

# Gender Trouble and Its Impact on Fertility Intentions

IRENE M. TAZI-PREVE, Ph.D.

DIETER BICHLBAUER, Ph.D.

ANNE GOUJON, Ph.D.

Vienna Institute of Demography, Austrian Academy of Science,  
Vienna, Austria

## Abstract

*It is often an underlying assumption that the new role of women and in general the trend toward a more egalitarian view of the concept of partnership is a main factor behind the low fertility rates in rich countries. The aim of this paper is to test the consequences of gender (in)equity on the desire of women and men to have (further) children by using “gender inequity” as an important category within population science. In our assumptions we want to test whether an unequal distribution of household chores and childcare duties has a negative effect on the desire to have children. Another assumption examines the potential correlation that the perception of (in)equality of women and men in society or the acceptance of government measures to ensure equal rights might have with the desire to have children. The data are derived from the recent Austrian survey “Population Policy Acceptance Survey”. The assumptions are tested by means of logistic regression analysis. The results show that it is “new men” who are likely to express a wish for children, rather than those who live in traditional partnership models.*

Keywords: Gender, fertility, household tasks, gender mainstreaming programmes, fathers, Austria.

## Introduction

Discrimination of women has become the subject of research in various disciplines of science. Within the demographic context, the analysis of the income discrepancy between the sexes has been the most “popular” subject and has seen an increase in Austria during the last 30 years. Women’s participation in the labor market, showing a continuous upward trend ever since the 1970s, has not entailed a greater share of household work being taken over by men. Therefore, the imbalance on the reproductive sector has been analyzed by many social scientists (e.g. Biffi 1994).

The last few decades have also seen other dramatic demographic changes. These changes have been particularly marked by the declining birth rate. The year 2001 brought the lowest figures ever observed in Austria, with total fertility rate dropping to 1.31 children per woman (Kytir, Wild and Zuser 2002). More recent studies also indicate that the desire to have children is dropping beneath replacement level all over Europe (Goldstein, Lutz and Testa 2003).

It is often an underlying assumption that the new role of women is a main factor behind the low fertility rates in rich countries (Jensen 2000). The focus of this article, however, is the question of whether a more egalitarian model of partnership and society in general, either in real life or as an intellectual concept, does in fact increase the willingness to have a baby.

Meanwhile the phenomenon of gender-specific inequity is no longer only an issue for women's studies but has been accepted as an important topic in the sociology of social inequality. A number of major approaches have been developed to explain the problem, based on many empirical studies from various walks of life. Despite the growing interest in the integration of gender-specific inequities into several academic disciplines (sociology, political science and demography), no consensus has been reached about the reasons and the consequences of this inequity. During the last few years, there have been many approaches, also by falling back on "classics" such as Weber and Marx, to draw up a theoretical explanation of the phenomenon, and to integrate new approaches into these theories in order to broaden them.

It is not only in functionalist theory that one finds the assumption that existing inequities – such as that between the sexes – is a necessary prerequisite for society as it is. This idea is also part of some feminist theories. All these approaches presuppose that the existing unequal division of labor between women and men is an essential condition for upholding a capitalist society. From a feminist-Marxist perspective, Chafetz (1984) made an effort to explain "sex stratification" on the basis of general laws governing this society. Her approach is in the tradition of the "general theory" of U.S. sociology that aims at making general statements with a possibly universal field of application. She concentrates not only on specific dimensions of inequities but wants to gain a greater view that would comprise these dimensions, as well as their conditional factors, in an index of discrimination. Here, the variable of "sex stratification" covers eleven dimensions ranging from difference in access to material goods, services, the educational system and political decisions to freedom from physical violence.

The individualistic approach (e.g. Beck 1994) pointed out another fact that follows from the empirical findings: the inequity women are subjected to is multifarious and

can be found in all walks of life. That women are largely responsible for the reproductive sector has a number of consequences for their access to social opportunities in life, such as on the labor market (unequal chances with regard to access, income and career, etc.) (Cyba 2000). Therefore there is a multitude of forms of inequity, which also indicates that biological sex is a determining factor in experiencing unevenly distributed chances in life.

Studies on fathers' roles have shown that when women changed their demands, men developed a certain insecurity (Zulehner and Volz 1999; Werneck 1997), in particular with regard to women's drastically changed expectations toward them. The transformation of the father image toward a loving, caring father who invests his time on the children, though it has happened largely on the attitude level so far and less in practical behavior patterns, is accompanied by completely new demands on fatherhood and is hardly compatible with the traditional male self-image.

It is also important to explicitly explore the term of "equity" as analyzed in this work. According to the concept of Gómez Gómez (2002), equity is not the same as equality and not all inequality can be considered inequity. Equity implies that what is considered in decisions about resource allocation are actual needs rather than socioeconomic advantages. So while equality is an empirical concept, equity is an ethical imperative grounded in principles of social justice and human rights. Thus, aiming for "equity" goes far beyond simple equal-opportunity concepts and takes into account the varying needs of men and women. Regarding the purpose of our study, this means that both sexes are faced with different attitudes in their work environment and that this is bound to have a different effect on a "private" decision such as the wish to have a baby.

