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# Gender Role-Set, Family Orientations, and Women's Fertility Intentions in Switzerland

Laura Bernardi*, Valérie-Anne Ryser** and Jean-Marie Le Goff*

## 1 Introduction

The current low level of fertility in Switzerland and in many other European countries raises questions about the determinants of shrinking family sizes and the rise of childlessness. According to most researchers who have studied post-industrial societies, if the family sizes that people desire, expect, or consider ideal (as declared in surveys) were realized, then fertility rates would reach replacement levels. However, in most cases – at both the macro and micro levels – there is a gap between the expected number of children and the actual number of children born (Thomson 1997; Schoen et al. 1999; Goldstein et al. 2003; Le Goff et al. 2005; Spéder and Kapitany 2009). Some researchers have claimed, paraphrasing the more famous expression that there is "an unmet need for contraception", that society faces a sort of "unmet need" for children, which means that family researchers should pay attention and that the government should intervene by adopting child-friendly family policies (Chesnais 1998). Identifying the determinants of the intentions-realizations gap in fertility is therefore crucial.

One key aspect of this issue is the gendered nature of parenthood and the different gender norms that rule representations and practices of appropriate parental roles for men and women. The terms "stalled revolution" and "second shift" (Hochschild and Machung 1989) have become accepted, powerful synonyms for a situation in which women are increasingly active in the labor market while men prolong their absence from the domestic sphere. Similar meanings are suggested by the expressions "dual-burden", "double-burden", and "double-day" (Meissner et al. 1975; Pahl 1984; Shelton 1992; Bittman and Matheson 1996; Harrington 1998; Bittman 1999; Baxter 2002). While these terms describe the division of the workload between partners, the value-based and normative dimension surrounding the stalled revolution are implicit in the half-cynical term "supermom" (Shaevitz 1984; Hochschild and Machung 1989). This indicates attitudes and norms that expect a woman to fulfill her aspirations in the domestic and labor markets without

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asking for help from her partner or from society at large. Gendered practices are not necessarily perceived as unfair; rather, they are talked about and explained in discourses on partners' freedom of choice and gendered preferences or abilities to perform given tasks. In turn, these preferences and abilities are justified in terms of socialization and the attitudes toward given gender roles or in terms of men's and women's different biological predispositions in parenting (Blain 1994).

In this paper, we investigate women's attitudes towards paid employment and family in relation to the share of paid and domestic work within a couple and in relation to the intention to have a child. We drew from the Swiss Household Panel data on family and work values, fertility intentions, and the gender division of the workload as declared by two people who have united as a couple. We ran multilevel model estimations in order to test whether, in addition to socio-demographic characteristics, the couple's role-set and the woman's satisfaction with her life as partner in a couple affects her fertility intentions. Merton (1957, 110) classically defined a role-set as a "complement of role-relationships in which persons are involved by virtue of occupying a particular social status". In the case we examined, gendered individuals, men and women, who live as couples were involved in a series of role relationships with their partners but also with their actual or potential employers and children or relevant others by virtue of belonging to opposite genders. Our paper contributes to the discussion about the role of women's work-life balance by examining women at different stages in their family life trajectory and whether or not they intend to have a child. We found that a woman's satisfaction with the way her domestic burden is organized increases her intention to have an additional child if she is already a mother. However, childless women who work or aspire to economic independence are less likely to intend to bear a child.

## 2 Theory and hypotheses

The stalled revolution and the double burden influenced the emergence and persistence of low fertility and increased childlessness in the late twentieth century. McDonald's (2000) seminal paper on gender systems and family dynamics argued that gender systems in which equality is expected and supported in the public sphere of the market and the legal system, but not in the domestic sphere of family relations and responsibilities are likely to promote low fertility. One finds prototypes of such gender systems in contemporary southern European countries where high expectations regarding how women spend their time in the domestic sphere can be avoided by delaying or forgoing the additional family responsibilities that accrue when they have children. Although McDonald's arguments were on a macro level, his explanation relied on a micro-level examination. He claimed that a woman who competes in the public sphere where she is afforded a gender-equal treatment and who

is simultaneously expected to be primarily responsible for housework and child care will perceive a high opportunity cost in having a first child or an additional child. On the one hand, treating men and women unequally by granting women some sort of privileged status to compensate for their extra labor in the domestic sphere would be perceived as unfair in modern democratic societies. On the other hand, the need to choose part-time employment or to opt for a temporary or permanent exit from the labor market would reduce women's lifelong earnings and career opportunities. The double burden a woman must shoulder becomes a too-disadvantageous option and has a discouraging effect on fertility (Treas 2010).

