreement is that children live primarily with one parent and have regular overnight stays with the other parent. In the most conflictual cases, fifty-fifty agreements are rare, and the SA does not recommend this solution because it requires a high level of collaboration and a low level of conflict between the parents (Björk 2015). Parents who are able to agree on a 7/7 visitation schedule on their own typically experience a low level of conflict and do not end up in the SA.

So what characterizes the 25-30 pct. of all parents who apply for help in the SA? Unfortunately, we do not have recent data on that. An evaluation of the Parental Responsibility Act from 2011 investigated whether the group of parents with a case in the district court concerning custody, visitation or the child's residence[4] differed from the general population (Ottosen and Stage 2011). The study showed that there were no major differences in level of education, but a larger share of the parents in these cases were outside the labor market and were almost three times more often in contact with the municipality about their child than the general population. In addition, they had other divorce motives than parents in general: four times more frequent occurrence of mental or physical violence, abuse problems and mental illness and more frequent disagreements about the child's education, division of labor in the home, and priority between work and family life (ibid.). Ottosen (2016) refers to these results and concludes in a Danish research report from 2016 that these findings are in line with other Danish studies from the early 2000s that focus on child visitation disputes (and not custody and child's residence). This characteristic of the target group for child visitation disputes in the Danish

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[3] In Denmark it is common to talk about visitation schedules in terms of days the child spends with each parent within a two-week period. For example, a 10/4 visitation schedule means that the child stays 10 days with one parent and 4 days with the other parent within a two-week period.

[4] The district courts could make legal decisions about visitation if the case also included a dispute about custody or residence.

State Administration corresponds well with my empirical material (see chapter 4).

In the following, I first explain the institutional setting, the Danish State Administration, its competences, the procedure in child visitation cases, and the typical structure of interdisciplinary meetings. Second, I describe the legislation in this policy area and the way the law assigns he parents two legal roles.

2.1. The Danish State Administration

In Denmark, divorced or separated parents can voluntarily contact the section for family law at the Danish State Administration (SA) if they are not able to reach an agreement about visitation, custody, children's residence, and child support. The SA is a government agency under the Danish Ministry of Children and Social Affairs. It has one unified management and administration and eight local SA offices geographically spread across Denmark. The majority of the employees working in the SA is women.

The SA handles approximately 17,000 visitation cases, 6,000 custody cases, 4,000 cases about the child's residence, and 30,000 cases about child support every year (Björk 2015).[5] Some cases, including urgent cases and all child support cases, are solved on written grounds and are handled by legal caseworkers with written casework as their primary task.

The SA's section for family law has exclusive competence to make decisions about child visitation. Denmark has a long tradition of handling child visitation cases in an administrative authority. In most other countries, these decisions are made by a court. Cases about custody and children's residence start in the SA, which can make temporary decisions, but the final decisions are made by the court.

As illustrated in Figure 2.1, there is only one entry for clients with family law cases (Björk, 2015: 49). The SA cannot raise a case on its own initiative and only handles cases based on an application from one or both parents. From age 10, children can also request the SA to summon the parents to a meeting regarding custody, residence or visitation (The Parental Responsibility Act, §35). In this dissertation, I focus solely on child visitation disputes. In the following, I describe the case proceeding for a child visitation case.

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[5] It is worth noting that a case can appear more than once in this statement, if more issues are raised at once.

Figure 2.1. The Danish State Administration's competences

The SA is the entrance in all cases concerning:
- custody
- child visitation
- children's residence
- child support

| The SA makes legal decisions about child support | The SA makes temporary decisions about custody and residence | The SA makes legal decisions about child visitation |

All decisions can be appealed to The National Social Appeals Board's department for family law.

The district court makes a final decision about custody and residence

All decisions can be appealed to High Court.

All decisions and agreements about custody, residence and visitation, which is not complied, can be enforced by the Enforcement Court

Decisions made by the Enforcement Court can be appealed to High Court.

Note: Inspired by figure 3.1 in Björk (2015).

2.1.1. The Case Proceedings in Child Visitation Disputes

When one or both parents apply for a meeting, the national SA office registers the case and schedules a visitation meeting at a local SA office. Attendance is mandatory for both parents. SA can reject the case if they assess that the circumstances have not changed. The parents are contacted within two weeks from the application is received (Statforvaltningen 2017a). If the case involves a meeting with the parents, they are in most cases (75 pct.) offered a meeting within five weeks from the application is received (Statforvaltningen 2017b). It takes maximum three months from the application is received until the case is closed when the parents reach an agreement. If the SA has to make an ad-

judication, the case is closed within six months. Cases are assessed by "meeting-assessment jurists" who decide whether there is a basis for the SA to handle the case, whether the case should be handled on written grounds or initiated by a meeting, and which type of meeting the parents should be convened to. All "meeting cases" typically begin with a cooperation meeting, although the SA can choose to abstain from this if it is considered unnecessary or unsuitable (Björk, 2015: 80; The Parental Responsibilty Act, §31a). In cases with a high level of conflict between the parents, in conflictual repeated cases, or cases very young children, the cooperation meeting is often replaced by an interdisciplinary meeting where both a legal caseworker and a child specialist attend. In some cases, the parents are offered conflict mediation or child specialist counselling after the meeting if the SA assesses that there is potential for an agreement. I will get back to the different meetings types in the following section.

Figure 2.2. The case proceeding in the Danish State Administration
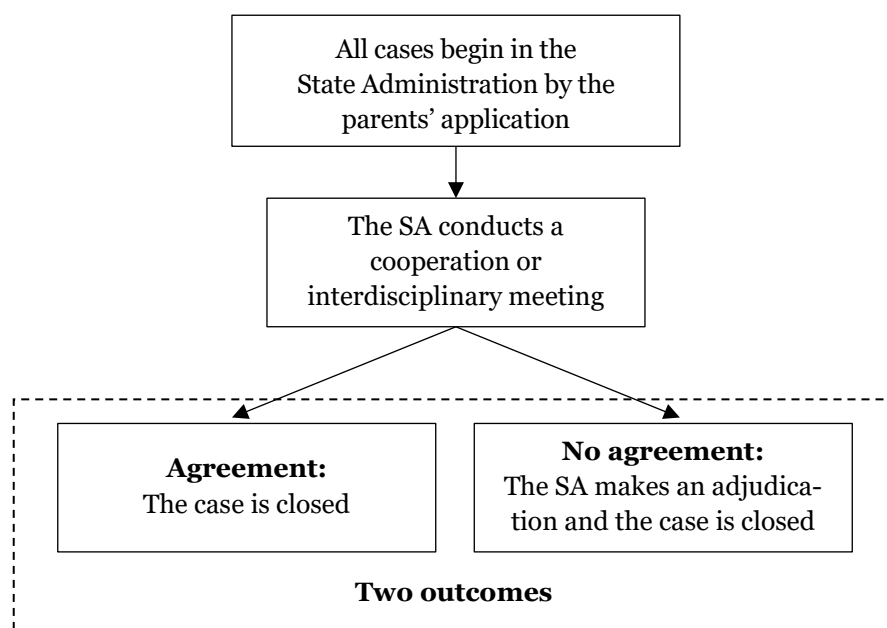
Figure 2.2 illustrates the case proceedings in child visitation rights cases for parents who are invited to a meeting. As explained, the case starts on the parents' initiative, and they are invited to either a cooperation or interdisciplinary meeting. Over the years, the section for family law has changed from a legal adjudication system (legal track) towards a system that helps parents reach agreements (communication track) (Björk, 2015: 117). Hence, the main goal at these meetings is to reconcile the parents, and if that is successful, the case is closed in the SA. In approximately 60 pct. of visitation cases, the parents reach an agreement at the meeting (Björk, 2015: 85). If is not possible to reach

an agreement, the SA will make a legal judgement based on the Parental Responsibility Act (PRA). To make a decision, the caseworker may obtain additional information about the child, for example from the school, daycare, doctor or municipality. This information is made available to the parents for comment. Clients in the SA can also submit information they find relevant for the case. Some parents submit private mail or text message correspondences or audio or video files to document their concerns or other claims about their ex-partner (Björk 2015: 86). All information is made available to both parties, which means that one parent cannot anonymously place information in the SA without their ex-partner learning about it.

2.1.2. Meeting Types

The parents are called to meetings in the SA in cases regarding visitation, custody or the child's residence. Based on a range of assessment criteria, the SA can choose between different types of meetings. The SA specifies these criteria based on information from the law instructions, professional assessments, and consideration to resources, and the criteria are continually updated and adjusted (Interview with head of the department for family law, 2016). The SA typically opens a case by calling the parents to a "cooperation meeting".

Cooperation meetings are supposed to contrast the legal track where adjudications can be made and are characterized by an effort to come as far as possible with cooperation and discussion of different alternatives in the hope of reaching an agreement between the parents. The SA cannot make a legal adjudication based on a cooperation meeting alone, but information from the meeting can be used as a foundation for a potential adjudication. In this case, the information will be handed to another legal caseworker who will make the adjudication. This strategy is used to ensure and underline the meeting as a "powerless space", separated from the legal track. A legal caseworker or a child specialist chairs the meeting.

Parents invited to an *interdisciplinary meeting* typically have a continued high level of conflict that overshadows the child's best interest, other serious problems such as violence, abuse or mental illness, or need a child specialist's qualification of the case. In these cases, both a legal caseworker and a child specialist attend the meeting. The legal caseworker guides the parents through the legal part, and the child specialist (typically a psychologist) gives the parents advice about the child's best interest. Again, the purpose of the meeting is to reach an agreement between the parents; however, if that proves impossible, the same legal caseworker will make an adjudication after the meeting based on the information from the meeting. In the qualitative part of this dissertation, I focus on the interdisciplinary meetings. I choose this meeting type

because there is a lot at stake for the parents, and because their behavior at the meeting can influence the legal caseworker's decision. In the quantitative part, all parents in child visitation cases were invited to take part in the survey regardless of meeting type.

In addition to cooperation and interdisciplinary meetings, the SA offers conflict mediation and child specialist counseling. These offers are not a part of the case handling, and information from the meetings must not be passed on to the legal caseworker without the parents' permission (Evaluering af forældreansvarsloven, 2011). This also means that the case is suspended while the parents make use of these offers and hopefully reach an agreement (Björk 2015). However, if the parents reach an agreement during the meetings, they can have it written in a meeting note or in their case documents.

2.1.3. The Typical Structure of an Interdisciplinary Meeting

In the following, I outline the typical structure of the interdisciplinary meeting based on observations from my fieldwork. It is important to say that each case and each meeting is unique in many ways, however, most meetings follows the same structure. As Box 2.1 illustrates, the meeting consists of five stages. First, the caseworker welcomes the parents, and the caseworker and the child specialist introduce themselves. If the parents bring a lawyer or a lay representative to the meeting, they are asked to introduce themselves. The caseworker informs them about their rights. Lay representatives are not allowed to talk during the meeting; they only function as support and an extra pair of ears. Second, the parents are asked to give a summary of the conflict and to describe their child's well-being. The applicant for the meeting speaks first. If both parents applied for the meeting, the caseworker asks who wants to start. Third, after the case description, the caseworker or the child specialist often suggests a small break. This gives the parents the opportunity to think about the other parent's suggestions or discuss it with their lawyer or lay representative. The parents can also ask for a break.

Box 2.1. The typical structure of an interdisciplinary meeting

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1. Welcome and introduction

- The caseworker and the child specialist introduce themselves.
- Lawyers and lay representatives (if present) introduce themselves.
- The caseworker sets the scene for the meeting.

2. Case presentation/summary of the case

- Both parents present the case.
- The applicant speaks first.
- If both parents applied for the meeting, the floor is open.

3. Break

- The parents (and lawyers, lay representatives) leave the meeting room.

4. Negotiation

- The parents negotiate the visitation schedule with guidance from the caseworker and child specialist.

5. The meeting ends

- Four outcomes:
  1) The parents reach an agreement.
  2) The parents do not agree; the caseworker will make a legal decision.
  3) The case needs further investigation (e.g. by a child specialist).
  4) The SA stops the meeting.

Fourth, after returning from the break, the parents start negotiating a visitation agreement based on the suggestions presented at the beginning of the meeting. The caseworker and the expert closely guide the negotiating between the parents. In some cases, the caseworker and the child make concrete suggestions about how the parents could arrange the visitation schedule. Fifth, the meeting ends, and the meetings I observed had four different outcomes: 1) the parents reached an agreement, 2) the parents were not able to reach an agreement, and the caseworker made a legal decision after the meeting, 3) the case needed further investigating, 4) the caseworker and the child specialist stopped the meeting. In the following, I describe the legal framework for cases about child visitation disputes.

2.2. The Legal Framework: The Parental Responsibility Act

The Parental Responsibility Act (PRA) from 2007 is the current legal framework for child visitation rights cases in Denmark. According to the PRA and the family law in general, all adjudications must be based on the child's best interest (The Parental Responsibility Act, §4). This principle had earlier been a tenet for practice but was not reflected in the law until 2007. Since the PRA does not specify how "the child's best interest" should be interpreted, legal

caseworkers have a high level of discretion, and all decisions about visitation must be based on an individual assessment of the child's conditions (The Parental Responsibility Act, §21, stk. 2). A decision about child visitation is thus made about a third party (the child) without any legal status. Three persons' interests are at stake; however, the consideration of the child's best interest must be weighed against the wishes of the parents.

The law specifically states that the child has a right to visitation with the non-resident parent to maintain connection with both parents (The Parental Responsibility Act, §19). The law emphasizes both that visitation is the child's and not the parents' legal right and that both parents are equally important in relation to the child. Historically, the legislation has changed from a parent-centered perspective (the parents' right to see their children) to a child-centered perspective (the child's right to see both parents) (Forslag til Forældre-ansvarslov, 2006). This reflects an assumption that contact with both parents is a determining factor in the assessment of the child's best interest.

Besides the importance of contact with both parents, several general considerations are taken into account when the caseworkers make decisions about child visitation. For example, the child's age and stage of development, the child's own position, former contact between child and non-resident parent, former visitation agreements, the distance between the parents' residences, and the parents' and the child's physical and mental health (Vejledning om forældremyndighed, barnets bopæl og samvær, 2019). These factors reveal a "status quo-principle" that emphasizes continuity and stability in the child's life, which is an influential aspect in adjudications regarding residence, custody, and visitation (Björk 2015). This principle can potentially challenge the consideration to developing and maintaining the child's connections with both parents – a balance the child specialist is expected to help qualify. Hence, when making decisions about child visitation, caseworkers with a law degree may depend on professionals with another professional rationality, namely the psy-professionals (King and Piper 1990). In child visitation rights cases, two professional rationalities – a legal rationality and a child-psychological rationality – are interconnected.

2.2.1. Two Legal Roles: Resident and Non-Resident Parent

When parents split up, they have to decide where the child will live. If they cannot agree, they can start a case in the SA, and the court with make a legal decision (see Figure 2.1). Hereby, the institutional setting determines that the parents are assigned two different legal roles as respectively resident parent and non-resident parent. In Denmark and most other countries, the majority of the mothers are resident parents, and the fathers are non-resident parents.

In 2018, 86 pct. of all children living in divorced families in Denmark had residence in their mother's home (Statistics Denmark 2018a). This means that the roles as mothers/fathers and resident/non-resident parents in most cases are interconnected.

This distinction between resident and non-resident parent is not without importance for the parents' legal rights and their opportunity to make important decisions. As illustrated in Table 2.1, the resident parent has more competence to make decisions than the non-resident parent.

Table 2.1. Resident parent vs. non-resident parent

Shared custody	Resident parent	Non-resident parent
Guardianship	Direct daily care	Decisions related to visitation – direct care
Medical treatment and medical intervention	Choice of daycare	Leisure activities
Choice of school, further education	Moving within national boarders	
After school care	(Non-risky)Leisure activities	
Risky leisure activities	School psychologist	
Moving outside the country	Child welfare counseling	
Choice of name		
Religion		
Passport		

Source: Vejledning om forældremyndighed, barnets bopæl og samvær (2019).

The resident parent can make a decision, without consulting the non-resident parent, about, for example, the choice of daycare, and is allowed to move within national borders without the non-resident parent's permission. However, when parents have shared custody, they have to agree on, for example, choice of school. Under the Parental Responsibility Act from 2007, all divorced or separated parents automatically have shared custody. To apply for full custody, parents have to start a case in the SA.

2.3. The Context: Child Visitation Disputes in Denmark

The aim of this chapter was to give a presentation of the empirical context investigated in this dissertation by describing the institutional setting and the legislation. The empirical context is important in order to understand the findings of this dissertation. Every public encounter is unique but is influenced by the specific institution and legislation applied in the specific policy area. The

empirical context influences how citizens and professionals interact, and the actors' roles and the rules applied in the specific policy area both enable and constrain the citizens' and the professionals' actions.

Figure 2.3. A triad interaction in child visitation disputes

The administrative system
(The SA)

A third party
(The child)

Legal party 1
(The mother)

Legal party 2
(The father)
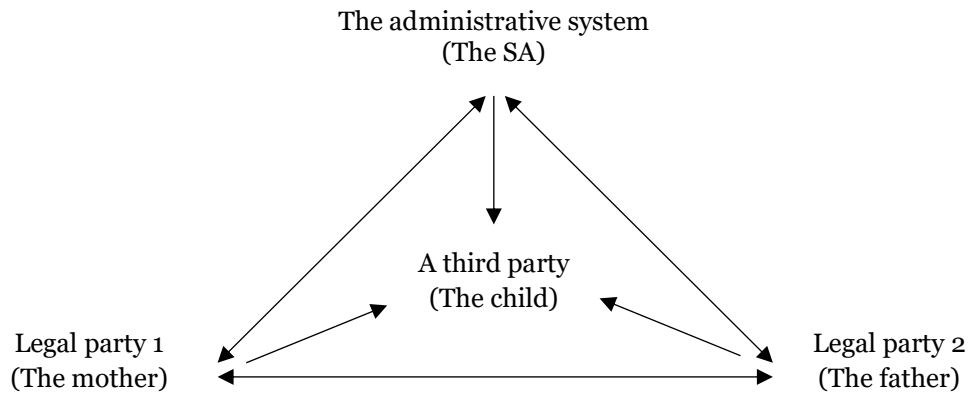
The policy area of child visitation rights disputes varies from many other citizens-state interactions, since it is not only one client sitting in front of a caseworker, but two conflicting clients with different interests as illustrated in Figure 2.3. The parents' roles as women/men, mothers/fathers, and their legal roles as resident/non-resident parent influence how they behave at a meeting in the SA. I discuss this in the following theoretical chapter.

Chapter 3.
Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, I outline the dissertation's overall theoretical framework. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, this PhD project is driven by an empirical question about how mothers and fathers behave in child visitation disputes in the Danish State Administration in light of discussions about gender inequality in these cases. I study this research question using different methods and analytical approaches. The theory presented in this chapter is the overall theoretical toolbox. In each article or chapter, I specify the theoretical concepts and analytical grips used to study the particular research question. In the following, I present the theoretical framework and the dissertation's overall argument. Building on insights from public administration and sociological literature on citizen behavior, and sociological and psychological theory about gender differences, I argue that men and women exhibit different behaviors when they interact with public authorities, especially in encounters where gender is salient as in child visitation disputes.

3.1. The Role of the Citizen in Public Administration and Sociological Literature

In this section, I present the role of the citizens in public administration research as well in the sociological literature and theorize about citizens' agency in the encounter with street-level bureaucrats.

3.1.1. The Role of the Citizen in Public Administration Literature

Since Lipsky's (1980) groundbreaking work on street-level bureaucracy, administrative actors and especially street-level bureaucrats (SLB) have received massive attention. Theories on how SLB's exercise discretion have been developed and empirically tested in several policy areas. Most studies focus on how contextual and organizational factors affect SLBs' decision-making. However, the street-level bureaucracy literature has been criticized for not paying enough attention to the agency of the citizens (Mik-Meyer 2017).

> The nature and behavior of clients has a profound effect on the behavior of street-level bureaucrats and the behavior of street-level bureaucrats has a profound effect on the implementation of public policy. This sequence has gone largely unappreciated. (Prottas 1979: 163)

As subjects of the policy and rules enforced by the state, citizens play a key role in the implementation of public policies. As Prottas (1979) writes in the quote above, citizens' behavior is of great importance for how street-level bureaucrats exercise discretion, and thereby for how public policies are implemented. Public administration and street-level bureaucracy scholars have for several years acknowledged that judgements of citizens' behaviors, identities and worthiness affect how SLBs make decisions (Soss, Fording, and Schram 2011; Schneider and Ingram 1993; Goodsell 1981; Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003; Nielsen 2002; Scott 1997). However, the citizens' role in the implementation of service delivery and regulatory policies is still overlooked in public administration (PA) research (Jakobsen et al. 2016; Bartels 2012); especially in studies of traditional face-to-face encounters between welfare clients and streel-level bureaucrats. Recent PA studies of citizens mainly focus on topics such as citizen engagement (Cooper, Bryer, and Meek 2006), and how citizens involve in public participation, for example by studying factors that affect coproduction (Jakobsen 2013; Thomsen 2017; Andersen, Nielsen, and Thomsen 2018) and investigating how participatory designs influence citizens' experiences (Nabatchi 2012). The literature on administrative burdens focuses on the costs clients face when interacting with bureaucracy and the consequences of these burdens (Moynihan, Herd, and Harvey 2015). Although citizens are represented in public administration studies, variations in their behavior and characteristics and how SLBs respond to them are primarily investigated from the SLBs' perspective. For example, Jilke and Tummers (2018) theorize and show how clients' effort and performance influence SLBs' assessments of the clients' deservingness and, in turn, their decisions to prioritize helping that client. Similarly, Jensen and Pedersen (2017) show how clients' behavior (compliant vs. non-compliant) interacts with SLBs' empathic abilities in predicting discretionary decision-making. These studies examine how SLBs respond to different client behaviors and mainly focus on decision-making and outcomes rather than relational interaction between SLBs and citizens. Bartels (2013) argues that in order to understand what goes on in public encounters between SLBs and citizens, we need to focus on the relational processes and communicative practices. Hand and Catlaw (2019) use ethnomethodology to study the relational process between clients and SLBs by focusing on talk and show that clients are not invisible in public encounters but play an active role (Hand and Catlaw 2019). In the second part of this dissertation, I examine how clients behave when interacting with public authorities by studying their communicative behavior. In the following, I explain how the relationship between SLBs and clients has been described in the street-level bureaucracy literature. Since this dissertation focuses on the role of the citizens

in citizen-state interactions, I do not explain theory and studies about street-level bureaucrats' behavior.

3.1.1.1. The Relationship between SLBs and Clients

Lipsky's work on street-level bureaucracy touches upon the relationship between SLBs and clients. Although he acknowledged that, the interaction is "to some degree" a reciprocal process between citizens and the street-level bureaucrats, he perceived the relationship as one of unidirectional power. The capacity to make decisions belongs exclusively to the staff of the bureaucracy (Lipsky 1980: 58). This clear distinction between the SLB and the client places them in different roles with different interests.

> The official has authority and is vested with legal powers; the citizen is a private individual standing alone before the sovereign state. The official, moreover, appears as the full-time expert, while the client is only an amateur. For the official, the transaction is but a single "case" among many; to the citizen, by contrast, a matter of personal importance as stake (Goodsell 1981: 5).

Goodsell's (1981) definition of public encounters also touches upon the asymmetric power relation. SLBs have legal powers and are experts in their field, but the clients are not given much agency, and their lack of knowledge about the functioning of bureaucracy sustains the unequal relationship (Dubois 2010: 48-49). For clients interacting with bureaucracy, the outcome of the encounter has emotional and material importance for their everyday life. In terms of high-stake cases such as visitation rights cases, the meeting outcome is life defining for the clients, but for the caseworkers, it is "just another day at the office". Clients view their needs as individual problems and expect individualized treatment, whereas SLBs categorize clients based on standards and practices and seek the best solutions within the given limits. This means that the interaction between clients and SLBs always involves a conflict. The client wants to ensure that his understanding of the case prevails, and the SLB wants control over the process, e.g. obtain the relevant information in a minimal amount of time (Lipsky 1980; Prottas 1979). Hence, SLBs develop routines to process the clients most efficiently. The asymmetric relationship between SLBs and clients has also been described in the sociological literature, but, unlike public administration research, many studies focus on clients in welfare encounters.

3.1.2. The Role of Clients in the Sociological and Regulatory Literature

Compared to the public administration literature, studies on client behavior are more widespread in the sociological, socio-legal and regulatory literature. Studies of regulatory compliance have examined citizens' compliance behavior and how it varies in different regulatory policy areas (Hutter 1997; Silbey 2011), for example tax compliance (Braithwaite, Valerie Braithwaite, Gibson, and Makkai 1994; Braithwaite 2003). Sociological studies focus on, among other things, citizens' experiences and strategies in interactions with SLB, mostly related to obtaining social services (Mik-Meyer 1999; Stax 2005; Carstens 2005; Mik-Meyer and Silverman 2019; Mik-Meyer 2004). Using qualitative case studies, these studies explore the power relation between caseworkers and clients and examine the clients' institutional selves; the process of citizens being transformed into a particular type of client in the encounter with the welfare workers (Gumbrium and Holstein 2001; Mik-Meyer 2017; Järvinen and Mik-Meyer 2003; Goffman 1991). The literature mainly focuses on encounters between frontline workers and vulnerable and socially marginalized clients (Järvinen and Mik-Meyer 2003a), for example homeless (Stax 2005; Mik-Meyer and Silverman 2019), mental patients (Goffman 1961), long-term unemployed (Carstens 2005) rather than more resourceful clients placed in the "normal" area of social services. Although the sociological literature mainly focus on vulnerable groups, they still focus on the agency of clients, and examine how clients can use different strategies to influence the frontline workers (Goffman 1961; Mik-Meyer 2017). In a recent study, Mik-Meyer and Silverman (2019) study agency and citizenship in public encounters between homeless clients and caseworkers in shelter placement meetings. Based on three cases of clients: the resolute, the acquiescent and the passive client, they show how clients' agency varies and how they engage in different ways in the interaction with the welfare workers (Mik-Meyer and Silverman 2019).

3.1.3. Theorizing the Client Role in Public Encounters: Clients' Agency

Even though Lipsky described the relationship between SLBs and clients as one of unidirectional power, he acknowledged that clients have different resources and can use different strategies to challenge the power balance between them and SLBs (Lipsky 1980). Earlier, clients were often described as passive and dependent individuals. However, this understanding of citizens seems dated. In today's welfare work, citizens are not only informers and legal parties waiting passively for welfare workers to solve their problems (Mik-

Meyer 2017; Clarke et al. 2007). The shift from government to governance over the past three decades has changed the organization of welfare work from a hierarchical understanding of government towards a cooperative and bottom-up understanding of politics where involvement and participation of citizens are highly prioritized (Mik-Meyer 2017). This means that citizens engage actively in the interaction; they suggest solutions and spend time and resources to obtain their desired goals. Clients are expected to be experts on their own lives and needs, and they are the main agenda setter for the welfare encounter (Mik-Meyer 2017: 14). Clients are not powerless –they also have agency in these encounters.

Agency is a sociological concept referring to the capacity of individuals to act independently: to form judgements and take actions. Giddens (1979) argues that agency is shaped by societal structures such a rules, roles and resources, and are not just a result of independent actions. Hence, agency and structure are embedded; agency cannot exist without structures, and structure is reproduced through agency (Giddens 1979; Sewell, 1992; Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2012). This understanding is relevant for the study of citizens in public encounters, where social structures both constrain and enable the citizens' actions. The legal rules define the institutional setting for the encounter, and the citizens' roles as clients position them in opposition to the SLBs. As I will discuss later in this chapter, in child visitation disputes, the clients' multiple roles as women/men, mother/father and their legal roles as resident/non-resident parents are highly relevant for client behavior in this specific social context, since they influence the clients' scope of action. Moreover, the clients' resources influence their agency. Jenkins (2009) argues that individuals have access to different resources, in different degrees and in different combinations. Not all clients are in a powerful position; their capacity to voice their situation and present their solutions to the SLBs may be difficult for clients with limited resources. When clients interact with bureaucracy, their agency is influenced by the structures in the specific context. Agency is a relational and dynamic concept that is situated in interactions, and the agency of the client and the SLB is negotiated in the context of policymaking (Mik-Meyer 2017; Wright 2012). Due to the unbalanced power relation between clients and SLBs (Dubois 2010; Lipsky 1980; Goodsell 1981), the clients' agency is also determined by the client's role and the agency of the SLBs with whom they are interacting.

I argue that clients play a greater role in today's welfare work given the prioritization of citizens' involvement and participation. The asymmetry between SLBs and clients is of course still present, however, the clients have agency and can use different strategies to influence the process and the decision-making when they interact with the SLBs.

3.2. Conceptualizing Client Behavior in Public Encounters

In the following, I review the literature and theorize how clients can use their competences and strategies to influence the SLBs' discretionary decision-making. Public administration and sociological theory suggests that citizens' knowledge, resources and competences matter when they interact with bureaucracy (Jacobsen, Jensen, and Aarseth 1981; Jakobsen and Nielsen 2014; Moynihan, Herd, and Harvey 2015; Smith 1988; S. Winter and Lehmann Nielsen 2008). According to access theories, there is an inherent bias in clients' access to public services (Schaffer and Wen-hsien 1975; Jacobsen, Jensen, and Aarseth 1981; Smith 1988). Clients with fewer personal resources are systematically disadvantaged in their interaction with the administrative system. To get access to the administrative system, especially to social services as the theory is primarily built on, citizens have to cross different thresholds. They need to have knowledge about the existence of the benefit they want to apply for, they need competences to handle the interaction and they have to be able to explain their situation and thoughts to the frontline workers (Jacobsen, Jensen, and Aarseth 1981). So far, the literature has mainly focused on dyad relationships between one client and the system, and not on encounters between two conflicting clients and the state as in child visitation rights disputes. After the literature review, I theorize that this triad relationship adds an extra dimension to the clients' behavioral strategies, as they are not only targeted at the public authorities but also at their counterparty.

3.2.1. Clients' Bureaucratic Competence

Theoretical concepts of citizens' strategies and behavior in public encounters is limited in PA research. However, in the 1970s and 1980s, a few studies of client behavior appeared in the street-level bureaucracy literature. For example, Gordon (1975) and Danet and Hartman (1972) argued that clients' level of bureaucratic competence affects their success in interactions with bureaucracy. Gordon (1975) conceptualized bureaucratic competence in a broad sense:

> Bureaucratic competence is seen here as all those abilities peculiarly related to bureaucratic interactions. Included are factors as vocabulary, familiarity with forms and documents, knowledge of the possibility of expediting procedures (or cutting red tape), a realization of the importance of tenacity, and the understanding that repetition and the impersonal handling of extremely personal information are often characteristic of bureaucracies (Gordon 1975: 198).

According to Gordon, bureaucratic competence is a combination of knowledge about the functioning of bureaucracy and practical and communicative skills. Danet and Hartman (1972) were inspired by Almond and Verba's (1965) work on participant cultures in the political system and had a multidimensional understanding of bureaucratic competence. Almond and Verba distinguish between cognitive and evaluative dispositions, as well as actual behavior in interactions with officials. For the cognitive orientation, they distinguish between citizens' objective knowledge about the functioning of bureaucracy and their subjective perception of their ability to influence and deal effectively with bureaucracy (Danet and Hartman 1972: 9). They argue that one of the most important components of bureaucratic competence is citizens' perception of one's ability or inability to influence what happens in bureaucracy. The concept of bureaucratic competence is still highly relevant, but the existing studies and concepts are dated and not completely applicable to current bureaucratic contexts. In Article A, "Bureaucratic Self-Efficacy", I conceptualize bureaucratic competence and develop a scale to measure citizens' bureaucratic self-efficacy, which I define as *citizens' assessment of their capabilities to cope and navigate in public encounters in order to influence the decision-making*. The development of the measurement is inspired by the psychological concept self-efficacy, understood as individuals' assessment of their capabilities to organize and execute actions required to achieve successful levels of performance (Bandura 1986), and sub-concepts of internal political efficacy (Lassen and Serritzlew 2011) and public service efficacy (Kristensen, Andersen, and Pedersen 2012) invented by political scientists and public administration scholars.

3.2.2. Clients' Strategies and Interaction Behavior

How clients behave and navigate in public encounters is a product of their bureaucratic competence, but their prepared strategies and impulse reactions based on questions and information also emerge at meetings. In the encounter with bureaucracy, clients can use various strategies to influence SLBs' decision-making. In the literature, there are seven recurring strategies. First, clients search for information about the organization to increase their bureaucratic competence (Hasenfeld and Steinmetz 1981; Gordon 1975; Danet and Hartman 1972). Second, clients can show acquiescence and be cooperative (Lipsky 1980; Braithwaite 2003). Several studies suggest that SLBs prefer submissive and cooperative clients who are easy to process (Lipsky 1980; Goffman 1961; Hasenfeld and Steinmetz 1981; Jensen 2017). Third, clients can be resistant (Braithwaite et. al. 1994) and use threats and bribes. Hasenfeld and Steinmetz (1981) argue that threats are a common strategy among clients

with few resources or low status and are caused by a lack of alternatives. Fourth, clients can challenge the SLB, for example by making demands, avoid the requirements of the system or suggest alternative solutions (Stax 2005). Fifth, they can manipulate information about themselves to make a favorable impression (Goffman 1970). Braithwaite describes a game-playing behavior where the citizen pretends to cooperate but acts strategically, for example by sharing information selectively or by moving focus to other aspects of the case (Braithwaite 2003). Sixth, clients can manage their appearance, e.g. their psychical appearance such as clothing or their speech mannerisms (Hasenfeld and Steinmetz 1981). Seventh, clients can appeal to compassion (Tripi 1984; Hasenfeld and Steinmetz 1981), for example by showing weakness or focusing on problems rather than solutions. Research shows that worthy and deserving clients often receive better treatment and more favorable benefits (Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003; Scott 1997). Furthermore, studies show that clients feel better treated the more weak and helpless they appear in the encounter (Mik-Meyer 1999; Guldager 2000). According to Goffman, individuals can use different strategies in their self-presentation, and he distinguishes between, for example, positive and negative idealization, which means that individuals appear respectively stronger and better or more submissive and weak than they actually are (Goffman 1959).

During face-to-face interactions, clients' behavior is a combination of intended and unintended actions. Previous studies on clients' behaviors and strategies primarily focus on *frontstage* interaction, to use Goffman's terminology; however, they do not distinguish between clients' behavior before and during the encounter with bureaucracy. I argue that citizens' behavior does not always occur instinctively in the interaction with public authorities, but may be carefully planned, sometimes in cooperation with other actors. I distinguish between preparation and strategies before the encounter (backstage), and during the encounter (frontstage). In Bisgaard (2018), I explore four dimensions of clients' preparation and strategies: 1) they seek advice and guidance through three different channels: a) official information, b) professionals, and c) social network; 2) they prepare content and documentation; 3) they consider and plan their attitude and self-presentation; and 4) they prepare mentally. In chapter 5, I explain the four dimensions in more detail and analyze gender differences in clients' preparatory strategies.

3.2.3. Two Conflicting Clients in One Encounter: Theorizing the Triad Relationship between Clients and the State

The theory and studies presented above all focus on interaction between *one* client and one or more representatives from the state. In Goodsell's (1981)

definition of public encounters, he also mentioned the dyad relationship as a main characteristic. However, not all public encounters consist of only one client. For example, in school and educational settings, several students interact with the teacher and the others students. In the empirical setting of this dissertation – child visitation rights disputes – two conflicting clients are invited for a meeting with one or two professionals, and the meeting concerns a third party (see Figure 3.1). How does the triad relationship between clients and the state influence the clients' interaction behavior compared to dyad encounters?

Figure 3.1. A triad interaction
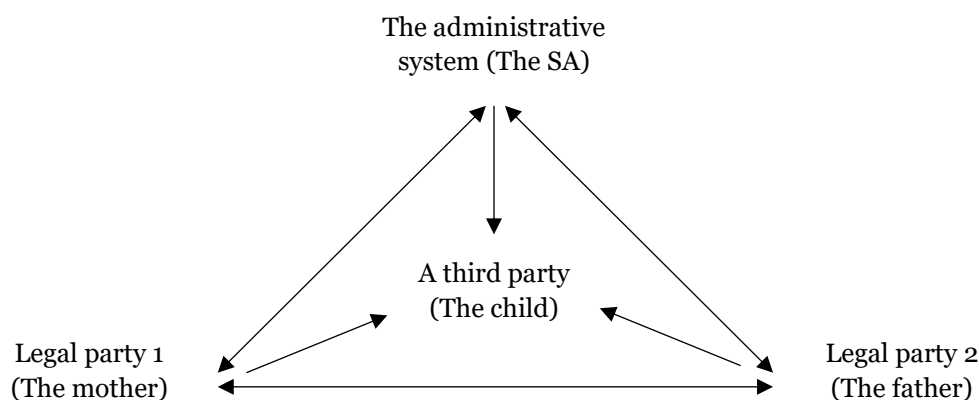
The strategies mentioned in the previous section are still reasonable in triad encounters; however, clients also use strategies in relation to their counterparty at the meeting. I argue that two conflicting clients, due to their different interests, have an interest in presenting themselves in a certain way and challenge their counterparty's position in order to convince the professionals about their definition of and solution to the problem. This means that they threaten or challenge not only the SLB but also the counterparty's position by discrediting their arguments. Goffman's notions of face work (Goffman 1967) and strategic interaction (Goffman 1970) are useful for understanding social interaction and individuals in conflict who challenge each other, for instance in a triad encounter between to legal parties and the administrative system. As a strategic move, clients can manipulate information about themselves and their counterparty and mislead the other participants in the interaction with the information they present to emerge as "winners". Why is this relevant in the study of citizen-state interactions? For the clients it is all about informing the SLB about their case. As clients they need to be able to explain their case, and often they have an interest in presenting themselves and their counterparty it a certain way. In child visitation disputes, both parents have an interest in presenting favorable facts about themselves and unfavorable facts about

the other parent, for example about their qualities as a parents and their relation to the child, in order to position themselves as a responsible client. Goffman labels this "aggressive interchanges" (Goffman 1967). I explain this in more detail in chapter 7. Instead of challenging each other; the two clients can also cooperate and negotiate about a solution both parties can accept. In chapter 7 and 8, I examine how two conflicting clients interact with each other and a public authority. Although the chapters focus on gender differences between the two actions, they still contribute to our understanding of a triad encounter more generally.

