GENDER TROUBLE AND FERTILITY DECLINE.
GENDER IN DEMOGRAPHY

Irene M. Tazi-Preve, Vienna Institute of Demography, Austrian Academy of Science

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1. Introduction

Ever since the rise of the modern state, issues of population policy have been of national interest in every country. Ongoing negative fertility rates in most European nations have even given them growing attention within the general public for the last few years. The relatively recent science of demography is concerned, among other subjects, with recording, analysing and evaluating trends in fertility. In this contribution we intend to describe this discipline in more detail and analyse its approach to women’s childbearing behaviour.

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

The last few decades have seen dramatic demographic changes in Europe. These changes have been particularly marked by the declining birth-rate. The year 2001 brought the lowest figures ever observed in Austria, with fertility dropping to 1.31 children per woman (Kytir et al. 2002).

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 the living reality or as an intellectual concept, does in fact increase the willingness of questionnaire subjects to have a baby.

2. Demography and gender

In the 1950s and 1960s the demographic transition theory (Davis 1963) was formulated: In its simplest terms it was an elegant schema which posited a three-stage transformation from high mortality and high fertility, through lower mortality with high fertility and finally, as numbers of surviving children became impossible to support, a necessary adjustment to low fertility and low mortality. The theory of the demographic transition attempted to place on a scientific footing a series of complex social changes incorporating not only political economy but sexuality and changing consciousness.

Picking up a central theory within the macrotheoretical approach the second demographic transition might be an example for a very generalizing access. Even if Dirk van der Kaa (1987) picked up the „woman question“ as one of the main reasons for the demographic changes of the last decades he did not seek to analyse the women movement of the late sixties. The question is touched quite superficially stressing much more the rights and self-fulfillment of individuals than the imbalance of power between the two sexes.

Demography concerning fertility has a tendency towards reducing very complex human activity to some clearly measurable phenomenon in which women are ignored in a very
fatal way as the ones who guarantee reproduction. Social statistics means the presentation of supposedly incontrovertible statistical facts. Within its parameters morality is supposed to be absent, but it lurks, unacknowledged, in its categories, in the questions chosen for investigation. The search of cause and effect has been the defining characteristic of disciplines such as demography which track movements in population (MacKinnon 1997). In the proceedings of the 1929 World Population Conference only two women’s voices were reported. One of them insisted on inserting into the new scientific proceedings the messy realities of women’s lives. “In these interesting scientific questions of population”, she said, “we women, on whom the increase in population depends, have not been asked for our opinion”. (Mackinnon 1997, 69). If you have a close look on demographic texts today obviously two points are mostly shifting away: sexuality and sex. Women often merely appear as variables, an approach which blunts a sense of active agency, of power or sexuality.

Susan Cotts Watkins (1993) in her view of thirty years of articles in the journal “Demography” highlighted taken-for-granted assumptions about women’s behaviour which underpin much quantitative demographic work. She found that issues of power within the family are ignored almost completely. Scott Watkins suggests that demographers should submit those understandings to critical scrutiny in keeping with the principles of women science.

Basically it is necessary to understand the question of “gender inequity” as an important category within population science. The cultural and economic concepts of population science have to be critically scrutinized by the category (“male-citizen-wage-earner”) which is underlying the research (Neyer 2000). Many demographers still tend to speak of the family or household as an undifferentiated, harmonious unit. The well-known demographer Richard Easterlin (1985) p.e. maintained that women’s aspirations today are not very different from those of the past: to find a husband who can support them, to give birth to children and to be a good mother. In his view the rise of women’s participation in the workforce is entirely due to the need for dual incomes. He maintains that when relative earnings rise, marriage and birthrates will rise again and women will return to their primary tasks of homemaking and childrearing.

Yet women’s attainments of the last three decades in the public sphere have changed the expectations of a whole new generation of women, which is now facing the challenge of juggling employment and family responsibilities. But such changes have not been matched by equivalent changes in social expectations of women’s responsibilities in the private sphere. So power is the central issue for a demographic research by which not only the workings of political and economic power but previously neglected domains such as the differential distribution of power within households is illuminated. So considerations of changing power relations among men and women are central to discussions of fertility decline.