Most studies applying McDonald's analysis at the micro level focus on the relationship between couples' role-sets and fertility (Cooke 2003; Olah 2003; Miller et al. 2004; Tazi-Preve et al. 2004; Mills et al. 2008). They have proved that the unequal role-set has a negative impact on fertility for both second and third births. Such studies have defined role-sets only on the basis of the division of domestic work. Yet fertility decisions may relate not only to the amount of domestic work but also to the overall workload shares (i. e., total time spent on both paid and domestic work) between man and woman, which are broadly similar in most industrialized countries (Robinson and Godbey 1997; Shelton and Firestone 1989; Bittman and Wajcman 2000; Greenstein 2000; Bianchi et al. 2006).

## 2.1 Switzerland: inconsistent public and private gender spheres

Contemporary Switzerland fits well in McDonald's category of countries where gender spheres are inconsistent (McDonald 2000). On the one hand, equality between men and women is granted at the institutional level. At each political level (e. g., confederation, cantons, and municipalities) and in most institutions (e. g., universities), there are gender equality offices in charge of promoting women's professional careers and sometimes even endorsing men's participation in domestic work. Social beliefs and norms favor gender equality, and childless couples in particular place a high value on it (Levy et al. 1997; Le Goff et al. 2009). On the other hand, gender practices are much different in the labor market, which is much more gender-biased than the picture portrayed in the official regulations. Despite the promotion of gender equality at the institutional level, the expansion of part-time jobs has contributed to keeping women in lower-paying jobs with less responsibility. Moreover, several studies have shown that inequalities in the roles played by men and women are normal, especially after the transition to parenthood. Most women reduce the time they spend working once they become mothers (Levy 2006; Le Goff et al. 2009). According to the state classification of regimes of time policy proposed by Anxo et al. (2006), Swiss women's patterns of labor market participation can be labeled *maternal part-time work*. Data from the Swiss census in 2000 show that part-time working schedules have become the norm for mothers in Switzerland.[1] At the end

1 Our own investigations were based on the Swiss census public use sample (Breitenstein

of the 1980s, most mothers of young children stopped working. By the 1990s however, part-time employment had become the preferred alternative. Only 20% of mothers return to full-time employment after a period of interruption, whereas a little more than half of mothers continue working part time (Le Goff et al. 2005; Levy 2006; Widmer and Ritschard 2009). The lack of explicit life-course policies that support mothers' full participation in the labor force translates into a life course *regime* (an empirically dominant model of practices) in which women are forced to interrupt their careers when they become mothers. In contrast, men's participation in the labor market, mostly full time, has no relationship to their parental status or the number of children they have. The decrease in the time that women spend working in the labor market after parenthood corresponds to an equivalent increase in the time they devote to domestic work (Henchoz and Wernli 2010) and to the emergence of a more traditional gender role-set – even among couples who, before the birth of the child, declared that they favored equally shared domestic tasks (Le Goff et al. 2009).

In the Swiss context, giving birth represents a turning point in a woman's life course. The origin of this phenomenon is found in the gendered nature of women's cultural and institutional integration into Swiss society. The theory of gendered master status postulates that family and work represent the two major spheres of social integration for individuals and that these spheres differ for men and women (Krüger and Levy 2000; Krüger and Levy 2001). The integration priority for women is the domestic sphere (family). This does not mean that women are excluded from the labor market (work); rather, it means that their professional paths are subordinated to their family lives. For men, professional integration has the priority, and family life is subordinated to it. Several recent studies demonstrated that women's and men's professional trajectories remain quite different (Levy et al. 2006). These studies specified that women's professional trajectories, compared to those of men, are more heterogeneous and sensitive to characteristics, such as education level, number of children, and cohort. These studies showed that women's working patterns are constructed and negotiated within the limits represented by family life, whereas men's family involvement is limited by the demands of their professional lives. Given that motherhood represents such a turning point in a woman's professional life course and, more generally, in her social integration pattern, it is crucial to consider the function of the gender role-set of a couple and to consider how each partner's gender orientation (identification with characteristics designated as masculine and feminine according to what society dictates as appropriate, desirable characteristics for women and men) affects his or her intentions to have a child.

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et al. 2005).

## 2.2 Fertility intentions and the gendered workload

Empirical research has showed that declared intentions to have a child and subsequent childbearing behavior correlate positively (Vinokur-Kaplan 1978; Nair and Chow 1980; Tan and Tey 1994), and such results are consistent with social psychological theories of planned behavior (Miller and Pasta 1995; Ajzen 2005; Philipov et al. 2009). Yet the empirical literature revealed that there are large discrepancies between declared intentions and realized behavior due to the instability of intentions that results from external and unpredicted factors intervening between a person's formation of the intention and how he or she foresees the ramifications of its realization. However, the gap in intention-realization is substantially smaller when intentions refer to a precise and relatively short time interval (2–3 years), rather than the whole life course. It is also smaller when the intentions are formed only with respect to the next child rather than one's overall fertility decisions (final number of children). Fertility intention is often correlated to individual socio-demographic characteristics (Liefbroer 2009; Sobotka 2009) similar to those that affect behavior (e. g., age, gender, parity, marital and occupational status), ideational factors like norms and attitudes (e. g., religious affiliation and practices, family and gender attitudes), and institutional opportunity structures (e. g., childcare availability, social networks support). Since fertility intentions are often found to be higher than realized behavior, a growing body of literature is focused on fertility intentions as an interesting phenomenon per se. Understanding the determinants of fertility intentions would help researchers understand why the intentions are not realized and discover the individual or contextual characteristics that make people overly optimistic about childbearing.