So basically it is necessary to understand the question of "gender inequity" as an important category within population science. Neyer (2000) suggests critically scrutinizing the cultural and economic concepts of demography for this category. Our study is intended as a contribution to the way in which "gender trouble" – a term coined by Judith Butler (1990) – might be measured, and also as a possibility for using inequity between men and women as an implication for the declining birth rate and – even more so – for the declining wish to have children (Goldstein et al. 2003) in Austria.

## **The interaction between inequity in the reproductive sector and the labor market in Austria**

Almost 20 years ago, Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (1983) coined the term of professional life being a “one-and-a-half-person construct”: in her words, due to working hours, commuting time and hours of overtime, any job claimed the full availability of one person, which meant that this one working person had to be supported by at least the part-time workload of another person who kept the breadwinning partner free from household and family tasks. Thus the structural relationship between family and the labor market was formulated. It means that the inequitable relation between the sexes is in fact an institutional presupposition of the labor market. For while it is true that the labor market is quite capable of making use of the “remaining half” of the supporting partner’s workforce, the special conditions of the part-time labor market, which is different from the “normal job” status, exclude this person from many career opportunities. Many factors sustain the “one-and-a-half-person system” in labor politics, which in turn profits from both variants of income generation, and even when the family tasks do finally diminish, it is usually difficult to reconvert part-time jobs into full-time ones.

The last microcensus in Austria, carried out by Statistisches Zentralamt in 1992, yielded the following results about time allocation between couples (Gross 1995): women aged over 19 years spent approximately 5 hours and 40 minutes every day on household tasks, childcare duties and caring for elderly or sick family members (Table 1). Men spent about 2 hours on these activities. At the same time, the average working time for men was at 6 hours and 20 minutes, while it was 3 hours for women. The survey also looked at the total workload (including economic, household and child care activities) among married couples with at least one child under 15 years of age living in the same household. One interesting finding is that fully employed women tend to work on average 1.5 hour more than their male partners: 10.5 hours daily for women compared with 9 hours for men. For women in part-time employment, the total daily working time drops to 9.75 hours, with the women thus working three quarters of an hour longer than their partners. Only when the woman does not have any regular employment, do both partners show a similar workload, i.e. approximately 9 hours per day each (STATA 2002).

Table 1. Time allocation in couples: average time expenditure<sup>1</sup> on income generation and household duties of subjects living in a partnership<sup>2</sup>. Austria 1992.

Activities	Men		Women	
	Income generation	Household and family duties	Income generation	Household and family duties
Women not employed, men full-time employed	7.10	1.96	0.27	8.43
Women part-time, men full-time employed	6.58	1.57	3.26	6.18
Both partners full-time employed	6.44	2.12	4.42	5.41

Source: STATA 2002

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> in hours, minutes per day

<sup>2</sup> having children under 15

This contribution of women to the national accounts, however, remains invisible with regard to its actual dimension. According to calculations published by the Austrian Statistisches Zentralamt in 1992 about an “extended gross national product” – i.e., extended by unpaid family labor –, the women’s share of added value amounted to 45 to 55%, depending on the method of calculation. The official “female GDP”, on the other hand, was 22%.

Although the relationship between the sexes in the sectors of education and the labor market has seen enormous social changes during the last 30–40 years, its traditional core has remained largely unaltered on the family level. Until most recently, many studies (e.g. Mikula and Freudenthaler 1999) have shown that women are still chiefly responsible for household tasks and childcare duties, while on the other hand there is no longer the same social pressure on men to provide the sole economic security for their families.

The consequences of women almost exclusively being responsible for family work are grave (McRae 1997; Garhammer 1996; Irwin 1999; Rosenberger 1995). As men are regularly given preference on the labor market, both in salary levels and in career advancement, this paper wants to examine how much trust women place in government policies aimed at reducing that imbalance by, for instance,

- 1) more institutional aid (e.g. childcare facilities)
- 2) legislation that supports egalitarian forms of marriage
- 3) supporting measures for equal opportunities on the labor market.

Arber and Ginn (1995) commented on the “gender gap” as follows: there is a contradiction in contemporary society between the general acceptance of equal opportunity and equal pay for women and the normative structure of the domestic domain in which husbands are generally accepted as the main breadwinner. According to Arber and Ginn, women may have gained on the labor market but the inequalities in the distribution of household chores still persist, because it has not yet been possible to translate the relative success in the public sector into the private sector of the family. This means – according to Arber and Ginn – that gender inequity in economic roles in the household may be more resistant to change.

## Data and method

The study uses a data set produced in the framework of a European survey<sup>1</sup>. The population basis was all persons aged 20–65 with Austrian citizenship and resident in Austria. The survey was conducted in 2001 as a series of personal oral interviews. A total of 3,280 persons were selected for the survey, of which 1,995 were successfully interviewed and included in the sample. The project PPA II<sup>2</sup> deals with knowledge and opinion about population and population policy as well as about family and gender-related issues.