Anyhow among demographers, the awareness has been growing that the traditional family model with its life-long marriage, definite segregation of gender roles, etc. forms rather an obstacle than a supportive environment for higher parity births. So we have to understand that „the family is not a static, unchanging institution, a decision-making black box” (Folbre 1983). On the contrary it is a group of individuals who make collective, but not necessarily consensual decisions.
Now there are new challenges to acknowledge the urgency of making the connection between changes in women’s “consciousness”, or subjectivity, and demographic change. “Female” subjects are forming more and more parts of debates, discourses and conferences, e.g.: a subject which is more and more included now within demographic conferences is the research on the gender pay gap. So women are restored to some active role in childbearing decisions (Federici al 1993). McDonald (2000) in his contribution returns to several findings in women’s studies and draws a parallel to the conclusions of demography, pointing out that “gender” plays no central role as yet in the theories about demographic change.

On the microtheoretical level certain theorists like Schmid (1984), Hoffmann-Nowotny (1987) or more recently McRae (1997) identify the tendency towards individualism within society as the underlying cause of low fertility. So in one way the area of privacy is widely accepted by society - just compare with the discussion concerning individuality, new forms of cohabitation etc - concurrently the number of births has significant importance for society and politics as a whole. That means fertility always stays at the cut of the private and the public area. Privacy in the context of declining fertility is accused to getting a notion of egoism by women who are accused for their wishes for „self-realization” by proponents of family policy.

It is a widespread procedure in demography to take economic theories as explanatory models. Thus the declining birth-rate is frequently explained in the context of the theory according to which individuals will always try to maximize their well-being (Becker 1991). Here, “fertility [is] part of this optimization since a person derives utility not only from the consumption of goods and leisure but also from having children.” The number of children a couple has is limited by fertility costs and their preferred level of care and expenditures per child”. These “fertility costs” also include income losses during the time of career interruptions or due to a reduced extent of breadwinning activities when a child must be taken care of. In the traditional “male breadwinner” model, such indirect fertility costs are almost negligible for the family because men were rarely involved in the direct care for children. As employment became increasingly appealing for women because it provided them with economic independence, the gendered nature of fertility costs therefore became a crucial issue in the dual-earner family context.

3. Gender-specific inequity

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, 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 labour 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 US 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.

From the point of view of feminist theorists, inequalities and discriminations of women cannot be exclusively or even primarily explained by the effects of capitalism or by the class structure of society. They are therefore not reducible to these reasons but constitute a fact of its own right that requires explanation. To analyze social inequality, it is interesting to read Walby (1990) who addresses the role of patriarchy as an explanatory factor for inequalities from a sociological perspective. The patriarchal theory departs from the assumption that women form a homogeneous social group whose discrimination can be accounted for by patriarchally influenced systems. The “patriarchy system” can be subdivided into six empirically definable dimensions. These are the imbalance in the context of the reproductive sector, discrimination on the salary level, patriarchal structures in the state, male violence, patriarchal sexual relationships, and patriarchal forms of cultural definition (religion, education).

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 labour 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 the biological sex is a determining factor in experiencing unevenly distributed chances in life. 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, taking 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.

Our study is intended as an important contribution to the way in which “gender trouble”—a term coined by Judith Butler (1990)—can be measured, and also as a possibility for taking the inequity between the sexes as an explanation for the declining birth-rate in Austria.
4. The interaction between inequity on the reproductive sector and the labour 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” because in her words any job claimed, due to the working hours including commuting times and hours of overtime, 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 labour market was formulated. It means that the inequitable relation between the sexes is in fact an institutional presupposition of the labour market. For while it is true that the labour market is quite capable of making use of the “remaining half” of the supporting partner’s workforce – but the special conditions of the part-time labour 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 occupation 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 within couples (Gross 1995): in 1992, women over 19 spent approx. 5 hours and 40 minutes every day for household tasks, childcare duties and caring for elderly or sick family members (Tab. 1). Men had about 2 hours for these reproductive 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. If at least one child under 15 is living in the same household, and the survey provides for additional differentiation with regard to the extent of women’s breadwinning activities, we have the following picture: with respect to the weekly average, women in full-time employment are shouldering the largest workload, viz., 10.5 hours per day, their total working time being by 1.5 hours longer than that of their male partners. For women in part-time employment, the total daily working time drops to 9.75 hours, thus they work three quarters of an hour longer than their partners. Only when the woman does not have any regular employment, both partners show a similar workload, i.e., approx. 9 h/d each (STATA 2002).