Despite a blooming interest in fertility intentions, social scientists rarely address the effect of paid and domestic work shares between a man and a woman in a couple on their fertility intentions (Mills et al. 2008). Researchers need to focus on answering this question: When a woman takes on both the primary responsibilities of the domestic sphere and shares the paid work load equally with her partner, is that couple less likely to intend to have a child or have a child than a couple in which both partners take equal responsibilities in both spheres? Rizzi et al. (2008) addressed this question by analyzing couples' role-sets based on the partners' shares of domestic and paid work and the relationship of those shares to women's fertility intentions, controlling for measures of family values in the Italian context. The authors' starting point was the identification of a typology for couples' role-sets, based on the number of hours each partner devoted to either domestic work or paid work and the gaps between the partners' shares in *domestic work hours* and in *(paid) labor work hours*. Their results showed that a *traditional role-set* – in which the woman carries out most of the domestic work and the man conducts most of the paid work – is predominant in Italy, even among working women. The researchers observed no association between women's intentions to have a first child and the

way in which partners arranged their shares of paid and unpaid work. In contrast, a role-set in which women do most of the domestic work and as much paid work as the men had negative effects on the intention to have a second child. A role-set in which partners share equally in domestic and paid work had an opposite, positive effect on the intention to have a second child.

A researcher analyzing the impact on fertility of how the workload is shared cannot ignore the important mediating role that perceived satisfaction with the gender division of workload may play in shaping individual subjective wellbeing. The theoretical literature contains examples of attempts to highlight the importance of subjective wellbeing and the perceived quality of the relationships, but, again, little empirical research has been done to examine their effects on fertility jointly with the actual workload share. One exception is a study by Benin and Agostinelli (1988), which used U.S. data from the 1980s to show that an important determinant of satisfaction with partners' workload shares was how individuals perceived it to be fair. Women were not happy with their partners' "minimal participation" (Benin and Agostinelli 1988, 350) in domestic work, disconfirming the idea that a symbolic participation would sufficiently reduce status distinction between partners and therefore increase the satisfaction of a partner. However, fair arrangements corresponded to very different combinations of shares, depending on whether equity was defined as a) an equal share of domestic work, independently of the shares of paid work; b) an equal share in domestic work that is typically done by a female (e. g., household chores or child care), independently of other tasks (technical, administrative); c) a share in which "people want to maximize their own rewards" (Benin and Agostinelli 1988, 350), depending on exogenously given preferences (e. g., the woman prefers caring tasks; a husband's success contributes prestige and status to the family; either partner prefers not to argue about how tasks should be performed when they are shared).

The most recent study on fertility intentions in Switzerland, based on Family and Fertility Survey data collected in 1994 (Coenen-Huther 2005), shows that intentions to have a child within 24 months decreases with age, for both women and men, and with parity. Religion also plays a role. Catholics, whatever their level of engagement in religious practices, are more likely to intend to have a child than Protestants. Women who said they do not belong to any religion more often had no intentions to bear a child. Childless women's most common reasons for not intending to have a child were related to the difficulty of conciliating their family and professional lives, worries associated with parenting itself, and problems related to time scarcity. All these factors relate to the responsibility involved in parenting in general and mothering in particular, not to the economic costs of children per se. However, mothers of one or more children who do not intend to have more children mentioned economic costs more frequently than scarce time budgets. Difficulties

conciliating family and professional lives and worries about parenting, on the other hand, do not discriminate between mothers and those who were not mothers.

In the following sections, we will examine the effects on fertility intentions of a couple's gender role-set, of partners' satisfaction with it, and of their attitudes towards family and gender in Switzerland in the early twenty-first century. Although indicators of fertility intentions were collected at the same time as indicators of gender role-set, partners' satisfaction, and attitudes towards family and gender, reverse causality is possible, and analyses could test for a correlation. However, in a study specifically constructed to understand the dynamics among intentions related to the gender division of workload and consequent behaviors before and after the birth of the first child, Le Goff et al. (2009) showed that the division of the workload between partners changes only after the birth of a child. Therefore, we assume that fertility intentions are based on the current division of workload and not a determinant of it.