As this study focuses on persons for whom a wish to have children is (still) accomplishable, we restricted the age group to 20 to 44 years. In order to exclude the “single” effect, we only accepted persons for analysis who were already living in a partnership (360 men and 420 women).

McDonald (2000) deplored the “poor design of quantitative analyses” in which the status of women is used as an analytical indicator of fertility resulting rather conventional types of study. This article attempts at contravening this problem by looking at measures of gender equity, simultaneously in the private and public domain. In other words, we strive to distinguish inequity at the micro level of individual couples and at the macro level of society at large. Both spheres are being examined on the individual level by looking at the responding attitude of the interviewees. We will demonstrate below what our categories for “inequity” are in both the private and the public sector for the women and men interviewed.

First, we will present facts about the distribution of household tasks. Men who answered that they perform household duties themselves or together with the partner

---

<sup>1</sup>The 14 participating countries are: Austria, Belgium (Flemish part), Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovenia and Switzerland.

<sup>2</sup>In Austria the first round already took place in 1992/1993.

were assigned to the “egalitarian” model, just like women who said that they are performed by “my partner” or “together”. All other cases were assigned to the “traditional” category.

- 1) Various facts with respect to the sharing of childcare duties are given and measured by “myself”, “my partner”, and “me and my partner together”.
- 2) Attitudes about the sharing of household tasks were measured by the same two variables, by dichotomizing the answers into “satisfied” on the one hand and “partly satisfied”/“dissatisfied” on the other.
- 3) Personal attitudes about the sharing of childcare duties are measured by three variables: “satisfied”, “partly satisfied” and “dissatisfied”.
- 4) The measurement of the subjects’ awareness of the unequal status of the sexes within society was based on their agreement or disagreement with four items which contained statements about women’s integration in the labor market.
- 5) Finally, we created an index to check the subjects’ acceptance of gender mainstreaming programs. We measured the extent of agreement with political actions aimed at abolishing the inequity on the labor market, in politics and in the family. One precondition for the sum index<sup>3</sup> was a high intercorrelation between the items. Below, we differentiate the degree of support by political measures for an egalitarian partnership on a range from “very weak”, “weak”, “strong” to “very strong”. However, in the regression analysis the index was dichotomized (egalitarian/conventional) (c.f. page 17).

We will test the assumptions by the following statistical procedures. At first, there is a descriptive presentation of all the dependent variables that we selected as indicators for the relationship between the sexes and that seem to be important from a theoretical point of view. The method chosen for testing the assumptions is binary logistic regression analysis.

Testing the correlations resulted in the finding that the question about the awareness of a gender (in)equity did not show any relation to the desire to have children. It was therefore eliminated from the logistic regression analysis. In a subsequent step, we decided to leave out the variables *distribution of childcare duties* and *contentment with childcare*, because these questions were only presented to those subjects who actually had children. However, confining all variables to subjects with children would have diminished the sample too much for the regression analysis.

---

<sup>3</sup> It must be stated here that this was not a measurement of attitudes because the indicators were not taken from a theory of the concept of “egalitarian attitude” and none of the scaling techniques normally applied in attitude measurement (Rasch model, Scalogram analysis, Likert scale, etc.) were used.

Therefore – besides the demographic variables *age, type of partnership, number of children, education* and *employment status* – the logistic regression analysis is left with three “gender” variables:

$x_1$ ...*distribution of household tasks* (egalitarian–conventional)

$x_2$ ...*contentment with the distribution of household tasks* (satisfied-partly satisfied/dissatisfied)

$x_3$ ...*attitude toward political promotion of equal opportunities for women in society and family* (“Equity” Index) (positive–negative)

## **Assumptions about the impact of gender issues on fertility intentions**

### **Fertility Intentions**

The desire to have children expressed by women and men aged between 20 and 44 constituted our dependent variable. The question was, “Do you intend to have a child or more children in the future?” We selected only persons living in a partnership: 25% of the women and 34% of the men said they wanted to have a(nother) child. Among women who were still childless, 60% wanted a child, while this wish was expressed by only 32% of women who already had one child and by 12.5% who had two or more children. Among childless men, 76% wanted a child, while 55% of fathers of one child expressed this wish, compared to about 13% of those who had two or more. Our analysis includes all persons, regardless of the number of children they have.

However, it must be noted that fertility intentions are predictions about the future and therefore may hold a considerable uncertainty. Generally, there is a discrepancy between the desired and the actual number of children, due to changes in living conditions or to other personal circumstances. A European comparative analysis showed that in general the number of children born to a woman is lower than the number of children previously desired (Testa 2002).

### **Assumption 1: Effect of distribution of childcare and household duties on childbearing desire**

Our Assumption 1 is that any imbalance in the sharing of family duties is significantly associated with a lower desire for an (additional) child. Our question is whether there is indeed an interrelation between the desired number of children and the level of contentment with, and/or the subjective perception of, the reproductive sector within a partnership, i.e., the distribution of household chores.