Tab. 1

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 labour –, 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 labour 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. Benard and Schlaffer 1993) have shown that woman 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 for providing the sole economical security for their families.
The „family sustainers“ are nowadays faced with transformations on the labour market (such as globalization, unemployment tending to increase, flexibilization) the implications of which for both sexes as well as for the family structure as a whole are of large-scale consequence. Women are frequently confronted with the alternative of children or career. For men, having children normally does not constitute a career disadvantage. But the consequences of women almost exclusively being responsible for family work are grave ones (McRae 1997, Garhammer 1996, Irwin 1999, Rosenberger 1995). As men are regularly given preference on the labour market, both in salary levels and in career advancements, this paper wants to examine how much trust women place in government policies aimed at reducing that imbalance by, for instance,
   a) more institutional aid (e.g. childcare facilities)
   b) legislation that supports egalitarian forms of marriage
   c) supporting measures for equal opportunities on the labour 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 labour 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.

5. Gender inequity and our hypotheses about the impact of gender issues on fertility intentions

5.1. Gender Inequity

McDonald (2000) deplored the “poor design of quantitative analyses” in which the status of women is used as an analytical indicator of fertility. This would result in a rather conventional type of studies. Other classical indicators in demography are education, religiousness, and economic status. We used the following measures of gender equity: in this contribution attention is given simultaneously to the distinction between inequality in the private and that in the public domain, or, 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.

Using the concepts of Chafetz (1984) and Walby (1990), we will demonstrate below what are our categories for “inequity” both in the private and the public sector for the women interviewed.

- In a first step, we will present facts about the distribution of household tasks – which were asked about in a general form –, expressed in two variables: “myself” or “me and my partner together”.
Various facts with respect to the sharing of childcare duties are given and measured as well, this time by “myself”, “my partner”, and “me and my partner together”.

Personal attitudes about the sharing of childcare duties are measured by three variables: “satisfied”, “partly satisfied”, and “dissatisfied”.

Attitudes about the sharing of household tasks were measured by the same three variables: “satisfied”, “partly satisfied”, and “dissatisfied”.

The measurement of the subjects’ awareness of the uneven 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 labour market (Tab. 4).

Finally, we created an index to check the subjects’ acceptance of gender mainstreaming programmes. We measured the extent of agreement with political actions aimed at abolishing the inequity on the labour market, in politics and in the family. One precondition for the sum index was the high intercorrelation between the items. Below, we are differentiating 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) (chapter 7.5).

5.2. Fertility Intentions

The desire to have children expressed by women aged between 20 and 39 constituted our dependent variable. The question said, “Do you intend to have a child or more children in the future?” In order to eliminate the “singles effect”, we selected only women living in a partnership: 60% of them said that they wanted to have a(nother) child. Among still childless women, 83% want a child, while this wish is expressed by only 75% of women who already have a child. Our analysis includes all women, 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 the 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).

Figure 1

Figure 1 shows the various factors influencing the wish to have a(nother) baby in women living in a partnership. Apart from demographic and socio-economical determinants, we are also showing those factors that might influence the childbearing desire because of the inequity between the sexes.
5.3. Hypothesis 1: Effect of distribution of childcare and household duties on childbearing desire

We have to keep in mind that the rising participation of women in the labour force does not necessarily mean that women’s power and autonomy is also increasing – neither in the public nor in the private sphere. Even in the ever so rapidly changing economic structures of the past decades, the reproductive sector has remained largely a female domain. The theoretical approach is based on the following observation: it is in the private area that the division of childcare and household duties can be called the “hot spot” of the “gender trouble”.

Our hypothesis 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 and the duties of childcare and childrearing.