3.3. The Dissertation's Overall Argument: Gender Differences in Clients' Behavior

In the precious sections, I presented theory and studies about client behavior in public encounters more generally. The aim of this dissertation is to contribute with concepts to study client behavior and enhance our understanding of how clients behave in triad encounters where they also face a counterparty; however, the overall aim is to study gender differences in clients' behavior. The focus on what explains differences in behavior, for example personal characteristics such as gender, is always interesting, but especially in the empirical context of child visitation disputes where two conflicting clients – typically a mother and a father – are placed in the same meeting room. Gender differences in client's interaction behavior remain unexplored, especially in the PA and sociological literature. However, several quantitative studies of gender differences in doctor-patient interactions have been published in medical journals and journals for communication in medical practice (see for example Hall et al. 1994; Schieber et al. 2014). In a socio-legal study, Bogoch (1997) examines gender differences in lawyer-client interactions in same-sex and mixed-sex dyads to discover whether the lawyer's gender affects client behavior. The results showed that both male and female clients expressed greater deference to male lawyers, and that female clients expressed cooperation and solidarity with all lawyers. To the best of my knowledge, gender differences in encounters concerning child visitation disputes have not been studied. However, related to this empirical context, Pines et al. (2002) have studied gender differences in content and style of argumentation between couples during divorce mediation (Pines, Gat, and Tal 2004). The study shows that men tend to use more legalistic arguments based on principles of law and customary practice, and women tend to use more relational arguments based in interpersonal responsibility to a relationship. Men's communication style was more unemotional and reserved, whereas women's communication style was more emotional with expressions of insult and pain. Before turning to a specified

argument on gender differences in child visitation disputes, I first present sociological and psychological literature on gender differences.

3.3.1. Gender Differences: Sociological and Psychological Perspectives

Differences between men and women are an ongoing debate in the general population and in scientific work. Biologists, sociologists and psychologists have studied gender differences from different perspectives; the first starting with differences in chromosomes, anatomy, hormones, and reproductive systems, the second referring to differences due to socialization, psychological traits and cultural context. Psychologists argue that both genetic makeup and socialization can affect individuals' own gender identification (Lindsey 2015). To differentiate linguistically between biological and sociological understandings of gender, the scientific literature distinguishes between *sex* and *gender*. Sex refers to biological characteristics for men and women, and gender refers to social, cultural, and psychological traits linked to males and females. This means that sex makes us male or female, and gender makes us masculine or feminine (Lindsey 2015; West and Zimmerman 1987). This dissertation will not take part in the debate about nature vs. nurture but uses the existing literature to examine gender differences in clients' behavior. However, both traditions also argue for some of the same gender differences, for example that women are more empathic and men are better as systematizing (Baron-Cohen 2005). It is also important to mention that the literatures are based on average and often subtle differences between women and men. Furthermore, there are variations in behaviors within each gender. In this dissertation, I build on insights from the sociological and psychological literature about gender socialization, gender roles and gender identity.

3.3.1.1. Gender Socialization and Differences in Personal Traits

According to sociological literature, differences in male and female behavior and attitudes are based on socialization and social structures. Beginning in early childhood, boys and girls are socialized into male and female gender roles (Carter 2014; West and Zimmerman 1987). Gender roles are deeply rooted in societies and formed by structural and cultural values about gender, for example, by traditional division of labor: men are breadwinners and women are homemakers (Eagly 1987; Lindsey 2015). Via different agents – family, the educational system and the mass media – boys and girls socialize into masculine and feminine behaviors in accordance with social expectations about appropriate behavior for one's biological sex (West and Zimmerman 1987). This is based on the idea that males learn masculinity and masculine

impressions in *opposition* to femininity and feminine behavior (Carter 2014). Parents socialize children according to these gender norms. Girls are socialized to be caring, kind, and empathic while boys are socialized to be independent, self-reliant, and ambitious. To describe these differences between men and women's personal traits, social psychologists distinguish between communal and agentic characteristics, which are rooted in the homemaker-provider division of labor. Characteristics like friendly, nurturing, empathic and caring are used to describe female behavior, interpersonal skills and ability to communicate nonverbally (Abele 2003; Eagly, Wood, and Diekman 2000). In contrast, men are ascribed agentic characteristics such as assertive, aggressive, dominant, controlling and confident (Eagly 1987; Stets and Burke 1996). These characteristics have become well-established gender stereotypes.

In sociology, discussions of the relationship between social structure and the person have gained great attention (Stets and Burke 1996), and it is relevant for the understanding of gender. Gender can be understood at the macro level as a position in the social structure (for example as status differences between men and women), and at the micro level as an identity persons apply to themselves (e.g. how they see themselves as masculine and feminine). In this dissertation, I do not understand gender solely as an individual characteristic, but as a combination of social structures and individual gender identity. This is in line with West and Zimmerman (1987) and their concept of *doing gender*, which argues that individuals perform and maintain gender in the interaction with others by playing out their roles in society. By doing tasks associated with a specific gender, men and women perform masculinity and femininity (West and Zimmerman 1987; Carter 2014) For example, when women care for children, they are in a gender perspective *doing their gender*. This performative approach has its roots in symbolic interactionism and takes its lead from Goffman's dramaturgical approach to social interaction. Like actors on stage, individuals use different strategies of impressive management, which provide information and cues to others in the interactions (Goffman 1959). The doing gender perspective is a social constructionist approach, which argues that individual gender identity is not static but can be reformed by social interactions. Based on this understanding of gender differences, I argue that gender influences behavior during a meeting with public authorities. However, as I argue below, gender differences in clients' behavior may be more evident in encounters where gender is salient.

3.3.2. Studying Gender Differences in the Context of Child Visitation Rights Disputes

The literature on gender socialization and differences in men and women's psychological traits is valuable to examine gender differences in clients' behavior. However, I argue that the institutional and empirical setting also influences how men and women interact. In policy areas where gender is salient, gender differences in clients' behavior are more evident. I argue that in policy areas concerning family and children like child visitation rights cases, women have more agency than fathers, and that it is relevant to pay attention to the social context when studying public encounters. As explained earlier, the clients' agency is influenced by structures such a rules, roles and resources in the specific social context. In child visitation rights disputes in Denmark, the roles as female and male client are interconnected with the roles as mother and father, but also with the legal roles as resident and non-resident parents. As explained in chapter 2, 86 pct. of children living in divorced families have residence at their mother's home. On average, mothers and fathers therefore have different legal positions when they enter the meeting room. These multiple roles both constrain and enable the clients' actions and are particularly salient in the encounter concerning child visitation disputes since it is placed in the policy area of family and children. In child visitation disputes, analyses of client behavior cannot be reduced to a question about gender differences exclusively. The clients' behavior is also influenced by their parental and legal roles, which are closely related to their gender. The clients' multiple roles in child visitation disputes are illustrated in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2 Clients' multiple roles in child visitation disputes

```
                          ┌──────────────┐
                          │    Client    │
                          └──────────────┘
        ┌───────────────────────┼───────────────────────┐
   ┌─────────────┐       ┌──────────────┐       ┌──────────────────┐
   │ Gender role │──────▶│ Parental role│──────▶│   Legal role     │
   │ Female/Male │       │ Mother/Father│       │ Resident/Non-    │
   └─────────────┘       └──────────────┘       │ resident parent  │
                                                 └──────────────────┘
   Three roles
        └───────────────────────┼───────────────────────┘
                          ┌──────────────┐
                          │ Interaction  │
                          │  behavior    │
                          └──────────────┘
```
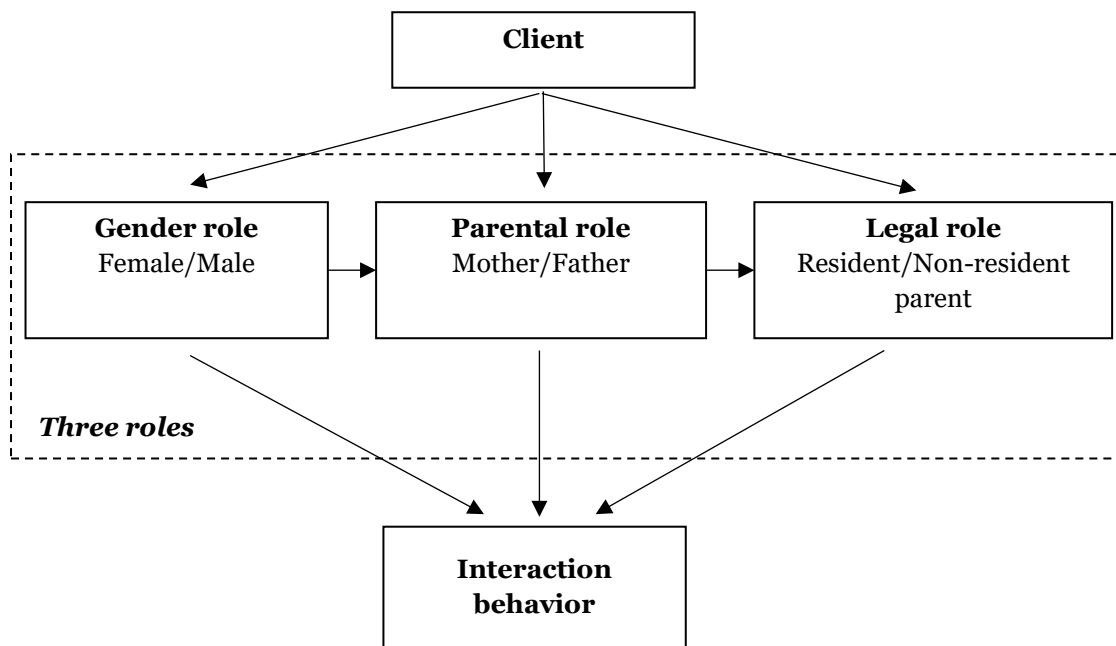
Child visitation disputes are a unique example of a public encounter where the two genders – a woman/mother and a man/father – confront each other.[6] Gender is especially salient in this encounter. During the interaction, the parents are expected to use gender-based arguments related to their parental roles and identities as mothers and fathers. According to Stryker's (1980) hierarchical approach to identity, individuals will behave in a situation based on how well identity meanings match the meanings in a situation. Stryker labelled this *identity salience.* As individuals, we have multiple roles or identities; we can be woman, mother, daughter, and researcher at the same time (Eagly, Wood, and Diekman 2000). However, depending on the context, the self and others will invoke the salient identity in the social encounter, and the salient identity determines the individual's behavior (Stryker 1980; Carter 2014). Gender identity and the identity of mother and father are of course closely related, but in child visitation disputes, behavior and arguments rooted in traditional gender roles and the roles as mothers and fathers are activated. In the following, I describe gender roles and the differences in mothers and fathers' roles related to the child.

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[6] In some cases, the parents are homosexual couples, but my sample only consists of mixed-sex parent couples.

3.3.2.1. Gender and Parental Roles

As mentioned, the traditional division of labor has placed men and women in different roles and positions in society, which have fostered a gendered status hierarchy. Traditionally – and today – men have higher status and more power in society compared to women: men are more represented in higher-ranked jobs and are better paid. Although gender roles have changed during the last century, especially since the 1960s when women entered the workforce (Dahl 2015; Dalsgaard 2015; A. Eagly, Wood, and Diekman 2000; Knight and Brinton 2017), the picture is still – on average – traditional, both internationally and in Denmark. Men still work more, and women still handle most domestic tasks in the household (Dush, Yavorsky, and Schoppe-Sullivan 2018), even though most couples in western societies are *dual earners*, i.e., both work and contribute financially to the household (Dush, Yavorsky, and Schoppe-Sullivan 2018; Bianchi et al. 2012; Sayer 2005). Mothers are still the primary caregivers and spend more time with their children compared to fathers. In recent decades, fathers' engagement in and responsibility for child rearing have increased (McMunn et al. 2017), particularly in aspects of childcare like reading and playing (Dush, Yavorsky, and Schoppe-Sullivan 2018; Sayer 2005).

This picture also emerges in Denmark. In a recent analysis from the Rockwool Foundation Research Unit, Bonke and Christensen (2018) investigate Danes' time consumption in different areas. The study shows that men on average work seven hours more per week than women. Danish women spend around an hour more per day on household work than Danish men. Women primarily spend their time on daily tasks like shopping, cooking and laundry, while men handle the more flexible do-it-yourself work (Bonke and Christensen 2018: 36). In families with children, the women tend to retain the primary care role, but the division of labor is more equal for other tasks. Women spend more time on what Bonke and Christensen (2018) define as childcare (e.g. nursing) on a daily basis, especially for children under seven. Here the difference between women and men is almost one hour per day, compared to approximately 30 minutes for children aged 7-17. However, mothers and fathers spend the same amount of time on bringing and picking up their child from daycare or school and playing, reading and talking with their children of both age groups. So although mothers still spend more time in total, some child-related tasks are more equally divided between mothers and fathers in Denmark. However, the study also shows a difference across women and men's educations backgrounds. Fathers with higher education (master level) spend twice as much time on their children than fathers with no education,

and higher-educated mothers spend 50 pct. more time than mothers without education (Bonke and Christensen 2018: 38).

Another area where mothers still play the dominant role is parental leave. In 2015, Danish mothers had on average 297.6 days of maternity leave and fathers had on average 31 days of paternity leave, i.e., approximately 10 pct. of the overall leave (Haagensen and Agerskov 2017: 29). Also in this area is there a different between different social groups. Higher educated fathers had more paternity leave than fathers at lower educational levels (Statistics Denmark 2019). The doing gender perspective still emerges in Denmark when we look at the averages: women and men are performing and maintaining gender roles by playing out their roles in society, but we see a tendency towards a more equal division of household tasks, especially for higher educated groups.

According to gender scholars, the traditional work distribution is based on power imbalances between men and women (West and Zimmerman 1987). By undertaking gendered tasks, men and women are "doing gender", and the power imbalance is maintained. From a structural and cultural perspective, male-oriented activities have higher value in society than female-oriented activities (England 2010; Dush, Yavorsky, and Schoppe-Sullivan 2018). However, since household work and childcare are still women's primary domain, I argue that what women have a more powerful position than men in family- and child-related policy areas. The fact that mothers still – on average – are the primary caregiver and spend more time with their children is a resource and a female advantage the mothers can use in child visitation disputes. Moreover, the mothers' legal status as resident parents also gives them an advantage in terms of time spent with their children and the different legal rights for resident and non-resident parents (see chapter 2). I therefore argue that in cases of child visitation disputes, mothers have more agency than fathers and that this difference will color their interaction behavior. In the following, I present the dissertation's tree analytical parts.

3.4. The Dissertation's Three Analytical Parts

The theory just presented is the overall theoretical framework for this dissertation. The analysis is divided into three parts. In each analytical chapter, I specify the analytical strategies and introduce and explain theoretical concepts that are used in the particular chapter.

In the first part "Before the encounter", I first examine how mothers and fathers prepare and devise strategies before a meeting with the SA. The starting point for this analysis is a typology I developed over clients' preparatory strategies (Bisgaard 2018). The article is published in a Danish journal and not a part of this dissertation; however, I explain the results in the chapter,

and I use it to examine gender differences. Second, I present the results from Article A, "Bureaucratic Self-Efficacy", and Article B, "Bureaucratic Self-Efficacy and Spillover Effects". Article A develops a measurement scale for studying citizens' bureaucratic self-efficacy; Article B investigates gender differences in mothers and fathers' bureaucratic self-efficacy, and whether the level of mastery experience from other child-related encounters mediates the relationship.

In the second part, "The Encounter", I invite you into the meeting room where I study mothers and fathers' performances during an encounter with the SA. This part consist of three chapters and uses different theoretical approaches. In the first chapter, I study the conversational dominance between the two conflicting clients. I introduce theory about gender differences in language and about conversational dominance, and study whether one of the parties (the mother or the father) plays a more dominant role at the meeting. In the second chapter, I examine how mothers and fathers position themselves and their counterparty at the meeting by analyzing their verbal acts and how they argue their case. In the third chapter, I study gender differences in mothers and fathers' interaction behavior when they present their case and negotiate about a new visitation agreement. In two chapters, I use Goffman's theory on social interaction as an analytical grip to study the parents' performances.

In the third part, "After the Encounter", I analyze how mothers and fathers evaluate the meeting by using the theoretical framework of substantive and procedural justice. I ask whether mothers and fathers have different perceptions of substantive and procedural justice related to their meeting in the SA. According to the theory of procedural justice, citizens care as much or more about the process of interaction with the state as they do about the outcome (Lind and Tyler 1988).

Chapter 4.
Methodological Framework: Research Design, Data Collection and Data Processing

> Most of my work is question driven. I begin with a question about some political phenomenon and then, if I come to see the question as interesting and consequential, I try to specify a methodology that will help in work with it in a fruitful way. (...) as I have moved between projects, picking up one methodology and setting another aside, it has been the logic of my inquiry that has changed. I have not been transformed into a wholly different type of researcher, nor have I been forced to trade in my core beliefs about the nature of knowledge and reality. For this reason, I find it most helpful to apply the label "interpretive" to the logics of specific pieces of research rather than to researchers themselves or to any philosophical first principles one might attribute to researchers. The interpretive/positivist distinction, in this usage, is a matter of practice rather than identity or worldview. It is a matter of what we assume, require, and do for the sake of a particular inquiry rather than an aspect of who we are or a fixed description of what we believe in general (Soss 2006).

This quote by Joe Soss captures how I view myself as a researcher and how I have worked with this dissertation. My work has also been question driven, and my logic of inquiry has changed depending on the research question I ask in the particular article or chapter. In the analytical chapters, I mainly apply an interpretive logic of inquiry, while the articles follow a positivist methodological approach. Hence, I see myself as a methodological pluralist; the choice of methodology and the ontological and epistemological assumptions vary depending on the specific research question.

The dissertation in divided into sub-questions, all related to the overall research question. The point of departure is an empirical question about whether mothers and fathers behave differently in child visitation disputes in light of public discussions about gender discrimination in the Danish State Administration. This case is not selected because it is ideal for testing general theoretical assumptions; it has been the point of departure for this dissertation from the beginning. The different methods were selected in order to illuminate various aspects of the overall research question.

In this chapter, I outline the distinction between the positivist and interpretive logic of inquiry, I describe the overall research design, how I collected my qualitative and quantitative data, and how I processed it. I reflect on my

role as researcher in the data collection and discuss my methodological considerations. Qualitative data collection and data processing are described in more detail than the quantitative part, which is described in the articles. In each chapter or article, I explain the methods and the analytical grip related to the specific study.

4.1. The Methodological Distinction between a Positivist and an Interpretive Logic of Inquiry

As a researcher, you can follow different methodological approaches. As the quote by Soss (2006) explains, for me it is not a matter of identity or worldview; it is a matter of which research question is asked. Working with this dissertation, I have been pragmatic and open for different methods. The dissertation do not follow one methodological approach, but two different approaches. In this section, I will briefly explain some of the central distinctions between the positivist and the interpretive logic of inquiry. I will not discuss philosophy of science but rather unfold the methodological differences in how to conduct research: the logic of inquiry. Based on the two approaches, I distinguish between two types of logics: deductive and abductive reasoning.

Positivism is rooted in the realist ontological and objectivist epistemological understanding of knowledge. The positivist approach believes that there is an objective reality to any research phenomenon regardless of the researcher's perspective (Hudson and Ozanne 1988). Positivist research typically follows a deductive approach, meaning that researchers, based on theory, define concepts, formulate hypotheses, and operationalize concepts into measureable variables in order to test them with empirical observation and either verify of falsify them. The approach is thus variance-based and seeks to explain causal relationships. The goal is to be able to generalize the results, also outside the population that is studied. The researcher takes control over the research process, for example by controlling the case selection, and creates a distance to the phenomenon or the participants in order to remain emotionally neutral.

The purpose of interpretive research is not model testing like in the positivist approach, but rather to understand human meaning making in context (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012: 108). Knowledge is socially constructed, there are multiple and relative "truths", which are generated through interactions between the researcher and the researched phenomenon (ibid: 4). Interpretive research typically follows an abductive logic of inquiry, which is characterized as an iterative process going back and forth between empirical observations and theory (Tavory and Timmermans 2014; Schwartz-Shea and

Yanow 2012). It often starts with an empirical puzzle or a surprising observation, and then theories are used to explain and understand the phenomenon (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012: 27-29). In interpretive research, the researcher is a part of the data generation and the sense-making.

These two methodological approaches have different research orientations and different approaches to design and research. In the articles of this dissertation, I apply a positivist methodological approach by following a deductive logic of inquiry. The aim is to test theoretically based hypotheses on my empirical data. The three articles are all based on quantitative data. By contrast, in the analytical, qualitative chapters, the aim is to understand and uncover how male and female clients behave in public encounters, and how they perceive the situation. These chapters follow an abductive logical of inquiry. Before starting my observations, I had not decided to apply Goffman's theory on social interaction (more on this in chapter 7) as an analytical grip to understand how people behave in public encounters. However, based on the empirical observations, this theory turned out to be helpful to interpret and understand the clients' actions. In chapter 9, I combine quantitative and qualitative data but with different aims. The quantitative data is used to explain gender differences in clients' substantive and procedural justice, and the qualitative data is used to describe and understand how mothers and fathers perceive and make sense of the meeting.

4.1.1. How to Evaluate Research: Research Criteria

Since the two methodological approaches conduct research differently, the research process and the results should not be evaluated based on the same research criteria. However, even though each approach has different standards for research, they share similarities and take some of the same considerations into account. In both approaches, it is important to be transparent about how the research is conducted.

In the positivist logic of inquiry, the commonly accepted standards are validity, reliability, replicability, and generalizability. As researchers following this logic of inquiry, we should 1) be able to measure what we think we are measuring (measurement validity); 2) ensure that the data collection methods are reliable, i.e., that applying the same procedure will always produce the same result; 3) make sure that the data and analysis are replicable, i.e., the research process should be transparent so other researchers can duplicate the data and reach the same conclusions; 4) be able to generalize the results in a wider population, also known as external validity (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994: 25-26). Furthermore, standards such as objectivity and rigor are highly valued.

These criteria are not directly transferable to interpretive research since it is based on different assumptions about how we obtain knowledge. Research criteria for interpretive research have been widely discussed by constructivist qualitative researchers; however, many different concepts share similarities (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña 2014; Maxwell 2012; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). According to Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012), research criteria such as transparency and reflexivity are important standards in terms of designing and conducting trustworthy research. Researchers should be transparent about their reasoning about the research process and the interpretation of the empirical material. Furthermore, the research should be reflexive. Schwartz-Shea and Yanow define reflexivity as "a researcher's active consideration of and engagement with the ways in which his own sense-making and the particular circumstances that might have affected it, throughout all phases of the research process, relate to the knowledge claims he ultimately advances in written form" (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012: 100). This includes reflections about the researcher's positionality; how individual characteristics such as gender, age, and race as well as capacities, knowledge and previous experience influence how data is collected and interpreted.

In addition these criteria, I use Maxwell's (2012) understanding of validity to discuss and evaluate my research process and my results. These concepts do not contradict Schwartz-Shea and Yanow's (2012) standards. According to Maxwell, validity is not inherent to a method or procedure. Validity refers to accounts, conclusions, or inferences, and not to data (Maxwell 2012: 130-133). However, Maxwell does not use the concept of validity as we know it from the positivist approach but distinguishes between descriptive, interpretive and theoretical validity. Descriptive validity refers to the factual accuracy of an account, i.e., the researchers are not making up or distorting the things they observe or hear. Descriptions of physical objects, events and behaviors should be valid and reproduced correctly (Maxwell 2012: 134-137), i.e., it should be trustworthy (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). Interpretive validity refers to the validity of the researchers' interpretation of what these objects, events and behaviors mean to the people being observed or interviewed. Maxwell includes the participants' intention, cognition, affect, belief, and evaluation in meaning (Maxwell 2012: 137-138). Theoretical validity refers to an account's validity as a theory of some phenomenon, i.e., the validity of the theoretical concepts and categories applied to study a particular phenomenon, and the validity of the postulated relationships between the concepts (Maxwell 2012: 139-140). Finally, Maxwell (2012) discusses the criterion of generalization and how it can be used in qualitative research where the designs typically do not allow for generalization to a wider population. Maxwell argues that there are

two aspects of generalization in qualitative research: internal and external. The first refers to the ability to generalize within the setting, group, or institution studied, and the second refers to the ability to generalize to other settings, groups, or institutions that are not directly observed or interviewed (Maxwell 2012: 142).

In the following, I explain the dissertation's overall research design and I give an overview of the chapters and articles and their specific logic of inquiry.

4.2. Overall Research Design

I am interested in studying male and female clients' way through the administrative system – more specifically, how mothers and fathers deal with the Danish State Administration in child visitation rights disputes. How do they prepare before the encounter? What is their assessment of their own capabilities to cope and navigate in public encounters in order to influence the decision-making (bureaucratic self-efficacy)? How do they behave when they interact face-to-face with public authorities? How do they evaluate the meeting afterwards? Do they perceive the process and outcome as fair? To answer these questions, I triangulate different data generation methods and, as explained above, use different methodological approaches. The qualitative and quantitative methods are primarily used equally and in parallel in each article or chapter (except chapter 9). However, I also use the qualitative data to qualify and develop the quantitative measures (Creswell et al. 2003). My knowledge about the empirical context from the qualitative data collection made it possible to ask better and more realistic questions in the survey. Table 4.1 gives an overview of the research questions, the data and the logic of inquiry used in each chapter or article. After the table, I explain how I collected my qualitative and quantitative data.

Table 4.1. Overview over analytical chapters and articles

Chapters	Research question	Data generation method	Logic of inquiry
Chapter 5: Gender Differences in Clients' Preparatory Strategies	How do male and female clients prepare and devise strategies before interacting with bureaucracy?	Interviews	Abductive
Chapter 6: Who Dominates? Investigating Gender Differences Clients' Amount of Talk and Interruptions	Do female clients talk and interrupt more than male clients do?	Observation	Deductive
Chapter 7: How Male and Female Clients Position Themselves and Challenge Their Counterparty's Position	How do male and female clients position themselves and challenge their counterparty's position during the encounter?	Observation	Abductive
Chapter 8: Gender Differences in Clients' Interaction Behavior	How do male and female clients perform during a public encounter? What characterizes their interaction behavior?	Observation	Abductive
Chapter 9: Gender Differences in Clients' Perceived Substantive and Procedural Justice	Do mothers and fathers have different perceptions of substantive and procedural justice related to their meeting in the SA? How do mothers and fathers describe the procedure at the meeting?	Survey data Interviews	Deductive
Articles			
Article A: Bureaucratic Self-efficacy	How can we conceptualize and measure citizens' bureaucratic self-efficacy?	Survey	Deductive
Article B: Bureaucratic Self-Efficacy and Spillover Effects	Does the traditional gender division of household responsibility creates spillover effects in the form of gender differences in bureaucratic self-efficacy in relation to citizen-state encounters concerning child visitation rights?	Survey	Deductive
Article C: Women Cry, Men Get Angry	How do SLBs perceive clients and react when clients exhibit gender counter-stereotypical behavior vs. gender-stereotypical behavior (that is, behavior that deviates from vs. conforms to gender-stereotypical expectations)?	Lab experiment	Deductive

4.3. The Qualitative Data Collection: Observations and Interviews

In the qualitative part of this dissertation, I am interested in understanding the relational, situated performances in public encounters between mothers and fathers and professionals from the SA. Especially with focus on the role of the clients since the perspective is still unexplored in public administration research, as argued in the previous chapter. Furthermore, I am interested in understanding how it is to be a client in a system where two conflicting clients negotiate with professionals about a third party. What happens backstage before the encounter, and how do they evaluate the process after the meetings? The best way to study this is to enter the field and observe how they actually behave, and to interview the parents about their experiences. In the following, I describe how I collected observations and interviews.

4.3.1. Observing Interdisciplinary Meetings in the Danish State Administration

From the beginning of January until the end of July 2017, I observed 50 interdisciplinary meetings in four local offices of the SA.[7] Gaining access to the SA was not as time consuming as in many other research projects, since the SA already agreed on the observations before we applied for funding to the overall research project. Before starting my observations, I went to the local office in Copenhagen for two days in June 2016 to observe four meetings in order to get an understanding of how the meetings proceed and to create an observation guide I could use to structure my field notes (see Appendix A). As mentioned in chapter 2, I decided to observe interdisciplinary meetings because the caseworkers are able to make legal decisions based on these meetings. The clients' interaction behavior can potentially influence the caseworker's decision making, so there is more at stake for the parents here than in cooperation meetings.

I had a contact person in each local SA-office with whom I coordinated observation days. I observed 36 meetings in the local office in Copenhagen,[8] three meetings in Ringsted, four meetings in Aabenraa and seven meetings in Aarhus. I regularly experienced that one parent canceled a meeting, so the

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[7] I am not interested in comparing local offices. I chose to observe meetings in different local SA offices for pragmatic reasons and to not "disturb" one office too much. I do not expect it to influence my results and conclusions.

[8] The local SA-office in Copenhagen handles approximately one-third of all cases about visitation in the SA.

time period for my observations was extended several times. On each observation day, I observed one or two meetings. Between meetings, I worked at a desk in the open office space, which made it possible to have informal talks about the meetings with the caseworkers and child specialists during the day or over lunch. Two hours are allocated for each meeting. The meetings lasted from 45 minutes to two hours, and most meetings used the maximum of time. If the local office had several disciplinary meetings planned at the same time, the meeting I observed was randomly selected. The aim was not to theoretically select cases based on the clients' specific background characteristics but rather to maximize the range of cases (Weiss 1994) in order to get a diverse picture of the client group who attends meetings in the SA.

Due to administrative processes in the SA, it was not possible to inform the parents about my research project and ask them to consent before the meeting. In agreement with the SA, I presented my research project and myself and asked them to consent when they entered the meeting room. This strategy gives rise to some ethical considerations. The parents obviously had the option to decline, but it can be difficult to say no when the researcher is right in front for you. Furthermore, it might be hard to say no if the other parent accepts. However, the majority of parents both consented immediately and seemed interested in my project. Only in three meetings, one or both parents declined, and I left the meeting room. I do not see a systematic pattern in those parents who declined. Before starting my observations, I feared that many parents would say no due to the very personal and emotional nature of these meetings. However, it turned out not to be a problem. Before the meeting could start, I also asked for their permission to audio-record the meeting. In five meetings, one of the parents said no. In these cases, I stayed in the meeting room and took more detailed field notes than at the other meetings. It was mainly the fathers who refused the audio-recording, perhaps because there is more at stake for the fathers due to their legal roles (cf. chapter 2), and they are less confident than the mothers when they enter these meetings (more on this in chapter 5).

4.3.2. Being a Fly on the Wall: My Role as Observer and Reflections on Positionality

After the parents had consented, the meeting began. As an observer, you can enter different positions. As a complete participant, you become a member of a group without letting them know that you are there to do research. As a participant observer, you take part in activities in the social setting you observe. Finally, as a complete observer, you study and record people's behavior with little if any interaction (Bernard 2006: 347). Since I am interested in studying

how clients interact with public authorities in a formal setting, I assumed the role as complete observer. After the parents had consented, I did not say anything during the meeting. Hence, I was not an active part of which information was gathered at the meeting. Sometimes the conversation between the parents and the professionals from the SA was rather implicit. Some parents referred to episodes or information the SA already knew about (e.g. from previous meetings or from written information the parents had submitted before the meeting). I could not ask them to explain it to me during the meeting, but after the meeting ended, I asked the caseworker or the child specialist to explain it to me.

In most meetings, the parents were placed next to each other on one side of the table facing the caseworker and child specialist on the other side of the table.[9] Since my goal was to be "a fly on the wall" and not influence how the meeting proceeded, I was not placed at the meeting table. Instead, I sat behind the caseworker and the child specialist so I could see the parents. In this position, I was a bit "hidden" from the parents so they did not feel that I was a part of the meeting. Several caseworkers mentioned after the meeting that they did not feel that the meeting processed differently while I was there. They told me that some of the clients are used to attending meetings in social work offices with different people, so it is not strange for them to be in a situation with several people around them. However, in interpretive research, it is important to be aware of your positionality as you become a part of the data generation. As Schwartz-Shea and Yanow write: "scholars are human beings with specific histories, capacities, and characteristics" (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). Hence, I have to be aware of my positionality as a young, female researcher studying gender differences. My visible personal characteristics such as my gender and age might affect how the participants perceive me and potentially how they behave. It may also influence how I observe the situation and how I collect my data. The fact that I have not been in the participants' position before (I have never been married, I do not have children (yet!), and I have never experienced a divorce) may influence how I observe the situation. As I explain in the following section, I wrote down reflections about my role and my feelings during the encounters to take this into account when analyzing my data.

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[9] In the four meetings I observed in Aabenraa, the parents were placed on each side of the table facing each other.

4.3.3. Taking Field Notes

Since I am interested in analyzing clients' behavior based on their verbal acts, I decided to audio-record the meetings if the parents consented.[10] During a meeting with at least four participants, it is difficult to write down all nuances of their speech. However, the recordings do not capture their non-verbal behaviors and the atmosphere at the meeting. Therefore, as a supplement to the audio recordings, I took field notes. Taking field notes is a craft, and not something you master from one day to the other. You have to learn it by doing it (Wolfinger 2002). In the beginning, I wrote down everything and sometimes forgot that I could replay the meeting. Therefore, I decided to focus more on non-verbal acts and the atmosphere at the meeting. Field notes comes in many forms, they can be methodological, descriptive or analytical (Bernard 2006: 395-398). Mine were mainly descriptive, for example what was happening at the meeting, descriptions of the atmosphere, how the participants placed themselves in the meeting room (even though they had to sit next to each other, some parents moved their chair a meter away from their ex-partner), and whether they looked at each other during the meeting. I was aware of the importance of enhancing the accuracy of my notes to secure the descriptive validity (Weiss 1994). When I came home from an observation day, I re-wrote the descriptions, added analytical notes and wrote notes about my feelings and emotions during the meeting in order to reflect on my own role in the data collecting process (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). When observing two people in high conflict about something as invasive as how much time they can spend with their child, the atmosphere is intense. Being a "fly on the wall" affected me personally, and it was often difficult to release and let go of the stories I heard. At the end of the observation (and interview) period, I had a supervision session with a psychologist to talk through some of my experiences. The psychologist was affiliated with the SA and experienced in supervising caseworkers and child specialists working with child visitation disputes.

4.3.4. Presentation of the Observational Data

In this section, I present factual information about the observational data. All names in the empirical material are anonymized. When I refer to parents, I write "mother/father, case X". If the children's names are mentioned, I write the gender of the child in brackets (see transcription guide in Appendix E).

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[10] It could have been ideal to video-record all meetings, especially to study non-verbal behavior more closely. However, due to the very intimate nature of these meetings, I thought it would be too intimidating for the parents if I video-recorded the meetings, and I feared that many parents would refuse to be a part of the project.

As described earlier, I observed 50 interdisciplinary meetings, but not all of them will be a part of the empirical material for the analysis. As illustrated in Table 4.2, I have left out eight meetings for various reasons. In three cases, an interpreter participated in the meetings because one or both parents did not speak Danish, which made it difficult to analyze the clients' communicative behavior since they argue their case through an interpreter. In four cases, one of the parents did not show up. The meetings started while we waited for the other parent, and they are excluded because they only present one side of the case. Finally, in one case the mother was not able to speak her case because of serious illness. She attended the meeting, but her lay representative spoke her case even though lay representatives normally are not allowed to speak at the meeting, cf. chapter 2. The empirical material consists of 42 meetings, four of which were not audio-recorded.

Table 4.2. Overview over the number of cases in the empirical material

	Number of cases
Observed meetings	50
Meetings with interpreter (case 11, 12, and 24)	3
Meetings where only one parent attended (case 18, 27, 29 and 46)	4
Meeting where the mother was unable to speak her case due to serious illness (case 35)	1
Total number of cases	42
Total number of audio recorded cases	38

Appendix B contains an overview of the 42 cases. The table shows the month of observation, the local SA-office, the gender of the caseworker and child specialist, the parents' legal role, the meeting outcome, whether the parents brought a lawyer or a lay representative to the meeting, and whether the meeting was audio-recorded.