Numerous studies – a few are mentioned above – have been concerned with the various aspects of intrafamilial inequality. Sarah Irwin (1999) bases her evaluation on the assumption that the general theme of much of the research about changes in female employment patterns is that it has not significantly altered patterns of gender inequality in employment or the family for the majority of women in the Western world. From this perspective, the “new family” looks much like the old family where conventional divisions of labor in the resourcing of households have remained intact, despite the change in female labor participation rates.

That the willingness to have a baby is linked to the level of women’s contentment with their partner’s participation in matters of household chores and childrearing duties could be documented by the data from the Austrian Family and Fertility Survey (FFS) used in a study about abortion (Tazi-Preve and Kytir 2001). In partnerships that are characterized by severe conflicts in these matters, the probability of a decision for abortion is roughly doubled. For instance, when the distribution of childcare duties is perceived as fair, only one out of 10 women would be in favor of terminating their pregnancy. However, if the distribution in this sector is experienced as unjust, 21% of the women advocate abortion.

For Sweden and Hungary, Olah (2001) recently found a higher tendency for a second birth in couples who share family responsibilities equally than in those with traditional gender role behavior. So one of the questions we raise here is whether men with an egalitarian approach to partnership also have a greater tendency to express the wish for a(nother) child.

### **Assumption 2: Effect of the perception of gender inequity in the labor market and the trust in “gender mainstreaming” programs on child-bearing desire**

Our goal is to assess the acceptance of “gender mainstreaming” programs. As a yardstick for discrimination in the public sector we are considering questions that are intended to examine people’s attitude about using political measures to support women’s issues. The attitude towards government involvement in sectors like the labor market (equal-opportunity campaigns, etc.), politics (participation) and the family is registered by an index in order to determine a negative or positive attitude with respect to state-supported measures giving advantages to women.

Our Assumption 2 is that the attitude towards political measures being used to counter inequality might have an effect on decisions in the private sector related to the wish to have children. A woman may decide not to have a (further) child because she feels that mothers face discrimination on the labor market and in the welfare system (lack of childcare institutions etc.). Additionally women or men with a more egalitarian

view of society may be more willing to have a (further) child. Unlike the questions we analyze in Assumption 1, we will not turn to factual items here but rather concentrate on the judgement and opinions of the interview subjects and on the question to what extent they have an effect on fertility.

## **Descriptive results**

Here we will show the results for those indicators which we selected as measuring instruments for gender (in)equality.

### **Results concerning the distribution of household tasks**

The results show that the distribution of household tasks between the partners confirms the findings of previous as well as recent statistical results (Table 2). The correlation of answers to “Which of you usually does the household chores?” shows clearly significant results with regard to the subject’s sex in the scales “mostly I do them myself”, or “mostly my partner does them”, respectively.

The majority of women living in partnerships – over all age groups and regardless of whether there is a child in the family – are coping with the daily household tasks all by themselves (74%). Their male partners recognize this, although they value their own contribution slightly higher than the women. They say that their partners are shouldering some 70% of the household tasks. In those couples who share household duties, 22% of the men assume that such sharing is done equally, while 20% of the women reported an equal distribution.

Table 2 shows that there are several factors influencing the type of partnership model. Considering the results from an age-specific perspective, we find that men who live with a female partner (whether married or not) show a relatively high tendency towards equitable distribution of household tasks at a young age: about 34% of the males aged 20–29 say that they share household chores with their partner. Another significant factor is the type of partnership, which we subdivided into four groups. Among unmarried cohabitating persons the probability is rather high that these tasks also become “men’s affairs”: at least 48% of the unmarried men living with their partner without children are willing to share the household labor, while only 20% of the married men with children report doing so. Generally, as soon as there are children in the family, men’s readiness to become involved in household work decreases significantly. Men’s education levels constitute another significant aspect. Both partners’ load of paid work also has an important influence on how the household is organized. When both are working full time, about 38% of the women report that household duties are shared equally, while this is found only in 15% of the cases where women are working part time or as housewives only.

Table 2. Prevalence of equal distribution of household duties in sociodemographic subgroups of spouses aged 20–44.

Category		Equal distribution of household duties		Traditional distribution of household duties	
		Men	Women	Men	Women
Age	20–29	34.1	50.0	65.9	50.0
	30–39	23.0	25.0	77.0	74.0
	40–44	13.6	15.7	86.4	84.3
		Men: $\chi^2=5.02$ $p=0.02^*$ OO=0.05		Women: $\chi^2=12.20$ $p=0.000^*$ OO=0.23	
Partnership	Cohabiting with child	36.5	22.5	63.5	77.5
	Cohabiting without child	45.3	47.4	54.7	47.4
	Married with child	13.7	13.0	86.3	87.0
	Married without child	33.3	34.5	66.7	65.5
		Men: $\chi^2=15.04$ $p=0.001^*$ OO=0.21		Women: $\chi^2=123.6$ $p=0.000^*$ OO=0.17	
Number of children in household	0	44.1	45.9	55.9	54.1
	1	32.1	34.9	67.9	65.1
	2 and more	13.6	14.2	86.4	80.8
		Men: $\chi^2=15.48$ $p=0.000^*$ OO=0.21		Women: $\chi^2=351.1$ $p=0.000^*$ OO=0.23	
Education	Low	22.4	22.7	77.6	77.3
	High	33.5	30.0	66.5	70.0
		Men: $\chi^2=0.75$ $p=0.02^*$ OO=0.16		Women: $\chi^2=2.20$ $p=0.13$ OO=0.07	
Occupation	Fully employed	22.9	33.1	77.1	66.9
	Part-time	50.0	16.4	50.0	83.6
	Housewife		13.5		86.5
	Other	33.3	35.4	66.7	64.6
		Men: $\chi^2=34.10$ $p=0.000^*$ OO=0.30		Women: $\chi^2=26.90$ $p=0.000^*$ OO=0.24	