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 labour in the resourcing of households have remained intact despite the change in female labour participation rates.

That the willingness to have a baby is clearly 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) 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 favour of terminating their pregnancy. However, if the distribution in this sector is perceived 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 behaviour. Women who get no help at all from their partners tend to avoid the birth of a second child.

5.4. Hypothesis 2: Effect of the perception of gender inequity in the labour market and the trust in “gender mainstreaming” programmes on the childbearing desire

The first objective is to find out the level of awareness of the gender question, i.e., the opinions of both men and women regarding an existing discrimination of women. We try to measure whether the individual respondent perceives an imbalance between the sexes in general, and whether “gender troubles” on the labour market and in particular in politics are perceived.
Offe and Heintze (1986) repeatedly pointed out that in times of poor public funds the traditional family is the best way to facilitate the outsourcing of public services, i.e. a cheap measure of shifting certain family-supporting institutions (day nurseries, nursery schools, day-homes for schoolchildren, nursing homes for the elderly and medical care) back into the realm of the private family. So breadwinning activities, family duties and social politics form an interdependent, mutually conditional system.

The perception of discrimination against women in the public sector is of particular interest since it is they who compose the (future) generation of mothers. When verifying our hypothesis, we therefore wanted to concentrate on analyzing the effects of (in)equity in the public sector with respect to female fertility.

A second goal was to assess the acceptance of “gender mainstreaming” programmes. As a yardstick for discrimination in the public sector we are considering questions that are intended to check the attitude towards supporting women’s issues by political measures. The attitude towards government interference in sectors like the labour 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 hypothesis 2 is that the perception of inequality in the public sector or the opinion towards political measures to counter such 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 labour market and in the welfare system (lack of childcare institutions etc.). Unlike the questions we analyze within hypothesis 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.

6. Data and method

The study uses a data set produced in the framework of a European survey. The project “Population Policy Acceptance Survey” (PPA II) deals with knowledge and opinion about population and population policy as well as about family and gender related issues. Because of the rather large questionnaire, the interviews were carried out as a nation-wide representative special study, with verbal interviews of one to one and half hours’ time. The population basis was all persons aged 20-65 with Austrian citizenship and residence in Austria (1995 subjects).

We will test the hypotheses by the following statistical procedures. At first, there is a descriptive representation of all those dependent variables that we selected as indicators for the relationship between the sexes. The method chosen for testing the hypotheses was multivariate binary regression analysis, with only those women included who were aged between 20 and 39 and living in a partnership.

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 regression analysis. In a subsequent step, we decided to leave out the
variables “distribution of childcare duties” and “contentment with childcare”, because naturally, these questions were only presented to those subjects who actually had children. However, confining all variables to subjects with children would have too much diminished the sample for the regression analysis.

Therefore, the regression analysis is left with three variables:

\[ x_1 \text{... distribution of household tasks (egalitarian/conventional)} \]
\[ x_2 \text{... contentment with the distribution of household tasks (satisfied/partly satisfied/dissatisfied)} \]
\[ x_3 \text{... attitude toward political promotion of equal opportunities for women in society and family (positive/negative)} \]

The variables \( x_1 \) to \( x_3 \) were controlled for age, number of children, education, and extent of breadwinning activity in order to account for possible other influences. But as the number of cases was relatively small, the results could not be used representatively.

Finally we differentiated the subjects by parity 0 and 1, with no difference being found for whether or not women had already carried out a childbearing desire. We therefore did not select by the number of children.

### 7. Descriptive results

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

#### 7.1. 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 (Tab. 2). The correlation in the answering behaviour for “Which of you usually does the household chores?” shows clearly significant results with regard for the subject’s sex in the scales “mostly I do them myself”, or “mostly my partner does them”, respectively.

The majority of women in partnership – 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 (77.4%). Their male partners recognize this, although they value their own contribution slightly higher than the women. They say that their partners are shouldering some 72% of the household tasks. Even in those couples who share household duties, the men tend to assume that this is done equally (22%) while only 17% of the women reported an equal distribution.