The theoretical framework presented above leads us to the formulation of the following two hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 1:* Positive fertility intentions depend on family and gender attitudes and the amount of social support available.

*Hypothesis 2:* Her partner's involvement in both the paid and the domestic work has a positive effect on a woman's fertility intention.

## 3 Data and measurement

### 3.1 Data

Panel data measure the dependant variable at each wave. Such characteristic neutralizes period effects if the duration of the panel is long enough to include the occurrence of short-term changes in the economic and social situations. Moreover, it allows distinguishing between true age effects and cohort effect, which is particularly important in the domain of fertility and the general issue of its postponement in European countries. Panel data also allows taking into account the individual's past in relation to fertility intentions and, more generally, how intentions evolve over time (Heckman 1981). We based our investigations on data collected by the Living in Switzerland project conducted by the Swiss Household Panel (SHP), which is based at the Swiss Centre of Expertise in the Social Sciences (FORS), located at the University of Lausanne. The project is devoted to analyzing the changing living conditions in Switzerland, and it is funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF). The SHP data are relevant to our purposes because they are longitudinal and they contain pertinent information on both people living as a couple. Two random samples of households were followed yearly, and all household members older than 14 years were interviewed separately. This computer-assisted telephone

survey was based on a close-ended questionnaire that was translated into the three main languages spoken in Switzerland (German, Italian, and French).

The first sample had been followed since 1999, the second since 2004. Because questions about fertility intentions were asked only since 2002, we used a subsample of the first sample, starting in 2002 only. For the purposes of our article, we selected only women who were living with a partner (married or cohabiting) and were in the age group 18 to 49 from 2002 to 2009 and for whom we also have their partners' interview data. The analysis was conducted on a subsample of about 1 575 women: 537 of them childless and 1 037 who had at least one child. We acquired at least one observation for each woman and a maximum of eight. Note that during this period, economic conjuncture was increasing until the economic crisis of 2008 while the total fertility rate (TFR) increased from 1.39 to 1.50.

### 3.2 Dependent variable

Our dependant variable is the intention to have a child (or another child) in the 24 months following the interview (reference period).[2] Theoretically, the intention to have a child in a given time period indicates a more realistic formulation of fertility desires (a preferred number of children, when certain obstacles to childbearing are neglected) or childbearing expectations (a number of children that an individual thinks she will have, under the restriction of prevalent conditions but independently of whether the children were intended). Researchers have empirically shown that respondents do not necessarily distinguish between the two concepts precisely (Westoff and Ryder 1977; Hagewan and Morgan 2005). Fertility intentions in this study were measured using a three-point scale: (1) women who intend to have a child; (2) women who do not know whether they want a child; and (3) women who do not intend to have a child. We first allowed for uncertain intentions, since research has shown that uncertainty is a meaningful answer (Morgan 1982). A descriptive analysis showed that at each wave of the SHP, the majority of childless women declared to plan to have a child within this period, whereas the majority of women with one child did not plan to have another child (Table 1). In both subsamples, women who did not know whether they wanted a child were rare. Therefore, we computed a dichotomous independent variable in which these answers were regrouped with positive intentions to have a child.

### 3.3 Control and intermediate variables

*Familistic attitudes.* To capture this dimension, we took three items into account. The first item considers, on a three-point scale – from 0 ("completely disagree") to 2 ("completely agree") – whether women think that having a job preserves independence.[3] The second item measured, on a three-point scale – from 0 ("completely

2 Original question: "Do you intend to have a child in the next 24 months?"

3 "Please tell me how strongly you would agree with the statements I am going to read to you

Table 1 Sample characteristics. First observation recorded for each woman between the ages of 18 to 49, in couples, interviewed at least once

| Variables | 1 575 women interviewed at least once | 537 Childless Women | 1 037 women with at least one child |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Dependent variable** | | | |
| Intentions to have a child in next 24 months | | | |
| No | 75.7% | 60.7% | 83.5% |
| Don't know | 2.5% | 3.5% | 2.0% |
| Yes | 21.8% | 37.8% | 14.5% |
| **Partners' workload variables** | | | |
| Satisfaction with the organization of domestic work | | | |
| No - Little | 22.3% | 16.6% | 25.4% |
| Somewhat | 39.4% | 35.9% | 41.3% |
| Yes - Very satisfied | 38.2% | 47.5% | 33.4% |
| Mean of Women's domestic | 17.2 hours/week | 8.6 hours/week | 21.8 hours/week |
| Mean of Men's domestic k | 5.5 hours/week | 5.2 hours/week | 5.6 hours/week |
| Mean of Women's paid work | 27.3 hours/week | 37.8 hours/week | 19.8 hours/week |
| Mean of Men's paid work | 44.8 hours/week | 44.1 hours/week | 45.2 hours/week |
| **Control and intermediate variables** | | | |
| Women's age groups | | | |
| Less than 30 years old | 21.7% | 47.1% | 8.4% |
| 30–34 years old | 20.5% | 22.0% | 19.8% |
| 35–39 years old | 28.1% | 15.1% | 34.9% |
| 40–44 years old | 29.7% | 15.8% | 36.9% |
| Women's education | | | |
| Low education | 12.1% | 9.3% | 13.5% |
| Middle education | 67.9% | 61.1% | 71.6% |
| High education | 20.0% | 29.6% | 14.9% |
| Women's occupational status | | | |
| Occupied full time | 24.5% | 59.0% | 6.7% |
| Occupied part time | 46.2% | 27.7% | 55.7% |
| Housewife | 25.0% | 3.2% | 36.4% |
| Looking for a job | 0.8% | 1.3% | 0.6% |
| In Training | 3.0% | 8.0% | 0.4% |