Source: PPAII, author's own calculations

Notes: Percentages and Chi-Square-Test ( $p<0.05$ ; \* = significant)

## Results concerning childcare duties

In order to assess activities linked to childcare and childrearing, the questions were subdivided into a number of categories and presented to men and women with at least one child under 15 living at home. The activity categories were cooking for the children, dressing the children, taking them to the doctor and choosing nursery schools and elementary schools. Another question was who played or went out with the children, and who helped them with their homework. The respondents were asked

which partner took care of each of these tasks in most cases or whether this was a shared activity.

Cooking and dressing are left practically entirely to the mothers – about 80% of both men and women say that it is the women who “usually do” these things. As for necessary visits to the doctor or to public authorities, the fathers estimate their share considerably higher than the mothers’ answers suggest: 80% of the women say that only they take their children to the doctor, while only 68% of the fathers answer that their female partners did so. 25% of the men and 16% of the women see this as a common task. Helping with homework is something only 6% of the men are ready to do, compared to 64% of the women. However, 40% of the fathers and 31% of the mothers consider it a joint activity. For all questions, the proportion of men who report performing any of the activities mainly on their own amounts to only a few cases.

### **Opinions on equality within the partner relationship**

As a further indicator for egalitarian sharing of household activities, we examined the personal feelings of our respondents, i.e., we asked whether each of the partners was content with the distribution of household activities (Table 3). Our survey data showed that only a relatively small percentage of the women made comments to the effect that they experienced discrimination in the distribution of household work: 7% of the women and only 2% of the men consider this distribution as “unfair”. 35% of female respondents were “partly satisfied” with the contributions of their male partners. For the logistic regression, we dichotomized the variable so as to obtain a distribution of “satisfied” and “not” or “partly satisfied” respondents, as shown in Table 3. 85% of the men have no objections to the distribution of chores, while only 57% of the women are satisfied.

Table 3. Proportion (%) being satisfied with the distribution of household tasks (subjects married or cohabiting with partner in the same household; 20–44 years).

	Females	Males
The distribution of household tasks between me and my partner		
– is satisfactory	56.7	84.7
– is partly satisfactory or unsatisfactory	43.3	15.3
	100.0	100.0

Source: FPA II, author's own calculations

The picture is similar when looking at the distribution of work related to caring for and bringing up a couple’s children. Three percent of the women living together with a partner and child(ren) report that they experience the distribution of childcare duties as unfair, while another 22% consider it somewhat fair. The distribution of childcare duties is considered satisfactory by 60% of the women and by 77% of the men. So the uneasiness of women is expressed by their exercising great reserve in the statements about their satisfaction with the partner’s contribution.

### **Awareness of the gender issue in the labor market**

Testing the perception of gender inequality with the question “What do you think about the differences between men and women in society”, we found a rather high level of awareness of existing discrimination. The majority of respondents believe that the time of absence for parental leave<sup>4</sup> might make it difficult for women to regain their former professional position. While 70% of the male respondents agree with this item, more than 81% of the female show their agreement. Among all respondents, 85% were aware of the fact that women earn less than men in equal positions. Among men 61% do not believe that women have the same chances as men to pursue a career, and even 69% of the women have their doubts about equal opportunity. About 70% do not believe that family policies concerning children are sufficient to provide equal chances for women in their job, with women appearing more pessimistic than men (74% vs. 65%).

### **Acceptance of policy measures for equal opportunities – Equity Index**

An equity index was formed to draw up some sort of typology concerning questions that are particularly important for so-called gender-mainstreaming programs. This index uses the following items, thus taking into account attitudes toward promoting gender equality in the family, labor market and politics:

Support of political equal-opportunity measures in order to ...

- improve job opportunities for women
- promote the political participation of women
- promote the integration of women in technical professions
- promote the integration of women in leading positions
- encourage fathers to increase their contributions to childcare duties
- encourage sharing of household duties

It was formed as a sum index by adding together all positive item evaluations (i.e., the answers “I fully agree” and “I rather agree”): the higher the index figure, the more positive the subjects’ attitude towards the effects of government intervention aimed at promoting equal opportunities in the public sector. We then divided the index into two groups, representing a traditional and a progressive attitude toward public support programs. Furthermore, we analyzed them separately for both sexes, as index values for women were generally a lot higher (see Table 4).