#### Tab. 2

7.1.1. The older, the less support

Considering the results from an age-specific perspective, we find that men who live with a female partner (whether married or not) only in their younger years show an increased tendency towards equitable distribution of household tasks: about 38% males aged 25-29
and 29% aged 30-34 say that they share household chores with their partner. Some 55% of these age groups assign the sole responsibility for the household to their partners. Men aged 40-44 show the lowest result for equitable household task distribution (13%). Men above 50 mostly live in households where their wives or partners have the main responsibility. As for the women, the issue of household chores and who does them shows a rather homogeneous picture: sole responsibility increases continuously with age. While of the women aged 25-29 and living in a partnership, 71% say that they are the only ones who perform everyday household activities, this figure rises to 80% already for those aged 40-44. However, at least one quarter of the younger generation reports living with a cooperating partner.

7.1.2. Married people rarely share
When looking at the type of partnership, the status (i.e., married or cohabiting) seems to have a marked influence on the amount of equity in distributing the household tasks. Unmarried cohabitation increases the probability that these tasks also become “men’s affairs”: at least 33% of unmarried men living with their partner are willing to share the household labour, while only 17% married men report that they do this. Among married women, 80% are solely responsible for the household, while for women living in cohabitation the figure is 73%.

7.1.3. More sharing without children
As soon as there are children in the family, however, the men’s readiness to become involved in household work significantly decreases. Among the women who have children, 80% manage the household work alone while only half of the childless women say so. Of men and women without children, about 40% perform household chores in cooperation. Another finding is that with more children in the family, the male share of household work is even decreasing.

7.1.4. Egalitarian behaviour increases with level of education
Considering the answers of women about their share in household tasks in the light of the subjects’ level of education, there is a clear trend: those female respondents who only have a high-school or vocational college diploma report sole responsibility for household tasks much more frequently than women with higher education. Among female university graduates, 60% report that they do the household work alone and 28% say they do it together with their partners. Of the women with minimum schooling on the other hand, 86% are solely responsible and only 9% share household tasks with their partners.

7.1.5. Two thirds of full-time employed women are alone in doing the household work
Almost all men living in a partnership (92%) are employed full-time. In this constellation it is usually the female partner who is responsible for household tasks (74%). At least 22% of the men share them with their partners. Among the women living in partnership, 29% have a full-time employment, 31% are part-time employed and another 40% are housewives. While men who are full-time employed take practically no part at all in household work, 65% of the women in full-time employment report to perform household tasks alone, and well over one quarter (28%) does them together with the male partner. Of the women in part-time employment (more than 10 hours), 16% can count on help from their partners, while 79% say they care for the household alone. Among women who work less than 10 hours per week, 91% report sole responsibility for household activities. Remarkably, this figure is lower, i.e., only 88%, among the housewives with no employment.
7.2. Results concerning childcare duties

In order to assess activities linked to childcare and childrearing, these were subdivided in a number of categories and presented to those men and women who live with at least one child under 15. The population basis was the 20-39 age group.

The activity categories were in particular: cooking for the children, dressing the children, going to the doctor with them, and choosing nursery-schools and elementary schools. Another question was who was playing or going out with the children, and who helped them with the homework. What was asked was which of the partners had one of these tasks in most cases or whether this was a shared activity.

Cooking and dressing are practically left 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 they take their children to the doctor alone, while only 67% of the fathers answer that their female partners did that. 27% of the men and 16% of the women see this as a common task. Helping with the homework is something only 5% of the men are ready to do, compared to 63% of the women. However, 43% of the fathers and 32% 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 comes out to only a few cases.

7.3. Opinions on equality within the partner relation

As a further indicator for egalitarian sharing in the household activities we examined the personal feelings of our respondents, i.e., we asked whether each of the partners was content about the distribution (Tab. 3).

7.3.1. Household tasks

The data of our survey 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”. 32% of female respondents were “partly satisfied” with the contributions of their male partners. The distribution of duties on the private sector is seen as “satisfactory” by 57% of the women but by 78% of the men. Another finding of the survey is that this satisfaction proves to be remarkably dependent on the subjects’ age. Concerning the gender question it can be said that younger women find the distribution of household tasks more satisfactory than their counterparts from the older generation. What is also remarkable is that mothers show lower satisfaction values (56%) than women without children (63%).