In 86 pct. of the sample (36 cases), the mother is the resident parent. This corresponds to the percentage in the general population, cf. chapter 2. In 76 pct. of the cases (32 cases), the parents reached an agreement; in 10 pct. of the cases (4 cases) the caseworker made a legal agreement after the meeting; 5 pct. of the cases (2 cases) needed further investigation; and 10 pct. ended without an agreement for various reasons.

In 12 of the 42 meetings, the parents were the only ones present besides the professionals from the SA. At the remaining meetings, both or one of the parents brought a lawyer or a lay representative. In five cases, both parents brought a lawyer; in nine cases, the father brought a lawyer; and and in six cases the mothers brought a lawyer. The lawyers participating in the meetings

varied; some of them almost did not talk during the meeting, while others were more active. In the analysis, I focus on the speech and the behavior of the clients and not on the lawyers. The lay representatives' presence did not influence the conversation since they were not allowed to talk during the meeting.

4.3.5. Collecting Semi-Structured Interviews

Observations of the meetings give unique insights into how two conflicting clients interact with professionals in a bureaucratic setting. However, in order to understand how the parents make sense of what happens at the meeting, and to get an understanding of other processes related to the meeting, you need to ask them. Therefore, I decided to interview the parents about their experiences after the meeting.

When the meetings ended, I asked the majority of parents' permission to contact them to arrange an interview after the meeting. It was not possible to ask all the parents. Some parents ran out of the meeting room the moment the meeting ended, while other parents were very emotionally affected, and in respect of their situation, I did not ask them. Of the group of parents who agreed to be contacted, a total of 30 parents (16 mothers and 14 fathers) said yes. Among the interviewees, a total of nine parent couples were interviewed. The rest of the interviewees were not paired in parent couples; only one of the parents participated in an interview. The other parent said no to an interview either when I asked them in the meeting room or afterwards when I called them. As in all research projects, there is a degree of self-selection in who accepts to do an interview. I have to take the fact that the most vulnerable groups are not represented in the sample into account when I conclude on my results.

All interviewees have previously attended meetings in SA, but they vary in gender, level of education and which local SA-office they belong to (see Appendix C for characteristics of the interviewees). The interviews were conducted, simultaneously with the observations, from January to August 2017. They lasted from one to three hours and were all audio-recorded. The majority of the interviews took place in the interviewee's private home, four took place in an office at VIVE – The Danish Center for Social Science Research, and one at a café by choice of the interviewee. The interviews conducted in private homes often lasted longer than the other interviews. I did not ask them different questions depeding on the interview site, however, some of the parents interviewed in their own home offered more detailed and private descriptions (and mentioned topics outside the scope of my research). Another interesting observation was that I did not recognize a few of the interviewees offhand. At the meeting they were "dressed up" in a more formal outfit, and when I visited them in their private home they were more laid back. This illustrates that the

parents have an interest in making a good impression when they interact with professionals in the formal setting of a meeting.

Since I attended all meetings, all interviewees had met me before. I got the impression that this created a good and secure environment for the interviewees from the beginning. Moreover, we had a mutual understanding about what happened at the meeting. This and the fact that both I and the interviewee attended the meeting at the same time also strengthened the validity of the interviewees' descriptions of their behaviors at the meeting. They were not able to lie or make their own performances look better. Jerolmack and Khan (2014) argue that inferring situated behavior from verbal accounts is problematic; what people say is often not consistent with what they do. The combination of observations and interviews is therefore ideal: the observations give information about the parents' social actions in real-time format at the meeting, and the interviews give insights about the parents' experiences and sense-making of the meeting. However, in the interviews, I also ask the parents about their behavior before the meeting, and here there might be a difference between what they say they did and what that actually did (Jerolmack and Khan 2014). According to Jerolmack and Khan (2014), there is a risk of *attitudinal fallacy*¸ i.e., the error of inferring situated behavior from verbal accounts.

4.3.6. Interview Guide

I conducted semi-structured interviews based on Kvale and Brinkman's (2015) recommendations (see interview guide in Appendix D). I used different question techniques throughout the interview. To open the interview, I first asked them to describe their history with their ex-partner to get a narrative about their common past. After this, I asked them to fast-forward to the period just before the meeting. I openly asked them to describe what they did before the meetings. I was interested in understanding whether they spent time on preparation, and if so, what they did. This part of the interview turned out to be interesting because I found great variation in how much they prepared, and a clear difference between the mothers and the fathers (see chapter 5). I also asked them to describe their experiences at the meetings. I this part of the interview, I prepared specific questions to the particular interviewee if I had experienced something at the meeting I wanted their view on. In addition to the more open, exploratory questions, the interview guide included theoretically based questions. From the beginning, I knew I was interested in understanding their perceived procedural and substantive justice in relation to the meeting. The formulation of the questions was inspired by Tyler's work on this topic (Tyler 1990, 2010). All questions in the interview guide were formulated

in everyday language without technical or academic terms or language. Furthermore, I had prepared probes to all questions. In the following, I reflect upon doing interviews on personal topics.

4.3.7. Reflections on Interviewing Citizens about Personal Issues

> Interpretive interviews, however, often take up topics because they are meaningful to participants and focus on what experiences mean to people at a more personal level. The interview setting itself can sometimes feel like an intimate conversation, and its open-ended format increases the odds that emotional issues will arise (Soss 2006).

An interview is a conversation between two people. When we do research, we continue to be human beings although we take on the role as interviewer. Interviewing people about a private topic like child visitation provokes many feelings in both interviewees and interviewer. As Soss (2006) writes in the quote above, it becomes an intimate conversation. Interviewing people in their home made the interview situation even more private and intimate. Often the parents had pictures of their children hanging on the wall, and some parents actively showed me pictures. This made the whole situation much more "real".

When I came home, I wrote notes about my experiences and reflections during the interview. In some interviews, I felt that I could not control the interview situation. The parents had so many things they wanted to share with me, and some of the themes were outside the scope of my research topic. However, due to their situation, it was hard for me to stop them and move on to another question. This also resulted in some very long interviews; one lasted for three hours and was very intense. Several interviewees mentioned after the interview that is was rewarding talking to another person who did not know them personally, and the interview turned into a therapeutic situation for some of the parents (Weiss 1994: 134). With no training as a therapist, I was sometimes a bit overwhelmed. However, if the interviewees became emotional and started to cry during the interview, I tried to stay patient and listen to them. Conducting this type of interviews has taught me that I should know my limits. As Soss (2006) again helpfully formulates it: "Acknowledge that there are limits to what you can provide your interviewees and what you can absorb without doing harm to yourself" (Soss 2006: 144). After some interviews, I was really exhausted and often sad about what I had heard. However, my role was not to provide a therapeutic session for the interviewees but to conduct research with their help and in respect for their situation.

The interviews with the mothers were often longer than the interviews with the fathers. It might be because women talk more than men and are better at reflecting on personal issues, however, it could also be because they interacted with a female researcher. Several of the mothers kept talking after I ended the interviews, and some of them gave additional information when I stopped the audio-recording. Some of them became very friendly and gave me their advice: "Be careful and think about who you have children with". I do not find this diversity in the interviews problematic for the dissertation, since the questions related to the topic of this dissertation were unfold by all interviewees.

4.4. The Qualitative Data Processing

The next step after collecting data is to prepare the data for analysis before starting the analytical process. In this section, I briefly explain how the data was transcribed and how I started the analytical process by coding the empirical material.

4.4.1. Preparing Data for Analysis: Transcriptions of Meetings and Interviews

The 38 audio-recorded meetings and the 30 interviews were transcribed by student assistants. Transcriptions can be done in many ways that will produce different text (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña 2014: 11). To ensure that the transcriptions followed the same format and to increase the descriptive validity, I made two transcription guides, one for the meetings and one for the interviews. Before starting the transcription process, the student assistants were carefully instructed in the transcription guide. I re-read the first transcriptions and gave the student assistants feedback in order to ensure consistency. The transcriptions of the meetings were more complex, since each meeting consisted of 4-6 participants. Furthermore, since I was interested in analyzing the amount of talk and interruptions (see chapter 6), each utterance[11] was transcribed line by line, and each interruption was coded. Appendix E lists the transcription symbols used in the transcribed interviews and meetings.

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[11] An utterance is defined as the smallest unit of speech; it is a continuous piece of speech beginning and ending with a clear pause or interruption.

4.4.2. The Analytical Point of Departure: Coding Observation of Meetings

The transcriptions of the meeting were imported into the software program NVivo 12. First, I did an initial coding of 20 of the 38 transcribed meetings[12] (Charmaz 2006). I did not have specific hypotheses about the data before I started the coding, nor was I looking for specific themes in the data. Data was the point of departure, and I stayed close and open to it during the first part of the coding. However, since I had collected the data, I already had an idea of themes and patterns, but I stayed open during the first process. When reading through the meetings, I primarily used three types of codes: descriptive codes (the basic topic of a chuck of text), In-invo codes (word or phrases from the meeting), and process coding (action in the data) (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña 2014). Coding the meetings was often challenging because the participants interrupted each other (I will get back to this in chapter 6), and their arguments were spread over several transcribed pages. Based on the initial coding of 20 of the 38 meetings, I rearranged the codes in themes and built a coding scheme in order to do a focused coding (Charmaz 2006). Using the coding scheme, I did a focused coding of all meetings (see the coding scheme in Appendix F). Since I am interested in comparing how mothers and fathers behave, both within each case and across cases, I conducted within-case analyses for all parents (42 mothers and 42 fathers). (Bazeley and Jackson 2014; Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña 2014). The primary goal was to understand how the particular client acted during the meeting and which arguments were used. The within-case analyses revealed patterns in the empirical material, and I was able to compare the clients across cases. Based on the initial coding, I decided to write two qualitative analytical chapters based on the meetings. The first chapter focuses on how male and female clients position themselves and challenge their counterparty at the meeting by focusing on the argumentation of the case. The second chapter examines the clients' interaction behavior by looking at two stages at the meeting: how do mothers and fathers behave at the beginning of the meeting when they are asked to explain their case, and how do they interact when negotiating a new visitation agreement? In the following, I explain how I coded the interviews.

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[12] I re-read and coded my field notes from the four meetings that were not audio-recorded.

4.4.3. Coding interviews

The interviews were coded in several rounds. As explained in the previous chapter, I realized during the interviews that the theme about preparation before the meeting was particularly interesting. Therefore, I decided to do an initial coding of all interviews with this focus first. Although I had this theme in my mind, I stayed open during the reading of the meeting if some themes related to this topic seemed interesting. It turned out that the interviewees' reflections about experiences from previous meetings also made them describe what they did differently before a meeting now compared to earlier. The initial coding showed four different dimensions of clients' preparatory strategies (see chapter 5). Based on these four dimensions (and sub-dimensions), I re-read the interviews and did a focused coding of all interviews. This allowed me to compare mothers and fathers' preparatory strategies before the meeting.

In the second round of coding, I used a more deductive strategy. I was particularly interested in the parents' perceived procedural and substantive justice. Although this coding was more theory driven, I was interested in the parents' meaning-making and in understanding potential gender differences in how they talked about this. Hence, I did not code based on pre-defined codes rooted in the theoretical concepts. Again, I started an initial coding, and based on this, I made a code scheme and reread and recoded the interviews.

4.5. Quantitative Data Collection: Lab Experiment and Panel Survey

Below, I briefly describe the quantitative data collection, which consisted of two parts: a lab experiment among SA caseworkers and a panel survey conducted among parents with a case in the SA. In the articles, I (or we) use different analytical strategies, which is described in the particular article and will not be repeated here. In addition to using the quantitative data in the articles, I use some elements of the survey data in chapter 5 and chapter 9.

4.5.1. Randomized Lab Experiment

Simultaneously with my qualitative data collecting I spent eight days travelling to all local SA-offices in Denmark (except the SA-office in Rønne)[13] to conduct lab experiments among the caseworkers working with child visitation

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[13] The excluded office is situated on a small island (Bornholm), has a small jurisdiction, and employs only one visitation caseworker who works part-time on child visitation cases.

rights. 90 pct. of all caseworkers working on this area participated. Although our sample is small, it comprises close to the full population of visitation caseworkers in Denmark. The lab experiments were conducted between January and March 2017 in collaboration with Mogens Jin Pedersen (postdoc), Vibeke Lehmann Nielsen (head of project) and a student assistant. During the day, we did several experiments with the caseworkers, and two of them were designed by me. The idea was to focus on clients' *gendered* behavior and not on *sex* as most quantitative studies studying gender differences do. We asked how street-level bureaucrats perceive a client and react when the client exhibits gender counter-stereotypical behavior vs. gender-stereotypical behavior (that is, behavior deviating from vs. conforming to gender-stereotypical expectations). In the two experiments, we distinguish between two types of behavior: crying and showing anger. Crying and expressive anger relate to prevalent gender stereotypes (Birnbaum, Nosanchuk, and Croll 1980; Kelly and Hutson-Comeaux 1999; Plant et al. 2000; Smith et al. 2016). The act of crying and showing of anger relate to stereotypical feminine and masculine behaviors, respectively. The experiments apply a novel approach by using audio vignettes instead of traditional written vignettes. We chose this approach with the aim of increasing contextual realism. In experiment 1, the caseworkers hear a mother or a father start crying, and in experiment 2, the caseworkers hear a mother or a father express anger. The treatments were randomly assigned to the caseworkers, which means that our treatment estimates should be unbiased have causal interpretation. The design and the results are explained in more detail in Article C, "Women Cry, Men Get Angry".

Collecting these data put me in another position in relation to the caseworkers than when I did my observational studies. In the experiments, the caseworkers were in focus and they were out of their natural setting in the meeting room. We did a one-on-one session with each caseworker, explaining the different experimental tasks and debriefed them afterwards. The caseworkers were divided between me and the other researchers participating the particular day. I observed meetings held by some of the caseworkers I met during the lab experiments afterwards, but I do not think it influenced my relationship with them. Only one of the caseworkers who was skeptical about the lab experiments seemed a bit unhappy with me observing one of her meetings.

Article C, "Women Cry, Men Get Angry", based on this experimental design differs from the other articles and analytical chapters since it focuses on the *caseworkers'* perceptions and reactions rather than the *parents*, who are the main focus of this dissertation. However, it contributes knowledge about

how caseworkers perceive and react to clients when they deviate from vs. conform to gender-stereotypical behavior. The results are discussed up against the results from the others findings in the dissertation in chapter 10.

4.4.2. Panel Survey Design

In addition to the lab experiments, I designed a survey targeted at parents who have a case in the SA. The survey was designed and conducted after I ended my qualitative data collection, and I used my empirical knowledge from the qualitative data collection to formulate better and more realistic questions in order to strengthen the measurement validity in the survey. The survey is broad, and not all questions are used in the dissertation. The items used in the analyses are described in the articles or in the chapters.

One of the main goals of the survey was to develop a measurement scale that can help measure clients' bureaucratic self-efficacy when dealing with public authorities. This measurement scale is developed in Article A, "Bureaucratic Self-Efficacy", and in Article B, "Gender and Bureaucratic Self-efficacy", I used the measurement to study whether traditional gender division of household responsibility creates spillover effects in the form of gender differences in clients' bureaucratic self-efficacy. In the following, I explain the overall survey design.

Since one of the main goals of the survey was to measure clients' bureaucratic self-efficacy, I decided to design a panel survey, which means that I surveyed the parents before and after their meeting with the SA. I did so in order to ensure that the measurement of the parents' bureaucratic self-efficacy was not affected by their actual performance at the meeting. The idea was to measure their bureaucratic self-efficacy before the meeting (survey 1) and test whether it was able to predict their outcome and their perceived and substantive justice after the meeting (survey 2 or 3) in order to test the criterion-related validity of the concept. I explain this in more detail in Article A. I also gave the parents the opportunity to describe experiences and thoughts about their meeting in an open text format, and many of the respondents used this opportunity.

In cooperation with the SA, I incorporated a short description and a survey link in all meeting invitations concerning visitation sent out to clients at all local SA offices in Denmark from the beginning of October 2017 to the end of February 2018. A total of 560 parents completed the first survey. In the end of survey 1, the respondents were kindly asked to type their email address, so I could send them survey 2 after their meeting. 93 pct. of the sample did so and received survey 2 a few days after their meeting. 68 pct. answered survey 2. From this sample, 57 pct. reached an agreement at the meeting, and for 43 pct.

of the parents, the caseworker had to make a legal decision after the meeting. The last group received survey 3 eight weeks after the meeting. To increase the response rate, each respondent received one email-reminder and later a phone reminder (see figure 4.1 for an overview of the research design).

Figure 4.1. The Panel Survey design

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                  ┌──────────────────────────────┐
                  │     Before the meeting        │
                  │         Survey 1              │
                  │       560 respondents         │
                  │ (519 with email for survey 2) │
                  └──────────────────────────────┘
                  ┌──────────────────────────────┐
                  │      After the meeting        │
                  │         Survey 2              │
                  │    68 % (368 respondents)     │
                  └──────────────────────────────┘
       ┌──────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────────────────┐
       │   Meeting outcome     │      │      Meeting outcome          │
       │ The parents reached   │      │ The SA will make a legal      │
       │    an agreement       │      │        decision               │
       │ 57 % (208 respondents)│      │   43 % (160 respondents)      │
       └──────────────────────┘      └──────────────────────────────┘
                                          ┌──────────────────────┐
                                          │ After they received a │
                                          │    legal decision     │
                                          │       Survey 3        │
                                          │ 63 % (101 respondents)│
                                          └──────────────────────┘
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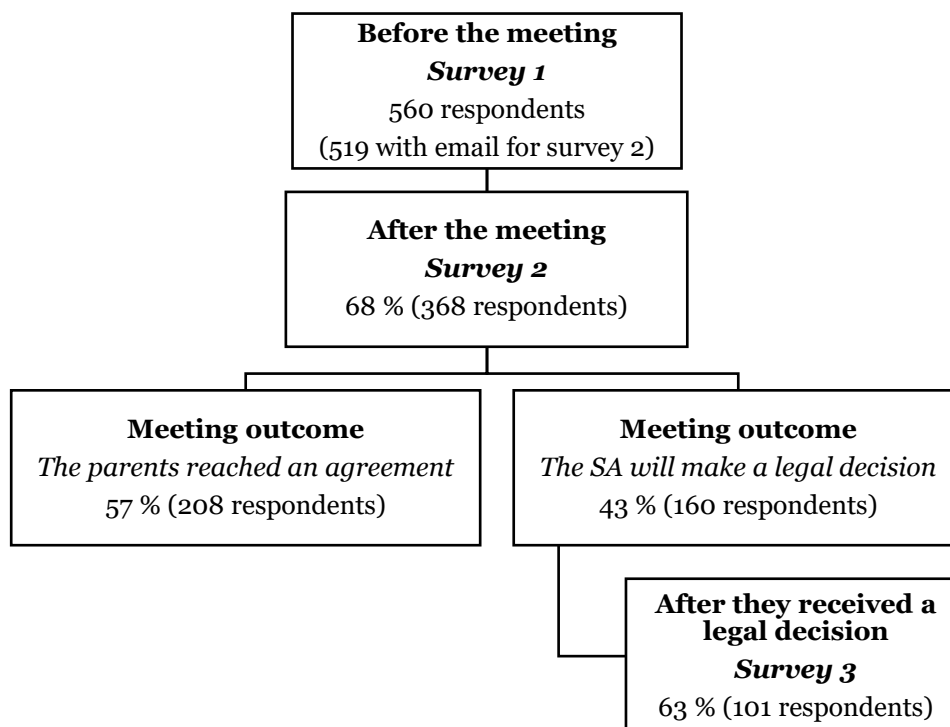
As mentioned in chapter 2, all parents involved in a child visitation case received a survey. Unlike in the qualitative data collection, they were not selected based on the meeting type. This means that the population for the quantitative studies is broader, because I do not only focus on the most conflictual cases like the interdisciplinary meetings. Hence, it is possible to generalize the results more broadly for the client group who ends up in the SA. Some of the parents who participated in the observation could potentially be respondents in the survey if they went to a meeting later the same year. However, I do not have any information about that.

Table 4.3 Descriptive Statistics

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. dev	N
Female	0	1	0.55	0.5	560
Age	18	59	39.5	7.64	560
Danish	0	1	0.89	0.30	541
Education					
Without completed education	0	1	0.03	0.17	542
Elementary school	0	1	0.10	0.29	542
High school	0	1	0.08	0.27	542
Vocational school	0	1	0.37	0.49	542
College/Bachelor's degree	0	1	0.27	0.45	542
Master's degree	0	1	0.14	0.45	542
Experience with SA	0	21	2.4	3.2	560
Experience from public sector	0	1	0.40	0.49	532
Local SA1 (Aalborg)	0	1	0.12	0.32	560
Local SA2 (Aarhus)	0	1	0.18	0.39	560
Local SA3 (Aabenraa)	0	1	0.08	0.26	560
Local SA4 (Copenhagen)	0	1	0.29	0.45	560
Local SA5 (Nykøbing F)	0	1	0.02	0.14	560
Local SA6 (Odense)	0	1	0.09	0.29	560
Local SA7 (Ringkøbing)	0	1	0.07	0.25	560
Local SA8 (Ringsted)	0	1	0.15	0.36	560
Local SA9 (Rønne)	0	1	0.01	0.07	560
Agreement	0	1	0.57	0.50	368

Table 4.3 lists descriptive statistics for the social demographic characteristics as well as experience with the SA and the local SA office. Female and male citizens are almost equally represented: 55 pct. of the sample are women and 45 pct. are men. The typical survey respondent is between 39.5 years of age and has been in the SA 2.4 times before. Citizens who work in the private sector and have completed vocational school or college/bachelor's degrees are the target group in the sample. As mentioned in chapter 2, roughly 60 pct. reach an agreement at the meeting; in this sample it is 57 pct.

4.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined my methodological framework by describing the two methodological logics of inquriy used in this dissertation, the research design and how I collected and processed my empirical material in order to make my research process transparent to the reader. As explained in the beginning of this chapter, this PhD-project is driven by an empirical question about how mothers and fathers behave in child visitation disputes in the light

of discussions about gender discrimination against fathers in these cases. The aim was not to design my inquiry to produce generalizable claims about gender differences in clients' behavior in public encounters outside the empirical field. I argue that we need to pay attention to the context, and the case of child visitation rights disputes differs in many ways from other public encounters; it consists of two conflicting clients, and the goal is not to obtain a benefit or a service. The SA primarily plays a mediating role but can also regulate citizens if they do not reach an agreement. Furthermore, gender is particularly salient in this policy area, where the two conflicting parties are typically a women and a man. Having said this, I think some of the tendencies in the clients' behavior might be transferable to other public encounters. I will discuss this in chapter 10, the overall conclusion of the dissertation.

Part I:
Before the Encounter

I feel like throwing up before each meeting (...)
You're nervous about the outcome, and you're scared.
Also because it's uncomfortable to be in a room
with a person who just hates you so much.
So it's also the mental part.
- *The mother from case 25*

I'm not nervous, well actually, I was a little nervous before I went in.
And that's why it's nice to have a lawyer with me now,
or a lay representative. Because there's a lot at stake.
And you worry that you'll be misunderstood
or that you won't say the right things.
- *The father from case 42*

Chapter 5.
Gender Differences in Clients' Feelings, Behaviors and Strategies Before the Encounter

In this first analytical part of the dissertation, the aim is to understand different aspects of the period before parents attend the meeting with the SA. How do mothers and fathers feel before the meeting? How do they prepare and devise strategies before interacting with the professionals from the SA? Do mothers and fathers assess their own capabilities to cope and navigate in public encounters in different ways (bureaucratic self-efficacy)? Most sociological studies focus on clients in the meeting setting. However, I argue that to get a more nuanced picture of how clients as actors – in this case two clients in conflict – deal with bureaucracy *frontstage*, we need knowledge about their behavior *backstage.* In some public encounters, clients are expected to prepare or fill out forms before a meeting. In child visitation disputes, the meeting is initiated by request from one or both parents, and they are expected to be able to present their case at the meeting. Even though the meetings take place frontstage, the clients' behaviors and strategies may be rehearsed backstage. I am interested in examining whether mothers and fathers in child visitation disputes already before their meeting with the SA have different feelings, behaviors and strategies. As argued in the theoretical chapter, mothers and fathers enter the meeting room with different positions, partly because of their roles as resident or non-resident parent and as mother or father. These roles gives different resources, which both constrain and enable the parents' actions. The majority of fathers interacting with the SA spend less time with the children than the mothers due to their roles as non-resident parents. Based on their different positions, it is plausible that mothers and fathers have different feelings about attending a meeting in the SA. A study by Userneeds shows that 40 percent of fathers compared to only 20 percent of mothers are anxious about their interaction with the SA (Politiken 2014). A popular explanation of this gender difference is that men, to a larger degree than women, experience that they and the caseworkers are not "speaking the same language". Therefore, men feel less heard and less capable of taking part in the interaction with the SA. In the first round of my survey (before the meeting), I ask the parents a couple of question about how they felt before the meeting. As illustrated in Figure 5.1, more fathers than mothers ($p < 0.00^{**}$) felt that they were "behind on points" already before the meeting started, and more fathers than mothers ($p < 0.00^{**}$) feared that the SA would listen more to their ex-partner than to

them. Hence, on average fathers anticipate a "lost game" already before entering the meeting room and fear that the professionals will discriminate between them and their ex-partner. Child visitation rights cases must be characterized as high-stake cases for both parents. As illustrated in the introductory quotes, they fear the outcome of the meeting already before the meeting, which leads to feelings of nervousness.

Figure 5.1. Gender differences in mothers and fathers feelings before the meeting
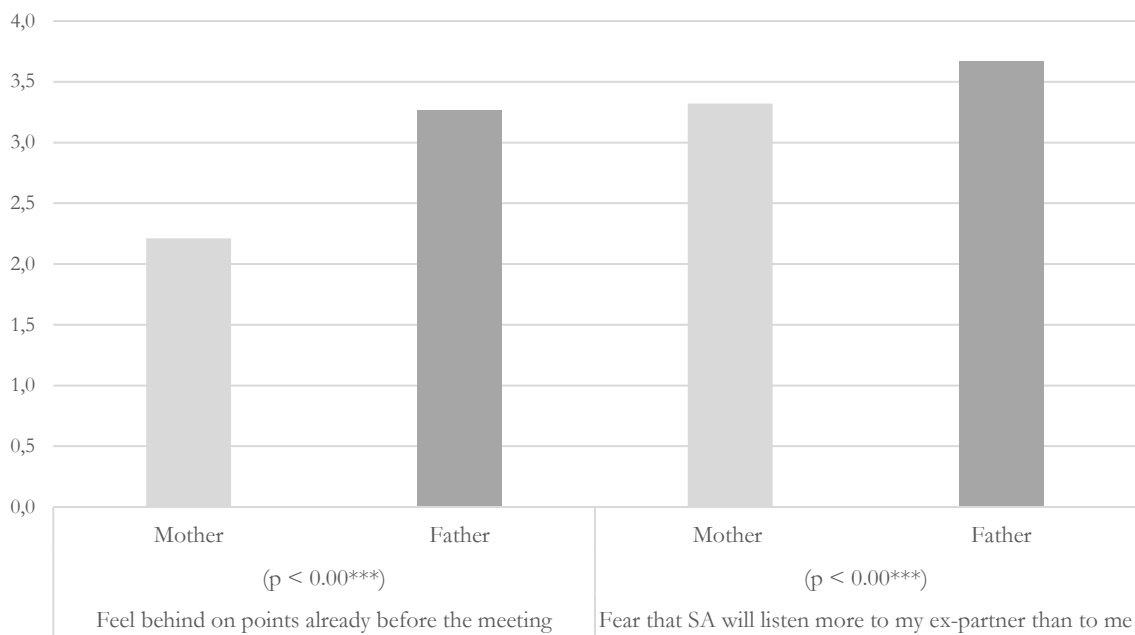
Note: The parents were asked, "The next questions are about how you felt before your meeting with the SA. Please indicate to what extent the following statements match you".
Response options on a scale from 0 (not at all) to 5 (to a great extent).
Source: Panel survey data (round 1).

Below, I turn to two analytically different concepts. First, how mothers and fathers prepare and devise strategies before a meeting with the SA, and second, whether mothers and fathers have different degrees of bureaucratic self-efficacy in relation to their meeting with the SA. The point of departure for the first analysis is a typology of clients' preparatory strategies I developed in the Danish article, "'It's like an exam': An exploratory study of target group strategies"[14] (Bisgaard 2018). The article is in Danish and is not a part of this dissertation, however, I use it to illustrate and analyze gender differences in parents' preparatory strategies. The article does not focus on gender differences, so this is uncovered in the dissertation. The second part of the analysis is based

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[14] In Danish: "'Det er ligesom en eksamen': et eksplorativt studie af borgerstrategier inden mødet med det offentlige", published in *Politica*, September 2018.

on Article A, "Bureaucratic Self-Efficacy" and Article B, "Bureaucratic Self-Efficacy and Spillover Effects". In this chapter, I briefly sum up the results from the two articles.

5.1. Gender Differences in Client's Preparatory Strategies

In the following, I present the overall findings from my Danish article about clients' preparatory strategies before the meeting. Afterwards I dig into how mothers and fathers prepare. As explained in the previous chapter, I openly asked the parents in the interviews what they did before the meeting with the SA and whether they spent time on preparation. Based on interviews with 30 parents, I divided the parents' preparatory strategies into four dimensions: 1) seek advice and guidance, 2) prepare content and documentation, 3) prepare attitude and self-presentation, and 4) prepare mentally. The four dimensions are illustrated in Table 5.1. The article was exploratory, and the dimensions are not structured by existing theoretical concepts. However, Goffman's theory of social interaction (Goffman 1959, 1967, 1970) was used as theoretical framework to understand and interpret the empirical material.

Table 5.1. Four dimensions of clients' preparatory strategies

Seek advice and guidance	Prepare content and documentation	Prepare attitude and self-presentation	Prepare mentally
Official information	Written documentation	How to behave at the meeting	The counterparty (e.g. his/her presence at the meeting)
Professionals (lawyers, NGOs)	Content and argumentation	Physical appearance (e.g. clothing and posture)	
Social network	"Attacks" on the counterparty (e.g. documentation about him/her)		

Source: Bisgaard (2018).

First, clients seek *advice and guidance* through three channels: 1) official information (e.g. the SA's webpage or in the law), 2) professionals (e.g. lawyers or relevant NGOs), and 3) personal network. Second, clients *prepare content and documentation*, but they do it in different ways. Some parents prepare a written description of the case, which they submit to the SA before the meeting. This documentation becomes part of the case material and is also sent to the counterparty. Other parents make an overview of the case or write a diary about their children's reactions when they come home from visitation. They use this material to prepare arguments for the meeting, often to put their ex-partner in a negative light (see also chapter 7). Other interviewees do not

spend much time on preparation but think through different scenarios. Third, clients *prepare attitudes and self-presentation*, for example, how to behave at the meeting and what clothes to wear. Several parents explained that they told themselves not to get angry or start crying during the meetings. Especially the mothers feared being categorized as the "worried mom". Fourth, the clients *prepare mentally*, especially in relation to being in the same room as their ex-partner. Many parents have very conflictual relationships, and several interviewees feared their ex-partner's presence at the meeting, and how they would react to it.

Based on these four dimensions, I classified the interviewees in four client types: the fighter, the autonomous, the advice seeker, and the spontaneous (see Table 5.2). The four types vary in level of preparation.

Table 5.2. Four client types

	The fighter	**The autonomous**	**The advice seeker**	**The spontaneous**
Characteristic	Does everything to be the best possible in the case. Uses most forms of preparation and involves professionals to reach the best possible outcome.	Prepares content and documentation, consults with social network but does not involve professionals.	Allies with a lawyer to get help and advice on the case. Makes no other preparations.	Takes the meeting as it comes but thinks through different scenarios beforehand.
Level of preparation	High	Medium	Medium	Low
Interviewees	M7, M9, M10, M14, M15, M17, M21, M25, M36, M37, M47	M3, M30, M40, M44, M50, F3, F17, F19, F21, F37, F45, F47	F15, F30, F42, F44	F9, F26, F32
	11 mothers	*5 mothers, 7 fathers*	*4 fathers*	*3 fathers*

Note: M = mother, F = father. Example: M9 = the mother from case 9.
Source: Bisgaard (2018).

As Table 5.2 shows, mothers and fathers have different levels and forms of preparation. Mothers generally spend more time on preparation than fathers, and their preparation consists of different elements. Several mothers explained that they wrote down their children's reactions when they came home from visitation at their father's home so they could use it in a meeting with the SA. Some of them wrote long descriptions of the case, which they submitted to the SA before the meeting. Many of the mothers thus had very systematic approach to their preparation, and two-thirds considered all four dimensions before they entered the meeting room: they involved professionals (lawyers

and/or advisors at an NGO), they talked to family or friends to get support and advice from those who had been in the SA before, they spent time on documentation, they considered their outfits and appearance, and they prepared mentally. Half of the interviewed fathers spent relatively long time on preparation but did not involve professionals. The other half did not spend much time on preparation; they either hired a lawyer to get help and advice (four fathers) or went unprepared (three fathers). Mothers and fathers thus enter the meeting room with different prepared strategies in some cases. Case 9 is an extreme case, where the mother and the father had completely different preparatory strategies:

> I don't do that. I don't do that. So, I simply don't do that. I have to look myself in the mirror. I don't have notes with me. I don't have binders with me. I don't have any appendixes. I don't have any friends, lawyers, or family with me, I don't need it. I just need to close my eyes and look at my children. Then, come and ask me anything (The father from case 9).

This is how the father from case 9 answered when I asked him whether he spent time preparing before the meeting. As the quote shows, he did not do anything before the meeting. The mother from case 9 had a very different strategy and spent a lot of time preparing for the meeting:

> First, I looked through my documents and collected the most relevant to show … for instance, some mails, and I also cut out some of the conversations I had with [the father]. (…) I mailed all conversations [[to the SA]] where you can see that (the father) pushed (the children).

> (…) I also prepared a long list of points I wanted to say [at the meeting]. I know it's hard, because we need to discuss everything …

> (…) I talked to "Mødrehjælpen" [[Danish NGO that helps mothers and children]] and the municipality. "Mødrehjælpen" have been a great support for me, and they also have professional advisors (The mother from case 9).

As illustrated, the mother from case 9 goes all in. Later in the interview, she explained that she had contacted a family member with a background as social worker to talk through her case.

Not all couples enter the meeting room with opposite strategies. However, only one of the nine couples in the interview sample[15] falls into the same client type. In case 3, both the mother and the father can be characterized as "autonomous". In the other couples, the mother is typically the fighter, and the father

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[15] As mentioned in chapter 4, a total of nine parent couples were interviewed. The rest of the interviewees were not paired in parent couples; only one parent participated in an interview.

is either "autonomous" or "advice seeker". In case 30, the parents also have different strategies before meeting:

> Oh well, I've written down the children's reactions, and I write it down on a daily basis or when they are picked up and dropped off. And if there's something that goes on for a longer period and they react to it, I always write it down to be able to remember it and which days it was and so on. So I've tried to gather it all and then send it in [[to the SA]] (The mother from case 30) .

> We have been in there so many times. So preparing is a little difficult. In the beginning, I spent a lot of time preparing what I was going to say and talk about. But now, I just take the meetings as they come. Of course, I have an idea that I'll say that I want the children, and she'll say no to that. So I don't really prepare; it kind of depends on who is there. If it's child specialists or lawyers. Lawyers can be kind of ... sometimes. It's hard to prepare for the meeting, I'll say (The father from case 30).

As the mother from case 30 explains, she spends at lot of time on writing descriptions of the children, which she sends to the SA as documentation. This focus on written descriptions about the children's reactions especially characterizes the mother's preparation. The majority of the mothers mentioned this was part of their preparation. However, the mother from case 30 did not involve professionals in her preparation like the mother from case 9. Like the father from case 9, the father from case 30 also "takes it as comes", however, it is not mentioned in the quotation that he hired and met with a lawyer before the meeting to get professional help during the meeting. Another interesting information in the father's quotation is that in the beginning (the parents from case 30 have been at the SA several times), he prepared what he wanted to say at the meeting, but he does not do that anymore. As mentioned in chapter 4, all the interviewees have been at the SA before. It is therefore not possible to make an internal generalization (Weiss 1994) to all parents who attend meetings at the SA. Parents attending a meeting for the first time may prepare differently. Some of parents in the sample explained, like the father in case 30, that they did not prepare as much as in the beginning; others explained that based on their experiences they prepared more or in a different way for the following meetings.

Based on this sample of interviewees, the mothers appear more strategic than the fathers, and many of them are better prepared than the fathers when they either the meeting room. They often choose different preparatory strategies, but whether it influences their behavior at the meeting is an empirical question. In chapter 7 and 8, I analyze the parents' behavior at meetings, which seems to be colored by the differences in their preparatory strategies.