---

<sup>4</sup> Parental leave is rather long in Austria, and has been extended up to two and a half years.

Table 4: “Equity Index” (percentage; 20–44 years)

		Traditional Index low (0–4)		Progressive Index high (5–8)	
		Men	Women	Men	Women
Age	20–29	53.6	39.6	46.4	60.4
	30–39	60.7	41.7	39.3	58.3
	40–44	65.2	44.9	34.8	55.1
		Men: $\chi^2=1.98$ $p=0.37$ CC=0.07		Women: $\chi^2=0.28$ $p=0.75$ CC=0.03	
Partnership	Cohabiting with child	67.3	30.4	32.7	69.6
	Cohabiting without child	41.7	35.0	58.3	65.0
	Married with child	60.2	42.6	39.8	57.4
	Married without child	71.4	54.3	28.6	45.2
	Men: $\chi^2=7.78$ $p=0.05^*$ CC=0.14		Women: $\chi^2=5.07$ $p=0.16$ CC=0.11		
Number of children in household	0	53.3	43.2	41.2	53.3
	1	47.6	44.6	52.4	55.4
	2 and more	66.7	40.1	33.3	59.9
	Men: $\chi^2=0.21$ $p=0.61^*$ CC=0.15		Women: $\chi^2=1.13$ $p=0.58$ CC=0.05		
Education	Low	60.5	41.4	39.5	53.6
	High	61.1	44.3	38.9	55.7
	Men: $\chi^2=0.003$ $p=0.92$ CC=0.005		Women: $\chi^2=0.28$ $p=0.59$ CC=0.02		
Occupation	Fully employed	60.2	45.3	39.8	54.2
	Part-time	68.7	34.4	33.3	65.6
	Housewife		45.5		54.5
	Others	68.7	42.4	33.3	57.6
	Men: $\chi^2=0.44$ $p=0.80$ CC=0.03		Women: $\chi^2=4.19$ $p=0.24$ CC=0.10		

Source: PPA II, authors' own calculations

Note: Percentages and Chi-Square-Test ( $p < 0.05$ ; \* = significant)

without children turned out to be a progressive group, although the influence of age must be taken into account. For fathers of two or more children, there is also a clear correlation to the attitude toward support programs for women.

## Results

We asked whether inequality in sharing household tasks is connected with the wish to have a baby. For men and women separately, we did a logistic regression analysis with the variables *age*, *children living in the household*, *education*, *employment* and, as “gender variables”, *distribution of household duties*, *contentment with the distribution of household duties*, and the “*Equity Index*”. During forward selection, however, the results only show the significant variables (Table 5).

Table 5. Logistic regression analysis of variables with possible influence on childbearing desire (20–44 years) with partner (forward selection)

### Women

		Regression coefficient B	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% Confidence intervals for EXP(B)	
						Low value	High value
Step 3	Age	0.963	1	0.000*	2.620	1.980	3.466
	Children in household	0.838	1	0.000*	2.311	1.658	3.221
	Education	-0.835	1	0.006*	0.434	0.234	0.805
	constant	-2.115	1	0.001	0.121		

Source: FPA II, authors' own calculations

Note: \* = significant

### Men

		Regression coefficient B	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% Confidence intervals for EXP(B)	
						Low value	High value
Step 4	Age	0.801	1	0.000*	2.228	1.570	3.164
	Children in household	1.515	1	0.000*	4.550	2.992	6.919
	Occupation	-0.527	1	0.027*	0.590	0.370	0.941
	Distribution of household tasks	0.842	1	0.022*	2.322	1.130	4.770
	constant	-5.028	1	0.000	0.007		

Source: FPA II, authors' own calculations

Notes: \* = significant

In forward selection, the variables are gradually introduced, and in the final step only the significant variables remain in the table.

As an indicator for an egalitarian relationship we used the response of both partners sharing household duties. When this is compared to women who bear full responsibility for the household, in the descriptive analysis it turns out that willingness to have a(nother) baby is higher in an egalitarian partnership. When tasks are shared, 35% of the women are in favor of a(nother) child, as opposed to 21% of those women who are shouldering these tasks alone. For men, the result is even clearer: 23% of those living in a traditional partnership wish for a(nother) child, as opposed to 57% of the men sharing household duties or caring for the household by themselves.

The results of the regression analysis are significant with respect to our Assumption1 only for males: thus the traditional division of household labor is correlated with a negative wish to have a baby, while an egalitarian partnership increases this wish<sup>5</sup>. Furthermore, men's wish to have a(nother) child is influenced by their age and occupation. Older men and men in whose relationship there is no sharing of household duties would rather not have a(nother) child. Also when controlling by 10-year groups (20–29 and 30–39 years), there is a markedly higher wish to have children among men who do not follow the traditional distribution of household labor. Women, on the other hand, do not show any connection between willingness to have a(nother) child and the distribution of domestic chores. Here, only the demographic *variables age, number of children and education level* are significant. Younger women with few or no children and a higher education level tend to want a(nother) child.