Tab. 3

7.3.2. Childcare duties

The picture is similar when looking at the distribution of work related to caring for and bringing up a couple’s children. 3% of the women living together with partner and child(ren) report that they experience the distribution of childcare duties as unfair, another 20% consider it somewhat fair. On the other hand, men do not experience the
distribution of childcare activities as a problematical aspect in their relationship at all. 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 from 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. The distribution of childcare duties is considered satisfactory by 60% of the women and by 69% of the men.

### 7.4. Awareness of the gender issue in the labour market

Testing the perception of gender inequality by 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 (Tab. 4). 74% of the respondents believe that the time of absence for parental leave might make it difficult for women to regain their former professional position. While 65% of the male respondents agree with this item, more than 80% of the female show their approval. 82% of all respondents were aware of the fact that women earn less than men in equal positions. The values for women (86%) are higher here than for men (77%). 55% of the men do not believe that women have the same chances as men to pursue a career, and even 71% of the women have their doubts about equal opportunity. 68% 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. 59%).

#### Tab. 4

The question whether respondents are parents seems to be a decisive factor for men in how pessimistic they assess women’s career opportunities. Fathers estimate women’s chances to be worse than men without children (59% : 51%). Women, on the other hand, expressed pessimism independent of whether they had children or not. Another finding is that women in full-time employment are aware of this problem to a greater extent (72%) than housewives (62%).

### 7.5. Acceptance of policy measures for equal opportunities – Equality index

A so-called equality index was formed to draw up some sort of typology concerning those questions that are particularly important for the relationship between the sexes. This index uses the items shown in Table 5, thus taking into account the attitudes for promoting gender equality in the family, labour market and politics. It was formed as a sum index by adding all positive item evaluations (i.e., the answers “I fully agree” and “I rather agree”, or “Yes, by all means” and “Yes, but only if the woman has a job as well”): the higher the index figure, the more positive the subjects’ attitude towards the effects of government interference aimed at promoting equal opportunities in the public sector.

#### Tab. 5

The various question items relate to promoting women’s integration into the labour market, mainly with regard to the areas equal opportunities and career possibilities. These
issues were advocated most strongly by women aged 20-39, who answered with 88% “complete agreement”. Political measures encouraging fathers to accept more childcare duties and to share household tasks with their female partners were welcomed by more than 70%. A general rejection of a state intervention is rather rare, the highest figures were found here in questions of joint household duties (14%).

8. Results of hypotheses

8.1. Results of hypothesis 1

We asked the question whether the inequality in sharing household tasks does in fact influence the wish to have a baby. As an indicator for an egalitarian relationship we used the response of both partners sharing the household duties. When this is compared to women who bear the full responsibility for the household, it turns out that the willingness to have a(nother) baby increases in an egalitarian partnership. When tasks are shared, 41% are in favour of a(nother) child, as opposed to 28% of those women who are shouldering these tasks alone. The results of a regression analysis is significant with respect to our hypothesis: thus the traditional division of household labour ($x_1$) is correlated with a negative wish to have a baby, while an egalitarian partnership increases this wish (Tab. 6).

Tab. 6

Several studies on the division of household labour 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 labour (Blair 1993). That the readiness to bear a(nother) child is positively influenced by a woman’s contentment with her partner’s behaviour in matters of household cooperation ($x_2$) can certainly be documented by the PPA data on the descriptive level. As only a very small minority of women reported being actually dissatisfied, the category “partly satisfied” was used for further analysis. Whenever women assess their partnership to be only partly satisfactory in this regard, their willingness to have a(nother) child decreases by more than 10%. The group of pregnant women (9%) was excluded from our calculations. Of those women (aged 20 to 39) who reported an egalitarian division of household labour in their partnerships, 41% said they wished to have a(nother) baby. On the other hand, only 28% of the women who bore the sole responsibility for this work wanted to realize their childbearing desire. When verifying the hypothesis by means of logistic regression, however, it was impossible to determine any significance.