5.2. Gender Differences in Clients' Bureaucratic Self-Efficacy

One thing is how clients prepare before a meeting, another thing is how capable they feel of influencing the decision-making. In Article A, "Bureaucratic Self-Efficacy", I develop a measurement scale for citizens' bureaucratic self-efficacy. I define bureaucratic self-efficacy as *citizens' assessment of their own capabilities to cope and navigate in public encounters in order to influence the decision-making*. The article contributes with a scale to measure citizens' confidence related to interactions with bureaucracy. As mentioned in chapter 4, I measure citizens' bureaucratic self-efficacy before they interact with bureaucracy to ensure that it is not influenced by their performance at the meeting. To develop the measurement scale, I combine insights from street-level bureaucracy theory, access theories, and studies of bureaucratic competence with the psychological concept of self-efficacy and sub-concepts such as internal political efficacy and public service efficacy (Jacobsen, Jensen, and Aarseth 1981; Smith 1988; Danet and Hartman 1972; Gordon 1975; Bandura 1986; Lassen and Serritzlew 2011; Kristensen, Andersen, and Pedersen 2012). I argue that bureaucratic self-efficacy consists of two dimensions: citizens' self-efficacy in (1) understanding rules and processes and (2) communicative skills related to interactions with bureaucracy. I tested the dimensionality of the concept using exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis on data from the first round of the survey. The analysis confirmed the concept's two dimensions. In additional validity tests, the concept demonstrated good psychometric properties. The results show that the scales correlate with citizens' decision outcomes and their perceived substantive and procedural justice. This indicates that the measurement is able to predict citizens' outcomes when they interact with bureaucracy.

Now the question is whether mothers and fathers have different levels of bureaucratic self-efficacy before interacting with the SA. Research in general self-efficacy shows that men have higher general self-efficacy than women (Schunk and Lilly 1984). However, I argue that citizens' general self-efficacy is not necessarily consistent with their feeling of self-efficacy related to interactions with bureaucracy – in this case with the SA. To capture citizens' bureaucratic self-efficacy, we need a more specific concept. In gender-salient policy areas like in child visitation rights cases, I expect that mothers have a higher bureaucratic self-efficacy than fathers. As argued in the theoretical chapter, mothers are in a more powerful position than fathers in policy areas regarding family and children because they still on average dominate domestic child-related tasks. Furthermore, in child visitation rights cases, mothers are often the resident parents, which gives them an advantage over the fathers and

should give them more confidence in their dealings with the SA. The results do show that mothers have higher bureaucratic self-efficacy than fathers. This relationship is mainly driven by the dimension "rules and processes". As shown in Figure 5.2, mothers have significantly higher self-efficacy in understanding rules and processes than fathers; however, we do not find a gender differences in mothers' and fathers' self-efficacy in their communicative skills related to the interaction. As Figure 5.2 shows, fathers have higher general self-efficacy than the mothers in the sample, which confirms that self-efficacy can be context-specific. A specified measurement for bureaucratic encounters is therefore useful to capture clients' confidence related to an interaction with bureaucracy.

Figure 5.2. The relationship between gender and bureaucratic self-efficacy, rules and processes, communicative skills and general self-efficacy
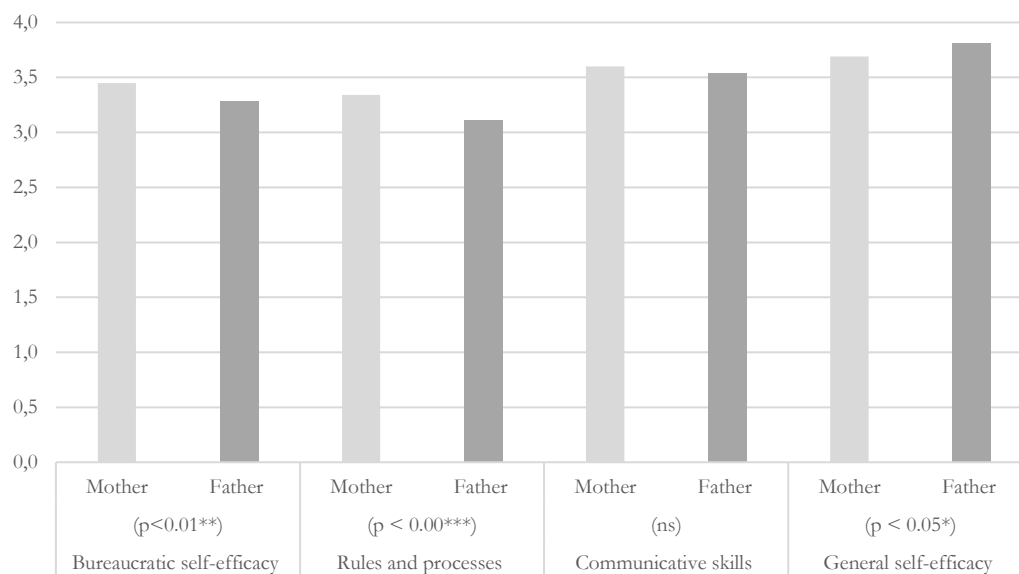
Source: Panel survey data (round 1).

In Article B, "Bureaucratic Self-Efficacy and Spillover Effects", we study whether the traditional gender division of household responsibility creates spillover effects in the form of gender differences in bureaucratic self-efficacy in relation to citizen-state encounters concerning child visitation. Is this gender-based difference in bureaucratic self-efficacy based on differences in pre-divorce division of responsibility for – and hence experience with – child-centered citizen-state encounters like daycare, school, doctor, and dentist? We argue that women have more responsibility for and experience with other child-centered citizen-state interactions since they still – on average – handle most domestic tasks related to the child, and that this difference in pre-divorce division of responsibility mediates gender differences in parents' bureaucratic

self-efficacy in child visitation disputes. The results show, as mentioned, that mothers have higher self-efficacy than fathers in understanding and learning rules related to the SA, but the effect is not affected by spillover effects from other child-centered citizen-state encounters. When it comes to communicative skills, we find spillover effects from other neighboring areas. Learning and understanding rules may be individual from policy area to policy area and therefore not transferable between policy areas.

5.3. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to uncover how mothers and fathers feel and behave before interacting with the SA. The chapter showed that fathers to a higher degree than mothers feel that they are behind on points already before the meeting and fear that the SA will listen more to the mothers. A potential explanation could be the discourse about gender discrimination in child visitation disputes against fathers. Several mass media have reported on and debated these cases, and there is an understanding in society that fathers are discriminated in child visitation disputes. The chapter also shows that mothers have higher bureaucratic self-efficacy than fathers, especially when it comes to understanding rules and processes related to the SA. I do not find a gender difference on the dimension "communicative skills". Before a meeting with the SA, mothers are more confident than the fathers about the meeting and their own abilities to influence the decision-making. Although the fathers feel that they are behind on points before the meeting and have lower bureaucratic self-efficacy than the mothers, they do not spend more time on preparation than the mothers. The mothers are better prepared and have a more systematic approach to how they prepare before the meeting. Several fathers have a more relaxed approach. Some hire a lawyer to give them advice just before the meeting; others just think through scenarios before the meeting. This chapter illustrates that mothers and fathers in child visitation rights cases have different feelings, behavior and strategies before they enter the meeting with the SA. In the following part, "The Encounter", I invite you into the meeting room and examine mothers' and fathers' behavior at meetings.

Part II: The Encounter

The waiting room is full. Most people are sitting in the couches and waiting; others are standing in line in front of the desk to announce their arrival; some are walking around the waiting room. The room is filled with different voices. A young woman is sitting next to a middle-aged woman dressed in a black blazer. It looks like her lawyer. They are talking and looking at different documents the lawyer carries in a black folder. Next to them sits a man, probably in his mid-thirties, staring at his phone. One of his legs is shaking. The door in the end of the waiting room opens. A female caseworker takes a step out and loudly calls out "Jane and Peter". From two different positions in the meeting room, a woman and a man get up from the couches. They walk towards the caseworker and shake her hand. The door closes behind them.
(Field notes, February 2017, Copenhagen)

In this second part of the dissertation, I invite you into the meeting room. Bartels (2012) argues that in order to understand public encounters, we need to pay attention to the interaction process between street-level bureaucrats and clients, preferably by examining the relational, situated performances through which public professionals and citizens communicate in daily practice (Bartels 2012: 478-479). Although communication between parents and professionals from the SA is a reciprocal process in which the caseworkers structure the meeting and ask the clients questions, this dissertation mainly focuses on the *clients'* communicative behaviors. The aim is to understand whether mothers and fathers have different behaviors when they interact with the SA in child visitation rights cases. I thus focus on the process at the meeting rather than the meeting outcome.

This second part of the dissertation is divided into three chapters. In the first chapter, I investigate the conversational dominance. Is one parent more dominant than the other? Inspired by sociolinguistics, I study this by quantifying and comparing the parents' talking time and interruptions. In the second chapter, I use Goffman's theory on social interaction to investigate how mothers and fathers position themselves in the beginning of the meeting, when they are asked to describe the case, their child and their conflict, and how they challenge their ex-partner's position at the meeting. In the third chapter, I examine gender differences in the parents' interaction style by paying attention to the two central parts of the meeting: 1) when they are asked to explain their case, and 2) when they are negotiating an agreement.

Chapter 6.
Who Dominates?
Investigating Gender Differences in Clients' Amount of Talk and Interruptions

In child visitation disputes, mothers and fathers enter the meeting room with different interests and strategies. Both with the desire to convince the other parent and the SA of their view on an ideal visitation agreement, and often with different tactics and strategies to obtain their goal (see chapter 5). Unlike in other citizen-state interactions, it is not only one client but two conflicting parties arguing their case. This chapter focuses on the conversational dominance of the interaction (Coates 2004), i.e., whether one parent dominates the conversation. Inspired by sociolinguistic studies, I examine conversational dominance by quantifying parents' talking time and interruptions. In sociolinguistics theory about language and gender, this approach is also known as the dominance approach. Scholars argue that due to status differences between men and women, men behave more dominant than women in mixed-gender interactions (West and Zimmerman 1987; Coates 2004). However, in the specific empirical context of child visitation rights cases, I expect that mothers play a more dominant role than fathers. As discussed in the theoretical chapter, women have advantages in policy areas where children and family are salient due to their role as primary caretakers of children. In Denmark, most mothers are resident parents and therefore spend more time with their children on a weekly basis. This creates power imbalances between mothers and fathers in these cases.

In the following, I first explain existing research on gender and language. Second, I conceptualize two characteristics of conversational dominance investigated in this analysis and show examples from the empirical material on how to operationalize it. Third, I explain the procedure and methods, and present and discuss the results.

6.1. Gender and Language: Differences in Communication Style

Gender differences in the use of language is a common topic in linguistics, sociolinguistics, communication studies and social psychology. However, I argue that it is also interesting in the study of public encounters, since the face-

to-face interactions between clients and the state are typically based on conversation. Research in language and gender often uses two approaches to analyze differences: the dominance and the differences approach. In general, scholars of linguistics and communication emphasize the amount of talking time and interruptions as characteristics of dominance in communication (Mast 2002; Allen and Bourhis 1996; Coates 2004). Scholars in gender and language have also studied dominance in relation to mixed-gender interactions (Spender 1982; West and Zimmerman 1987). They argue that due to power imbalances between men and women in society, men often dominate conversations with women by talking and interrupting more, and by controlling the topic of conversation. Thus, linguistic differences in men's and women's speech are interpreted as men's dominance and women's subordination (Coates 2004).

Tannen (1990), a linguistic scholar known for her research on the difference approach, has criticized the dominance approach by arguing that dominance is not always an intention to dominate. For example, interruptions may have others functions such as support and recognition. She argues that gender differences in communication arise because boys and girls are socialized differently and therefore have two different approaches to communication (hence the name "the difference approach") (Tannen 1990). For example, it is claimed that women often are more indirect when they make proposals, and that men are more direct and give orders (Baron-Cohen 2005; Tannen 1990). Research in communication often describes men as more dominant, directive, and hierarchical, and women as more supportive, facilitative, cooperative, personal, and egalitarian in conversations (Aires 1996). Although these are subtle and generalized differences, it still illustrates that men and women, in some situations, approach a conversation in different ways. Coates (2004) argues that the differences approach allows women's talk to be examined outside the framework of oppression and powerlessness. It is able to show the strengths of women's linguistic strategies. However, the difference approach has been criticized for ignoring the issue of power in mixed-gender interaction. The two approaches do not exclude each other, and some studies use both approaches to study gender differences (see for example Bogoch 1997).

Most studies investigate gender differences in everyday settings, however, a few studies examine them in bureaucratic contexts like doctor-patient interactions (see for example Hall et al. 1994; Hall and Roter 2002; West 1990) and in lawyer-client interactions. Bogoch (1997) analyzes differences in lawyers and clients' communication style by applying both the dominance and the differences approach. Following the dominance approach, she first investigates who talks and interrupts the most, and who controls the conversation and

challenges the other part. To study the difference paradigm, she examines differences in the lawyers and clients' cooperative moves, affiliative requests, indirection and politeness, and expression of emotion. The study examines both same-sex and mixed-sex dyads to discover whether the lawyer's gender affects client behavior. The results show that both male and female clients expressed greater deference to male lawyers, and that female clients expressed cooperation and solidarity with all lawyers. Common to the empirical studies of gender and communication in citizen-state interactions is that they all apply a quantitative approach, i.e., quantify utterances from conservations, interpret and code, for example, how many times a participant changes the topic to statistically test differences between male and female clients. However, they do not focus on the content of their speech and arguments.

In this chapter, I focus on conversational dominance and investigate differences in two central characteristics of dominance: how much mothers and fathers talk and interrupt during a meeting with the professionals from the SA. I focus on these two characteristics of dominance because they can be measured and quantified without direct interpretation of the data. For example, when Bogoch (1997) and other scholars quantify whether one participant in a conversation either challenges the other participant or behaves cooperatively, it is based on an assessment and an interpretation of the data and it is given a numeric value. Instead of quantifying the clients' strategies of challenges and cooperation, I unfold this in the qualitative chapters. By quantifying two characteristics of dominance, this chapter gives an indication of whether one parent plays a more dominant role at the meeting. The focus on dominance is particularly interesting in the empirical context of child visitation disputes. The meeting is a "battle of power" between the two conflicting parties; both parents have an interest in being heard and getting equal talking time.

6.2. Two Characteristics of a Dominant Communication Style – and How to Operationalize It

Inspired by Coates' (2004) analytical strategy for studying conversational dominance in mixed talk and Bogoch's (1997) study of gender differences in lawyer-client interactions, I analyze two characteristics of dominance in conversation: amount of talk and interruptions. In the following, I explain the two characteristics and show examples from the empirical data on how I operationalized it.

6.2.1. Amount of Talk

In the literature, amount of talk is associated with dominance and control of the conversation. Several studies of mixed-gender interactions show that men dominate the interaction space by talking most of the time (West and Zimmerman 1987; Leet-Pellegrini 1980; Mulac 1989; Pakzadian and Toot-kaboni 2018). An experimental study by Leet-Pellegrini shows that men dominate the conversation even when their conversation partner has more knowledge of and greater experience with a specific topic (Leet-Pellegrini 1980). To measure the amount of talking time, I calculate each utterance at a meeting. An utterance is defined as the smallest unit of speech; it is a continuous piece of speech beginning and ending with a clear pause or interruption. This means that an utterance can vary in length. Box 6.1 gives an example of utterances from the empirical material. The caseworker asks one question (one utterance), and the father's answer is divided into three utterances based on clear pauses in the speech flow. Counting utterances also captures the volume of the participants' talk since it captures more than how many times they talk during a conversation.[16]

Box 6.1. Example of utterances

> CW3: Why do you want this change?
>
> F3: Uh, I want it primarily based on [my son's] well-being and not that it doesn't work out, but I don't think he's functioning optimally in the current constellation or the agreement we're following now.
>
> F3: So then I have to sign, uh, there have been some indications that his behavior is not desirable, it's not that bad at the moment, but it has been, especially in the spring.
>
> F3: Not that he says very much, I have to be honest about that, but I think it's difficult for him to express it, so it's more his behavior I'm looking at.

Note: CW = caseworker, F =Father, number = the case number. See transcription symbols in Appendix E.

As described in chapter 2 about the empirical setting, each meeting always consists of at least four persons: a mother, a father, a caseworker, and a child specialist. However, in some meetings, the parents also bring a lawyer or a lay representative. To calculate the mothers and the fathers' utterances in percent, I use the total amount of utterance for the whole meeting. Table 6.1 illustrates a meeting of four participants and a meeting of six participants. The utterances in percent are used to test differences in mothers and fathers' amount of talking time at a meeting.

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[16] Counting utterances is mostly seen as analytical strategy in the literature, instead of counting, for example, minutes or words.

Table 6.1. Examples of calculation of utterances in number and percent

Utterances in meeting 26	Number	Percent	Utterances in meeting 42	Number	Percent
Mother	696	32.6	Mother	136	24.2
Father	377	17.6	Father	81	14.4
Caseworker	727	34	Caseworker	127	22.6
Child specialist	337	15.8	Child specialist	131	23.3
			Mother's lawyer	27	4.8
			Father's lawyer	61	10.8
Total	2137	100.0	Total	563	100.0

6.2.2. Interruptions

Because interruptions involve a violation of the current speaker's right to speak and are used to control the topic of the conservation, they have been seen as a mechanism of power and dominance (Coates 2004; Aires 1996). Several scholars have used interruptions to measure dominance, also in studies of gender and conversation (Bogoch 1997; West and Zimmerman 1987). Studies find that men interrupt more than women in mixed-gender interactions (West and Zimmerman 1987; Leet-Pellegrini 1980; James and Clarke 1993). The meaning of interruptions has been discussed intensely among linguists, sociolinguists and psychologists. Aires (1996) argues that interruptions may serve many functions. They may be collaborative, used to show support, understanding and agreement. Tannen (1990) also criticized the dominance approach's view on interruptions as dominance: "Claiming that an interruption is a sign of dominance assumes that conversation is an activity in which one speaker speaks at a time, but this reflects ideology more than practice". Because most research in gender differences in communication is built on everyday interactions, this criticism is justified. However, in formal settings like a meeting at the SA, participants are expected to respect each other's turn of talking – as pointed out by several caseworkers when a meeting starts:

> I will ask you not to interrupt each other and to refrain from using language that may offend the other party or behave in a way that may escalate conflict (Caseworker, case 14).

In this study, I investigate interruptions where one speaker takes over another speaker's speaking turn, and the first speaker stops speaking. Utterances where the other participant says "okay", "yes", or "mmm" to recognize what is being said, are not coded as interruptions. These utterances can be interpreted as support rather than dominance since the first speaker does not stop speaking. In Box 6.2, I show an example of an interruption. As the caseworker is

speaking, the mother interrupts her. I distinguish between whether a parent interrupts the SA (a total of interruptions of the caseworker and the child specialist) or the other parent.

Box 6.2. Example of interruptions

> CW1: No, it is not in relation to the condition for traveling abroad, [so]
>
> M1: ((The mother interrupts the caseworker)). So that means, that means I haven't had any resolution until now?
>
> CW1: No, that's not what it means, but could you please let me answer.

Note: M = Mother, CW= Caseworker, number = case number.

The literature on interruptions presents either the proportion of each speaker's interruptions of the total number of interruptions in a conversation, or the proportion of each speaker's interruptions of his or her total number of utterances. I decided to use the second method in this analysis. As an example, the mother from meeting 41 had a total of 319 utterance in the meeting. She interrupted the SA 36 times and her ex-partner 2 times. This means that in 11 percent of her utterances, she interrupted the SA, and in 0.6 percent of her utterances, she interrupted her ex-partner.

6.3. Data and Methods

To examine differences in mothers and fathers' communication style, I use transcriptions from 38 audio-recorded meetings (see more about the transcriptions in chapter 4). As mentioned in the methodological chapter, some of the meetings were left out, and in a few meetings, the parents did not consent to let me audio record the meeting. This means that the data in total consist of 76 observations (38 mothers and 38 fathers). The unit of analysis is one parent. The dataset was created based on the transcriptions of the meetings. The student assistants who transcribed the meetings coded all interruptions and I counted each utterance. In all, the data consist of 43,678 utterances, which is an exceptionally high number for this type of analysis. In comparison, Bogoch (1997) analyzes 19 meetings (12 women and 7 men) with 8,750 utterances.

Since each mother and father is nested in a specific meeting with unique characteristic, I use multilevel modeling with fixed effects (Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal 2012). In each model, I control for the parents' legal status (non-resident parent = 0, resident parent = 1), who applied for the meeting (non-

applicant = 0, applicant = 1),[17] and whether a lawyer (no lawyer = 0, lawyer = 1) or lay representative (no lay representative = 0, lay representative = 1) attended the meeting. These factors could potentially affect the clients' talking time. Resident parents spend more time with their children and can therefore typically give longer descriptions of their child (as we will see in chapter 7). The applicant for the meeting might have more to say since they started the case. This would all lead to longer talking time. In meetings where the parents brought a lawyer or a lay representative, their talking time could potentially be reduced because another person helps argue their case.

6.4. Findings

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, I expect that mothers have a more dominant role than fathers at the meeting due to the context of child visitation rights cases. Although fathers' role in parenting has changed radically in recent decades, mothers have more power than fathers in child-related areas due to their role as the primary caretaker and resident parent.

Figure 6.1. Differences in mothers and fathers' talking time
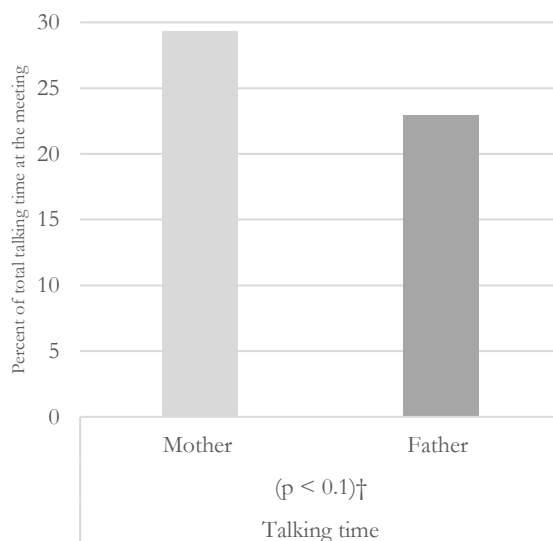
Figure 6.1 shows that mothers talk 6.45 percent more than fathers at a meeting with the SA (significant at the 0.1 level). It can be discussed whether this is a major or substantial difference; however, it is a tendency across meetings and it contributes along with the other analysis to our understanding of mothers

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[17] In cases where both parents applied for the meeting, they were both given the value 1. For follow-up meetings for which none of the parents applied, they were both given the value 0.

and fathers as actors in these cases. Furthermore, mothers interrupted the SA (caseworker and child specialist) more than fathers ($p < 0.00$***). In 14.3 percent of all utterances, the mothers interrupted the SA. In comparison, the fathers interrupted the SA in 7.27 percent of all utterances. However, there was no gender difference in interruptions of the other parent (see the estimated models in Appendix G).

Figure 6.2. Differences in mothers and fathers' interruptions of the SA and ex-partner
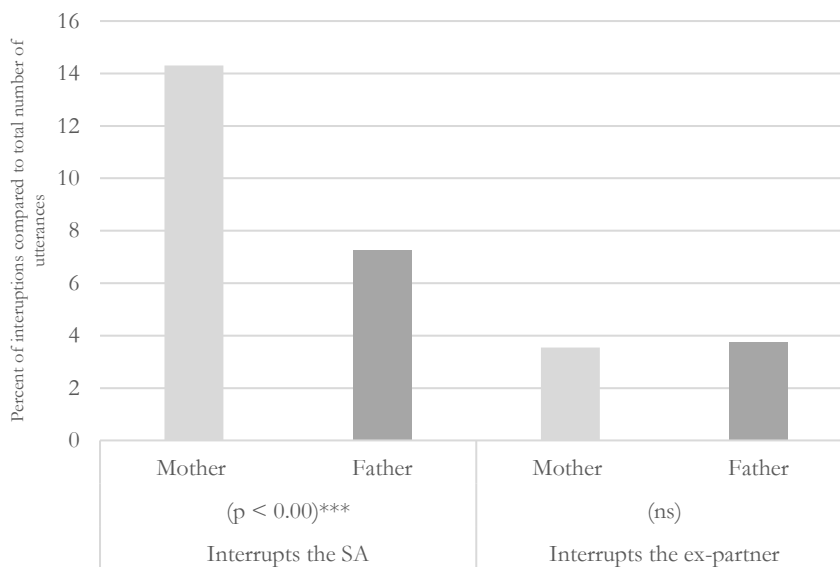
These results indicate that mothers have a more dominant communication style than fathers. They dominate the meeting by talking more, and they grab the floor by interrupting the caseworkers more than the fathers. Hence, in the context of child visitation disputes, the mothers are performing masculinity by having a more dominant communication style.

6.5. Conclusion

This chapter has analyzed conversational dominance by looking at two central characteristics: how much the parents talk during a meeting, and whether they interrupt the other participants at the meeting (caseworkers/child specialist and ex-partner) in order to get talking time. Based on the argument that women have more power in family- and child-related issues due to the traditional division of household work, I argued that women have a more dominant communication style than men in child visitation rights cases. This expectation differs from most literature on gender and language, which argues that men are more dominant than women in mixed-gender interactions. The results show that mothers on average talk more at the meetings, and that they

interrupt the SA more than the fathers do. I do not see a significant difference in how much the parents interrupt each other. This indicates that mothers perform masculinity by being more dominant at the meeting. A clear weakness in the study is that it only looks at two characteristics of dominance. However, in the following chapters I unfold the parents' behavior by studying verbal acts at the meeting. The following chapter will show whether mothers are more dominant in others aspects of the meeting.

Chapter 7.
How Male and Female Clients Position Themselves and Challenge Their Counterparty's Position in Triad Encounters

In this chapter, I explore how the mothers and fathers use different narratives and arguments when presenting their case in the Danish State Administration. The chapter centers around the first part of the meeting where the parents are asked to describe their case, the children's well-being and the conflict about the visitation agreement. While the preceding chapter analyzed the conversational dominance by quantifying the parents' talking time and interruptions, this and the following chapter use an interpretivist approach to understand how two conflicting clients position themselves and their counterparty at the meeting, and which strategies they use during the meeting and when negotiating their case.

In this chapter, I examine the content of the narratives and arguments the parents use to describe their case. I am interested in exploring which narratives and arguments the clients use when presenting information, whether their roles as mother and father influence their strategies, and how they present information. By studying the parents' verbal acts during the encounter, I am able to uncover how they position themselves and their counterparty at the meeting. I draw on Goffman's theoretical concepts of face-work and strategic interaction as analytical tools. Goffman's micro-sociological studies of everyday encounters provide an ideal theoretical framework for understanding the complexity in the encounter between citizens and state, and are useful for understanding the dynamics between two conflicting clients. How clients present themselves and their case illustrates their strategies and how they want the other participants to perceive them. Both parents have an interest in presenting themselves as responsible parents, a role that is negotiated and performed throughout the interaction.

In child visitation disputes, it is a fight between two parties with conflicting interests who want to convince their ex-partner and the SA about their version of an ideal visitation agreement. Their roles are clearly defined from the beginning of the meeting. The professionals on one side of the table, and the conflicting clients on the other side. The clients' multiple roles as mothers/fathers and resident/non-resident parent create a frame for their conversation and their actions. As discussed in the theoretical part (chapter 3), these roles

both enable and constrain their actions. In Denmark, these two roles are interconnected; most mothers are resident parents, and most fathers are non-resident parents. Mothers and fathers typically have different positions when they enter the meeting room. Hence, the analysis of differences in mothers and fathers' positions cannot be reduced to a question about gender exclusively. Due to the parents' divergent positions in these cases, I expect that they use different strategies to position themselves. In the following analysis, I first examine how mothers and fathers use different narratives and arguments when describing their child's well-being and the visitation agreement. Second, I explore how they indirectly position themselves as a responsible parent by sharing unfavorable information about their ex-partner.

7.1. Analyzing Face-To-Face Interaction: Using Goffman's Theoretical Concepts as Analytical Tool

In this part of the dissertation, the aim is to analyze how mothers and fathers position themselves during the face-to-face interaction with the representatives from the Danish State Administration. I am interested in how they as clients present themselves and their counterpart at the meeting, and how they use different strategies to present and negotiate their case. To analyze this, I draw on Goffman's theory on social interaction and especially his concepts of impression management (Goffman, 1959), face-work (Goffman 1967) and strategic interaction (Goffman 1970). Goffman's theories are rooted in symbolic interactionism, which puts the interaction and context in the center of analysis of human behavior (Blumer 1969; Järvinen and Mik-Meyer 2017). I use the theoretical concepts as analytical tool to analyze the clients' verbal acts at the encounter. In the following, I present the key concepts.

7.1.1. Face-Work and Strategic Interaction

A key point in Goffman's work is that when we interact with other people, we adapt into roles and rules relative to the social context that surrounds us. Goffman argued that every encounter is played out within a set of framing activities that help organize the action (Goffman 1974). When we encounter others, we form perceptions of them based on their interaction behaviors – and they use different strategies to influence how others perceive them by regulating and controlling information in social interaction. Goffman denotes this as *impression management* (Goffman, 1959), which he further developed in his later work on *face-work* (Goffman, 1967), which he defines as follows:

The term *face* may be defined as the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line other assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self delineated in term of approved social attributes – albeit an image that others may share, as when a person makes a good showing for his profession or religion by making good showing for himself (Goffman, 1967: 5).

The construction of one's face is a communicative process that is undertaken through interaction with others. To create and maintain their face, individuals need to act in line with the face they want to signal; in Goffman's terminology also referred to as a *line:* "a pattern of verbal and nonverbal act by which he expresses his view of the situation and through his evaluation of the participants, especially himself" (Goffman, 1967: 5). In interactions, individuals use different strategies to maintain their own and others' face and to avoid threats (the avoidance process). For example, they can use a *defensive strategy* by keeping topics and information away that is not consistent with the face they want to signal, or they can apply a *protective strategy.* By being polite and showing respect, and by leaving unstated facts that might implicitly or explicitly contradict and embarrass the positive claims made by others, an individual can protect his and the other participants' face.

In most face-to-face interactions, individuals tend to maintain both their own face and the face of the other participants due to rules of self-respect and considerateness. However, individuals can also make *aggressive use* of facework by threatening a participant's face. Goffman denotes this as aggressive interchanges:

In aggressive interchanges the winner not only succeeds in introducing information favorable to himself and unfavorable to the others, but also demonstrates that as interactant he can handle himself better than his adversaries (Goffman, 1967: 25).

By introducing favorable information about oneself and unfavorable information about other participants, the individual's goal is to score points against one's adversaries and making as many gains as possible for oneself. The goal of "face-threatening" is to make another participant *lose* face or damage it in some way.

In Goffman's book, *Strategic Interaction*, he uses this game-like metaphor to describe human behavior as calculative and strategic (Goffman, 1969). The encounter between individuals is a type of game with fixed rules where participants can use different strategies. For example, they can perform acts they think will improve their situation or manipulate information about themselves to mislead the others (Goffman, 1970: 11-12). Goffman argues that individuals

mislead each other in order to win the game and achieve their desired goals. However, individuals do not only rely on what is communicated verbally; they also "spy" and are "spied on" in interactions in order to influence their desired outcome. In the analysis, I draw on these concepts to analyze how the clients present themselves and their ex-partner at the meeting.

7.2. Data Sources and Analytical Approach

The main data source for this analysis is the transcriptions of the meetings and my field notes. However, in one of the sections, I also use an interview where the parents describe and reflect upon their behavior at the meeting. The unit of analysis is the individual parent. I am interested in exploring how individual clients position themselves when describing their case in the interaction with both a counterparty and public authorities. Hence, I am interested in exploring and comparing how mothers and fathers act. Do mothers and fathers have different ways of arguing and presenting their case? What characterizes mothers and fathers' strategies when they present their case? As explained in chapter 4, I coded half of the meetings using an initial coding strategy, and afterwards I coded all meetings following a focused coding approach (Charmaz 2006). For all parents, I conducted a within-case analysis to be able to compare mothers and fathers within each case and across the empirical material (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña 2014)

7.2.1. Presenting the Analysis

I use different formats to illustrate the mothers and fathers' verbal acts. I use quotations, and in boxes, I show excerpts from conversations between the parents and professionals from the SA. Furthermore, I present some of the results in a display format, i.e., "a visual format that presents information systematically" (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña 2014). In tables, I show examples from the empirical material to give an overview of the results. The information is presented in authentic from, meaning that I use quotations in their original form translated into English (Dahler-Larsen 2008).

7.3. Presenting the Child and the Visitation Agreement

In this first part of the chapter, I focus on the parents' descriptions of the case and the visitation agreement. I examine how mothers and fathers use different narratives and arguments when describing their child, their child's well-being and the visitation agreement. According to the Parental Responsibility Act, caseworkers are required to keep the parents' focus on the child's best interest

during the meeting. As explained in chapter 2, the legislation has changed over time from a parent-centered perspective (the parents' right to see their children) to a child-centered perspective (the child's right to see its parents). Hence, the institution defines the framework for the conversation; the parents are supposed to consider their children's interests, and not their own. The "ideal" client thus presents an altruistic argumentation focusing on the child's best interest. In these cases, egoistic argumentation can weaken their position.

Using Goffman's theoretical concepts, I examine how the parents through verbal acts present and describe their child and the visitation agreement, and how they through these descriptions position themselves and their parent role. When analyzing the empirical material, I found variations in how mothers and fathers present their case in relation to the visitation agreement they want to achieve, and in the detail and richness of their descriptions. Not all parents succeed in focusing on the child's best interest during the meeting; egoistic and personal interests also become a part of the argumentation. In most meetings, the parents were asked to describe their child and issues concerning the current visitation agreement. However, there are some exceptions; the parents' descriptions of the child do not appear in every meeting. In meetings based on a child interview, the child specialist typically describes the child's point of view, and afterwards the parents share their thoughts about what they have just been told. In other meetings, the parents start negotiating a new agreement from the beginning.

7.3.1. Two Sides of the Same Coin: How Parents Use Different Narratives about Their Child's Well-Being to Argue Their Case

> Well, we always have two different pictures of the situation
> (Mother, case 36).

At the beginning of each meeting, the parents are typically asked to describe how their children are doing. As the mother from case 36 explains in the quotation above, the parents often view the situation differently. In several cases, the parents use opposite narratives when describing the child and the child's well-being. As illustrated in Table 7.1 with quotes from three meetings, the parents either use positive or negative narratives to support their point of view. Common for these cases is that the narrative supports their wishes for the visitation agreement. Their framing of the child's well-being becomes a strategic move in their argumentation about the visitation agreement. Hence, it also illustrates the conflict and disagreement between the parents.

In the three cases shown in Table 7.1, the parents all want to expand the current visitation schedule in their favor or maintain status quo no matter

which narrative is applied. However, their way of framing the case is different. In case 3, the father uses a negative narrative about the son's well-being to argue that the current visitation agreement is not the best solution for his son. The father explains that he has a hard time getting his son to school and that he is sad. He has applied for the meeting because he wants to change the current visitation agreement from a "9-5" to a "7-7" visitation schedule (the son is currently living 9 days with his mother and 5 days with his father). He argues that an equal distribution would be beneficial for his son's well-being. The father is presenting the son's well-being in negative terms. However, the mother does not want to accept the father's description. She does not recognize the picture the father is drawing and is not willing to cooperate with the father's face. She describes their son as "happy", "good in school" and as "a social person". She argues that the current visitation schedule is functioning well and she is not interested in changing it. She rejects the father's argumentation as something he creates "in his own little world".

The same picture appears in cases 38 and 42, but here the mothers present a negative narrative, and the fathers present a positive one. The mother from case 38 explains that her son has been very confused and angry and that he bullies other children in daycare. In contrast, the father explains that his son "is doing fantastic" when the child specialist asks him to describe his son's well-being. Later in her description, the mother from case 38 explains that her son is doing better. This positive development started after they ended the "7-7" schedule, and the son started living more at the mother's home. As Table 7.1 also illustrates, the parents' descriptions of their child and their child's well-being varies in length, choice of words and in the level of detail. I will get back to this in the following analysis.

In case 42, the mother describes her daughter's negative reactions before and after visitation at her father's home. In contrast to the mother, the father describes his daughter's well-being in positive terms. By drawing these different *lines*, the parents express conflicting views of the situation, and they position themselves in opposition to each other. The examples clearly show that the parents do not want to collaborate about each other's faces. Throughout the meeting, the parents constantly try to maintain their own face and challenge their counterparty's position.

The parents' descriptions of the child are often so contradictory that is hard for the caseworkers and child specialists to believe that the parents are talking about the same child. In some cases, opposing descriptions initiate further investigation of the case. In case 42, the caseworker and the child specialist decided to start a child welfare investigation due to the divergent descriptions. Neither parent was able to convince the caseworkers about the validity of their argumentation.

As mentioned, in two of the three cases illustrated in Table 7.1, the mothers applied a negative narrative about their child's well-being and the visitation agreement, and the fathers applied a positive one. This tendency appears throughout the empirical material. Although not all parents apply such contradictory narratives, most mothers focus on the child's negative reactions and behaviors, their worries about their child and the current visitation agreement. The fathers draw a more positive picture of the child. The opposite narratives illustrate the parents' opposing interests in a new visitation agreement. Both want to expand the visitation schedule in their favor. However, the different framing of the case might be due to their divergent positions: the mothers on average spend more time with the children due to their role as resident parents; the fathers are fighting for more visitation time with their children. The mothers want to maintain their position as the primary parent who is able to care for the child's best interest and therefore focus on their child's negative reactions after visitation at their father's home. However, the fathers do not have the same resources to make these rich descriptions and therefore focus on positive experiences with their child and arguments based on father-child connection in order to convince the SA and the other parent about their point of view. As two conflicting parties, they have no incentives to collaborate on saving face. Both have an interest in having the winning definition of the problem.