*Continuation of Table 1 on the following page.*

*Continuation of Table 1.*

| Variables | 1 575 women interviewed at least once | 537 Childless Women | 1 037 women with at least one child |
|---|---|---|---|
| Social support: Practical support | | | |
| None at all | 17.1% | 11.5% | 19.9% |
| A little | 39.9% | 38.9% | 40.5% |
| A great deal | 40.1% | 46.4% | 36.8% |
| Missing | 2.9% | 3.2% | 2.8% |
| Social support: Emotional support | | | |
| None at all | 9.8% | 6.5% | 11.6% |
| A little | 40.1% | 38.9% | 40.7% |
| A great deal | 47.0% | 51.4% | 44.8% |
| Missing | 3.0% | 3.2% | 2.9% |
| Household income, net (mean) | 37 806.40 CHF | 5 0821.40 CHF | 29 129.60 CHF |
| Religious participation | | | |
| Never | 5.8% | 7.8% | 4.5% |
| Few times a year | 72.7% | 80.4% | 68.7% |
| Few times a month | 21.5% | 11.7% | 26.4% |
| Number of children younger than 17 living in the household | | | |
| 0 | 34.1% | | |
| 1 | 18.9% | | |
| 2 | 31.4% | | |
| 3 | 12.5% | | |
| 4 and more | 3.0% | | |

disagree") to 2 ("completely agree") – whether the women who participated thought that a child suffers if he has a working mother.[4] Finally, a third item, women's satisfaction with the organization of domestic work within the couple, was measured using a three-point scale from 0 ("not at all satisfied") to 2 ("very satisfied").[5]

*Gender attitudes.* We computed a three-item indicator that measured gender attitude toward equality between men and women. This indicator was composed

now, if 0 means 'I completely disagree' and 10 is 'I completely agree'. To have a job is the best guarantee for a woman, as for a man, to be independent".

4 "Please tell me how strongly you would agree with the statements I am going to read to you now, if 0 means 'I completely disagree' and 10 is 'I completely agree'. A pre-school child suffers if his or her mother works for pay".

5 The answers to the question "To what extent are you satisfied with the way the housework – for example, washing, cooking, cleaning – is shared within your household, if 0 means 'not at all satisfied' and 10 is 'completely satisfied'?" was recoded using a three-point scale.

of three items: (1) whether women think that they are, in general, penalized compared to men;[6] (2) whether women think that they are personally penalized;[7] and (3) whether women favor measures to promote equality between men and women.[8] Each item was recoded from 0 ("not at all penalized") to 2 ("strongly penalized"). Next, the overall gender attitude scale, which is a mean of these three items, starts from 0 ("not at all penalized") and goes to 2 ("strongly penalized"). The internal consistency of this scale is very satisfactory; the Cronbach's alpha rises from 0.76 to 0.82 among waves, which corresponds to the social sciences' widely accepted satisfactory cut-off for the internal consistency of a scale.

*Social support.* Finally, we controlled for social support. With two indicators, we measured the amount of social support received by women. One item measured whether women received practical support from relatives on a three-point scale, ranging from 0 ("not at all") to 2 ("a great deal").[9] Another item assessed whether women receive emotional support from relatives on a three-point scale ranging from 0 ("not at all") to 2 ("a great deal").[10]

*Workload Variables.* Two variables measured the number of hours the partner devoted weekly to both domestic and paid work.[11] One variable measured the number of hours devoted to domestic work, and the second variable measured the number of hours devoted to paid work.

*Sociodemographic variables.* Finally, we also controlled for socio-demographic variables, such as age, education (high, middle, or low), occupation (full-time, part-time, in training, looking for a job, or being a housewife), and household income (yearly household income equivalized) (Kuhn 2009; Lipps 2010). The control for age deserves a comment. Members of a society have normative beliefs about the appropriate age for a woman to bear a child, particularly the upper age limit. As a consequence, we expected a non-linear effect for age (intentions increasing and then decreasing with age). We therefore added a quadratic effect for the age.