Women who experienced childcare duties at least in part as an unevenly distributed burden were slightly more negatively inclined to the idea of having another baby than the control group of women who were satisfied with the division of labour. While 28% of the women who expressed contentment with the distribution of childcare duties said they might like to have another baby, this willingness is slightly reduced among the group of “sceptics” (24%). As explained in chapter 6 we excluded the variable from regression analysis.
Our results show that the actual division of household tasks is a driving force behind the childbearing plans of women, whereas their level of contentment with regard to household and family work and the distribution of childcare duties among the partners has less explanatory power.

8.2. Results of hypothesis 2

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 contentment with existing conditions on the labour 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 (x3) and the wish to have a(nother) baby. For this purpose, we used the concept of equity described in chapter 3 as well as the equality index mentioned in chapter 7. Looking at the results in order to verify whether women who wish for the state to intervene in favour 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 are as follows: 11% among those who have weak or even very weak progressive attitudes expressed a wish to have a(nother) baby, while for those cases who have a distinct “egalitarian tendency” this wish increases. For women who expect to be supported both by their partner and by the state in terms of equal opportunities, the percentage is at 24%. The regression analysis, however, shows this index to be non-significant.

9. 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 subjects’ attitude and to the actual behaviour of respondents. The fact that an egalitarian attitude in gender issues encourages the wish to have a(nother) baby is a significant finding with respect to the actual behaviour of the partners, but less expressive when opinions in gender issues are being considered.

What our data also show is a finding that surprises at first glance, viz., that a large number of women do not see an uneven distribution of household work as a violation of their rights. We will take into account the following explanatory considerations 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 equal distribution of labour, 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 labour market. They assess the opportunities for career and reintegration after a break in the professional life due to the birth of a child as relatively poor. A surprising result is that this does not seem to be seen as related to the wish to have a(nother) baby, which in the final account is considered a private desire.

Many studies (e.g. McDonald 2000) report that women who are fully integrated into the labour market and thus have attained a “high level of equality” tend to have a low fertility. Integration into the labour market, however, is no longer any question for the generation of women that was interviewed here. Equally, the subjects shared a relatively large consensus about the fact that there is a certain backlog in improving conditions for women on the labour market. We found that the childbearing desire of women who place great trust into “gender mainstreaming” programmes is not at all lower than that of women who fundamentally refuse any equal-opportunity measures and programmes. And women living in the traditional family constellation (housewife/male breadwinner) do not show a higher childbearing desire than women with career ambitions.

The institution family proves to be – and our data are confirming this – a lot more resistant to change than sectors such as public education or the labour market. Faced with the preservation of traditional attitudes with respect to the sharing of family duties, women react by refusing the potential extra burden of an additional child. We reach the conclusion that while the changes within the family allowed women to have extensive control over their fertility, they have not provided other forms of equity within the family.

Acknowledgement
The author want to acknowledge the contribution of Anne Goujon and Dieter Bichlbauer concerning data and method.
Notes

1. A differentiation must be made here between “male” and “patriarchal”. Patriarchal structures are characterized by the prevailing school of thought – usually supported by men – that is primarily oriented on male needs, ideas and realities. However, these ideas can also be embraced and propagated by women, just as – vice versa – men can become “victims” of the patriarchal system (e.g., when men want parental leave to care for their children but are refused this wish by their employers).

2. 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.) was used.

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


5. Parental leave is rather long in Austria, actually it was extended up to two and a half years.

References


*Cotts Watkins, Susan* (1993) „If all we knew about women was what we read in „Demography“, what would we know“?, *Demography* 30(4).


### Tables

Table 1: Time allocation in couples: average time expenditure\(^1\) on income generation and household duties of subjects living in a partnership\(^2\). Austria 1992

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th></th>
<th>Females</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Income generation</td>
<td>Household and family duties</td>
<td>Income generation</td>
<td>Household and family duties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…Woman not employed, man full-time employed</td>
<td>7.10</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>8.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…Woman part-time, man full-time employed</td>
<td>6.58</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>6.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...Both partners full-time employed</td>
<td>6.44</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>5.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: STATA 2002

Notes:

1) in hours, minutes per day
2) having children under 15
Figure 1: Diagram showing the various factors influencing the wish to have another baby in women living in a partnership