Table 7.1. Positive and negative narratives about the child's well-being

Case	Positive narrative	Negative narrative
3	Mother	Father
	I see something very different. I see a boy who is doing really well and is thriving, and I cannot recognize what (father) is saying. It's something that's going on in his own little world, and it simply isn't true.	… I do it primarily based on (son's) well-being, and not that it isn't working out, but I don't think he is functioning optimally in the current constellation or the agreement we're following at the moment. There have been some indications that he is not acting appropriately; it's not that bad right now, but it has been, especially in the spring.
	… we contacted the school, and they say, no, there's no problem, we have a happy boy who's thriving and well-functioning, he's doing well academically and really, really well socially.	… as I described in the application that I have had – I'm going to say – problems with and sometimes getting him to school where he hasn't really been able to say why, but I could tell by looking at him that it upset him.
	I just don't recognize what (father) is saying, and I see a really happy boy. He is thriving in all relations and is, should we say, a very popular, really talented in school and in all contexts, at soccer, and he is just doing really well when he is staying with me, and he obviously needs to stay with me more if he is having so many problems at [father's], it's regrettable, it must be something about their relation, and we have to work on that, but it's not something I can do anything about.	Yeah, so I've tried to talk to the school, primarily with [son's] homeroom teacher, to find out if he had noticed the same pattern. Because obviously I was starting to worry.
38	Father	Mother
	Child specialist: How would you say your boy is doing?	He has been a very confused boy.
	"He's doing really great. He goes fishing and sailing with me."	… they notice it in the daycare, they say that (son) does not want to go with Dad, and he gets very angry. I can feel a boy who bullies others and snaps and makes knee-jerk reactions.
		… [son] before December and so on when [father] kind of started moving in with me, when we went out to pay off, I don't know how many thousands on his cocaine debt, then he sometimes pees in bed at night and things like that when he comes back from there. He doesn't do that at all anymore. They say in the daycare that [son] is doing better and better, becomes better and better at picking a more homogenous boy group and removes himself from those problem kids down there and plays with some other boys in another room.

42	Father	Mother
	So, she has been thriving, and she has eaten really well, she has slept really well, and I have shown up a little early and sat and talked with her and her classmates and taken chairs down before time and checked on the plants that are growing over there, and, well, I've just been part of what you normally have when you have a child that has to be taken to school and a child that needs to be picked up from school.	The current visitation resolution is not in her best interest at all. She is not thriving in the current visitation, and I hope that today after this meeting we can put it together so that it is in her best interest. And there are, there are different things that indicate that she is not thriving.
	I have never seen her sad, I mean, that she has been sad and crying and thought and said that she needed to go home to you, that has not happened at any time, not at all. On the contrary, she has been really happy.	Well, when she is going to her father's and I inform her about it, she just has a very negative reaction. She becomes very upset, she starts to cry, she hides in her room so that I can't take her. She sometimes throws fits on the floor and gets very angry at me and says why do you keep sending me off to something I don't want and something I don't like? And of course I reply that it's something I and your father have decided, and it's something you have to do, and I've done that for many years now. You know, these reactions have been happening for many years, but of course they keep getting worse, and lately she has had reactions where in addition to the physical things I told you about, she also gets stomach aches and started wetting her bed again, so I've started to put her in diapers again and she has trouble sleeping. She gets very upset, and she keeps saying to me, when is somebody going to listen to me?
		She switches back and forth between apathetic and aggressive after she came home from compensation visitation last week. Seven days' compensation visitation, and she had a huge breakdown, well I picked her up and she came home and she broke down completely.

7.3.2. Descriptions of the Child: The Detail-Oriented Mothers

When comparing the parents at each meeting, I explore differences in how mothers and fathers describe the child and current issues related to the visitation schedule. First of all, in most cases in the empirical material, the mother speaks relatively more about the child and gives richer and more detailed descriptions of the child and its reactions than the father. An extreme example is case 38 as illustrated in Table 7.1. The child specialist asks the parents to describe how their son is doing. While the mother describes the son's reactions and behaviors and refers to conversations she had with the daycare, the father just says that the son "is doing really great". Precisely this detail-oriented focus on reactions and behavior characterizes the mothers' argumentation style. An example is case 42, where the mother uses the first 20 minutes of the meeting to explain why the current visitation agreement is not in her child's best interest (see excerpt in Table 7.1). She systematically describes details about her daughter's reactions before visitation with her father. She explains that her daughter gets sad and angry, hides in her room, and asks why she has to go to her father's place. The mother continues to describe physical symptoms like stomach aches, bed-wetting and sleep problems, and that she was alternately "apathetic and aggressive" when she came back from her father's. The mother gives a rich description of her daughter's current well-being, and she especially describes her daughter's reactions and behaviors after visitation with her father. This is a central part of her argumentation for why the current visitation agreement needs to be changed. Throughout, she focuses on the child and the child's best interest.

When arguing their case, several mother tend to focus on their child's reactions after visitation. As illustrated in chapter 5, they often prepare this documentation before their meeting with the SA. In case 19, the mother and the father changed the visitation agreement three-four months before the meeting and agreed that the son should stay several days at his father's. However, a few months after, the mother contacted the SA because she wanted to change the visitation agreement due to her son's negative reactions:

> Yes, I actually feel that (son) is not thriving in it, partly because he still, just like last time we talked, that he is still very, very clingy, and I have to spend a lot of time getting him back in his rhythm again; he needs to be with me a lot, hold hands, he doesn't want to sleep alone, he is much more fussy than he usually is, and he started to get sick, almost systematically, get fevers often, when he came home, and it was actually quite often, it was most of the times, that he got sick Friday when he came home from this Thursday to Friday. And actually, I didn't really see it then, but actually, I think that when he comes home from the

overnight on Mondays where I pick him up from daycare or the nursery Monday afternoon, then he has two normal days at home, and then he's off again. And I think that's a lot of moving back and forth (…), and so I feel that he's reacting to that. I think he's stressed out in his little body (Mother, case 19).

Again, the mother outlines several symptoms and reactions and she offers assessments of her child's well-being. At the end of the quotation above, she says that she believes that her son is stressed due to the many moves back and forth between the parents' homes. She explains that the son systematically gets sick after visitation at his father's home. In describing her son's reactions, she builds a narrative about how the son needs his mother. She draws on her role as mother and the resources related to motherhood (e.g. the mother as primary caretaker) to argue that the current visitation schedule is not in her son's best interest. The father does not dismiss the mother's explanations but says that he does experience the son as whining or sick during visitation at his home.

Descriptions of the child and the child's well-being are also present in the fathers' argumentation, but with fewer details and examples. The fathers' descriptions are often not as concrete as the mothers'. In case 3, the father expresses his worries about his son and argues that the current visitation schedule is not working (see Table 7.1). However, besides explaining that he has problems getting his son to school, he does not describe symptoms or reactions or assess why his son is not doing well, and he is not able to convince the caseworker and child specialist about his interpretation of the case. The caseworker gets around the possibility for changing the current visitation agreement by arguing that the problem is the parents' cooperation and not changes in the son's well-being (see also chapter 8). The ability to make rich descriptions of the child becomes a resource in these meetings. Several caseworkers and child specialists discussed in the break of the meeting that – typically – the father was not able to give a detailed description of the child or the child's relation to school or daycare. Rich descriptions are evaluated as a value by the professionals and are part of how they interpret the parents. By sharing these detailed descriptions of the child, the mothers position themselves in the interaction as the responsible, knowledgeable parent who knows what is best for her child. This illustrates the mothers' agency in these meetings; they draw on their roles as mothers and resident parents when describing their observations of the child.

There are various reasons for this difference. First, it could be due to general gender differences between men and women. Neurological scholars would argue that women by nature tend to absorb more information through

their senses and store more of it in the brain for other uses than men. Therefore, women generally have more interest and pay more attention to detail than men (Legato and Tucker 2009; Stancey and Turner 2010). Second, mothers are more systematic in their preparation for the meeting and are therefore able to give richer descriptions. Several mothers explain in the interviews that they wrote down their child's reactions after visitation to be able to document and explain it at the meeting (see chapter 5). Third, it might be due to mothers and fathers' different parental roles and their legal roles as respectively residential and non-residential parent. On average, the mothers spend more time with their children than the fathers do, which enables them to make more observations of their child and their child's well-being.

7.3.3. Unequal Positions: The Submissive Fathers

Rich descriptions of their child's well-being and reactions characterize how mothers present their case, but several fathers have a different starting point for their argumentation. Due to mothers and fathers' divergent positions in these cases (the mothers are typically resident parents and spend more time with the children), several fathers' arguments center on their desire to spend more time with their children and their children's needs for both parents in their lives. Hence, their motivation when applying for a meeting in the SA is to get more time with and strengthen their relationship with their child. Only in two cases in the sample did the parents practice a "7-7"-schedule and hereby had an "equal" starting point.

In some cases, the fathers have not seen their children for several months due to the conflict with the mother or based on more serious accusations of violence, drug/alcohol abuse or psychical or mental violence. These fathers have asked the SA for help to re-establish contact with their children. In case 14, the father has not seen his two children for almost two years and wants to have contact with them again because he misses them and wants them to have a father in their lives.

> Well, I apply, of course I apply to have contact with my children in the future because of course I miss them, and I think they should be allowed to have a father in their lives. I'm perfectly aware that it is going to be a drawn-out process, and it isn't something that can be done in a couple of weeks, so I'm perfectly aware that it has to be supervised visitation, perhaps a couple of hours every month to begin with. I am willing to do anything, so to speak. I think a lot has happened since I ... I think we've established peace (...) I have obviously tried on their birthday and things like that, and I have also respected that they said no at their last birthday in September. In addition, I've personally completed psycho-therapy sessions to kind of find peace in myself and find out what I could do

better, so I personally think ... well, I would just really love to have my kids in my life (Father, case 14).

The father from case 14 positions himself as humble; he is willing to be patient and knows that re-building the relationship will be a long process. He explains that he is seeing a psychotherapist to work with himself and find out what he could do better. The power imbalance between mothers and fathers becomes particularly manifest in some of the fathers' argumentation and presentation of themselves. The fathers show submissiveness; also in cases where they see their children more frequently than in case 14. Across the empirical material, several fathers admit mistakes, explain that they "have changed", that they have listened to the mothers' suggestions and started working with themselves. I only see this tendency among the fathers.

In case 10, the mother's lawyer asks the father what he will do to improve cooperation between the parents. He explains that he has listened to the mother and changed the son's bedtime based on her suggestion. He explains that he is not "stuck in a box"; he is willing to be more flexible.

Box 7.1. Example from case 10

ML10: What can you offer (father) (...) what would you offer to start cooperating?

F10: But just take this case within the past few months; I've listened to you.

F10: Yes, the bedtime has been changed since the last time.

ML: Yes, that's right.

F10: I have, I think I'm paying attention to his wishes, but I will pay even more attention to it.

ML10: I think these are very positive statements.

F10: Even more than in the past few months.

ML10: Yes, yes.

CS10: And he says so too.

F10: Well, I think that demonstrates that I'm not stuck in small squares or boxes; I am willing to move outside them and be flexible.

Note: F = the father, M = the mother, CS = child specialist, FL = father's lawyer, ML = mother's lawyer. See transcription symbols in Appendix E.

Like in case 10, the father from case 32 explicitly states that he knows he has to change. He admits that he has made mistakes, just as he thinks the mother has made mistakes:

It's not that, I know I've made a lot of mistakes just as I think that [mother] has made a lot of mistakes, but there are just many ways of doing it, right? I'm probably a bit more impulsive and more emotional, and I know where I have to change things (Father, case 32).

Self-knowledge or self-discovery is a tendency I only see in the fathers' self-presentation in phrases like "I'm not perfect" (father, case 9) and "I made mistakes" (father, case 32). This illustrates the power imbalance between the mothers and fathers in these cases; the fathers need to prove that they are willing to change, and they play a more submissive role compared to the mothers. The mothers are typically in a stronger position compared to the fathers, and this might explain why they do not use these types of arguments.

7.3.4. The Clients' Use of Professional Language

When I examine differences in length and level of detail in the descriptions of the child, I also explore some variation in the parents' language and vocabulary. Although they are talking about the same thing – their child – they use different words to describe them. Several parents draw on professional language from psychology, pedagogy and law. By using expressions like the child's welfare, the child's best interest, and the child's response patterns, the parents demonstrate knowledge in the field of child development and child visitation. They adopt a dual role in the meeting as clients and experts on their children's welfare.

The excerpt from the mother's description in case 42 (see Table 7.1) is an example of this. From the beginning, she states that the visitation agreement in not in the *child's best interest*. She continues by outlining several factors that illustrate her daughter's *ill-being*. In the last section, she describe her daughter as alternately *apathetic* and *aggressive* when she comes back from *compensation visitation*. Compensation visitation is a concept used in the Parental Responsibility Act to describe the non-resident parent's right to get compensation if the resident parent cancels visitation (The Parental Responsibly Act, §3), and it is mainly used by professionals in the SA. The description demonstrates that the mother draws on professional language to argue her case, and she positions herself as a knowledgeable client. In three meetings, the mothers use the word "sensitive" to describe their child. The word "sensitive" or the concept "highly sensitive" has become more salient in the last decade. This choice of word also illustrates that the mothers are able to draw on professional language from psychology in their descriptions. I especially see this tendency to use professional language among middle-class parents in general, but also among some working-class mothers. This might be due to spillover effects from other child-centered encounters as shown in article B, "Bureaucratic Self-Efficacy and Spillover Effects". The mothers have more contact with the child's school or daycare than the fathers and thereby hear and learn professional language from the professionals. Not all parents have the vocab-

ulary to give rich descriptions of their child (typically the working-class parents) and they often start negotiating about solutions from the beginning of the meeting. In the following section, I examine how the principle of the child's best interest is expressed by the parents and by the professionals.

7.3.5. "It's Not About Us – It's About the Children": Keeping Focus On the Child's Best Interest

When describing their case and their child's well-being, the ideal client based their argumentation on altruistic values by focusing on the child's best interest rather than their own needs or egotistic perspectives. As stated in the Parental Responsibility Act, the main goal at the meeting is to reach an agreement between the parents that is based on the child's best interest. As described in the following excerpt from an instruction to the Parental Responsibility Act, the Danish State Administration is forced to keep focus on the child's best interest during the meeting:

> The purpose of the meeting is to determine whether it is possible to reach a compromise that serves the *child's best interest*. Moreover, the information supplied by the parents for the meeting will be included the State Administration's basis of information. It is important that the parents during the guidance meeting are reminded that it is *the child's best interest* that is decisive for the assessment of visitation (Vejledning om samvær) [emphasis added].

Keeping focus on the child signals that the clients are able to "speak the right language" in front of the professionals, and that they understand the premise of the meeting. However, the concept of the child's best interest is rather abstract and is not clearly defined in the law. The child's best interests thus becomes an overall assessment of the child's welfare, both short and long term. The parents should thus be able to assess a third part, i.e., the child. As we will see in the following section, the parents are not always successful in adhering to arguments related to the child when egoistic and personal interests outweigh the child's best interest. In case 9, the mother suggests that they make an agreement about calling times, when the children live at the others parent's home. She wants clear rules about how they communicate during visitation. She explains that the father calls the children every day and often disturbs the children while they are doing other things. She further explains that the father gets angry if the children do not want to talk to him, and afterwards the children are nervous. Based on the reactions the mother has experienced, she assesses that it is not in the children's' best interest. Box 7.2 shows an excerpt from the meeting where the child specialist asks the father whether he is willing to make an agreement about calling times.

Box 7.2. Example from case 9

CS9: What are you (father) thinking?

F9: It is completely out of the question, they are my children, they are my flesh and blood ... the way to hurt me is to deny me contact with my kids.

F9: I live and breathe for my children, and of course, OF COURSE, I have to respect that they are with their mother, they have school and bedtime, but as father I OBVIOUSLY want to be able to ask to my kids: "Hey, how's school?" and "How are you doing? Did you eat?"

F9: Of course, I shouldn't be STOPPED from talking to my kids, [and I can't]

M9: ((The mother interrupts the father)) Yes, you can. ((The mother raises her voice))

F9: So of course I want to talk to my kids, I don't want any limitations that I can talk to them twice in 9 days, I can't accept that.

Note: F = the father, M = the mother, CS = child specialist, CW = caseworker. See transcription symbols in Appendix E.

In the interaction in Box 7.2, the father refuses the mother's suggestions about calling times. The father argues based on his own need to talk to his children every day. He does not want any limitations on his right to call his children. He sees it as his right to communicate with his children whenever he wants. The mother argues based on the child's best interest and says that it not about him but about the children. By doing so, the mother demonstrates that she understands the rules of the meeting and thereby positons herself as an advocate for the children's rights. The mother wants to signal that she, unlike the father, is able to assess what is in the child's best interest. In several cases, the parents hold each other up on the child's best interest and expose the other parent if they use egoistic arguments or arguments based on the relationship between the parents: "This is not about you and me, it about our children" (father, case 14).

However, the caseworkers and child specialists also remind the parents about the child's best interest if they argue based on own interests. In case 34 (see Box 7.3), the child specialist suggests different visitation schedules for the two sons based on conversations with the children. She suggests that one of the sons returns to his mother's home on Saturday. The mother immediately says that means that she will never have an entire weekend to herself. The child specialist explains that they focus on the children and not on the parents, and she explains that it would not be an option if they were living together. Hereby, the child specialist demonstrates that they do not consider egoistic arguments when proceeding the case. The mother ends up accepting the child specialist's argument.

Box 7.3. Example from case 34

CS34: And so one compromise could be that Tuesday is switching day and then (son 1) comes home on Saturday, and (son 2) stays until Monday.

M34: That would mean that I never ever have a weekend to myself.

CS34: You don't have a weekend to yourself … you have every other weekend.

M34: So I would never have a weekend to myself; I would have a Friday to myself, every other Friday, but I would never have a weekend without children.

CS34: Then he comes home, yes, but we're not talking about the parents' needs, we focus on the children's needs. I mean, we're not looking at whether you have free time alone, that's not the point of departure.

M34: No.

CS34: And you don't have that option when you live under the same roof, you always have the children one way or the other, even though I understand that you want a bit more time to yourself, especially when you feel that you are alone when you've split up, you do things, you don't lift them together in the same way anymore.

Note: F = the father, M = the mother, CS = child specialist. See transcription symbols in Appendix E.

Since the meetings take place in in a legalistic setting, I expected that the parents would use legalistic rights-based arguments when presenting their cases. Only a few parents claim their rights by referring to the legal documents and the legislation on this area. However, this often does not gain acceptance at the meeting, not even by the law-educated caseworkers. In case 26, the parents discuss the circumstances for the visitation agreement, and the mother claims her right to be on holiday with her child. The caseworker argues that it is not in the child's best interest not to see his father for a longer period. The son is two years old and spends time with his father Saturday to Sunday every second week. The caseworker argues that frequent visitation is a precondition for building the father-son relationship:

> (…) right now we're looking at the child. We are not looking at the law. Because if we did, it would be so much easier, then we could just shut it down and say, OK, you have to follow the rules, but if we follow the rules over Easter, summer and Christmas then that would cancel a lot of visitation time (Caseworker, case 26)

As the caseworker states here, the professionals look at the child and not at the law. The absence of argumentation based on legalistic rights also shows that the clients know the rules of the game. The child's best interest is the foundation of the discussions.

7.4. Discrediting the Counterpart: Clients' Aggressive Use of Face-Work

While the previous analysis covered how parents describe the child and the visitation agreement, this part examines how they present their ex-partner, themselves and their relationship to the other parent. The main topic at the meeting is, of course, the child and the child's well-being. However, another major theme in the argumentation is personal information about the ex-partner and their parental skills. In this section, I use Goffman's concept of aggressive interchanges (Goffman, 1967), as described in section 7.2, as analytical tool to examine how mothers and fathers strategically share unfavorable information about their ex-partner in order to score points against them. Surprisingly, they do not spend much time on direct self-presentation, however, the description of the ex-partner's deficiencies implicitly describes their own role as a responsible parent.

7.4.1. Exposing the Other Parent's Parental Skills

Explaining what the ex-partner does wrong in relation to the child is a big part of the parents' descriptions of the case, however, primarily for the mothers. As mentioned, the mothers are very detailed and concrete in their argumentation; also when it comes to the father's shortcomings during visitation and his parental role. Table 7.2 shows a list of arguments the mothers (and a few fathers) use to expose and exemplify inappropriate conditions during visitation and their ex-partner's poor parental skills. For example, that the fathers are late for the visitation appointment, that the grandparents take care of the child during visitation, and that the children do not have play dates at their father's home. Two mothers also mention that the father does not have appropriate equipment for the child. In case 5, a non-age-appropriate child safety seat becomes a picture of the irresponsible father. The mother explains that the father did not use a child safety seat, and when she confronted him, he bought a booster car seat that is intended for older children (the children are one and two years old). The mother further explains that he told her to shut up when she said that the car seat was not age-appropriate. During the meeting, they return to the child safety seat several times. The caseworker also uses the example to point out that the parents need to be able to communicate about important issues: "you should at least be able to have a proper talk about how to find solutions on something as important as a child safety seat and your children's safety" (Caseworker, case 5). By sharing this information, the mother succeeds in creating a negative image of the father's parental skills; it is accepted by the professionals and hereby becomes a topic at the meeting.

Table 7.2. Examples of arguments used to expose the ex-partner's parental skills

Conditions during visitation	Parental skills
Does not have appropriate equipment for the child (e.g. a child safety seat, asthma mask) (M5, M25)	Does not attend meetings or events at the school/daycare (M10, M16, M34, M50)
Is late for the visitation appointment (M5, **F25**)	The parent has a bad relationship with the daycare (**F1**)
The child does not do homework (M7)	The ex-partner does not inform the daycare about vacation (M28)
Picks up the child too late from daycare (M28)	
Forbids phone calls to the other parent (**F9**, M34)	The ex-partner does not want to spend time with the children during holidays (M34)
The children do not have play dates during visitation (M34, M10)	Does not call on the child's birthday (M19)
Grandparents take care of the child during visitation (M1, M28)	Badmouths the other parent in front of the child (M20, **F4**)
Too many people are involved during visitation (e.g. relatives, the parent's new partner and children) (M17, M25, M30)	Badmouths the other parent's new partner or family in front of the child (F9, M20)
The child sleeps too much during visitation, cannot sleep when he comes home. (M19)	Involves the child in the parents' conflict (M7, M32, **F42**)
The child is left to herself, spends time alone (M42)	Involves the child in personal problems and conflicts (M7)
The parent is not able to raise the children (**F20**)	

Note: M = mother, F = father, number = case number. Fathers marked in bold.

Besides practicalities during visitation, many mothers mentioned that fathers do not attend meetings at the school. By this, they want to signal that the fathers do not take part in important events in the child's life, and it illustrates the conflictual relationship between the parents. Often they do not both attend meetings at school because they do not want any contact with each other. A common thing is that both mothers and fathers describe that their ex-partner involves the child in the parents' conflict, and that it puts further stress on the child.

While many mothers go into details about what is not working during the father's visitation and point to his bad parental skills, the majority of the fathers refrain from such arguments. Whether this is a strategic move (or lack of strategy) or a lack of knowledge about what is going on at the mother's home is hard to tell. However, a picture emerges of the mothers as detail-oriented actors who point out the child's difficulties during visitation and the fathers' deficiencies during visitation and as a parent. By sharing this information, the mothers present themselves as the responsible parent, and as the parent who

knows what is best for the child. Hence, self-presentation or impression management gives the mothers an opportunity to demonstrate their role as the responsible parent – "mommy knows best" – by highlighting what the other parent does wrong in relation to the child.

7.4.2. Personal "Attack": Exposing Personal Information about the Counterparty

> F7: I could spend HOURS talking about ALL the things she's saying, but mudslinging is not the point and that's not why I'm here.

> *Two minutes later*
> F7: But I'm not here to sling mud.

> F7: I could easily take part in the mudslinging.

> F7: I could easily bring up (mother's) past.

> M7: My PAST?!?!

In the previous section, I showed how the parents – primarily the mothers – share unfavorable information about the ex-partners' parental skills to expose their inabilities as parents. However, the parents do not only focus on child-related issues and their ex-partners' parental role, they also present personal information about their ex-partner to "score points against their adversary" to use the Goffmanian framework.

Analyzing across the empirical material, the information the parents share about the counterparty can be seen as a continuum of information from minor to serious issues. There is substantial difference in how the information may affect the case. Serious issues such as alcohol and drug abuse are of course taken very seriously by the professionals and become the major theme at the meeting. However, even minor details about the counterparty may influence the professionals' interpretation of the client. Table 7.3 shows some examples of threats the parents use to discredit their ex-partner.

Several parents share information about their ex-partner's work situation. The mother from case 21 explains that she heard "straight from the horse's mouth" that the father was fired due to collaboration problems at his workplace; the father from case 33 explains that the mother was fired due to alcohol problems; and the father from case 9 mentions that the mother is unemployed. Some parents describe the ex-partner's unfavorable personality traits. The mother from case 19 describes the father as conflict seeking, and the father from case 9 mentions that the mother badmouths others. The examples of threats in Table 7.3 are not exhaustive; not all examples fall in one thematic category. However, I will just mention another example to illustrate the wide

range of personal information the parents share about their ex-partner. In case 7, the father, who is quoted in the beginning of this section, says that the mother used drugs in her past. He explains that she owes him money for service on her car and that she and his other ex-wife have started a hate campaign against him.

Table 7.3. Examples of information the parents share about their ex-partner

Examples of threats	Examples from the empirical material
Ex-partner's work situation	I have it from the horse's mouth that (father) has been laid off because he couldn't cooperate (Mother, case 21)
Ex-partner's personality	She has dedicated her life to badmouthing me, neighbors, everybody (Father, case 9)
	Some people just love a conflict (…). We've known each other for four years, and I know that [father] does not shy away from conflict (Mother, case 19)
Ex-partner's behavior during marriage and divorce	In terms of working together, there have always been many aggressions, a lot of anger, (father) has acknowledged that it's something he has from his childhood, and it was also there towards the end of our marriage (Mother, case 32)
	Yes, we have gotten our household effects, it hasn't been settled [in connection with the divorce; [father] has kept it all (Mother, case 9)
	Bad divorce, (mother) is angry because I left her, that's the crux of the matter and why we're here at the SA (Father, case 9)
Ex-partner's network and relations	It's because your gangster friends who come by all the time and wreck my house and knock down the door (…) I'm accosted in parking lots, I'm yelled at in the supermarket (Father, case 28)
Ex-partner's mental problems	Well, I'm sure that (mother) has a personality disorder, either that or she's more or less a psychopath (Father, case 13)
Ex-partner's alcohol and drug abuse	(Father) drinks too many beers and that's a big issue, and it just shouldn't happen during visitation (Mother, case 41)
	(…) It's not that I don't want the children to see their father. That's not what it's about. It's about the fact that there are 11 incident reports on (father) concerning alcohol abuse. From schools, from the police and from the municipality (Mother, case 48)
Physical and mental violence during the marriage	What happened in my opinion, I am aware that (father) sees it differently, and that's fair enough, but the way I see it, the children and I have been victims of both physical and mental violence (Mother, case 14)

This type of information does not say anything about the ex-partner's parental role or relationship to the child, but it is way of "threatening" the ex-partner's face by pointing out their weaknesses and discrediting them as a person. The

caseworker and the child specialist typically do not find this information relevant, and sometimes they interrupt the parents and ask them to stop bad-mouthing the other parent:

> OK, now I'm going to say something because we could spend the next hour and a half on you telling us how awful (mother) is, and we can spend the next hour and a half hearing you talk about how awful [father] is, and to be honest, I don't want to hear it, and I don't think your son would be OK with it (Child specialist, case 38).

In case 38, the child specialist stops the parents and says that they cannot spend time on each parent's descriptions of how terrible they find their ex-partner. Although the caseworkers and the child specialists do not find always find this information relevant, the information still becomes available and may influence how they interpret the parent.

I do not see a clear gendered pattern in the empirical material in relation to these arguments; both mothers and fathers use this strategy. However, the mothers refer more often than the fathers to the past by sharing information about their ex-partner's behavior during their marriage or divorce. In case 32, the mother explains that their cooperation has been plagued by aggression and anger, as she also experienced when their marriage was ending (see Table 7.3). Often this information is just mentioned briefly or in-between the lines, but subtle information still colors our interpretation of the person. In another example, the mother from case 16 briefly mentions, "you have always travelled a lot while the kids where small", and gives the impression that she was the primary parent and caretaker, and she succeeds in discrediting the father's parental role. By sharing unfavorable information about the counterparty, the clients threaten their counterparty's position by trying influence how the other participants in the meeting perceive them.

The interviews also confirm that the parents are strategic in terms of information they share and do not share at the meeting. The father from case 30 explains that he refrains from sharing information that puts him in a bad light:

> I'll say that I hold back a lot, especially regarding my ex-wife, on what I'll say. In the beginning, I might say on Saturday that I'd been out drinking all weekend. Or, yeah, there are some things you just don't say. Friday night, we didn't get around to brushing teeth. Because you just know that, well, all children have tried falling asleep on a Friday without brushing their teeth, that's not uncommon. But I don't say stuff like that. I don't say other things like that either, because they won't let it go. You hold back and tell them what they want to hear (Father, case 30).

The father from case 30 has learned from previous interactions with the SA that there are "some things you just don't say". In the words of Goffman (1970), he started manipulating the information he shares at the meeting to improve his situation and to mislead the other participants. As he concludes in the excerpt, you tell the professionals "what they want to hear". The clients often carefully consider the information they share at the meeting.

7.4.2.1. Serious Issues: Stigmatizing the Counterparty

While some information may have minor consequences for the case, information of very serious nature often becomes the focal point at the meeting and is taken very seriously by the professionals. In one third of the cases in the empirical material, one parent mentions accusations of alcohol or drug abuse or physical and mental violence. In some meetings, the parent mentions it implicit, probably because they already discussed it at earlier meetings in the SA. For example, in case 5 it is mentioned briefly that the father was forced to take urine samples before visitation due to suspicions of drug abuse. However, it does not become the main theme at the meeting. In other meetings, typically where the information is the main reason for applying for a meeting, the accusations become the point of departure for the discussions. Hence, there is a difference in whether the information is new or already known by the professionals.

In case 41, the mother is applying for full custody and limited visitation at the father's home, and the father wants extended visitation. At the beginning of the meeting, the mother talks implicitly about "the police case" without describing the content. Later, I find out that the father has been accused of sexual assault against two of his daughters; however, the father explains that the police has dropped the case. The mother adds that the municipality is conducting a child welfare investigation. The caseworker asks whether they think they may reach an agreement about visitation, otherwise he will make a legal decision. As illustrated in Box 7.4, the mother explains that the father is drinking too much, and that she does not want is to happen during visitation. The father denies the mother's accusations.

Box 7.4. Example from case 41

M41: (Father) drinks too many beers, and it's a huge issue, and it just shouldn't happen during visitation. I don't care if it's one beer, it shouldn't happen.

CW41: Well, as far as visitation and substances, whether it's alcohol or other things, the SA on principle enforces a zero tolerance policy, and that means that it does NOT go together, regardless of the scope, the SA does not condone visitation and alcohol, and it has to do with the fact that when the children are on visitation, they should feel safe and they should have a good experience. And you may thing, "oh, it's just one beer", but you also have to consider the associations children make with beer and so on and so forth, so, you can say, that's where we're coming from, it's that …

M41: ((The mother interrupts the caseworker)) But there are results here on two children, which basically say that their father has fondled them while intoxicated.

A few minutes later, the caseworker turns to the father:

CW41: Let me ask (father), how often do you drink?

F41: On social occasions.

CW41: But not during the week?

F41: Not during the week. I crawl around in masts and drive a car during the week. That doesn't add up.

CW41: Do you drink every weekend?

F41: No, I don't do that either. It's an allegation that's been imposed on me, and I have lived with that for more than a year. And I can't listen to it for the rest of my life.

CW41: But you drink on social occasions?

F4: Yes.

CW41: Have you ever experienced that your children felt unsafe during visitation with you?

F41: No, and I can say that everyone who knows me says the opposite.

CW41: Yeah, okay.

F4: I turn loving and nice and gentle, I don't scream or shout or anything else.

CW41: But do you drink while the children are present during visitation?

F41: No, not every time.

CW41: Not every time?

F41: No, if you take a birthday, then you have a beer for a birthday. So it's … but it's just blown up to sound like I'm a full-blown alcoholic, and that I go out drinking every day. And I'm sick of it, to be frank.

Note: F = the father, M = the mother, CW = caseworker. See transcription symbols in Appendix E.

The professionals accept the mother's description of the father's alcohol abuse, and it becomes the major theme for the meeting. The mother stigmatizes the father's behavior and the fathers tries to get rid of this label when the caseworker questions him. By using arguments based on his work situation and how his friends see him, he is trying to prove that the mother is wrong. However, he fails to refute the mother's interpretation of the case. They end up making an agreement based on the mother's two demands: the father needs to take Antabuse and to hand in urine samples before visitation. The father

accepts the mother's demands in order to see his two daughters every second weekend. Based on the father's answers in the excerpt, his relation to alcohol may seem harmless. However, it hard to know what is up and down in the specific case. Unlike in courts, the SA does not have to lift the burden of proof on the two parties' claims against each other. They can illuminate the case by asking for information about the child in for example daycare or school, but they do not prove the trier of facts mentioned by the two parties for example by inviting witnesses. Hence, the professionals' impressions of the parents, or the parents' descriptions of the case have a major impact on how the case is interpreted and which agreements or decisions are made. In case 41, the mother succeeds in stigmatizing the father's behavior, however, since he accepts the mother's demands, it seems like there is something to it, or the father is just willing to do anything to see his children.

Serious accusations can also be used to suspend visitation or stop a case until the case is investigated. In case 15, the father's visitation with his two children was suspended for three and half months because the mother accused him of psychical and mental violence against his children. In other meetings, the SA cannot make a decision before the case has been handled by the police and or the municipality.

7.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I examine which arguments and narratives mothers and fathers use to position themselves and challenge their ex-partner's position. In the first part of the chapter, I examine how the parents present their child and the visitation agreement. The analysis shows that parents often use contradictory narratives when describing their children's well-being. The fathers tend so describe it in positive terms, while the mothers tend to draw a more negative picture. The mothers give richer and more detailed descriptions of the child and its reactions than to the fathers. They draw on their role and resources as mother and resident parent and position themselves as knowledgeable clients who know what is best for their children. The fathers do not have resources to give detailed descriptions, perhaps due to their role as non-resident parents. They therefore focus on their desire to spend more time with their child and rebuild the father-child relation. This also illustrates the imbalance of power between mothers and fathers.

In the second part of the chapter, I examine how the parents share unfavorable information about each other to position themselves as responsible clients and discredit their ex-partner's parental skills. The analysis shows that especially the mothers expose their ex-partner's parental skills, for example by exemplifying inappropriate conditions during visitation. Both mothers and

fathers share personal information about their ex-partner to discredit and threaten their position. However, the mothers focus more on the past and their ex-partner's behavior during marriage and divorce than the fathers. Often the personal information is not of great importance for the case. However, information of very serious nature, for example accusations of drug/alcohol abuse or physical and mental violence, becomes the focal point at the meeting and is taken very seriously by the professionals.

Child visitation rights meetings can be seen as a game between two parties who as conflicting actors have no incentive to collaborate about each other's faces. Both have an interest in defining the winning definition of the problem that is discussed at the meeting and try to position themselves as the responsible client and to threaten their counterparty's position. In Goffman's essay about face-work, he writes that "a person who can maintain face in the current situation is someone who abstained from certain actions in the past that would have been difficult to face up to later" (Goffman 1967: 7). Due to the parents' common past and their conflict about their child, it is difficult for both parents to maintain face during the meeting. They use information about each other to make the other parent look bad and themselves look good. The mothers appear as the most powerful actors when it comes to describing the case, and they succeed to a greater extent than fathers in drawing a negative picture of the ex-partner's parental skills.

Chapter 8.
Gender Differences in Clients' Interaction Behavior

In the previous chapter, I examined how two conflicting clients position themselves and challenge their counterparty's position when presenting information about their case by analyzing their arguments at the meeting. This chapter focuses on the clients' interaction behavior during the meeting. My aim is to uncover mothers and fathers' behavioral strategies when interacting with the SA and their ex-partner. As illustrated in chapter 2, a meeting typically consists of two stages. First, the parents present their case, and after a break, they negotiate a potential new visitation agreement. In this chapter, I focus on these two stages: First, what characterizes mothers and fathers' interaction behavior when they present and argue their case? Second, do mother and fathers use different strategies when negotiating their case? In the following, I describe my theoretical point of departure for analyzing mothers and fathers' interaction behavior in the SA.