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6 "Do you have the feeling that in Switzerland women are penalized, compared with men, in certain areas, if 0 means 'not at all penalized' and 10 is 'strongly penalized'?"

7 "Do you, in your everyday life, feel penalized compared with the opposite sex, if 0 means 'not at all penalized' and 10 is 'strongly penalized'?"

8 "Are you in favor of Switzerland taking more steps to ensure the promotion of women, if 0 means 'not at all in favor' and 10 is 'totally in favor'?"

9 "If necessary, in your opinion, to what extent can these relatives, or your children who do not live in your household, provide you with practical help (either concrete help or useful advice), if 0 means 'not at all' and 10 'a great deal'?"

10 "To what extent can these relatives or these children be available, in case of need, and show understanding (by talking with you, for example), if 0 means 'not at all' and 10 'a great deal'?"

11 These questions do not include time devoted to child care. In order to measure time devoted to housework, the SHP asked people, on average, how many hours they spent on housework (including washing, cooking, and cleaning) in a normal week. The respondents were instructed not to include childcare when answering this question).

### 3.4 Analytical strategy

All covariates taken as independent variables were time-varying, which means that they can evolve over time. Indeed, we considered that the women's fertility intention was dependent on the situation that they faced at the time of the interview and not the situation they were in at the beginning of the follow-up interview.

We attained at least one declared fertility intention for each woman in our 8-year yearly panel, from 2002 to 2009. In most cases, the information on intentions covered multiple points in time. We performed a variety of nested hierarchical two-level models in which the lower level represents the intra-individual measures (which vary across waves and are time dependent), and the higher level represents the individual woman (e. g., sex, which is a variable that does not change over time). Data concerning each individual's child intentions were not independent units. We expected that there would be more similarities in answers given by one person year after year compared to answers given by two different persons. The estimated multilevel models allowed us to disentangle inter-individual measures and intra-individual measures (Hox 2002; Singer and Willett 2003). We estimated fixed effects for the intercept and the different covariates, as well as a random effect for the intercept. The hypothesis was that the intercept varies for each woman, according to unknown characteristics, while there are no variations in the effect among different covariates. This hypothesis concerning a sole random effect on the intercept is often made when a researcher is dealing with a case of multilevel logistic regressions. Models were estimated using HLM software, version 6 (Bryk and Raudenbush 1992). The chosen method of estimation was restricted maximum likelihood.

However, it is noteworthy that our analyses distinguished between two subsamples: childless women (537) and women with at least one child (1 037). This distinction was guided by the fact that, as already mentioned, childless women differed from women with at least one child regarding the time they devoted to paid and domestic work (Table 1).

## 4 Results

### 4.1 Descriptive results

Women dedicated about 17 hours a week to domestic work, but there were strong differences between mothers and non-mothers (Table 1). Unsurprisingly, childless women dedicated less time to domestic work (almost 9 hours), compared to the number of hours dedicated to domestic work by women with at least one child (nearly 22 hours). By contrast, there was no difference among men, who spend a little more than 5 hours weekly on domestic chores. Childless women devoted more time to paid work than mothers. For men, there were no differences based on parenthood or childlessness. Such results align with previous studies that demonstrated the effect

of a life course transition (e. g., marriage, arrival of a child), especially the transition to parenthood on the amount of domestic work done by men and women (Levy et al. 1997; Le Goff et al. 2009; Henchoz and Wernli 2010). Our descriptive analysis revealed the difference between men and women with respect to involvement in domestic and paid work before and after the transition to parenthood. Table 1 demonstrates that the *traditional role-set,* in which the man carries a heavier burden related to paid work and the woman carries a heavier burden related to performing domestic work is prevalent in Switzerland. The prevalence of these traditional role-sets increases with the number of children a couple has. Couples tend to adopt a traditional role-set after the transition to parenthood, and this tendency is even more prevalent when they have more than one child. Descriptive results show that childless women were more satisfied with the division of domestic work than women with at least one child. Finally, we want to emphasize that childless women and mothers with at least one child differed with regard to the question about the level of occupation, the level of education, and the household income.

### 4.2 Results of multilevel analysis

We estimated different models for each of the two subsamples – (1) childless women and (2) women with at least one child – because the equality adopted by spouses that prevails before the arrival of children is challenged by the transition to parenthood. In the first model, we introduced indicators related to familistic and gender attitudes as well as the social support to test our first hypothesis. Model 2 tested the second hypothesis related to the number of hours devoted to paid and domestic work by the interviewee's partner. Model 3 tested the hypothesis related to the effect of age. Finally, Models 4 and 5 progressively introduced control covariates (education, occupational status, and the household equivalized income).