Demographic and socio-economic characteristics (age, sex, education, professional activity)

Distribution of family duties within the couple

Attitude towards political measures aimed at equal opportunity and perception of inequality in the public sector
Table 2: Who is normally doing the housework? (Respondents with partner) (percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Myself</th>
<th>My partner</th>
<th>Me and my partner together</th>
<th>Other people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>77.3</td>
<td>72.2</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>53.2</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>75.4</td>
<td>56.1</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>74.5</td>
<td>81.0</td>
<td>81.0</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>80.4</td>
<td>81.5</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>79.3</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>82.2</td>
<td>70.2</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>85.5</td>
<td>80.9</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>82.3</td>
<td>71.2</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cohabiting &amp; w/o children</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cohabiting &amp; w/ children</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>72.9</td>
<td>57.6</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>married &amp; w/o children</td>
<td>65.9</td>
<td>57.9</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>36.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>married &amp; w/ children</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>80.4</td>
<td>77.9</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of own children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>73.4</td>
<td>60.1</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>84.2</td>
<td>81.7</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 and more</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>79.9</td>
<td>76.1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary and secondary modern school</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>85.6</td>
<td>76.9</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational school and technical college</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>77.0</td>
<td>74.6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar school</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>72.5</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College/university</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>73.5</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fully employed</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>64.6</td>
<td>73.9</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time (&gt;10 hours)</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>78.6</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time (&lt;10 hours)</td>
<td>91.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help in family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>83.8</td>
<td>74.3</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socially assisted</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widow with retirement</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>87.7</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>88.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: PPA II, author’s own calculations
Table 3: Contentment with the distribution of household tasks and childcare duties (subjects married or cohabiting with partner in the same household; percentages, 20-39 years)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The distribution of household tasks between me and my partner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– is satisfactory</td>
<td>57.4</td>
<td>77.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– is partly satisfactory</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– is unsatisfactory</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– does not apply</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The distribution of childcare duties between me and my partner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– is satisfactory</td>
<td>60.4</td>
<td>68.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– is partly satisfactory</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– is unsatisfactory</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– does not apply</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: PPA II, author’s own calculations

Table 4: Awareness of gender issues (affirmative answers in per cent, 20-39 years)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>… Mothers who had parental leave will face difficulties in reaching their former professional position.</td>
<td>80.4</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>74.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… Women are usually paid less than men in equal positions on the labour market.</td>
<td>86.1</td>
<td>77.0</td>
<td>82.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… Women have the same chances as men to pursue a career.</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>29.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… Family politics concerning children (provision of day-care facilities, child allowance, etc.) are sufficient to provide equal chances for women in their jobs.</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: PPA II
Table 5: Distribution of answers to items used for the "Equality Index" (in per cent) (women aged 20-39 years)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support of political equal-opportunity measures in order to …</th>
<th>Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>… improve job opportunities for women</td>
<td>I fully agree 59.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… promote the political participation of women</td>
<td>I rather agree 28.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… promote the integration of women in technical professions</td>
<td>Neither nor 9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… promote the integration of women in leading positions</td>
<td>I rather disagree 2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… encourage fathers to increase their contributions to childcare duties</td>
<td>I fully disagree 0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… encourage sharing of household duties</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: PPA II, author’s own calculations

Table 6: Regression analysis of variables with possible influence on childbearing desire in women (20-39 years) with partner

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence on childbearing desire</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( x_1 ) … distribution of household tasks (egalitarian/conventional)</td>
<td>0.024*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( x_2 ) … contentment with the distribution of household tasks (satisfied/ partly satisfied/ dissatisfied)</td>
<td>0.094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( x_3 ) … attitude toward political promotion of equal opportunities for women in society and family (positive/negative)</td>
<td>0.440</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: PPA II, author’s own calculations
Note: *significant
Authors:

Dr. Irene Mariam Tazi-Preve  
Vienna Institute of Demography  
Austrian Academy of Science  
Prinz-Eugen-Str. 8-10  
A-1040 Vienna, Austria  
E-mail: Irene.Tazi@oeaw.ac.at