8.1. Analyzing Mothers and Fathers' Interaction Behavior in the SA

In recent years, procedural – co-productive – elements like parental consulting and mediation have come to play a greater role in case-handling practices in Danish State Administration (Ottosen 2004; Familiestyrelsen 2011). Today, welfare work is in some settings a combination of bureaucratic values, such as legal rules and procedures, market-oriented values, such as freedom of choice, as well as more psychological approaches, such as engaging in co-productive relations (Mik-Meyer 2017: 129-130). This means that the citizens are centered "in the heart of service", and this allows them to become participants in the design and delivery of welfare work (Ferguson 2007). Citizens are seen as capable of voicing and explaining their problems and suggesting solutions on how to solve the problem (Mik-Meyer 2017: 86). This positions them in an expert role; citizens need to take charge of their own lives and problems, and the professional welfare workers' job is to facilitate and help clients find the best solutions (Mik-Meyer 2017: 93). As clients, the parents play an active role in the meeting in the SA. They are not only informers, legal parties, and opinion representatives, but also the objects of more or less therapeutic actions of the public authority. Parents are thus expected to be able to explain and define

the problem in relation to the conflict about the child and the visitation agreement, and the caseworker's and the child specialist's role is to help the parents reach an agreement. If the parents do not reach an agreement, the case enters a classic bureaucratic stage where the caseworker makes a legal decision based on information obtained at the meeting and additional information obtained from e.g. the child's school or daycare.

As in chapter 7, I use Goffman's theory on social interaction as an analytical tool to uncover parents' performances on the frontstage when they interact with public authorities and their counterparty. Goffman's (1959) theatrical metaphors like frontstage and performance as well as his focus on strategy (1970) are useful for understanding the parents' behavior and how they perform their client role at the meeting. Goffman argues that individuals' performance is created by the surroundings and the audience (Goffman 1959). In the context of child visitation rights cases, mothers and fathers have different parental and legal roles, which shape their performances at the meetings. I am interested in uncovering how the parents demonstrate agency when presenting and negotiating their case. As explained in the theoretical chapter, agency is a sociological concept that refers to individuals' capacity to act independently: to form judgements and take actions. According to Giddens (1979), agency is shaped by societal structures such as rules, roles and resources, and is not just a result of independent actions. When clients interact with bureaucracy, their agency is influenced by the structures in the specific context. As I argued earlier, rules, roles and resources in a particular context both contain and enable citizens' actions. Due to the mothers' powerful position in child visitation rights cases, I expect them to play a more dominant role than the fathers both when presenting the case and when negotiating a new visitation agreement.

8.2. Data and Analytical Approach

The data source for this analysis is the transcriptions of the meetings and my field notes. As in chapter 7, I apply an interpretivist approach to analyze and uncover parents' interaction behavior at the meeting. When I present the analysis, I use excerpts from the conversation at the meeting and from my field notes. Some details from each case are left out to secure anonymity. The coding of the data follows the same strategy as in chapter 7 (see also chapter 4 for a more detailed description and Appendix F for the coding scheme). As in chapter 7, I conducted within-case analyses to be able to compare mothers and fathers within each case and across the empirical material like in the previous chapter (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña 2014).

8.3. Stage One: Presenting One's Case

In the following, I explore gender differences in how mothers and fathers present their case and interact with the professionals at the SA. The analysis shows that the mothers have more agency in this stage; they take control of the situation by being proactive and solution-oriented, whereas the fathers play a more passive role.

8.3.1. The Proactive, Solution-Oriented Mothers – and the Passive Fathers

In chapter 5, we learned how clients prepare and devise strategies backstage before an interaction with public authorities and their counterparty. The analysis showed that mothers and fathers generally use different preparatory strategies. Mothers are well prepared and spend time, for example, documenting and preparing arguments. Many fathers have a more relaxed approach, and most of them do not spend much time on preparation. Several fathers explained that they take the meeting "as it comes". These different approaches seem to color the parents' performances frontstage when they present and negotiate their case at the meeting. In several cases, the mothers have a more systematic approach than the fathers when they explain their case. Many bring a list of arguments that they outline when it is their turn to speak. This results in detailed descriptions of their child and what their ex-partner does wrong in relation to the child (see chapter 7). "I just wrote down some things we could talk about during the meeting", the mother from case 5 says and starts outlining all her arguments chronologically. Hence, the mothers are not only more systematic when presenting arguments, they are also more proactive and solution-oriented; they suggest concrete solutions to the problems. The fathers are more passive and often just lean on the mothers' arguments and solutions.

Meeting 9 clearly illustrates the mothers and fathers' divergent strategies when presenting their case. In chapter 5, we met the parents from case 9 for the first time. The mother explained, among other things, that she looked through her documents before the meeting, and that she prepared a long list of points. The father explained that he did not prepare anything. In the following excerpt from my field notes, we are now placed in the meeting room:

> The meeting has just begun. The mother and the father sit at a distance from each other in front of the male caseworker and the female child specialist. The caseworker explains that they normally let the applicant describe the case first. Before the caseworker finishes his sentence that both applied for the meeting, the father interrupts him and say: "[Mother] can start. Ladies first." The mother leans over the table and looks directly at the caseworker and the child specialist.

Right next to her is a large stack of documents she has brought with her. The mother starts describing her children's well-being and her concerns about the current visitation schedule for their four children. The father asks if he can borrow a pen. While the mother keeps talking, he takes notes in his notebook, quickly turning each page. She gives a detailed description with several examples of conditions during visitation that in her opinion are not in the children's best interest. For example, she explains that the fathers constantly calls the children during her scheduled period, and that it is stressful for the children. The child specialist asks the mother how she thinks they can help her. The mother says, "Basically, I think we should make an agreement about calling times. I have a suggestion for day and time". The child specialist continues: "A concrete agreement about cooperation and communication?" "Yes, exactly," the mother answers. "I think that sounds reasonable," the child specialist states. The mother suggests that they use a book as a tool to communicate about the children. The child specialist asks what should be in the book. "Specific rules," the mother promptly responds. The mother explains that she has a list of topics and suggestions she would like to discuss at the meeting (Field notes, case 9, January 2017).

The excerpt illustrates that this mother has a clear strategy when presenting the case. She starts by *defining the problem* by explaining the children's well-being and her concerns about the current visitation agreement. She gives examples of conditions during visitation that in her opinion are not in the children's' best interest. Second, she *suggests a solution* to the problem, namely that they implement specific calling times and use a book to communicate about the children. Moreover, she brought a list of suggestions she would like to discuss. The mother demonstrates agency by taking control of the situation. She is able to define what is important to discuss at the meeting and how to solve the problem. Hence, she plays the ideal client role by being proactive and demonstrating that she is an expert on her own life and needs (Mik-Meyer 2017).

The father does not hesitate to let the mother start, and while the mother is talking, he takes notes. This could be interpreted as a lack of strategy, which he also explained in the interview. He uses the mother's descriptions to prepare what he wants to say. After the excerpt, it is the father's turn to speak. He looks in his notebook and then begins to respond to the mother's arguments. He explains that the mother is right that he calls his children every day: "I need to know that my children are doing well," he explains. Afterwards, they turn to another item on the mother's list. After some minutes, the child specialist interrupts the father and says that she would like him to explain how they can help him at the meeting. The father also applied for a meeting but he has not defined and explained the problem he needs help with. Box 8.1 shows an excerpt from the discussion between the father and the child specialist.

Box 8.1. Example from case 9

CS9: ((The child specialist interrupts the father)) But can I please just say something because I need – and it's not to hurry anyone – but I would really like to hear from you (father) how you think we could help you today.

F9: I'll tell you.

CS9: Because it's important that you take advantage of us now that we're here.

F9: Yes, exactly.

CS9: Because what often happens – and it's perfectly understandable – is that you get all the details about what's happened and who said what and so on; we'll never agree on all those things, but please listen, what could we agree on?

F9: Yes.

CS9: Because (mother) has been very specific about how we [can help her]

F9: ((The father interrupts the child specialist)) I [just need]

CS9: ((The child specialist interrupts the father)) How did you want us to help you?

F9: I just need that some of things (mother) … the accusations she's [made against me]

CS9: ((The child specialist interrupts the father)) I just want to remind you, because we really want to help you.

Note: F = the father, M = the mother, CS = child specialist. See transcription symbols in chapter 3.

The child specialist asks the father several times to explain what he needs and mentions that the mother has been very precise in defining what she needs. Instead of giving a clear answer, the father explains that he needs to respond to some of the mother's accusations. He does not define the problem he needs help with or suggest solutions to the problems. After a break, they start discussing the mother's suggestions one by one. The father does not make any additions. Hence, the mother becomes the main agenda setter for the discussions at the meeting. The excerpt illustrates that the professionals expect the clients to co-produce by defining the problem and explain what they need help with (Mik-Meyer 2017). In this meeting, the father shows lack of agency by playing a passive role. He does not demonstrate independence, and he leans on the mother's argumentation in order to formulate his own point of view.

Case 9 clearly shows that the mother and the father have different strategies when presenting the case. This picture of the systematic, proactive and solution-oriented mothers and the passive fathers emerges across the empirical material. However, in some cases, the father plays a more proactive role. The question is whether the father's passivity is always lack of agency or whether it is an intentional strategy. For the father from case 19, passivity was an intentional strategy. He did not apply for the meeting, his goal was to maintain status quo in the visitation agreement, and he decided not to go into long discussions at the meeting:

I: Had you prepared a strategy before this meeting or a plan for what you wanted to say or do during the meeting?

F19: Actually no, not for this meeting. I hadn't applied. So I just thought that I would wait and see what they came up with.

(…)

F19: (…) my strategy for the meeting is actually to not comment on what she says.

I: Why?

F19: Because then you don't end up in a … then it ends there. There won't be a long discussion. I primarily go to the meeting if we have to make changes on that piece of paper, then that's what it's about. I don't want to participate in a long couples therapy session. A lot of times she'll say something and then look at me, almost hoping that she can provoke me. My strategy is actually to only respond to questions from the two participants from the SA.

(…)

I: Have you done that other times if there was something you wanted to articulate more?

F19: Yes, I think I did that the first time we were in there. I had called the meeting. I think I had an agenda and some things I wanted settled. This time it was probably different because I was kind of in the defensive and just had to wait and see; I was not the attacker. I just wanted to maintain status quo more or less.

The father from case 19 explains that he decided not to comment on the mother's statements, and that he would only reply to the SA's questions. Throughout the meeting, he is silent and passive and only responds if asked. In the last part of the excerpt, he explains that this strategy was based on his position at the meeting and his desire to maintain status quo. Using a game metaphor, he explains that he was not "the attacker"; he was in a defensive position and therefore decided not to be proactive. In this case, the passive role is linked to the client's goal and position at the meeting. However, I do not find a systematic pattern between the more passive role and being the non-applier. In the empirical material, there are several examples of fathers who applied for the meeting (for example case 9) and who still play a more passive role than the mothers. However, it is reasonable that some fathers decide not to be aggressive or dominant at the meeting as a strategy.

8.4. Stage Two: Negotiating an Agreement

In this second part of the chapter, I focus on the last part of the meeting – the negotiating phase – and whether male and female clients use different strategies. To the best of my knowledge, there is no scientific research about how parents negotiate about child visitation or whether mothers and fathers use different strategies. However, there are several studies about gender differences in negotiation style more generally. In a review of gender stereotypes and negotiation performance, Kray and Thompson (2005) argue that the gender stereotype dictates that men perform assertively, independently and rationally, whereas women act more emotionally, passively and with concern for others. They argue that female negotiators are disadvantaged because the masculine traits are valued at the bargaining table. There is thus an implicit link between gender stereotypes and negotiation performance (see Figure 8.1). In their review, they find mixed evidence and conclude that the contextual factors surrounding the negotiation have a significant effect on whether the gender differences emerge (Kray and Thompson 2005).

Figure 8.1. The Gender Stereotype-Negotiation Link

The effective negotiator	The ineffective negotiator
Strong Dominant Assertive Rational	Weak Submissive Accommodating Emotional

Male attributes	Female attributes
Strong Dominant Assertive Rational	Weak Submissive Accommodating Emotional
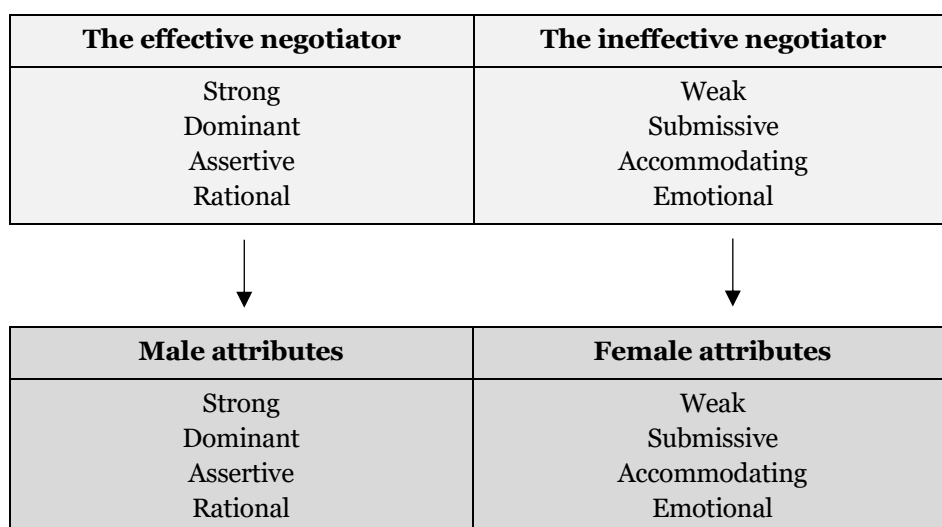
Note: Based on Figure 1 in Kray and Thompson (2005).

In the context of child visitation rights cases, the gender stereotypes presented in Figure 8.1 are not present. I see the opposite picture: the mothers show masculine traits by being assertive and playing a dominant role in the negotiation phase and the fathers show feminine traits and appear weak and submissive. The mothers adhere to their own arguments and use broad and detailed descriptions of their child to argue their case. They are also more tenacious and persistent than the fathers when it comes to reaching an agreement. In some meetings, the mothers state that they are willing to cooperate on a new agreement about more visitation at the father's home, but it is often on

the mother's premises. They define and formulate the solution, often in collaboration with the professionals, and then the fathers adjust to these suggestions. The fathers are more cooperative, willing to be flexible in order to reach an agreement and therefore more compliant when negotiating. This might be due to the power difference between mothers and fathers in these cases. Fiske (1993) argues that low-power individuals behave in a more cooperative and dependent fashion than high-power individuals (Fiske 1993). As resident parents, the mothers are first movers. They have authority to make more decisions than the non-resident parent (typically the father), and they spend more time with the children. This puts the mothers in an advantageous position, also when they negotiate visitation. The professionals seek approval by the mothers (or the resident parent) when negotiating a new agreement. In the following, I use two cases to illustrate the gendered pattern in parents' interaction behavior when negotiating a new visitation agreement.

8.4.1. Case 1: The Compliant Father and the Persistent Mother

The parents from case 3 have a son, who lives 9 days with his mother, and 5 days with his father per two-week period. The father has applied for a meeting in the SA. He argues that the current visitation agreement is not in the child's best interest and suggests a 7-7-solution. He has also applied for one more week of holiday with his son. The parents have opposite views on the son's well-being (see chapter 7), and the mother is not interested in changing the current visitation agreement. After long discussions about their son and their cooperation and communication, the caseworker rejects the fathers' suggestion about a 7-7-solution:

> OK, listen, about a 7-7 scheme, it's simply not an option because the way your cooperation is going, you have to start somewhere else. First, you should work on improving your cooperation for [son]. We can't force you, you're adults, so it's up to you whether you want to. We can only encourage you to do what's necessary for your child (Caseworker, case 3)

The parents are not negotiating a new visitation agreement; the caseworker rejects the father's application for a 7-7-solution due to their lack of cooperation. The father makes no objections; he just says that it makes him sad. The mother smiles and seems very satisfied. However, the expression in her face changes significantly, when the caseworkers turns to the second point in the father's application: holiday visitation. He mother is not willing to hand over one week of holiday to the father, and a long negotiation starts between the caseworker and the mother. The father stays passive during the negotiation phase as the caseworker argues his case:

Box 8.2. Example from case 3

CW3: So on the subject of holidays, (father) wants three consecutive weeks of summer holiday, and we have to say that with (son's) age and the scope of the current visitation, it's perfectly normal to split holidays equally, and I don't really see any arguments why that would not be the case.

M3: But 2 weeks are also normal, and 1 week is also normal.

CW3: No, it's normal that, well, (son) is actually also (father's) child, and therefore it's perfectly normal that when you are non-resident parent and see the child less than the resident parent in normal everyday life, [then]

M3: ((The mother interrupts the caseworker)) If you have more holiday?

CW3: No, it's the same amount of holiday you have, right, that's totally normal, and you should expect us to make a decision on that, right? I'm just thinking that we'll make that three consecutive weeks' holiday.

M3: Then I would like to have that week at some other point.

CW3: What week?

M3: But why does it have to be more?

CW3: When you are divorced, and you have a child together and it's summer holiday, right, then you actually think it's good for the child to have equal opportunity to think back on lovely holidays with both mom and dad.

M3: I don't agree; I think two weeks are plenty.

F3: I don't think two weeks are enough, (mother).

M3: You have more than enough, and it's already been changed from two weeks to 17 days. I don't think it's fair.

CW3: But three weeks for a child that age isn't [something that]

M3: ((The mother interrupts the caseworker)) We're not doing 7-7 in the other schemes, so why does it have to be equal precisely during holidays?

CW3: Because holidays are something [special that]

M3: ((The mother interrupts the caseworker)) I would also like to spend holidays with my children.

The mother continues to reject a new agreement about holiday visitation

CW3: But if you can't agree, then I have to make a decision. How can I make a decision? Then I'll need (son) to come in for a child interview, right? Bye bye peace! Should we do that, or should we just say that it'll be three weeks?

CS3: It's 17 days now, (mother), three weeks are 5 days more.

The caseworker and the child specialist keep arguing that three weeks' holiday at the father's home is normal.

CW3: Three weeks that's completely uncontroversial, completely. So should we write it down that you're in agreement with that, or should we call (son) for a child interview?

M3: That depends on what more we have to discuss.

CW3: We have no other items to discuss. Then we're done.

CS3: If we agree on three weeks' holiday, then that's it.

CW3: ((Long break)) Yes, should we do it?

M3: Yes, yes, of course.

CW3: OK, let's do it then.

M3: Not that I agree.

CW3: No, but you consent.

M3: Yes, yes, I consent.

Note: F = the father, M = the mother, CW = caseworker, CS = child specialist. See transcription symbols in chapter 3.

As the rather long excerpt from the meeting illustrates, it is a tough negotiation between the mother and the caseworker. The mother is persistent and keeps arguing her case. In order to convince the mother about a new agreement for holiday visitation, the caseworker uses several arguments and ultimately threats. First, the caseworker uses a discourse about normality in relation to the child's age and the current visitation agreement. Second, he argues for the child's rights to see both parents also during holidays. Third, when the caseworker still has not convinced the mother, and she keeps refusing a new agreement, the caseworker threatens her by saying that if they do not agree, he will make a legal decision based on an interview with the child. The threat seems to be the right move. The mother gives up and agrees on the new agreement for holiday visitation. The mothers tries hard and is very persistent throughout the negotiation. The caseworker's rejection of the fathers' application for a "7-7-solution" implies an alliance between the mother and the caseworkers, but this alliance changes in the fathers' favor when holiday visitation is negotiated. Although the mother gives up, she still demonstrates more agency than the father. He does not resist when the caseworker refuses to negotiate a new visitation schedule.

8.4.2. Case 2: Cooperation – But on the Mother's Premises

The parents from case 30 have three children together, who primary live with their mother. Every second Saturday, the children spend 7 hours with the father. Two years ago, they practiced a 7-7 visitation schedule, but it was changed due to the father's illness. The father applied for a meeting with the SA, and he argues that the children express that they want to spend more time with him. The father hopes that within a year, they can agree on a visitation schedule where the children live 5 days at his place and 9 days at their mothers place per two-week period. He suggests that they increase the amount of days every third month. The father is proactive throughout the meeting; he suggests different solutions and appears very cooperative when the mother, the caseworker or the child specialist make suggestions: "We can easily do that", the father keeps saying. The mother is willing to cooperate about a new visitation schedule. "Of course, we should expand it [the visitation schedule]", the mother says repeatedly. However, despite the common goal, they have two different approaches to obtaining it.

The father wants a long-term agreement, and the mother wants to take small steps and listen to the children and evaluate their behavior after ended visitation. The mother has tears in her eyes when talking about her children, and she fears that the father's solution is not in the children's best interest.

When they negotiate a new agreement, it is on the mother's premises. She defines the solutions to the visitation schedule, and she insists that they do not make a long-term plan. The father ends up accepting this. Hence, the mother's arguments prevail, and she is supported by the child specialist in her suggestions about taking small steps when it comes to the children's visitation with their father.

Box 8.3. Example from case 30

F30: (...) now I'd like to say that I hadn't thought that we would ever reach this type of agreement, that we could get any sleep-overs, I have to admit, I hadn't seen that coming that we would agree on that and I had thought that we would be yelling at each other because that's what we usually do.

M30: But I don't understand that because it's always been my intention, I've just been forced to establish a framework because you've been sick and all that.

Note: M= Mother, F = father.

Although the mother's arguments prevail and she frames the conditions for a new visitation agreement, the father seems relieved that they were able to find a solution.

This case illustrates the power imbalance between mothers and fathers in child visitation disputes. The mother's solution is often the winning solution, and the father adjusts to it. Several fathers mentioned during negotiations that they feel that the mother's needs are given more weight, and that the new agreement is on her premises. Again, the reason may be their different legal roles. The professionals seek approval from the mothers (or the resident parent) when negotiating a new agreement, and in most cases, the mothers therefore have the final say on the new visitation agreement.

8.5. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to uncover parents' frontstage performances and examine how their roles as mothers and fathers influence their interaction behavior. I analyzed their interaction behavior on the two main stages at a meeting: when they present their case, and when they negotiate a new visitation agreement. The chapter shows that the mothers demonstrate more agency in each stage. Most mothers are more systematic, proactive and solution-oriented when they explain their case, while many fathers play a more passive role. As clients, the parents are expected to coproduce during the meeting by being active players in the problem solving. They are thus given the role of the responsive client with expert knowledge about their own life and needs (Mik-Meyer 2017). The analysis showed that the mothers play the ideal client role

by defining the problem and suggesting solutions. However, it can be problematic that clients are placed in this expert role, as they are not all capable of explaining their situation. In the context of child visitation rights cases, it is important to consider the fathers' position. Their more passive role in the meeting is not necessarily lack of competence but could be related to their legal role as non-resident parent. They do not have the same resources as the mothers to argue their case.

This also applies in the negotiation stage. The two cases illustrate that the mothers play a more dominant role than the fathers when negotiating a new visitation agreement. The fathers are more submissive and cooperative. In some cases, the mothers are very persistent and keep arguing their case to convince the professionals from the SA and their ex-partner about their point of view. Even though the mothers express that they are willing to cooperate and share the same goal as the father, they still become the main "architect" on the new visitation agreement. In the context of child visitation rights cases, mothers' interaction behavior is more stereotypically masculine, while the fathers' behavior is more stereotypically feminine. However, the mothers' behavior is often a combination of masculinity and femininity; even though they are dominant, they often become emotional during the meeting.

Part III: After the Encounter

Because it [the SA] is still, unfortunately, designed so that
the mother is right. (...) it's a feeling you get as a father.
That it's only the mother who has like a mouthpiece.
It's not so much the father. You don't have a lot to say as a
father. That's kind of how I feel.
- The father from case 15

Chapter 9.
Gender Differences in Clients' Perceived Substantive and Procedural Justice

The meeting is over. The parents leave the meeting room; either they reached an agreement about a new visitation agreement, or they have to wait until the caseworker makes a legal decision. How do they evaluate the meeting? Do they perceive the process and the meeting outcome as fair? In this final analytical chapter, I examine the parents' perceived substantive and procedural justice. Perceived substantive justice[18] is the perceived fairness of how rewards and cost are shared (Adams 1965). In the case of child visitation rights, it is the parents' perceived fairness of the distribution of visitation outcomes with their children, i.e., the allotted time they can spend with their child. However, one thing is the fairness of decision outcomes; another is the process of citizens' interaction with the public authorities. Social psychologists point to the importance of procedural justice (Lind and Tyler 1988; Tyler 1990; Tyler and Huo 2002). Perceived procedural justice is a psychological process-based model that explains citizens' subjective judgement about the fairness of the procedures through which the public authorities make decisions and treat members of the public (Tyler and Huo 2002; Tyler 2003). Citizens care as much or more about the process of interaction with the state as they do about the outcome (Lind and Tyler 1988). Fair and equitable procedures are important to citizens. In this chapter, I ask two questions: 1) Do mothers and fathers have different perceptions of substantive and procedural justice related to their meeting in the SA? 2) How do mothers and fathers describe the procedure at the meeting? I analyze this using a combination of quantitative (survey data) and quantitative (semi-structured interviews) data.

Based on insights from the previous chapters, it is reasonable to believe that mothers have a higher level of perceived substantive and procedural justice. Mothers are in a position of advantage due to their role as resident parents. Furthermore, the previous analyses showed that mothers are better prepared before the encounter, they have higher bureaucratic self-efficacy, and they appear as more powerful actors in the meeting compared to the fathers. They are, for example, able to give richer descriptions of the case, and they are more persistent when negotiating about a new agreement. This could lead to

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[18] Also known as distributive justice.

better outcomes and a feeling of more influence at the meeting. Below, I describe four elements of perceived procedural justice before turning to the method section and the analysis.

9.1. Elements of Perceived Procedural Justice

The theoretical framework of procedural justice has been used in different empirical settings, mainly in regulatory areas, for example, in studies of citizens' encounters with the police (see, e.g., Jonathan-Zamir, Mastrofski, and Moyal 2015; Mazerolle et al. 2013; Tyler and Folger 1980; Tyler 2017). As mentioned, perceived procedural justice is a psychological process-based model that explains citizens' subjective judgement of the fairness of the procedures through which public authorities make decisions and treat members of the public (Tyler and Huo 2002; Tyler 1990). The model suggests that people's willingness to accept the constraints of the law and legal authorities is related to their evaluations of procedural justice (Tyler 2003). The literature mentions four key elements of perceived procedural justice.

First, *participation*. When public authorities are managing a dispute, their approach is evaluated as fairer if they allow disputants to participate in finding a solution to the dispute (Tyler 2003). Early studies of procedural justice also emphasized the importance of participation in the process (Thibaut and Walker 1975). They argue that people are more satisfied with the procedure if they are asked to explain their situation and are able to communicate their views to the authorities about that situation, and, maybe more important, that they feel that their views are being considered. A second key element is *neutrality*. Public authorities are expected to be neutral, impartial, and unbiased. When public authorities make decisions, they should be based on objective legitimate criteria, there should be an absence of obvious decision-making bias based on personal characteristics (e.g. sex, race, and age), and the decision-making process should be transparent (Jonathan-Zamir, Mastrofski, and Moyal 2015). In this chapter, I do not look at the perceived procedural justice in the authorities' decision-making but rather at the process at the meeting. In most cases in the SA, the parents reached an agreement at the meeting; however, the professional closely guides this agreement, and values like neutrality and impartiality between the two conflicting parties are extremely important for how they evaluate the process at the meeting. Third, *interpersonal treatment* is important for how citizens view the process. Citizen who feel treated with dignity and respect by the authorities with whom they deal have a higher degree of perceived procedural justice (Tyler 2010, 1988). Fourth, *decision accuracy or quality of the decision*, which includes that the authority has received the relevant information they need to handle problem (Tyler

1988). Unlike perceived procedural justice, perceived substantive justice does not consist of several elements. It is primary related to the content of the outcome: how people judge the fairness of the outcome (Van den Bos, Lind, and Wilke 1997). Most studies of citizens' perceived substantive and procedural justice use a quantitative approach; there are only few qualitative studies (see, e.g., Maguire 2018; Saarikkomäki 2016).

Why should we care about citizens' perceived procedural and substantial justice? On the macro level, it is important for citizens' trust in government. If citizens feel unfairly treated in the administrative system, it will decrease their trust in government, which is an essential societal problem. On the micro level, is it important that parents feel fairly and equally treated when they interact with the SA. The decisions made in the SA have major importance for parents' everyday lives and happiness; deciding how much time parents are allowed to spend with their child must be characterized as one of the most invasive decisions public authorities can make. It is therefore important that parents feel treated fairly. In the following, I explain the data and the analytical strategy.

9.2. Data and Analytical Strategy

In this chapter, I combine quantitative and qualitative data. First, the aim is to investigate whether mothers and fathers have different levels of perceived substantive and procedural justice in relation to their case and experiences in the SA. To study this I use the panel survey data. Second, I use the interviews with the parents. The goal is to understand how mothers and fathers describe and perceive the process at the meeting and whether they have different experiences (see chapter 4 for descriptions of the data collection). It is important to highlight that the interview data consist of parents who are invited to interdisciplinary meetings (typically with high conflict between the parents), and the survey data consist more generally of parents who have a child visitation case in the SA (both parents invited for a cooperative and interdisciplinary meeting, see chapter 2). In the following, I describe the measurement of the quantitative analysis and the interview questions.

9.2.1. The Quantitative Part: Measures

The dependent variable gender is measured as a binary variable (0 = male, 1= female), and this also reflects the parental roles as mother and father. This chapter mainly focuses on the parents' perceived substantive and procedural justice, but first, I test the relationship between gender and the decision out-

come at the meeting. This measure is used as control in the analysis of perceived substantive and procedural justice since it could potentially influence how the parties view the process and the fairness of the outcome.

9.2.1.1. Decision outcome

Child visitation rights outcomes concern the amount of time parents can spend with their child. In Denmark, agreements and decisions on scheduled visitation are often based on the number of days allotted to each parent per two weeks (from 0 to 14 days). For example, a 7/7 decision' gives the mother seven days and the father seven days for every two-week period. Most parents want to either maintain the existing agreement (status quo) or spend more days with their child. A smaller group wants fewer days, often based on practical explanations or on the child's desire to spend more time with the other parent. This variable measures the parents' preferences regarding scheduled visitation before the meeting (measured in survey 1) and the actual agreement or legal decision/resolution (measured in survey 2 or survey 3). The value 0 indicates that the parents obtain their preference, i.e., there is consistency between their preference before the meeting and the scheduled visitation agreement or decision reached at the meeting. The other values indicate how many days (1-14) the parents were from obtaining their desired outcome (mean = 1.60, SD = 2.34).

Figure 9.1. Illustration of outcome measure

Preference

| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
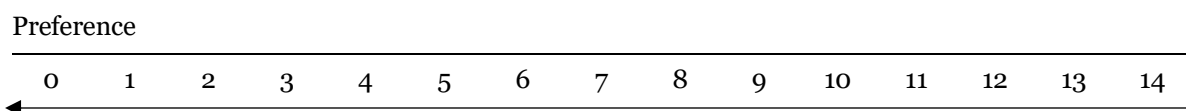
As shown in Table 9.1, mothers and fathers were on average respectively 1.28 days and 2.02 days from obtaining their preference.

Table 9.1. Decision outcome

	Mean (SD) Mothers	N	Mean (SD) Fathers	N	p > F
Decision outcome	1.28 (2.36)	123	2.05 (2.26)	86	0.02*

Note: * p < 0.05. **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.00.

It is difficult to establish a good outcome measure in these cases. Every agreement or legal resolution is very specific and cannot always be counted in days. Some parents see their children less than one day per two-week period (for example two hours every other Wednesday), some have monitored visitation

(a child specialist supports the visitation), and some have different solutions for each of their children. These respondents have been eliminated from the analysis. This is problematic because it reduces the sample and excludes some of the most vulnerable parents who only spend few hours with their children per two-week period from the sample.

9.2.1.2 Perceived Substantive Justice

The outcome of the meeting based on whether the parents obtain their preference for scheduled visitation does not necessarily reflect their satisfaction with or perceived fairness of the substantial outcome. Parents who were one day from obtaining their preferred outcome may consider the agreement or decision reasonable, and the dialogue and discussion at the meeting may have changed their idea of the ideal visitation agreement. Therefore, perceived substantive justice might be a better outcome measure. As mentioned, perceived substantive justice is the perceived fairness of how rewards and costs are shared. In the case of visitation rights, it is the parents' perception of the fairness of the scheduled visitation with the child. The parents were asked: "Think back to the visitation agreement you made at the meeting" (survey 2) / "Think back to the adjudicative decision you received from the SA" (survey 3). "To what extent do you think the agreement (survey 2)/decision (survey 3) was fair?" (0 = Not fair, 10 = Very fair). (Mean = 5.40, SD = 3.74).[19]

Table 9.2. Perceived substantive justice

	Mean (SD) Mothers	N	Mean (SD) Fathers	N	p > F
Perceived substantive justice	6.25 (3.48)	173	4.11 (3.77)	114	0.00***

Note: Survey question: "Think back to the visitation agreement you made at the meeting" (survey 2)/ "Think back to the adjudicative decision you received from the SA" (survey 3). "To what extent do you think the agreement (survey 2)/decision (survey 3) was fair?" (0 = Not fair, 10 = Very fair). * p < 0.05. **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.00.

As Table 9.2 shows, mothers have a higher perceived substantive justice on average than fathers. On a scale from 0-10, their mean is 6.25 compared to 4.11 for fathers.

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[19] As mentioned in chapter 4, the meeting can have different outcomes: they reach an agreement at the meeting or the caseworkers will make a legal decision. The meeting outcome was measured in survey 2 or 3. See Figure 4.1 in chapter 4.

9.2.1.3. Perceived Procedural Justice

Perceived procedural justice is hard to measure using only one question. Inspired by Tyler's questionnaire about procedural justice (1990) and the four elements described earlier, I measure citizens' perceived procedural justice using 10 items (see Table 9.2). The respondents replied on a five-point Likert scale. A factor analysis showed that the concept reflected one dimension (see factor analysis in Appendix H). The scale goes from one to five, where five indicates a high degree of perceived procedural justice (mean = 3.5, SD= 0.91). The index showed sufficient reliability (Cronbach alpha = 0.93). The measurement was conducted in survey 2 based on meeting processes.

Table 9.3. Measurement of perceived procedural justice

	Item	Mean (SD) Mothers	N	Mean (SD) Fathers	N	p > F
1	The SA gave me the opportunity to explain my side of the case.	3.68 (1.12)	210	3.34 (1.21)	144	0.01**
2	The SA let me take part in the conversation.	3.76 (1.05)	208	3.46 (1.08)	144	0.01**
3	The SA asked for relevant information about our case.	3.44 (1.20)	207	3.05 (1.26)	144	0.00***
4	The SA was impartial to me and my ex-partner.	3.68 (1.21)	200	3.14 (1.38)	135	0.00***
5	The SA had a great deal of knowledge of our case.	2.73 (1.17)	204	2.64 (1.14)	140	0.48
6	The SA seemed genuinely interested in helping me.	3.59 (1.16)	204	3.09 (1.32)	140	0.00***
7	The SA made it possible for both me and my ex-partner to be a part of the meeting.	3.79 (1.10)	200	3.52 (1.25)	138	0.04*
8	The SA treated me politely.	4.12 (0.88)	207	3.73 (1.17)	143	0.00***
9	The SA treated me with respect.	3.98 (0.96)	207	3.44 (1.19)	143	0.00***
10	The SA refrained from making incorrect comments.	3.82 (1.17)	191	3.45 (1.18)	132	0.01**
	Perceived procedural justice	3.66 (0.82)	169	3.28 (1.00)	119	0.00***

Note: Survey question: The following questions concern your perception of the meeting at the SA. Please indicate the extent to which the following statements match your experience. * p < 0.05. **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.00.

Table 9.3 shows each survey item with the mean for respectively mothers and fathers. Mothers score higher on each item, and there is a significant difference between mothers and fathers on all items except one. Item 5, "The SA had a great deal of knowledge of our case", scores lowest of all items for both

mothers (mean = 2.73) and fathers (mean = 2.64) and the two scores are very close. This finding corresponds with the parents' descriptions in the qualitative data, which I will return to later in this chapter.

Other factors than gender may affect perceived substantial and procedural justice. In the following, I explain which control variable is used in the models to analyze the relationship between gender and perceived substantive and procedural justice.

9.2.1.4. Controls

I examine the relationship between gender and perceived substantive and procedural justice respectively. In the first model, I show the binary relationship between gender and perceived substantive and procedural justice. In the following models, I control for relevant confounding variables. In model II, I control for variables at the individual level: social demographic characteristics such as age, ethnicity, and length of education. Age is measured as the difference between birth year and survey year (2017 or 2018), ethnicity as a dummy variable (non-Danish = 0, Danish = 1), and education as a categorical variable (1 = without completed education, 6 = Master's degree). Furthermore, I control for parents' bureaucratic self-efficacy (see items in Article A, "Bureaucratic Self-Efficacy"), which is measured before the meeting to ensure that it is not affected by the parents' performances at the meeting.

In model III and model IIII, I control for variables related to the meeting. First, the type of meeting outcome; either the parents reach an agreement at the meeting guided by the caseworkers or the caseworkers make a legal resolution after the meeting if the parents do not agree. I control for this difference using a dummy variable ("Legal resolution" = 0, "Agreement" = 1). See descriptive statistics in chapter 4 (Table 4.3). Second, I control for the decision outcome, which is measured as explained earlier. Since the parental role (mother and father) in most cases is interconnected with the legal role as resident and non-resident parents, I do not control for this difference.

