

The influence of gender role (in)equality on childbearing decisions in Germany

Petra Buhr
Mandy Boehnke

Introduction

- Role of gender equality in the family and its importance for fertility
- McDonald (2000): Low fertility in Europe associated with the combination of high levels of gender equality in institutions outside the family (labor market, education) and low levels of gender equality in family
- Even with an (almost) egalitarian participation of men and women in the labor market women do most of the domestic work
- Incompatibility between parenting and working in the formal labor force leads to lower number of children or no children at all
- “Anything that reduces this role incompatibility, or the perception of incompatibility, may raise levels of fertility.”(Rindfuss 1996)

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Results of previous studies

- Studies differ according to concepts and operationalization of gender inequality
- Different results according to parity and context
- Results are inconsistent and partly contradictory

Results of previous studies

- Transition to the first child
 - Few studies where gender role attitudes were found to be significant while affective value of children resp. family orientation seem to matter more (Henz 2008, Mittiinen et al. 2011)
 - Different results for division of housework; Henz (2008): Lower transition rate for couples with equal distribution of housework; Schober (2012): Higher transition rate if women does not more than 63% of housework
 - Interactions between women's housework share and gender role attitudes were found to be not significant

Results of previous studies

- Transition to the second or further child
 - Some studies find a significant effect of gender role attitudes (Speder/Kapitany 2009, Schober 2012)
 - Effect of unequal division of housework is unclear; some studies find a negative effect, especially if woman is employed (Craig 2007, Torr/Short 2004, Schober 2013); some studies do not find an effect at all (Cooke 2004; Craig/Siminski 2010)
 - Few studies where interactions between women's housework share and gender role attitudes were found to be significant (Goldschneider/ Bernhardt 2011)

Hypotheses

- 1. Women with egalitarian gender role attitudes have a lower chance for the transition to a first child than women with traditional gender role orientations.
Rationale: Women with egalitarian attitudes anticipate compatibility problems and postpone children or decide against it.
- 2. Division of household tasks is more important for transition to second or third children than gender role attitudes.
Rationale: After a first child is born anticipations become real and it becomes more decisive how everyday routines are arranged and whether these lead to excessive demands.

Hypotheses

- 3. An unequal distribution of household tasks and childcare in couples influences the transition to further children more negatively for fulltime employed women than for non-fulltime employed women
Rationale: → overload
- 4. An unequal distribution of household tasks and childcare in couples influences the transition to further children more negatively for egalitarian women than for traditional women.
Rationale: → frustration

Data & Method

- Data base: pairfam wave 1 - 3
- Sample: Heterosexual and fertile women of age cohort 2 and 3 who live together with the same partner in all three waves and who are not pregnant at the beginning of the observation period
- Method: Gender role attitudes and the division of housework in wave 1 are used to estimate with logistic regression models if a woman has a first or a further child or is pregnant in wave 3

Results

Logistic regression models

- Dependent variable: Birth of or pregnancy with a (first, second, third) child between wave 1 and 3
- Independent variables:
 - Gender role attitudes – Women should be more concerned about their family than about their career, Men should participate in housework to the same extent than women
 - Division of housework in partnership
 - Division of child care in partnership
 - Perceived fairness of division of labor
- Controls: Satisfaction with relationship, region, employment anchor and partner, age cohort, highest educational level attained, age of youngest child

Logistic regression (Odds Ratios)

Hypothesis 1: Transition to first child

Gender role "Women should care more for family" traditional (Ref.) ambivalent egalitarian	.33* 31**
Gender role "Men should participate in housework" rather traditional (Ref.) egalitarian	.48
Division of household labor Woman half or less (Ref.) For the most part me (woman) Completely me (woman)	1.45 1.26
Perceived fairness	.81
N	297
McFadden R ²	.158

Source: pairfam-wave 1 and 3, controlled for satisfaction with relationship , region, employment anchor and partner, age cohort, highest educational level attained

*** = p<0.001, ** = p<0.01, * = p<0.5, + = p<0.1

Logistic regression (Odds Ratios)

Hypothesis 2: Transition to second child

Gender role "Women should care more for family"	
traditional (Ref.)	
ambivalent	.43*
egalitarian	.73
Gender role "Men should participate in housework"	
rather traditional (Ref.)	
egalitarian	.73
Division of household labor	
Woman half or less (Ref.)	
For the most part me (woman)	1.59
Completely me (woman)	1.77
Division of child care	
Woman half or less (Ref.)	
For the most part me (woman)	.85
Completely me (woman)	.37*
Perceived fairness	.99
N	359
McFadden R ²	.177

Source: pairfam-wave 1 and 3, controlled for satisfaction with relationship, region, employment anchor and partner, age cohort, highest educational level attained, age of first child

*** = $p < 0.001$, ** = $p < 0.01$, * = $p < 0.05$, + = $p < 0.1$

Logistic regression

Hypothesis 3: Interaction effects with employment

- Second child:
No significant interaction effect for unequal distribution of housework with full-time employment; weak significant effect with part-time employment
No significant interaction effect for unequal distribution of childcare with full-time employment status
- Third child:
No significant interaction effects for unequal distribution of either housework or childcare with employment status

Logistic regression

Hypothesis 4: Interaction effects of with gender role attitudes

- Second and third child: No significant interaction effects for unequal distribution of either housework or childcare with gender role attitudes
- But: Perceived fairness in the distribution of labor increases transition to third child.

Summary

- Egalitarian gender role attitudes reduce transition to first child, division of housework does not seem to be important
- Ambivalent gender role attitude and inequality of childcare reduce transition to second child; no significant effect for division of housework; no significant interaction effects with employment status and gender role attitudes
- For the third child perceived fairness seems decisive

Discussion & further research strategies

- Unexpected results: negative effect for ambivalent gender role attitude for transition to second child; no interaction effect of inequality in housework with full-time employment
- Measurement of gender role attitudes: What does this instrument measure? What does the ambivalent (middle) category mean?
- Clarify concepts (e.g. equality/equity)
- Apply more sophisticated methods (e.g. event history models)
- Dyadic analysis
- “Outsourcing” of housework and childcare
- Do the effects of gender inequality differ by context?