Table 2 presents the results for childless women. First, in each model, the intercept shows that the likelihood of positive childbearing intentions is lower than the likelihood of negative childbearing intentions within the period of observation. The first model revealed that women who agree that jobs preserve independence were less likely to intend to have a child within the period ($\beta = -0.253$; $p < .05$). An aspiration to gain economic independence was also negatively linked with childbearing intentions. This result seems to indicate that women anticipate that having a child means, first, a reduction of work hours and then a reduction of economic independence. Receiving practical support, however, had a positive impact on the intention to have a child within 24 months ($\beta = 0.416$; $p < .01$), which means that the availability of help favors child intentions.

According to the second model, believing that a job preserves independence was less related to the intention to have a child within the specified period ($\beta = -0.247$; $p < .05$). Receiving practical support, on the other hand, favored the intention to have a child ($\beta = 0.426$; $p < .01$). Finally, this model demonstrated

that the likelihood of childbearing intentions increased with the number of hours worked weekly by the partner; in other words, the economic security offered by the partner's involvement in the labor market tended to strengthen the childbearing intentions of a childless woman.

As expected, the third model showed that the intention to have a child first increases with age ($\beta = 1.873$; $p < .001$) but then flattens with growing age (age square: $\beta = -0.029$; $p < .001$). The effect of age partially mediates the effect of having practical support and the effect of familistic attitudes. This result indicates that the woman's position in her life cycle influences her childbearing intentions. Moreover, it shows that 18-year-old women will respond differently to questions about their short-term family intentions than 49-year-old women.

The fourth model showed no difference between women working full time and women working part time with respect to childbearing intentions, which could mean that childbearing intentions are unrelated to a woman's economic level. Being at school or undergoing training, on the other hand, were strongly negatively related to a woman's intention to have a child ($\beta = -2.778$; $p < .001$). This result was consistent with the classic results of life course studies, which show that women rarely give birth to a first child while they are enrolled in a school or a training program (Blossfeld and Huinink 1991). Looking for a job, however, had a positive effect on the intention to have a child ($\beta = 1.510$; $p < .01$).

The fifth model demonstrated that familistic attitudes had no influence on childbearing intentions when controlling for socio-demographic variables, such as income, level of education, and occupational status. However, practical support still had an impact on the intention to have a first child. In this model, again, being in training was negatively related to the intention to have a child, whereas looking for a job had a positive effect.

These first models demonstrated the importance of the woman's occupational context and age in relation to her intention to have a first child.

In the case of women who already have at least one child, Table 3 shows that familistic attitudes, gender opinions, and satisfaction with the couple's division of domestic work influenced the intention to have another child. The first model indicated that women who believe that the child of a working mother suffers were less likely to have another child ($\beta = -0.203$; $p < .05$). Satisfaction with the share of domestic work had a positive impact on the intention to have a child within 24 months ($\beta = 0.344$; $p < .001$) as well as favoring gender equality ($\beta = 0.208$; $p < .05$), and this effect stayed significant as other covariates were added. Receiving practical support ($\beta = 0.269$; $p < .01$) had a positive impact on the intention to have a child. These results indicated the importance of the women's satisfaction with their partners' involvement in the household before they responded positively about their desire to have another child. Moreover, the practical support results underlined the importance of the help provided by relatives. For women, childbearing intentions occur

Table 2 Childless women: results of logit models; unit-specific model; coefficient and odds ratio

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 | Model 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Intercept | −0.921** | −1.492** | −1.675** | −1.611** | −1.559** |
| | 0.398 | 0.225 | 0.187 | 0.199 | 0.210 |
| **Familistic attitudes** | | | | | |
| Job preserves independence | −0.253* | −0.247* | −0.197+ | −0.190 | −0.188 |
| | 0.776 | 0.781 | 0.821 | 0.827 | 0.828 |
| Child suffers with working mother | −0.164 | −0.187+ | 0.023 | −0.004 | −0.002 |
| | 0.848 | 0.829 | 1.023 | 0.996 | 0.997 |
| Satisfaction with the division of domestic work | 0.023 | 0.043 | 0.044 | 0.049 | 0.046 |
| | 1.023 | 1.044 | 1.045 | 1.050 | 1.047 |
| **Gender attitudes** | | | | | |
| Gender equity | 0.156 | 0.180 | 0.185 | 0.230 | 0.226 |
| | 1.169 | 1.197 | 1.204 | 1.258 | 1.254 |
| **Social Support** | | | | | |
| Practical support received | 0.416** | 0.426* | 0.264+ | 0.292 | 0.294+ |
| | 1.516 | 1.531 | 1.302 | 1.340 | 1.342 |
| Emotional support received | 0.189 | 0.174 | 0.113 | 0.126 | 0.119 |
| | 1.208 | 1.190 | 1.119 | 1.134 | 1.126 |
| **Partner's Workload** | | | | | |
| Number of hours spent for the domestic work by the partner | | −0.027 | −0.015 | −0.013 | −0.013 |
| | | 0.972 | 0.985 | 0.987 | 0.987 |
| Number of hours spent for the paid work by the partner | | 0.016+ | 0.013 | 0.013 | 0.013 |
| | | 1.016 | 1.014 | 1.013 | 1.013 |
| **Age** | | | | | |
| Age | | | 1.873*** | 1.805*** | 1.815*** |
| | | | 6.510 | 6.082 | 6.141 |
| Age square | | | −0.029*** | −0.030*** | −0.029*** |
| | | | −0.970 | 0.971 | 0.971 |
| **Sociodemographic variables** | | | | | |
| Occupational status: ref part time | | | | | |
| Occupation full time | | | | −0.183 | −0.168 |
| | | | | 0.833 | 0.846 |
| Occupation housewife | | | | 1.209 | 1.202 |
| | | | | 3.349 | 3.328 |
| Occupation training | | | | −2.778*** | −2.791*** |
| | | | | 0.062 | 1.511 |
| Occupation looking for a job | | | | 1.510** | 1.511 |
| | | | | 4.529 | 4.533 |