9.2.2. The Qualitative Part: Semi-Structured Interviews

In the qualitative part of this analysis, I use the 30 semi-structured interviews (see description of the data collection in chapter 4). I asked the parents about the four elements of perceived procedural justice (see Table 9.4), but first, I asked them more openly about their experiences of the process at the meeting, which added more context-specific descriptions of how they view the process.

Table 9.4. Excerpt from the interview guide

Elements of perceived procedural justice	Interview question
Participation	When you recall the meeting, do you feel that the lawyer/the child specialist involved you and gave you time to explain your side of the story?
Decision accuracy	Did you feel that the lawyer and the child specialist had a general idea of what the case was about?
Neutrality	Do you feel that you were heard and involved to the same extent as your ex-partner during the meeting?
Interpersonal treatment	Please describe how you perceived the lawyer and the child specialist. Did you feel well treated?

I also asked them how they viewed the content of the agreement reached at the meeting or the legal decision made by the SA to get an understanding of their perceived substantive justice. Table 9.5 shows an excerpt from the interview guide.

Table 9.5. Excerpt from the interview guide

Perceived substantive justice	Interview question
If they did not reach an agreement at the meeting	You did not manage to reach an agreement at the meeting. What has happened since then; has the SA made a decision?
	What is the content of the SA's decision?
	Please describe your thoughts when you read the decision.
	Do you think the decision was fair? Why/why not?
If they reached an agreement at the meeting	You managed to reach an agreement at the meeting. Are you satisfied with the content of the agreement?
	Why/why not? What would it have said if it were up to you?
	Did you feel pressured into making this agreement? (Where did the pressure come from? Ex-partner, child specialist, caseworker)
	Do you think the content of your agreement is fair to both parties?

Below, I show the results of the quantitative analysis and then nuance and deepen our understanding of parents' perceived procedural and substantive justice by analyzing the parents' descriptions.

9.3. Gender Differences in Perceived Substantive and Procedural Justice

Before I show the results from the quantitative analysis of the relationship between gender and perceived substantive and procedural justice, I describe the relationship between gender and decision outcome.

9.3.1. Gender Differences in Outcome and Perceived Substantive Justice

Do mothers obtain better outcomes than fathers in child visitation disputes? As shown in Table 9.6 below, there is a significant negative relationship between gender and decision outcome. This means that mothers are closer than fathers to obtaining their preference for a visitation agreement at the meeting, also when we control for sociodemographic characteristics. Why mothers obtain better outcomes and whether is it related to their performances at the meeting is not possible to test within this dataset. However, as also shown in Table 9.6, parents with high bureaucratic self-efficacy are closer to obtaining their preferred visitation schedule. A critique of this measurement is that it may reflect how good and realistic they are at predicting the meeting outcome.

Table 9.6. The relationship between gender and decision outcome

| | Decision outcome | |
	Model I	Model II
Female/Mother	-0.76 (0.33)*	-0.67 (0.33)*
Age		-0.00 (0.02)
Danish		-0.23 (0.67)
Education (ref: Master's degree)		
Without completed education		3.07 (1.26)
Elementary school		2.50 (1.23)
High school		1.54 (1.15)
Vocational school		1.75 (1.16)
College/Bachelor's degree		1.73 (1.20)
Bureaucratic self-efficacy		-0.92 (1.21)***
Constant	2.05 (0.25)***	3.59 (1.53)*
R^2	0.02	0.16
N	209	209

As described earlier, the decision outcomes based on whether the parents obtain their preference for scheduled visitation do not necessarily reflect their perceived fairness related to the substantive outcome. For example, parents who were one day from receiving their preferred outcome may consider the agreement or decision reasonable based on the discussions at the meeting. Perceived substantive justice is therefore a good measure of how citizen perceive the outcome.

Table 9.5. Perceived substantive justice

	Perceived substantive justice			
	Model I	**Model II**	**Model III**	**Model IIII**
Female/Mother	2.14 (0.43)***	1.90 (0.44)***	1.78 (0.44)***	1.57 (0.52)***
Age		-0.06 (0.03)*	-0.06 (0.03)	-0.08 (0.03)*
Danish		-0.06 (0.85)	0.03 (0.84)	0.61 (1.12)
Education (ref: Master's degree)				
Without completed education		-1.11 (1.65)	-1.18 (1.63)	-0.65 (2.00)
Elementary school		1.07 (1.59)	1.01 (1.57)	1.17 (1.92)
High school		0.85 (1.46)	0.79 (1.45)	0.87 (1.78)
Vocational school		0.22 (1.48)	0.29 (1.46)	0.46 (1.80)
College/Bachelor's degree		0.72 (1.53)	0.68 (1.51)	1.13 (1.89)
Bureaucratic self-efficacy		1.09 (0.25)***	1.06 (0.25)***	0.85 (0.31)**
Agreement (ref. legal resolution)			1.06 (0.25)**	0.39 (0.53)
Meeting outcome				-0.34 (0.11)***
Constant	4.11 (0.34)***	2.43 (2.43)***	1.58 (2.09)	3.49 (2.47)
R²	0.08	0.17	0.19	0.22
N	287	287	287	203

Note: * p <0 .05. **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.00.

The results show that mothers have higher perceived substantive justice, also when we control for social demographic characteristics. Parents with higher bureaucratic self-efficacy also perceive the outcome as more fair. Following the argument in Paper A, "Bureaucratic Self-Efficacy", clients with higher bureaucratic self-efficacy also obtain better outcomes and hereby perceive the outcome as more fair. Model III also shows that parents who reached an agreement at the meeting perceive the meeting outcome as more fair than parents who received a legal resolution from the SA. However, the relationship is no longer significant after control for meeting outcome in Model IIII. Overall, the results show that mothers obtain more favorable outcomes than fathers do,

and mothers view the substantial outcome as more fair than fathers, even when we control for outcome.

9.3.2. Gender Differences in Perceived Procedural Justice

One thing is the outcome; another thing is how the parents view the process. Citizen are more willing to accept outcomes if they view the process as fair. Scholars of procedural justice argue that people's judgements are more affected by procedures than by outcomes (Lind and Tyler 1988; Van den Bos, Lind, and Wilke 1997). In this section, I investigate whether mothers perceive the process at the meeting as fairer than fathers do.

Table 9.6 Perceived procedural justice

| | Perceived procedural justice | | | |
	Model I	Model II	Model III	Model IIII
Female/Mother	0.38 (0.01)***	0.41 (0.11)***	0.40 (0.11)***	0.43 (0.15)**
Age		0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Danish		0.39 (0.19)*	0.37 (0.19)	0.55 (0.31)
Education (ref. Master's degree)				
Without completed education		0.04 (0.38)	0.04 (0.38)	-0.38 (0.54)
Elementary school		0.10 (0.38)	0.10 (0.38)	-0.28 (0.54)
High school		0.05 (0.34)	0.04 (0.34)	-0.31 (0.48)
Vocational school		-0.07 (0.34)	-0.06 (0.34)	-0.55 (0.49)
College/Bachelor's degree		-0.17 (0.35)	-0.17 (0.35)	-0.49 (0.51)
Bureaucratic self-efficacy		0.28 (0.06)***	0.27 (0.06)***	0.29 (0.09)***
Agreement (Ref. legal resolution)			0.14 (0.10)	0.01 (0.15)
Meeting outcome				-0.03 (0.03)
Constant	3.28 (0.08)***	1.63 (0.51)***	1.55 (0.51)***	1.87 (0.69)**
R^2	0.04	0.13	0.14	0.15
N	288	288	288	168

Note: * $p < 0.05$. **$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.00$.

The results show that mothers have a higher level of perceived procedural justice, also when we include cofounding variables such as sociodemographic characteristics, bureaucratic self-efficacy, type of decision outcome and meeting outcome. As in the analysis of perceived substantive justice, I find a relationship between bureaucratic self-efficacy and perceived procedural justice, i.e., parents who are more confident about their meeting with bureaucracy

also view the process as more fair. However, type of meeting outcome (agreement vs. legal resolution) and meeting outcome do not seem to affect how the parents view the process. In the following, I deepen and nuance our understanding of parents' perceived substantive and procedural justice by analyzing interviews with the parents.

9.4. Parents' Experiences of the Process in the SA

In this section, I uncover how parents view the process in the SA based on the semi-structured interviews. First, I examine general elements that both mothers and fathers mention when they explain the procedure at the meeting. Second, I uncover differences in mothers and fathers' descriptions of the meeting. In the next section, I analyze the parents' descriptions of their perceived substantive justice.

In most of the interviews, both mothers and fathers explain that they participated actively in the meeting; they were both involved, and the caseworker and the child specialist listened and allowed both parents to explain their side of the case. However, a group of the parents, especially the fathers, felt that their ex-partner got more talking time than they did. The mothers did not express that they were treated differently than the fathers; however, in cases with severe issues, the mothers felt that it was difficult to convince the professionals from the SA about the severity. I will return to differences in descriptions later in this section.

Overall, most of the parents felt treated fairly and expressed that they were happy to be able to get help at the SA. However, they still think that the procedure can be improved. When I analyzed the empirical material, several parents mentioned mainly three points of criticism about the procedure at the meeting: 1) The SA did not have knowledge about their case, 2) as a client you are allowed to make accusations against your ex-partner without consequences, 3) the SA focuses on finding a compromise. These elements weaken the parents' feeling of procedural justice. In the following, I elaborate on these three points of criticism with examples from the interviews.

9.4.1. Three Points about the Process at the Meeting

9.4.1.1. The SA Does Not Have Knowledge about the Case

> I just think that the State Administration, it's just an assembly line. In, next, out. (...) I don't feel that the people who make the decisions that they know enough about the cases. I don't feel that. And I think it's frustrating. I think that's the worst thing about it (Mother, case 40).

As we already saw in the quantitative analysis, the parents do not feel that the professionals in the SA have enough knowledge about their cases. Several parents also express this claim in the interviews. The parents expect that the professionals from the SA are well prepared, that they have studied the case, and that they have obtained information before the meeting. If they experience that the professionals have not done so, it leads to feelings of frustration, as the mother from case 40 mentions in the quotation above. The mother from case 21 breathes a sigh of relief when she enters the meeting room and finds out that the caseworker has taken notes before the meeting. Professionals from Mødrehjælpen (NGO that helps mothers and children) told her that she could not expect that the SA had read the documents on the case before the meeting:

> M21: But the first thing I notice is that she [the caseworker] has a pad and a pen and has made some notes. Where I think, "okay, good [she makes a sound of relief], maybe she has also read the history. Maybe she knows what it's about." And they told me at Mødrehjælpen that I couldn't expect that they had. I couldn't expect that they had read the papers on the case.

> I: What do you think about that?

> M21: I think they're under pressure like everywhere else. And I get it. But as we were talking about on our way there, do these professionals, do these people even know what they're holding in their hands? It's crazy. These are my children's lives. And if it becomes a standard case because they are a little bit stressed and have 40 cases per day and they have to speed things up and they don't have time to read things thoroughly, if they are charmed by [father]. They really have power. Do they realize what kind of power they have? Are they having a bad day? They are just people too, after all. So it was nice that there were two of them. That it wasn't just one person. Because that can get dangerous real fast (Mother, case 21).

For the parents in child visitation rights cases, "a matter of personal importance is at stake" to cite a part of Goodsell's definition of a public encounter (Goodsell 1981: 5). Although it just might be "a case among others" for the caseworker and child specialist, it is problematic if the parents get this feeling, and if the professionals do not have time to prepare and read through the documents on the case before the meeting since it weakens the parents' feeling of procedural justice. As the father from case 47 explains: "you can submit documentation to the SA, but they do not read it". Moreover, the father from case 32 has a clear feeling that the professionals just use their experience from previous meetings and take the meeting as it comes without spending much time on preparation before. Whether the parents are right on this point is hard to say; however, it is problematic if the parents feel that the caseworkers and the

child specialists do not prepare before the meeting to get an overview of their case.

It is important to mention that not all parents feel this way. For example, the mother from case 47 explains that the caseworkers had broad and very detailed knowledge about their case. Whether the parents feel that the caseworkers are familiar with their case or not is often linked to whether they have met the caseworker and the child specialist at previous meetings:

> (...) if only you could meet the same people each time. (...) Well, someone who remembers the cases. (...) now, I don't know how many cases they have, it's probably a lot, and I could only hope that they at least remember to study up on it before the meeting. And then say, "oh yes, I remember this case" (Father, case 32).

> I really wish that you could go in and look it up and say, okay, you're familiar with this case and this family, so that you kind of had one person with background knowledge involved. (...) I can tell you that it is really exhausting to have to sit and say all these things repeatedly. (...) It has been very hard to sit there and put your cards on the table in front of new people each and every time. So that would be great if there at least was a common thread and you weren't just thrown in with new people every time (Mother, case 15).

In several cases, the parents have never met the caseworker and the child specialist even though all parents in the interview sample have been in the SA before. This influences how they view the process at the meeting. The parents feel that they have to explain their case over and over again, and sometimes important information from previous meetings is lost due to replacement of the professionals.

9.4.1.2. He Said, She Said: "You Can Say Whatever You Want"

As mentioned in chapter 7, the SA, unlike the courts, does not have to lift the burden of proof on the two parties' claims against each other. This is criticized by several parents, since they experience that it "cost free" to make accusations during the meeting.

> (...) you can say anything in there. To be blunt: You can tell all the lies you want (...) you have to listen to a lot of stories in there (Father, case 47).

> (...) you won't believe the things I've been accused of (...) But the thing is, there are no consequences. You can say fucking anything in these systems (...) They should come down on the lying. If you go to court, you'll be punished for it. I would like it if someone had more authority and that it wasn't so "let's join hands in a circle" and look at each other, and mom says this, dad says this. But that you actually had some more powerful tools. (...) This is an area that should be

addressed because it has consequences and costs. Again, it's cost-free to say all these things. I've been told that I'm an alcoholic, that I'm a workaholic, that I don't know how to change diapers, that I can't wash clothes, that I used perfume in the clothes. These are completely insane accusations. That I couldn't feed [the child], give basic care (Father, case 42).

As these two fathers explain, you can say want you want, you can lie and make accusations against your ex-partner without consequences. This influences the parents' feeling of procedural justice because they feel that agreements and decisions are not based on accurate information. Although this point of criticism is illustrated with two quotes from fathers, it is not a gendered tendency. Mothers also express this concern. However, the accusations made against the father from case 42, for example that he does not know how to change diapers and provide primary care, are gender stereotyped. As I showed in chapter 7, mothers often make accusations about parental skills. Whether these accusations are taken into account is hard to say, but they could potentially form the professionals' interpretation of the parent.

9.4.1.3. The SA's Focus on Finding a Compromise

> It is so obvious how they are trying to make us find some compromises
> (Mother, case 7).

The last point of criticism mentioned by several parents (both mothers and fathers) about the process at the meeting is that they experience that the caseworker and the child specialist are focused on reaching a compromise between the parents and that the parents often feel forced to reach an agreement at the meeting.

> Because it's all about me and [father] agreeing on some things. And again, it's he said, she said, or whatever you call it, but I think one thing and he thinks another. So in reality, if I wanted, I could take it to the extreme and say, well, it's all messed up, and [father] says it's going great. Well, but can we meet here? (…) I don't think they know the children well enough to know what's good for them. So it's all about us agreeing on something, and then we can go home and tell the children, "well, this is how it's going to be" (Mother, case 30).

Several parents explain that they have experienced that the caseworker and the child specialist were more focused on resolving the conflict between the parents than on the child's best interest. However, several parents also expressed that they were happy that they were able to reach an agreement instead of handing the case over to the SA for a legal decision.

9.4.2. Differences in Mothers and Fathers' Descriptions of the Procedure

Although the quantitative analysis showed gender differences in parents' perceived substantive and procedural justice, it is important to say that the difference is subtle when it comes to perceived procedural justice. However, the qualitative analysis showed that a group of fathers feel that the mother got more talking time and that the SA treated them differently than the mothers. There is not a clear gendered tendency in the mothers' descriptions of the meeting; they did not express that they differential treatment. However, the mother in a case of a more serious nature explains that their descriptions and documentation were not taken seriously. Here, it is important to mention that there are no fathers to compare with. In this interview sample, it is mainly the mothers who make serious accusations.

9.4.2.1. Fathers: The SA Listens More to the Mother than to Me

As mentioned, several parents feel that the SA listens more to their ex-partner than to them. However, it is a tendency I mostly see in the fathers' descriptions of the meetings. Nearly half of the interviewed fathers mentioned that they felt that the mothers got more talking time than them:

> But it is my experience in general that the mothers have much more talking time at the SA. I don't think I've been to one single meeting at the SA where they didn't say, "now, please let the father say something as well." So I think that in general, women get more talking time. They really need to unload a lot of things. And of course that takes up a lot of time. I just keep thinking that I also believe that they are so professional in there so they kind of encounter these things and they can distinguish between them (Father, case 42).

In addition to differences in talking time, some fathers explain that they were treated differently than the mother. For the father in case 9, the difference in talking time was "obvious". However, he also experienced that they were talking to him and his ex-partner in different ways:

> At some point, someone from the SA said when I interrupted, "you shut up." I'm a grown, proud man. You can tell me to shut up if I'm really supposed to shut up. But when [mother] interrupted, they said, "please wait a second, [mother]" You see the difference? (...) that's just so wrong. It's fucking wrong, "you shut up", when I interrupt and "[mother], please wait your turn" (Father, case 9)

The difference in how the professional from the SA spoke to the father and mother from case 9 made a major impact on how he felt treated as the meeting. He also problematized that most of the professionals in the SA are women.

He experienced that the mother gained more sympathy from the professionals than he did. He does not seem to share the father from case 42's belief that the caseworkers and the child specialist are professional in their work.

The father from case 32 also explained that he felt differently treated than his ex-partner; the SA started investigating problems in relation to his visitation with his child, but not in relation to the mother's. According to the father, it was not transparent why.

> Well, for instance, it was when they did the investigation back then about whether there were problems in the visitation with dad. Not with the parents. (...) why do they choose to say it that way? Instead of kind of saying, we have two parents. What is it that makes them choose to only look at visitation with dad and not with the parents? At the time, there were no investigations (Father, case 32).

Although this experience was not related to the specific meeting, it has influenced this father's experience and view of the SA as a place where mothers and fathers are not treated equally. This result is not surprising in light of the previous findings. As we saw in chapter 5, the fathers fear being discriminated already before they enter the meeting room. The analysis in chapter 6 also showed that mothers talk more than fathers during the meeting. Whether the professionals in the SA discriminate fathers in these cases is not a part of the analysis in this dissertation. However, a study by (Pedersen and Nielsen 2019) shows that caseworkers rely on gender stereotypes when making decision about visitation; mothers are more likely to obtain favorable outcomes than fathers.

9.3.5. Mothers in Severe Cases: "Feel Heard, But Not Taken Serious"

Like in the interviews with the fathers, there is no clear tendency that mothers feel that they are treated differently than their ex-partner. However, in some cases concerning serious issues (for example drug abuse or psychical or mental violence), the mothers feel that it is hard to convince the SA about their side of the story even though they bring documentation. They "feel heard, but not taken seriously" as the mother from case 40 describes it.

> (...) that they (the SA) don't believe you 100 percent. I think that's hard, because they know you have to cooperate with a man where you think that he's flat-out lying. Earlier at the SA as well, in the early process, he claimed that now he didn't do drugs anymore and so on. And they believed him. Where I also said, "well, that's a lie. I know you do." And I knew and he stood down here on the street and told me directly (...) And they could see it during the process that it wasn't true

that he stopped doing drugs (…) You almost have to catch the person in the act for something to happen. And I think that's just terrible (Mother, case 30).

The mother from case 7 also experienced that it was hard to convince the SA about the father's behavior, and she did not feel that they were able to "see through him".

> I'm thinking it would be nice if they put [father] in his place more and looked at some of the examples. When I brought this memo from [municipality]… that made them worry, and I understand why based on some of the things that were described (…) I don't think they take it seriously. I don't think they take [son] seriously in this, and I think that [son] gets way too much talking time considering that he's 13 and strongly manipulated by his father. That they can't see through it. I think they are very incompetent. That's what I think, and it'll be like, "let's try to make you find a compromise." Seriously, listen, he needs his base. He needs – and I have papers on that, and I know that I'm doing a good job. It's not my aim that he doesn't see his father. Like so many others. I have never held him back from visitation or anything, but it's just ignored. I mean, I'm not seen as a mother and the fact that I can read my child's needs. At least that's how I experience it (Mother, case 7).

Due to the circumstances in these cases, the mothers find it hard that they are encouraged to reach a compromise with their ex-partner. As mentioned, I do not have any fathers to compare with since accusations about serious issues often concern the fathers. Hence, it is not possible to say whether this is a gendered pattern or related to the type of case. In the following, I explain the results from the qualitative analysis of parents' perceived substantive justice.

9.5. Perceived Substantive Justice: Fair Outcomes Given the Legal Conditions

The quantitative analysis showed that mothers and fathers have different perceptions of the fairness of the decision outcome. On average, perceived substantive justice was higher among the mothers than among the fathers. The same tendency appears in the interviews. The majority of the mothers are overall satisfied with the new visitation agreement and think it is a fair and good solution for the parents and the child. However, a few of the mothers express concern about practicalities in the agreement, e.g., the travel time between the two homes (Mother, case 17), and some mother are worried that the agreement is not in the child's best interest. By contrast, the majority of the fathers are not as happy with the content of the agreement as the mothers. However, it is interesting to pay attention to their reasoning and way of talking about the agreement. Even though the agreement did not turn out as they

hoped, most of them are relatively satisfied given the conditions and the legal framework in these cases. They have low expectations and know it is hard to change the current visitation agreement:

> It (the content of the new visitation agreement) is okay, at least it hasn't gotten worse. It's a little better. Then you could say that I was anticipating that it probably wouldn't be worse (...) But I probably also expected it to be a bit better than it is. So you could say, yes, now the holidays are equally distributed, at least. I might have thought that they would do a bit more in terms of everyday visitation. Of course, I'm disappointed about that, but it's not really that surprising (Father, case 3).

As the father from case 3 explains, he is disappointed but not surprised that the meeting did not have the outcome he had hoped for. The fathers seem to accept the social and stereotyped norms about the mother as the primary parent. When negotiating a new visitation agreement, the fathers are realistic and know that it can take time to change it:

> (...) I had hoped that they had affirmed that I would see my kids more. I had somehow hoped for that. But small steps in the right direction. When I've been without them for about six months, I can probably handle one more month (Father, case 15).

The fathers accept the outcomes even though they do not perceive them as fair. The mother from case 37, who is the non-resident parent and thereby in the same position as most of the fathers in the sample, makes an interesting reflection on the fairness of the outcome:

> I have to answer in two parts. I have to give you two answers. Because if you think within the system, within what's possible in the system, then it's a big victory. But if you think about it in purely human terms, then it's a disaster. Because then I have to wait a whole year before I can see my child more. So for me personally, it's a disaster, but I've done everything I could to get what I want within the system. So, formally, it almost couldn't be better (Mother, case 37).

The mother from case 37 distinguishes between the fairness of the outcome within the legal framework of the system and for her personally. This may reflect how many of the fathers (and non-resident mothers) perceive an outcome. Given the conditions, they are relatively satisfied; however, personally it is hard to accept that the visitation agreement does not give them more time with their child.

9.6. Conclusion

In this final analytical chapter, I analyze how parents in child visitation disputes evaluate the outcome and the process at the meeting. Based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative data, the analysis first showed that mothers obtain more favorable outcomes, and that they perceive the outcome and the process as more fair than the fathers. The qualitative analysis nuances these findings by focusing on how mothers and fathers describe the outcome and the process at the meeting. Most of the parents felt involved and heard in the meeting but pointed to three major points of criticism about the meeting. First, the parents experienced that the SA did not have knowledge about their cases, and it was their impressions that the professionals did not spend much time on preparation before the meeting. Second, the parents think it is problematic that you are allowed to say anything at the meeting. You can lie and make accusations against your ex-partner without consequences, and the claims are never investigated. Third, the SA focuses on finding a compromise, and several parents feel forced to reach an agreement. These three points weaken the parents' (both mothers and fathers) feeling of procedural justice. Moreover, a group of fathers feel that they are treated differently than their ex-partner. For example, they think the mothers gets more talking. The mothers did not describe that they felt differently treated than the fathers. However, mothers in severe cases felt that it was hard to convince the SA about their side of the story. Whether this is a gender tendency or because of the case-type is hard to say. None of the fathers in the sample were in the same situation as these mothers. Finally, the qualitative analysis showed that fathers perceive the outcome of the meeting as less fair than the mothers do. However, they seem to accept the outcome and are realistic about what they can get. As fathers, they are not surprised that the meeting did not end as they had hoped.

Chapter 10.
Conclusion and Discussion

This dissertation took its point of departure in an empirical question about how mothers and fathers behave in child visitation rights cases in light of public discussions about gender discrimination against fathers. In three analytical parts, I investigated gender differences in how mothers and fathers behave before, during and after the encounter with the Danish State Administration using a variety of methods and analytical strategies. The dissertation shows that mothers and fathers exhibit different gendered behaviors and strategies both before and during the encounter, and that fathers evaluate the process and the meeting outcome as less fair than mothers. In the following, I nuance, sum up and discuss the overall findings, their contribution to the public administration literature, the sociological literature on citizen-state interactions and the gender literature. Finally, I discuss the practical implications of the dissertation.

10.1. The Findings of the Dissertation

Gender discrimination in child visitation disputes has been widely discussed in Denmark. However, we know very little about how parents interact to influence the process and decision-making in these cases. Public administration research on clients and especially face-to-face interactions between clients and public officials is very limited (Jakobsen et al. 2016; Bartels 2013), and research on citizen-state interactions mainly pays attention to the administrative side of the coin. This dissertation examines the encounter from a client perspective by examining what the clients brings into the interaction. It focuses primarily on the process rather than the outcome of these meetings, and on whether male and female clients have different strategies. I have used a combination of qualitative and quantitative data: observations of meetings between the professionals from the SA and the parents, interviews with the parents, and survey data on parents with a case in the SA. In the following, I outline the overall findings in the three analytical parts: before, during and after the encounter.

10.1.1. Before the Encounter: Gender Differences in Parents' Preparatory Strategies and Bureaucratic Self-Efficacy

Most sociological studies of client behavior focus on the encounter; how clients behave when they interact face-to-face with public authorities on the

frontstage. However, I argue that to understand citizens fully as actors, we must also pay attention to the *backstage*, where clients rehearse their frontstage performances. In chapter 5, I examined gender differences in two analytically different concepts: parents' preparatory strategies and bureaucratic self-efficacy before the encounter.

The point of departure for the first analysis was a typology of clients' preparatory strategies I developed in a Danish article, which is not a part of the dissertation. The analysis showed that mothers and fathers have different preparatory strategies before the meeting. The mothers were better prepared and had a more systematic approach to preparation. Many of them prepared content and documentation, for example, wrote down their children's reactions after visitation with their fathers, sought advice from professionals (e.g. lawyers and NGOs) and prepared their attitude and self-presentation. In comparison, half of the fathers in the sample had a more relaxed approach. Some of them hired a lawyer to give them advice just before the meeting; others just thought through different scenarios. The other half of the fathers prepared content and sought guidance from people in their social network, but they did not involve professionals.

The second analysis examined gender differences in parents' bureaucratic self-efficacy based on Article A, "Bureaucratic Self-Efficacy", and Article B, "Bureaucratic Self-Efficacy and Spillover Effects". In Article A, I develop a measurement scale for citizens' bureaucratic self-efficacy, which I define as *citizens' assessment of their own capabilities to cope and navigate in public encounters in order to influence the decision-making*. The scale consists of two dimensions: citizens' efficacy in 1) understanding rules and processes, and 2) communicative skills. The results from Article B show that mothers have higher bureaucratic self-efficacy than fathers, especially when it comes to understanding SA rules and processes. I do not find a gender difference on the dimension "communicative skills". Before a meeting with the SA, mothers are more confident than the fathers about the meeting and their own abilities to influence the decision-making if we look at the overall scale, but this is mostly driven by their confidence in understanding rules and processes. Further, we investigated whether spillover effects from other child-centered citizen-state encounters mediated these gender differences. We found spillover effects from neighboring areas when it comes to communicative skills, but not in relation to learning and understanding rules. Hence, learning and understanding rules may be individual and not transferable from policy area to policy area.

Overall, the first analytical part illustrates that mothers and fathers in child visitation rights cases have different preparatory strategies, and that mothers are more confident than fathers before their meeting with the SA.

10.1.2. The Encounter: Gender Differences in Parents' Strategies and Interaction Behavior at the Meeting

In the second analytical part, I examine gender differences in parents' behavior at the meeting using different methods and analytical approaches. This part consists of three analytical chapters.

In the first chapter (chapter 6), I examine the conversational dominance by comparing how much mothers and fathers talk, and how much they interrupt their ex-partner and the professionals from the SA. The analysis shows that mothers play a more dominant role at the meeting by talking more and interrupting the SA more than fathers during the meeting.

In the second chapter (chapter 7), I examine which arguments and narratives mothers and fathers use to position themselves and challenge their counterparty's position at the meeting by studying their verbal acts. The first part of the chapter shows that parents often use opposite narratives when describing their children's well-being. The fathers tend so describe it in more positive terms, while the mothers tend to draw a more negative picture. Furthermore, the mothers give richer and more detailed descriptions of the child and its reactions than the fathers. They draw on their role and resources as mother and resident parent and position themselves as knowledgeable clients who know what is best for their child. The fathers do not have the same resources to give these detailed descriptions; perhaps due to their role as non-resident parents. They focus on their desire to spend more time with their child and rebuild the father-child relationship. The second part of the chapter shows that a part of the parents' strategy at the meeting is to share unfavorable information about their ex-partner in order to position themselves as a responsible parent and discredit their ex-partner as a person or their parental skills. Especially the mothers expose their ex-partner's parental skills, for example by mentioning inappropriate conditions during visitation. Both mothers and fathers share personal information about their ex-partner to discredit and threaten their position.

In the third chapter (chapter 8), I examine gender differences in parents' interaction behavior at two stages at the meeting: 1) when they explain their case, and 2) when they negotiate a new agreement. The analysis shows that mothers are more systematic, proactive and solution-oriented when presenting their case, while many of the fathers play a more passive role. The mothers demonstrate agency by taking control of the situation; they define what is important to discuss at the meeting and how to solve the problem. Several fathers lean on the mothers' argumentation to formulate their own point of view. The mothers also demonstrate more agency when negotiating a new visitation

agreement at the meeting. They are very persistent and keep arguing to convince the professionals from the SA and their ex-partner about their point of view. The fathers are more submissive and cooperative than the mothers in this stage. Even though the mothers express willingness to cooperate and share the same goal as the father, the visitation agreement is often formulated on the mother's premises. However, the mothers are also placed in an advantageous position when they negotiate visitation as the professionals from the SA seek their approval as resident parents.

Overall, this part of the dissertation shows that mothers and fathers exhibit different behavior during the meeting. They draw on their resources and their parental roles as mothers and fathers, as well as their legal roles as resident and non-resident parents. Mothers appear as more strategical and resourceful actors than the fathers.

10.1.3. After the Encounter: Parents' Perceived Substantial and Procedural Justice

The last analytical chapter uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative data to analyze how the mothers and fathers evaluate the meeting by investigating their perceived substantive and procedural justice. It also examines whether mothers obtain more favorable outcomes than fathers do. The quantitative analysis first showed that mothers do obtain more favorable outcomes and that they perceive the outcome and the process as more fair than the fathers. The qualitative analysis nuances these findings by focusing on how mothers and fathers describe the outcome and the process at the meeting. Most parents (both mothers and fathers) felt involved and heard in the meeting but mentioned three major points of criticism about the meeting: First, the parents experienced that the SA did not have knowledge about their case. Second, it is problematic that the SA does not have to lift the burden of proof as clients can make accusations and say whatever they want without consequences. Third, the SA focuses on finding a compromise, and the parents feel forced to reach an agreement. Moreover, some fathers feel that they are treated differently than their ex-partner. For example, they think the mothers get more talking time, and that the professionals talk differently to them and their ex-partner. In general, the mothers did not describe that they felt differently treated that than the fathers. Finally, the qualitative analysis showed that fathers perceive the outcome of the meeting as less fair than the mothers do. However, they seem to accept the outcome and are realistic about what they can get.

10.1.4. Overall Conclusion of the Findings

Overall, this dissertation shows that mothers and fathers have different gendered strategies both before and during the meeting with the SA. They draw on their roles as mothers and fathers and their legal roles as resident and non-resident parents, which both constrain and enable their actions at the meeting. The roles as mother and resident parent give the mothers more agency in the context of child visitation rights cases, and they appear as more powerful and strategic actors compared to the fathers. The mothers are "working the system"; they know how the system works and they have more resources to engage successfully in the interaction. The differences in mothers and fathers' behavior may be due to mothers' dominance and fathers' subordination in the context of child visitation disputes. The power imbalance between the parents seems to color their behavior at the meeting. This difference in power is partly shaped by social norms about motherhood and fatherhood and the legal roles as resident and non-resident parents. Although the role of fathers has changed during the last decades, we still have different social norms for being a mother and a father. Women are socialized to be the primary caregiver and be fully devoted to this task by putting the children's need before her own. Being able to fulfill the norms of motherhood is a major part of women's identity (Meeussen and VanLaar 2018). Family and children are still primarily the mothers' domain, and this may explain why most mothers are resident parents. These two roles give the mothers a "double power". First, as described above, they have an advantage as mothers. Second, the institutional setting places mothers and fathers in two legal roles, and the resident parent makes more decisions than the non-resident parent. The unequal position of mothers and fathers in this context is thus caused my multiple factors. It is problematic if fathers both feel - and are - less capable to navigate "the system" since it puts them in a disadvantaged position. Furthermore, there is a risk for reproducing social inequalities and the fathers might lose trust in bureaucracy.

The dissertation shows that mothers and fathers have different resources to influence the process and the decision-making, but it cannot explain whether the different behaviors influence the outcome of the meeting directly. The outcome may be a result of different conditions and circumstances, for example, previous visitation agreements, the level of conflict between the parents, and the distance between the parents' homes. Nevertheless, the dissertation shows that the fathers evaluate the meeting outcome and process as less fair. An explanation could be that the fathers did not think they would be able to influence the outcome during the meeting. Furthermore, in cases where the caseworkers have authority to make legal decisions, the caseworkers may influence the decision outcome. A study by Pedersen and Nielsen shows that

caseworkers are more inclined to make decisions that favor mothers (Pedersen and Nielsen 2019).

10.2. Discussion of the Findings

The dissertation overall claims that mothers and fathers have different gendered behaviors and strategies before and during their encounter with the Danish State Administration, and that fathers perceive the outcome and the process as less fair. In the following, I discuss how mothers and fathers do gender, whether it creates a backlash, and whether the differences in behavior are a matter of gender or legal role as resident and non-resident parents. Third, I discuss the dissertation's limitations and the generalizability of the findings inside and outside the research site.

10.2.1. Doing Gender

The analysis shows that mothers and fathers do gender in different ways (West and Zimmerman 1987). Mothers play a more dominant role at the meeting; they talk more; they are the main agenda setters; and when they negotiate a new visitation agreement, they are very persistent and often have the final word. These characteristics are in the gender literature often associated with stereotypical masculine traits. By contrast, the fathers are often more submissive and cooperative, traits we stereotypically link to female behavior. This difference may be due to mothers' dominance and fathers' subordination in the social and legal context of child visitation disputes as discussed above. However, does the mothers' dominance in these cases cause a backlash or is it accepted that they play a more dominant role? Research shows that non-stereotypical behavior is generally perceived more negatively and that disconfirmation of gender stereotypes leads to a backlash that is larger for women than for men (Eagly 1987; Rudman et al. 2004; Rudman and Glick 2001; Heilman 2001). This finding is especially present in the management literature on women in leadership. Studies show that women are caught in a double bind: enacting communal behavior, they are liked, but not respected. Enacting agentic behavior, they are respected, but not liked (Rudman and Glick 2001). In Article C, "Women Cry, Men Get Angry", we also find that caseworkers in child visitation rights cases perceive counter-stereotypical client behavior as more accentuated and profound than stereotypical client behavior: An expressively angry female client is perceived as angrier and more aggressive than an expressively angry male client. Moreover, caseworkers are more inclined to intervene when the client exhibiting counter-gender-stereotypical behavior is female. This specific example of gender differences in emotion is realistic in the context of child visitation rights cases. However, is the mothers' dominant

role also counter-stereotypical in general? You could argue that mothers disconform to gender-stereotypical behavior by being the most dominant actor at the meeting. However, this argument only holds if we ignore the context. Mothers may be "punished" for being too aggressive, but not for being dominant. Dominance can be performed in many ways. When mothers are fighting for their children, they are doing their gender; mother who do not fight for their children would still to a higher degree than fathers be stigmatized as bad mothers and would be punished for deviating from this social norm (Meeussen and VanLaar 2018). When masculine behavior backlashes for women in leadership, it may be due to the context. However, in the context of child visitation rights cases, it is not surprising that mothers play a more dominant role and that this is accepted by the professionals. In this context, it might even be a strategy for the fathers to "turn down" their masculinity due to their subordination in the context. Fiske (1993) argues that low-power individuals behave in a more cooperative and dependent fashion than high-power individuals do (Fiske 1993). This dissertation indicates that gendered performances are related to status and power position in the particular context.