Several studies on the division of household labor and consequences for marital satisfaction found that perceived fairness might be a better predictor of a lack of marital conflict than the actual extent of inequality in the division of labor (Blair 1994). When verifying this assumption by means of logistic regression, however, it was impossible to determine any significance.

The variables for distributing childcare duties within the partnership, and attitudes about this issue, were excluded from the logistic regression analysis, as explained on page 11.

Testing the awareness of discrimination against women involves the perception, on the one hand, of the efficiency of institutional and financial supports and benefits granted by the state, and on the other, of the consequences a woman has to face from her employer upon taking maternity leave. None of the items we examined showed a correlation of a high level of awareness with existing unfavorable conditions in the

---

<sup>5</sup> Note: the wish to have a(nother) child was coded with “0” and refusal to have a(nother) child was coded with “1”.



labor market and a reduced desire to have a baby. This variable was therefore not included in the regression analysis.

As a further indicator of equity in society, we examined the correlation between the attitude towards political measures aimed at countering a lack of equity in society and the wish to have a(nother) baby. For this purpose, we used the concept of equity described in Introduction on page 7 as well as the “Equity Index” mentioned on page 17. Looking at the results in order to verify whether women and men who wish the state to intervene in favor of an egalitarian society and partnership and who have themselves an egalitarian view of partnership and society are actually more willing to have a(nother) baby, the results for Assumption 2 are as follows: the regression analysis shows this index to be non-significant.

## **Summary and discussion**

The analysis presented here has demonstrated the usefulness of including “gender aspects” in an analytical framework. It is our aim to add the dimension of the unequal relationship between men and women into the most complex framework of intentions connected to the desire to have children.

The data of our study apply both to the subjects’ attitude and to their actual behavior. The fact that an egalitarian attitude in gender issues encourages the wish to have a(nother) baby in men is a significant finding with respect to the actual behavior of the partners, but less expressive when opinions in gender issues are being considered. The result does, in fact, constitute a deviation from our initial assumptions, that is that an unequal distribution within a partnership is mainly bound to have a severe influence on women’s wish to have a(nother) child. Although such a connection was quite clear in the descriptive analysis, it no longer made any difference in the regression analysis. This result corresponds to the finding that more than before men are facing a challenge to share the responsibilities of family life, childcare and housework. Men who are interested in an egalitarian partnership thus also want to become fathers of a(nother) child more than men who live in traditional partnerships. However, one should note that the effect of the respondents’ age plays a role here as well, with younger men proving to be far more open-minded than older ones.

What our data also show is a finding that is surprising at first glance, that is that a large number of women do not see an uneven distribution of household work as a violation of their rights. On the other hand, men do not experience the distribution of childcare activities as a problematical aspect in their relationship. However, conflicts about the distribution of household tasks and childcare duties can be interpreted in quite different ways. Men who express dissatisfaction probably think that their partner

demands too much involvement in these activities of them. Women in turn want an egalitarian partnership because of a changed female self-awareness and also because of the actual triple workload of professional career, household and family.

We will take into account another explanatory consideration here: subjective opinions about what one is entitled to or not are characterized by the normative standards that apply in a given society as well as by social comparison, i.e., by the way other people in a similar framework are being treated. Since men and women, regardless of whether they hold a paying job or not, are still assigned different rights and duties in the household and with respect to childcare, the current normative standards will hardly supply any indication that an unequal distribution of household work is an infringement of women's justified claims. Also when making a comparison in their own social context, women must reach the conclusion that they apparently do not have a right to an equal distribution of labor, because, just like themselves, most other women are shouldering the major part of household chores.

Our results also show that women tend to have a rather sceptical point of view towards political measures and objectives aimed at achieving equal opportunities on the labor market. They assess as relatively poor their opportunities for career and reintegration after a break in their professional life due to the birth of a child. A surprising result is that this does not seem to be seen as related to the wish to have a(nother) baby, which is ultimately considered a private desire.

Many studies (e.g. McDonald 2000) report that women who are fully integrated into the labor market and thus have attained a "high level of equality" tend to have low fertility. Integration into the labor market, however, is no longer a question for the generation of women interviewed here. Instead it is a matter of course for women to have a job, even though the labor market is segregated according to gender-specific patterns and dominated by hierarchies. Equally, men and women shared a relative consensus about the fact that there is a certain backlog in improving conditions for women on the labor market. We found that the childbearing desire of women who place great trust into "gender mainstreaming" programs is not at all lower than that of women who fundamentally refuse any equal-opportunity measures and programs. And women living in a traditional family constellation (housewife/male breadwinner) do not show a higher childbearing desire than women with professional ambitions.