10.2.2. Gender versus Legal Role

As just discussed, the dissertation shows that mothers and fathers have different strategies and behaviors when interacting with the SA. The analyses illustrate that mothers are more powerful and dominant actors in child visitation disputes. However, are these differences gendered or a matter of mothers and fathers' different legal positions as resident and non-resident parents? This is hard to determine since the role of gender and the legal role are highly interconnected in Denmark. As explained in chapter 2, 86 percent of all children living in divorced families in Denmark have residence at their mother's home. The observation sample only consists of five cases where the father is resident parent. A typical stereotype about non-resident mothers is that they are mentally unstable; otherwise, they would be the resident parent. This stereotype is confirmed in almost all five cases. It is thus hard to analyze whether the behavior is gendered or determined by the legal role when you do not have two "equal" groups to compare. Therefore, these five cases are not systematically analyzed in the analytical chapters. However, an analysis of the five meetings where the father is the resident parent shows that some of the behaviors might be more related to the legal role than to the role of gender. The resident fathers were also able to give more rich and detailed descriptions of their child, and they had the final word when they negotiated a new agreement.

10.2.3. Limitations

In the dissertation, I triangulate different methods and data. The different analytical parts all contribute with different insights to the study of gender differences in mothers and fathers' behavior in child visitation rights disputes. A clear pattern emerges across the empirical analyses; mothers and fathers do have different strategies and behaviors in this specific context. The combination of different data and analytical approaches strengthens the trustworthiness and the robustness of the results. However, like any other study, the dissertation has some limitations.

First, the observations of the meeting represent a broad group of clients varying in sociodemographic background and level of conflict. However, some of most vulnerable parents are not highly represented in the interview sample, either because circumstances at the end of the meeting prevented me from asking them for an interview, or because they refused. Furthermore, the group of parents observed and interviewed were all invited for an interdisciplinary meeting, which means that the level of conflict was very high, or the content of the conflict was severe. All the parents had been in the SA before and had experience from previous meetings. This may have influenced their behavior at the meeting and should taken into account when discussing the generalizability of the results inside the research field in the next section. The survey sample is broader since it was sent to all parents with a visitation rights case, but it was not possible to link the survey responses to the complete list of parents it was sent to in order to make a drop out analysis. However, the descriptive statistics of the sample show variation in parents' sociodemographic characteristics.

Second, I am aware that my positionality as a female researcher in the qualitative data collection gave me access to longer and more detailed descriptions in the interviews with the mothers. However, I believe that I got a nuanced picture of all parents' experience with the SA in relation to the research question. Furthermore, my positionality may have influenced how I viewed and interpreted the meetings and the interviews. However, in the analysis, I have documented my findings with quotes and excerpts from the empirical material to strengthen the trustworthiness of my results.

Third, I apply a client perspective to the study of citizen-state interactions, and I do not directly analyze the relational, situated performances between the clients and the professionals (Bartels 2013). The meeting situation is of course a reciprocal process, and the professionals' way of asking questions as well as their individual characteristics may influence the parents' performances at the meeting. In chapter 7 and 8, I show excerpts of the conversations between parents and caseworkers/child specialists and comment on the professionals'

actions; however, I do not systematically analyze their behavior. Future research could study the relational relationship between parents and the processional more in depth. For example, does the gender of the caseworker/child specialist affect how the meeting proceeds?

Fourth, since I do not systematically study the relationship between the analytical concepts, I am not able to conclude whether, for example, the parents' preparatory strategies influence their performances at the meeting, and whether this is linked to their outcome and perceived substantive and procedural justice. However, the qualitative chapters indicate that the well-prepared mothers are more systematic and solution-oriented when presenting their case. Furthermore, the quantitative analysis shows a positive relationship between parents' bureaucratic self-efficacy and their perceived substantial and procedural justice.

10.2.4. Internal and External Generalizability

The dissertation is grounded in an empirical question about gender differences in parents' behavior in child visitation disputes. The aim was not to be able to generalize the results to a wider population, but it is still relevant to discuss whether the findings can be generalized within the context of child visitation disputes (internal generalizability), and whether elements of the dissertation can be generalized to settings outside the research field (external generalizability) (Maxwell 2012: 142).

Within the context of child visitation disputes, I argue based on the coherent findings that the results of the qualitative analysis can be analytical generalized to the groups of parents who are invited for interdisciplinary meetings in SA. However, I believe that most of the results also apply to parents interacting with the SA in general. Some of the strategies and behavior may not apply to parents who interact with the SA for the first time or for the most vulnerable groups. Due to the broader sample of the survey data, the quantitative analysis could be generalized to parents with a visitation rights case in the SA. Whether it is possible to generalize the results outside the research field is an empirical question – and a matter of context. Gender differences may not be as profound in policy areas where gender is not salient, and the type of difference might depend on the context. In others child-related encounters, for example daycare, schools etc., I believe that mothers will the play a more dominant role than the fathers due to the context. We may see a different picture in other policy areas.

10.3. Theoretical Contributions

In this section, I discuss how the findings contribute to the public administration and sociological literature on citizen-state interactions. At the end, I briefly discuss the contribution to the literature on gender differences.

The role of the citizen remains unexplored in mainstream public administration (PA) research. I argue that in order to get a full picture of the implementation of service delivery and regulatory policies, we need to pay attention to the citizens. As subjects of the policies and rules enforced by the state, citizens play a key role in the implementation of public policies. Furthermore, we need to pay attention to the process and not only the outcome of public encounters (Hand and Catlaw 2019; Brodkin, Marston, and Adler 2013). Compared to the public administration literature, the sociological literature has focused more on citizens' behaviors and strategies and paid more attention to citizens' agency (Mik-Meyer 2017; Järvinen and Mik-Meyer 2003a; Mik-Meyer and Silverman 2019; Stax 2005). The two qualitative analyses in chapter 7 and 8 are greatly inspired by this tradition in applying an interactionist approach. However, the dissertation studies another type of encounter – a triad relationship between representatives from the state and two conflicting clients. This institutional set-up has not gained much attention in the sociological or the PA literature. The dissertation thereby produces new knowledge about citizens as actors and new concepts for studying citizens' behavior that are relevant for public administration as well as sociological literature on citizen-state encounters.

The analysis of citizens' preparatory strategies indicates that citizens' interaction behavior does not always occur instinctively in the meeting situation; it can be carefully planned, sometimes in collaboration with other (professional) actors. It may differ what citizens invest in the meeting, how prepared they are, and thus also what they bring into the interaction with the street-level bureaucrats. This may ultimately mean that some citizens are better off than others are. Street-level bureaucrats must be aware of this difference; no matter who the citizens are or how prepared they are for the meeting, we expect street-level bureaucrats to treat people equally (Lipsky 1980). Further, the dissertation contributes to the understanding of clients as active – and not passive – clients. Even before the meeting, clients spend time on preparation in order to perform better at the meeting.

Furthermore, the dissertation contributes with a new measurement scale for studying citizens' self-efficacy in encounters with bureaucracy, hence the name "Bureaucratic Self-Efficacy". I argue that citizens' general self-efficacy is not necessarily consistent with their feeling of self-efficacy related to interactions with bureaucracy. To capture citizens' bureaucratic self-efficacy, we need

a more specific concept. Bureaucratic self-efficacy consists of two dimensions: citizens' self-efficacy in (1) understanding rules and processes and (2) communicative skills related to interactions with bureaucracy. The scales correlate with citizens' decision outcomes and their perceived substantive and procedural justice. This indicates that the measurement is able to predict citizens' outcomes when they interact with the bureaucracy. The concept can for example be used to study antecedents of bureaucratic self-efficacy and to test its influence on decision outcomes in other policy areas.

The analysis of the encounter between clients and street-level bureaucrats shows that citizens exhibit different behaviors and use different strategies to influence the decision-making. Although the relationship between street-level bureaucrats and citizens is characterized as asymmetric (Lipsky 1980; Dubois 2010), the dissertation shows that citizens also have agency. As actors, citizens draw on different roles and resources related to the context or situation. Mothers and fathers draw on their roles and resources related to being respectively female/mother/resident parents and male/father/non-resident parent, and these roles and resources form their interaction behavior at the meeting. This understanding is relevant for further studies on client behavior.

Moreover, the dissertation contributes with knowledge from another type of encounter than most other studies of citizen-state interactions. Namely an encounter between two conflicting clients and representatives from the state. Goodsell (1981) defines public encounters as a dyad relationship between one client and representatives from the state (Goodsell 1981). I argue that we need to extend the definition; public encounters can also be a triad relationship between two conflicting clients and representatives from the state. In triad encounters, citizens' behavior is not only directed toward the state, but also toward their counterpart. Furthermore, it gives another dynamic at the meeting and it puts the street-level bureaucrats in another situation. They need to handle two clients at the same time, treat them equally and avoid partiality. The dissertation does not investigate whether street-level bureaucrats treat mothers and fathers differently. However, the analyses show that one group of clients (the fathers) feel that they are treated differently than their counterparty (the mothers).

Finally, the dissertation shows that gender difference is situated in men and women's different power position in the particular context that is investigated. The literature on gender differences presented in the theoretical chapter derives mostly from studies of gender differences in everyday life situation and these findings not always applicable outside this context. When we analyze gender differences, it is important to pay attention to the social context in which the research is conducted.

10.4. Practical Implications

The dissertation shows that mothers and fathers have different resources to interact with the SA in child visitation rights disputes. This is due to differences in social norms and socialization of men and women into the roles as mothers and fathers, but also to the legal roles the institutional setting places men and women in. Caseworkers and child specialists must be aware of gender differences in parents' resources to interact with the SA in these cases. As mentioned in chapter 7, the ability to describe your child, its well-being and its relationship with daycare/school seems to be evaluated as a core value by the professionals. The analysis showed that mothers were able to give richer and more detailed descriptions of their child than the fathers. The professionals must be aware that most fathers do not have the same resources to make these rich descriptions, since most of them do not spend as much time with the children as the mothers do. Furthermore, fathers who only spend every second weekend with their child do not have the daily contact with their child's daycare/school. The analysis also showed that perceived substantive and procedural justice vary between mothers and fathers. Some fathers feel less heard, think the mothers get more talking time and that the professionals talk differently to them than to their ex-partner. These factors reduce the fathers' perceived procedural justice. Impartiality is important in every public encounter, however, in encounters with two conflicting clients it becomes particular important.

On 1 April 2019, the Danish State Administration became The Agency of Family Law. This involves some changes in the types of meeting and the legal framework. In the most complex visitation rights cases, the Agency of Family Law does not have competence to make decisions. These decisions are made by the Family Court. Furthermore, the new legislation allows "equal parenting" as the government labels it. This means that it is possible for parents to get shared residence and thereby have equal parental responsibilities and rights (Regeringen 2018). The findings in the dissertation are still relevant although the organization and the legislation have changed. Gender differences in behavior will always be present in child visitation disputes, but this might change over the next decades as equal visitation arrangements probably become more common. Future research could investigate cases where parents have shared residence and thereby equal legal roles in order to understand whether it changes the dynamic at the meeting, and whether it eliminates some of the differences in mothers and fathers' behavior at meetings.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Observation Guide

Background information

Observation number	Date:		Case number:	
Meeting participants			Gender	
			Male	Female
Caseworker				
Child specialist				
Resident parent				
Non-resident parent				
Lay representative (mother)				
Lay representative (father)				
Lawyer (mother)				
Lawyer (father)				
Additional information				

Notes during the meeting

Information about the case before the meeting	Reflections
The meeting	Reflections

Notes after the meeting

Context: Summery of the case and the conflict point between the parents	Analytical reflections

Descriptions of the participants	Analytical reflections
Mother	
Father	
Caseworker	
Child specialist	

How the caseworker and the child specialist describe the case after the meeting	Analytical reflections

Other notes	

Appendix B. Overview over Observational Data

Obser-vation	Month	Information about the SA			The parents' legal role		Meeting outcome	Lawyer	Lay representative	Audio-recorded
		Local SA-office	CW	CE	Resident	Non-resident				
#1	January	Copenhagen	Female	Female	Father	Mother	The SA ends the meeting	-	-	X
#2	January	Copenhagen	Male	Female	Mother	Father	Agreement	-	-	X
#3	January	Copenhagen	Male	Female	Mother	Father	Agreement	-	-	X
#4	January	Copenhagen	Male	Female	Father	Mother	Agreement	ML, FL	-	
#5	January	Copenhagen	Male	Female	Mother	Father	Agreement	FL	-	X
#6	January	Copenhagen	Female	Female	Father	Mother	Agreement	ML, FL	-	
#7	January	Copenhagen	Female	Female	Mother	Father	Agreement	-	-	X
#8	January	Copenhagen	Female	Female	Mother	Father	Agreement	FL	-	X
#9	January	Ringsted	Male	Female	Mother	Father	Agreement	-	-	X
#10	January	Copenhagen	Female	Female	Mother	Father	Agreement	ML, FL	-	X
#13	February	Ringsted	Male	Female	Father	Mother	Further investigation	-	MLR	X
#14	February	Copenhagen	Male	Female	Mother	Father	Agreement	ML	FLR	X
#15	February	Copenhagen	Female	Female	Mother	Father	Agreement	ML, FL	-	X
#16	February	Copenhagen	Female	Female	Mother	Father	Legal decision	FL	-	X
#17	February	Copenhagen	Female	Female	Mother	Father	Agreement	ML	-	X
#19	February	Copenhagen	Female	Female	Mother	Father	Agreement	ML	-	X
#20	February	Copenhagen	Male	Female	Mother	Father	The SA ends the meeting	-	-	X
#21	February	Aarhus	Female	Female	Mother	Father	Legal decision	-	MLR, FLR	
#22	February	Aarhus	Female	Female	Father	Mother	Agreement	-	-	X
#23	February	Aabenraa	Female	Female	Mother	Father	Agreement	-	MLR	X
#25	February	Aabenraa	Male	Female	Mother	Father	Agreement	-	MLR	X
#26	February	Aabenraa	Female	Female	Mother	Father	Agreement	-	-	X

#	Month	City					Outcome			
#28	March	Aarhus	Female	Female	Mother	Father	The SA ends the meeting	-	MLR	X
#30	March	Copenhagen	Female	Female	Mother	Father	Agreement	FL	MLR	X
#31	March	Copenhagen	Male	Female	Mother	Father	Agreement	-	-	X
#32	March	Copenhagen	Male	Female	Mother	Father	Agreement	ML	FLR	X
#33	March	Copenhagen	Female	Female	Mother	Father	Agreement	FL	MLR	X
#34	March	Copenhagen	Male	Female	Mother	Father	Agreement	-	FLR	X
#36	March	Aarhus	Female	Female	Mother	Father	Agreement	FL	-	X
#37	April	Copenhagen	Female	Female	Father	Mother	Agreement	-	MLR	X
#38	April	Copenhagen	Male	Female	Mother	Father	Legal decision	-	FLR	X
#39	April	Copenhagen	Male	Female	Mother	Father	Agreement	ML	-	X
#40	April	Copenhagen	Male	Female	Mother	Father	Agreement	FL	MLR	
#41	April	Copenhagen	Male	Male	Mother	Father	Agreement	-	MLR	X
#42	May	Copenhagen	Female	Female	Mother	Father	Further investigation	ML, FL	-	X
#43	May	Copenhagen	Female	Female	Mother	Father	Legal decision	FL	-	X
#44	May	Copenhagen	Female	Female	Mother	Father	Agreement	FL	MLR	X
#45	May	Copenhagen	Male	Female	Mother	Father	Agreement	-	MLR, FLR	X
#47	June	Copenhagen	Female	Female	Mother	Father	Agreement	ML	FLR	X
#48	June	Copenhagen	Male	Female	Mother	Father	The SA ends the meeting	-	-	X
#49	July	Copenhagen	Female	Female	Mother	Father	Agreement	-	-	X
#50	July	Copenhagen	Female	Female	Mother	Father	Agreement	-	-	X

Note: ML = The mother's lawyer, FL = The father's lawyer, MLR = The mother's lay representative, FLR = The father's lay representative.

Appendix C. Overview of Interviewees

Interview	Observation number	Local SA-office	Level of education
Mothers			
M1	#3	Copenhagen	High
M2	#9	Ringsted	Middle
M3	#10	Copenhagen	Low
M4	#7	Copenhagen	Middle
M5	#17	Copenhagen	Middle
M6	#14	Copenhagen	Low
M7	#21	Aarhus	Middle
M8	#25	Aabenraa	Low
M9	#30	Copenhagen	Low
M10	#15	Copenhagen	Low
M11	#40	Copenhagen	Low
M12	#37	Copenhagen	High
M13	#36	Aarhus	High
M14	#44	Copenhagen	Middle
M15	#47	Copenhagen	Middle
M16	#50	Copenhagen	Middle
Fathers			
F1	#3	Copenhagen	High
F2	#9	Ringsted	High
F3	#17	Copenhagen	Low
F4	#15	Copenhagen	Low
F5	#26	Aabenraa	High
F6	#19	Copenhagen	High
F7	#30	Copenhagen	Low
F8	#21	Aarhus	Middle
F9	#32	Copenhagen	Middle
F10	#37	Copenhagen	High
F11	#42	Copenhagen	High
F12	#44	Copenhagen	Middle
F13	#45	Copenhagen	Low
F14	#47	Copenhagen	Middle

Appendix D. Interview Guide

Theme	Questions
Briefing	First of all, thank you for participating in this interview. As a part of my PhD project at Aarhus University, I investigate how citizens interact with the SA, and therefore I am really grateful for your participation in this interview. - Promise anonymity - Inform about professional secrecy - Ask for permission to audio record the meeting **Part I**
Context	First, I would like to hear a bit about you common past. Can you tell me a bit about you and your ex-partner's history? - When did you get divorced? - How many children do you have together? - Which visitation arrangements did you have after you separated? How is your current visitation agreement? - Who contacted the SA and why? - Is your first meeting of the SA?
Preparation before the meeting	Now, let's talk about the period just before your meeting with the SA. I would like you to describe what you did before the meeting. - How did you prepare? - Did you seek help from family and friends? - Did you seek advice from professionals (e.g. NGOs, lawyers etc?)
Prepared strategy	Did you prepare something you wanted to say at the meeting? Or didn't want to say? - Did it succeed? Do you think your ex-partner had a plan or a strategy for the meeting? - Would you describe a little bit more? What do you think it was about?
Expectations	I would like you to describe your expectations before the meeting. **Part II**
The meeting with the SA	Now I would like to hear more about your experiences and impressions of the meeting. Would you describe how you experienced the meeting? - Did anything surprise you?
Procedural justice	When you recall the meeting, do you feel that the lawyer/the child specialist involved you and gave you time to explain your side of the story? Did you feel that the lawyer and the child expert had a general idea of what the case was about? Do you feel that you were heard and involved to the same extent as your ex-partner during the meeting? Please describe how you perceived the lawyer and the child expert. Did you feel well treated?

Substantive justice	**If they did not reach an agreement at the meeting**
	You did not manage to reach an agreement at the meeting. What has happened since then; has the SA made a decision?
	- What is the content of the SA's decision?
	- Please describe your thoughts when you read the decision.
	- Do you think the decision was fair? Why/why not?
	If they reached an agreement at the meeting
	You managed to reach an agreement at the meeting. Are you satisfied with the content of the agreement?
	- Why/why not? What would it have said if it were up to you?
	- Did you feel pressured into making this agreement? (Where did the pressure come from? Ex-partner, child expert, caseworker)
	Do you think the content of your agreement is fair to both parties?
Experience from previous meetings	You have previously told me that you have been to several meetings in the SA. What experiences have you made along the way? Is that something you did or did not say at the beginning that you wouldn't say now?
	Did you experience that it was difficult to follow what the caseworker's or the child specialist's said or suggested?
	Were you able to bring up topics you would like to talk about during the meeting?
	- Was there anything you would have done differently?
	Specific questions related to the specific meeting.
Examples from the meeting	Did you find that you were listened to and heard by the State Administration in relation to what you would like help with?
Information about the interviewee	Finally, I would like to hear a little more about you.
	- What are you doing on a daily basis?
	- Educational background
Outro	This was basically what I wanted to ask you about.
	Is there something you have thought of during the interview that you would like to add?
	Do you have any questions?

Appendix E. Transcription Symbols for Transcription of Meetings and Interviews

Table E1. Transcription symbols for the transcriptions of the meetings

Symbol	Example	Explanation
(())	((The mother interrupts the caseworker))	Double parentheses contain author's descriptions rather than transcriptions.
...		Small break
WORD		Capitals, except at the beginning of lines, indicate especially load sounds relative to the surrounding talk.
(name)	(the father), (the mother) (the son), (the daughter)	I anonymized names, I write the person's role in brackets.
[]		Overlapping talk
(...)		A part of the quote is not relevant to the passage, and was omitted by the author.

Table E2. Transcription symbols for the transcriptions of the interviews

Symbol	Example	Explanation
WORD		Capitals, except at the beginning of lines, indicate especially load sounds relative to the surrounding talk.
(name)	(the father), (he mother) (the son), (the daughter)	I anonymized names, I write the person's role in brackets.
(...)		A part of the quote is not relevant to the passage, and was omitted by the author.
[[]]	I mailed all conversations [[to the SA]] where you can see that	Explanation of implicit talk
...		Small break

Appendix F. Coding Schemes

F1. Final coding scheme for coding the parents' arguments during the meeting (chapter 7)

Code	Sub-codes	Description
The conflict between the parents		Description of the conflict
The current visitation agreement		Descriptions of the current visitation agreement
The child(ren)	The child's well-being	Descriptions of the child's well-being
	The child's best interest	Any reference to the child's best interest
The ex-partner	Conditions during visitation	Descriptions of the condition during visitation at their ex-partners home
	The ex-partner's behavior during visitation	Descriptions about their ex-partners behavior when they spend time with their child.
	Exposing the ex-partners parental skills	Any reference to information or descriptions about their ex-partners parental skills.
	Exposing personal information about ex-partner	Any reference to personal information about their ex-partner
The parent	Self-presentation	Descriptions about themselves, e.g. their job, priorities, personality etc.
	Parental role	Descriptions about their own parent role
	Own needs	Any reference to egoistic argumentation
The relationship between the parents	Cooperation	Descriptions about the cooperation in relation to their children.
	Common past	Descriptions about their past and their marriage
	Current relationship	Descriptions about their current relationship, e.g. how much they talk together, how the communicate etc.
Serious issues	Drug abuse	Any reference to accusations about drug abuse
	Alcohol abuse	Any reference to accusations about alcohol abuse
	Mental illness	Any reference to accusations about mental illness
The parents' legal rights/law		Any reference to the law and their legal rights

New partners	Their own new partner	Any reference to descriptions about their new partner and their role.
	Their ex-partner's new partner	Any reference to descriptions about their ex-partner's new partner, their role and relationship with the child.
Gender, motherhood and fatherhood		Any reference to their gender, their roles as mother or farther.
Authorities/professionals		Descriptions about involvement of authorities and professionals, e.g. the municipality, lawyers, psychologists etc.

F2. Final coding scheme for coding the parents' interaction behavior (chapter 8)

Code	Sub-codes	Description
Interaction behavior when presenting their case	Proactive	Any reference where the parent show proactive behavior i.e. suggesting solutions
	Passive	Any reference where the parent show passive behavior
	Lean on the counterparty's argumentation	Any reference where the parent lean on the ex-partner's argumentation when presenting their case
	Behavior towards SA	Any reference to how the parents react to the professionals (caseworker or child specialist) i.e. when they give suggestions.
	Behavior towards ex-partner	Any reference to how the parent react when their ex-partner is presenting their case.
	Non-verbal behavior	Any reference where the parent start crying, get angry
Interaction behavior during the negotiation-phase	Cooperates	Any reference where the parent cooperates with the other parent about a new visitation agreement
	Agrees on the counterparty's suggestions	Any reference where the parent agrees on the ex-partner suggestions i.e. for how they should arrange the new visitation agreement.
	Is permissive	Any reference where the parent show permissive behavior when negotiating
	Is persistent	Any reference where the parent is persistent behavior when negotiating
	Makes demands	Any reference where the parent make demands to the visitation agreement
	Guided by the SA	Any reference where the professionals guide the negotiating phase i.e. by suggesting how the visitation agreement could look like.
	No negotiation	Meetings where the parents do not negotiating about a new visitation agreement

F3. Final coding scheme for coding the parents' perceived procedural and substantive justice (chapter 9)

Code	Sub-codes	Description
Procedural justice	Feel heard	Any reference where the parent talks about being heard during the meeting.
	Differently treated	Descriptions of where they feel differently treated at the meeting.
	Equally treated	Descriptions of where they feel equally treated at the meeting.
	Talking time	Descriptions where the parent talks about talking time at the meeting.
	Compromise	Descriptions where the parents talk about seeking a compromise when negotiating about a new visitation agreement.
	Knowledge about the case	Descriptions of the parent impression of the SA's knowledge about the case.
	Who can say want you want	Descriptions about presenting any information without having any consequences.
	Not taken serious	Descriptions about presenting information, which is not taken serious by the SA.
Substantive justice	Fair outcome	Descriptions where the parents describe the outcome as fair.
	Unfair outcome	Descriptions where the parents describe the outcome as unfair.
	Medium	Descriptions where the parents finds some elements of the agreement fair, and others unfair.
	Reflections on the agreement	Descriptions on how the parent talk about the agreement.
	Acceptance	Descriptions about acceptance of the new visitation agreement.

Appendix G. Gender Differences in Talking Time and Interruptions (chapter 6)

Table G1. Gender differences in clients talking time and interruptions (OLS, fixed effects)

	Talking time	Interrupts the SA	Interrupts the ex-partner
Female	6.45 (4.27)†	7.03 (1.73)***	-0.20 (0.95)
Resident parent	-5.54 (4.34)	-6.36 (1.76)***	0.10 (0.96)
Applicant	0.33 (3.13)	0.45 (1.27)	-0.55 (0.70)
Lawyer	0.12 (2.71)	0.78 (1.71)	1.25 (0.94)
Lay representative	-0.16 (4.57)	-3.24 (1.85)†	-1.16 (1.02)
Constant	22.91 (2.71)***	7.27 (1.10)***	3.75 (0.60)***
R²	0.05	0.06	0.00
Number of observations	75	75	75
Number of groups	38	38	38

Note: † p < .1, * p < .05, **p < .01, ***p <.00.

Table G2. Gender differences in clients talking time and interruptions (OLS)

	Talking time	Interrupts the SA	Interrupts the ex-partner
Female	7.39 (3.40)*	6.53 (2.59)**	-0.62 (1.73)
Resident parent	-6.02 (3.43)†	-6.00 (2.61)*	0.71 (1.75)
Applicant	1.48 (1.88)	1.21 (1.43)	0.67 (0.96)
Lawyer	-3.09 (2.16)	-2.11 (1.64)	-0.65 (1.10)
Lay representative	-2.88 (2.42)	-2.34 (1.84)	-0.23 (1.23)
Constant	23.55 (1.83)***	7.57 (1.40)***	3.44 (0.93)***
R²	0.09	0.11	0.01
N	75	75	75

Note: † *p* < .1, * *p* < .05, **p* < .01, ***p* <.00.

Appendix H. Factor Analysis for Perceived Procedural Justice

Perceived procedural justice	Items	Factor loading
1	The SA gave me the opportunity to explain my side of the case.	0.85
2	The SA let me take part in the conversation.	0.84
3	The SA asked for relevant information about our case.	0.81
4	The SA was impartial to me and my ex-partner.	0.70
5	The SA had a great deal of knowledge of our case.	0.61
6	The SA seemed genuinely interested in helping me.	0.83
7	The SA made it possible for both me and my ex-partner to be a part of the meeting.	0.85
8	The SA treated me politely.	0.82
9	The SA treated me with respect.	0.89
10	The SA refrained from making incorrect comments.	0.64
Model statistics		
Eigen value		6.30
Cronbach Alpha		0.93

Summary

This dissertation takes its point of departure in an empirical question about how mothers and fathers behave in child visitation rights cases in light of public discussions about gender discrimination against fathers. The PhD project is part of the project, "Visitation Rights and Discrimination against Fathers: Bias or a Myth?" While the two other sub-projects focus on caseworkers and organizational explanations of discrimination against fathers, I focus on the other side of the table: the two conflicting clients – a mother and a father fighting for child visitation. I examine whether mothers and fathers have different gendered strategies and behaviors when they interact with the Danish State Administration. I also look at how they evaluate the meeting; do fathers feel differently treated compared to the mothers? The dissertation draws on theories from public administration about street-level bureaucracy, sociological theories about welfare encounters and client behavior as well as sociological and psychological theories about gender differences. Recent public administration research focuses mainly on bias in public authorities' decision-making, but we know very little about how clients interact with bureaucracy and how they try to influence the process and the decision-making. It may be that caseworkers are biased and favor mothers in child visitation rights disputes; another explanation could be that mothers and fathers have different resources to influence the process and the decision-making due to their different parental and legal roles. I follow parents before, during and after the encounter with the Danish State Administration to get a comprehensive understanding of them as actors in these cases. I use observations of meetings, semi-structured interviews and survey data on parents to study different perspectives of the research question. The goal is to contribute with empirical knowledge about how parents interact in these cases, and to contribute to the public administration and sociological literature with new knowledge about client behavior and new concepts to study their behavior. The institutional set-up in these cases differs from many others studies because it consists of not one client, but two conflicting clients and their encounter with the state.

The dissertation consists of three analytical parts. In the first part, "Before the Encounter", I examine gender differences in two analytically different concepts: in parents' preparatory strategies and in their bureaucratic self-efficacy before they interact with the Danish State Administration. The first analysis showed that mothers and fathers have different preparatory strategies. The mothers were better prepared and had a more systematic approach to preparations, whereas many of the fathers had a more relaxed approach. The second analysis showed that mothers have higher bureaucratic self-efficacy related to

their interaction with the Danish State Administration. In other words, they were more confident before their meeting.

In the second analytical part, "The Encounter", I examine gender differences in parents' behavior at the meeting using different methods and analytical approaches. This part shows that mothers have more agency and play a more dominant role at the meeting compared to the fathers. They draw on their resources and their parental roles as mothers and fathers, as well as their legal roles as resident and non-resident parents. For example, the mothers talk more than the fathers during the meeting; they are able to give richer descriptions of their child, and they challenge their ex-partner's position by exposing unfavorable information about his parental skills. Furthermore, the mothers are more systematic, proactive and solution-oriented when presenting their case, while many of the fathers play a more passive role. When negotiating a new visitation agreement, the mothers are very persistent and keep arguing their case, while the fathers are more submissive and cooperative.

In the third analytical part, "After the Encounter", I investigate whether mothers and fathers evaluate the meeting outcome and the process differently by studying their perceived substantive and procedural justice. The analysis shows that mothers perceive both the meeting outcome and the process at the meeting as more fair compared to fathers. Several fathers feel differently treated at the meeting; they think the mothers get more talking time and that the professionals use a different tone with them than with their ex-partner.

Overall, the dissertation shows that mothers have more agency in a child-related policy area like child visitation disputes compared to fathers. The mothers appear as more powerful and strategic actors. The differences in mothers and fathers' behavior might be due to mothers' dominance and fathers' subordination in the context of child visitation disputes. This difference in power is partly shaped by social norms about motherhood and fatherhood and their legal roles as resident and non-resident parents. Although the role of fathers has changed over the last decades, child- and family-related areas are still the mothers' domain, which puts the mothers in an advantageous position. Furthermore, the dissertation points to the importance of studying clients' behavior in public encounters. The dissertation demonstrates that clients have agency, they are not just passive actors. To get a full picture of the implementation of public policies, and to get a more nuanced understanding of what might cause different decision outcomes, we need to pay attention to both street-level bureaucrats and citizens in public administration research.

Dansk resumé

Denne afhandling taget afsæt i en empirisk problemstilling omkring mødres og fædres adfærd i forbindelse med samværssager i Statsforvaltningen. De seneste år har udfaldet af disse møder været omdiskuteret i den brede befolkning og i medierne i forhold til kønsdiskrimination. Der hersker bred enighed om, at mødrene favoriseres, når Statsforvaltningen træffer afgørelse. Denne ph.d.-afhandling er en del af et større forskningsprojekt om kønsdiskrimination og borgernes møde med Statsforvaltningen i forbindelse med samværssager. Mens de to andre sub-projekter undersøger, om sagsbehandlerne og de organisatoriske forhold kan forklare kønsdiskrimination i disse sager, vender jeg blikket mod den anden side af bordet: på de to borgere – en mor og en far – der er i konflikt med hinanden og kæmper hver deres sag. I afhandlingen undersøger jeg, om mødre og fædre har forskellig kønnet adfærd og strategier, når de interagerer med Statsforvaltningen, og hvordan de evaluerer mødet: Føler fædrene sig anderledes behandlet end mødrene? Afhandlingen trækker på teorier fra offentlig forvaltning, sociologi samt sociologiske og psykologiske teorier om kønsforskelle. Tidligere studier inden for offentlig forvaltning har vist, at offentligt ansattes skøn giver handlerum for, at deres egne personlige karakteristika såvel som borgernes personlige karakteristika og adfærd kan påvirke deres beslutningsadfærd. Men vi ved imidlertid ikke ret meget om, hvordan borgerne handler, og hvordan de forsøger at påvirke processen og beslutningstagningen, når de interagerer med forvaltningen. Én forklaring kan være, at sagsbehandlerne forskelsbehandler mødre og fædre i samværssager, men en anden forklaring kan være, at mødre og fædre har forskellige ressourcer til at påvirke processen og beslutningstagningen. I denne afhandling fokuserer jeg på borgerne og undersøger deres adfærd før, under og efter mødet med Statsforvaltningen for at få en dybdegående og nuanceret forståelse af forældrene som aktører i disse sager. Til at undersøge forskningsspørgsmålet fra forskellige perspektiver bruger jeg data fra observationer af møder i Statsforvaltningen, interviews med forældre samt data fra en spørgeskemaundersøgelse blandt forældre med en sag i Statsforvaltningen. Formålet er dels at bidrage med empirisk viden om, hvordan forældre interagerer i samværssager, dels at bidrage til forvaltningslitteraturen med ny viden om borgeradfærd og nye begreber til at undersøge adfærden. Det institutionelle set-up i disse sager afviger fra tidligere studier, da de ikke kun består af en, men af to borgere, der har en partskonflikt.

Afhandlingen består af tre analysedele. Den første del undersøger kønsforskelle i mødres og fædres forberedelse og bureaukratisk self-efficacy *før*

199

mødet. Analysen viser, at mødre og fædre forbereder sig forskelligt inden mødet med Statsforvaltningen. Mødrene brugte mere tid på forberedelse og gik mere systematisk til værks end fædrene. Mange af fædrene tog mødet, som det kom, og brugte ikke meget tid på at forberede sig. Analysen viste yderligere, at mødrene havde højere bureaukratisk self-efficacy end fædre inden mødet. Det vil sige, at de var selvsikre inden det forestående møde.

Den anden analysedel undersøger kønsforskelle i forældrenes adfærd *under mødet* ved hjælp af forskellige metoder og analytiske strategier. Denne analysedel viser, at mødre har mere agens og spiller en mere dominerende rolle på mødet sammenlignet med fædrene. Mødrene trækker på deres ressourcer som mødre og bopælsforældre. Det kommer til udtryk på forskellige måder. For eksempel taler mødrene mere end fædrene, de er i stand til at give længere og mere detaljerede beskrivelser af deres børn og deres trivsel, og så udfordrer de deres ekspartners position på mødet ved at udstille ham og fremhæve hans manglede forældrekompetencer. Analysen viser yderligere, at mødrene er mere systematiske, proaktive og løsningsorienterede, når de argumenterer deres sag under mødet. Fædrene spiller ofte en mere passiv rolle og spiller bold op ad mødrenes argumentation. Når de skal forhandle om en ny samværsaftale, er mødre ofte mere vedholdende, og de bliver ved med at tale deres sag, hvorimod fædrene er mere underdanige og samarbejdsvillige.

Den tredje analysedel undersøger, hvordan mødre og fædre efterfølgende evaluerer mødets resultat og processen på mødet. Analysen viser, at mødrene i højere grad end fædrene finder resultatet af mødets mere fair, og de oplever en højere grad af processuel retfærdighed end fædrene. Flere fædre følte sig anderledes behandlet til mødet, for eksempel oplevede de, at mødrene fik mere taletid, og at de professionelle fra Statsforvaltningen talte forskelligt til dem og deres ex-partner.

Samlet set viser afhandlingen, at mødrene har mere agens end fædrene i samværssager. Mødrene fremstår som mere magtfulde og strategiske aktører sammenlignet med fædrene. Denne forskel i mødres og fædres adfærd kan skyldes den magtubalance, der er mellem forældrene, der dels er skabt af sociale normer omkring moder – og faderrollen, dels af forældrenes rolle som henholdsvis bopæls- og samværsforælder. Selvom faderrollen har ændret sig de seneste årtier, er familie og børn stadig mødrenes domæne, hvilket stiller dem i en fordelagtig situation på disse møder. Endvidere peger afhandlingen på vigtigheden af også at undersøge borgernes adfærd i mødet med systemet. Afhandlingen viser, at borgerne også har indflydelse på processen. For at få et fyldestgørende billede af implementeringen af offentlige politikker, er vi nødt til at rette blikket både mod de offentligt ansatte, der arbejdet på området, men også mod borgerne.