## References

- Arber, S. and J. Ginn. 1995. The mirage of gender equality: occupational success in the labour market and within marriage. *British Journal of Sociology* 46(1):21–43.
- Beck-Gernsheim, Elisabeth. 1983. Vom Dasein für andere zum Anspruch auf ein Stück eigenes Leben. Individualisierungsprozesse im weiblichen Lebenszusammenhang. *Soziale Welt* 34:307–340.
- Beck, Ulrich, (editor). 1994. *Riskante Freiheiten. Individualisierung in modernen Gesellschaften*. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp.
- Biffl, Gudrun. 1994. Generelle Überlegungen zu einem sozialen Reproduktionsmodell. In: *Arbeitsgruppe Menschenrechte*, ed. Dokumentation der Tagung “Die Hälfte der Welt den Frauen”. Wien.
- Blair, S.L. and C. Hardesty. 1994. Parental involvement and the well-being of fathers and mothers of young children. *Journal of Men’s Studies* 3:49–68.
- Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. Thinking Gender*. New York & London: Routledge.
- Chafetz Saltzman, Janet. 1984. *Sex and advantage. A comparative, macro-structural theory of sex stratification*. Totowa, NY: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Cyba, Eva. 2000. *Geschlecht und soziale Ungleichheit. Konstellationen der Frauenbenachteiligung*. Opladen: Leske und Budrich.
- Garhammer, Manfred. 1996. Auf dem Weg zu egalitären Geschlechterrollen? Familiäre Arbeitsteilung im Wandel. In: *Familie zwischen gesellschaftlicher Prägung und individuellem Design*, edited by H.P Buba and N. Schneider, pp. 319–36. Opladen: Leske und Budrich.
- Goldstein, Joshua, Wolfgang Lutz, and Maria Rita Testa. 2003. The Emergence of Sub-Replacement Family Size Ideals in Europe. *European Demographic Research Papers* 2: 3–27.
- Gómez Gómez, Elsa. 2002. *Gender Equity and Health Policy Reform in Latin America and the Carrebean*. Paper presented at the Interregional Seminar on Reproductive Health, Unmet Needs and Poverty: Issues of Access and Quality of Service. Bangkok.
- Gross, Inge. 1995. Erhebung über die Zeitverwendung 1981 und 1992. Hauptergebnisse – 1. Teil. *Statistische Nachrichten* 2:116–21.
- Irwin, Sarah. 1999. Resourcing the Family. Gendered Claims and Obligations and Issues of Explanations. In: *The New Family?*, edited by E.B. Silva and C. Smart. London: Sage Publications.
- Jensen, An-Magritt. 2000. *Childbearing in Marriage and Outside: From Unity to Gender Divide?* Paper presented at Zahradky, Czech Republic. Network for Integrated European Population Studies.
- Kytir, Josef, Helga De Wild, and Peter Zuser. 2002. Demographische Strukturen und Trends in Österreich 2001. *Statistische Nachrichten* 10:736–54.
- McDonald, Peter. 2000. Gender Equity in Theories of Fertility Transition. *Population and Development Review* 26(3):427–39.
- McRae, Susan. 1997. Household and labour market change: implications for the growth of inequality in Britain. *British Journal of Sociology* 48(3):384–405.
- Mikula, Gerold and Heribert Freudenthaler. 1999. Aufteilung von Familienarbeit als Gegenstand von Ungerechtigkeitswahrnehmungen und sozialen Konflikten: zur Bedeutung sozialer Vergleiche. In: *Compendium of Family Studies in Austria 1999*, edited by Wolfgang Lutz, pp. 37–60. Wien: Österreichisches Institut für Familienforschung.

- Neyer, Gerda. 2000. Gender Issues in Family and Fertility Research. In: *Generations and Gender Programme*. Exploring Future Research and Data Collection Opinions. United Nations and Geneva: United Nations.
- Olah, Livia S. 2001. Gendering fertility: Second births in Sweden and Hungary. In: L.S. Olah: *Gendering family dynamics: The case of Sweden and Hungary*. Stockholm University. Demography Unit – Dissertation Series I: 1–50.
- Rosenberger, Sieglinde. 1995. Auswirkungen sozialpolitischer Maßnahmen auf die Gestaltung der Geschlechterverhältnisse. In: *Bericht über die Situation der Frauen in Österreich. Frauenbericht 1995*, edited by Bundesministerium für Frauenangelegenheiten/ Bundeskanzleramt, pp. 387–97. Wien: Bundesministerium für Frauenangelegenheiten.
- STATA (Bundesanstalt Statistik Austria). 2002. *Geschlechtsspezifische Disparitäten*. Wien: STATA.
- Tazi-Preve, Irene and Josef Kytir. 2001. Schwangerschaftsabbruch – Gesellschaftspolitische Aspekte und empirische Befunde, *SWS-Rundschau* 41(4):435–58.
- Testa, Maria Rita. 2002. *Eurobarometer 56.2*. Attitudes of Europeans towards fertility: Ideals, desires, intentions and realizations. Survey organised and managed by European Opinion Research Group EEIG. Unpublished paper. Vienna.
- Werneck, Harald. 1998. *Übergang zur Vaterschaft. Auf der Suche nach den „Neuen Vätern“*. Wien and New York: Springer.
- Zulehner, Paul and Rainer Volz. 1999. *Männer im Aufbruch. Wie Deutschlands Männer sich selbst und wie Frauen sie sehen*. Ostfildern: Schwabenverlag.