*Continuation of Table 2 on the following page.*

*Continuation of Table 2.*

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 | Model 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Education: ref. middle level of education | | | | | |
| Education low | | | | −0.302 | −0.311 |
| | | | | 0.740 | 0.732 |
| Education high | | | | 0.106 | 0.118 |
| | | | | 1.112 | 1.125 |
| Household | | | | | |
| Income, equivalized, net | | | | | −0.0001 |
| | | | | | 1.000 |
| **Random effect** | | | | | |
| Standard deviation | 1.560*** | 1.558*** | 1.517*** | 1.5222*** | 1.523*** |
| Variance component | 2.436 | 2.427 | 2.302 | 2.315 | 2.319 |
| Chi-square | 938.419 | 931.916 | 777.195 | 748.875 | 747.994 |
| Log-Likelihood | −1 520.403 | −1 525.103 | −1 463.717 | −1 447.376 | −1 458.544 |

Note: + $p<.1$;* $p<.05$; ** $p<.01$; *** $p<.001$. Mode of estimates: full maximum likelihood. N = 516; observations = 1 096.

more often in a context where help from relatives is available. This help provided by relatives may compensate for the lack of childcare in Switzerland; this help provides security for women who intend to have additional children.

The second model showed that a woman is less likely to have another child when her partner strongly participates in domestic work ($\beta = -0.035$; $p < .01$). This result indicated that the homeostasis of the family system could be challenged by another child, which is not considered ideal. In this model, again, familistic and gender attitude, as well as satisfaction with the division of domestic work and practical support influenced childbearing intentions.

The third model indicated that the intention to have a child within the specified period depends on the age of the individual. As in the case of childless women, the importance of the individual's place in her life course influenced her childbearing intentions.

The fourth model emphasized that working full time is negatively related to the intention to have another child. Being a housewife had the same effect. In both cases, we can argue that the homeostasis of the system would be challenged by having another child. On the one hand, for women working full time, it is difficult to imagine combining the responsibilities of work and another child; on the other hand, being less committed to their paid work increases the likelihood that they

Table 3 Women with at least one child: results of logit models; unit-specific model; coefficient and odds ratio

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 | Model 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Intercept | −2.763*** | −1.923*** | −2.653*** | −2.814*** | −3.047*** |
| | 0.063 | 0.146 | 0.070 | 0.060 | 0.047 |
| **Familistic attitudes** | | | | | |
| Job preserves independence | −0.073 | −0.065 | −0.001 | −0.041 | −0.056 |
| | 0.929 | −0.937 | 0.999 | 0.960 | 0.946 |
| Child suffers with working mother | −0.203* | −0.214** | −0.275** | −0.137 | −0.126 |
| | 0.816 | −0.807 | 0.999 | 0.872 | 0.881 |
| Satisfaction with the division of domestic work | 0.344*** | 0.353*** | 0.245* | 0.239* | 0.243* |
| | 1.410 | 1.423 | 1.277 | 1.270 | 1.275 |
| **Gender attitudes** | | | | | |
| Gender equity | 0.208* | 0.276* | 0.335** | 0.279* | 0.273* |
| | 1.323 | 1.318 | 1.398 | 1.322 | 1.314 |
| **Social Support** | | | | | |
| Practical support received | 0.269** | 0.259** | 0.114 | 0.073 | 0.078 |
| | 1.309 | 1.295 | 1.121 | 1.076 | 1.081 |
| Emotional support received | 0.107 | 0.090 | 0.058 | 0.102 | 0.105 |
| | 1.113 | 1.094 | 1.060 | 1.107 | 1.111 |
| **Partner's Workload** | | | | | |
| Number of hours spent for the domestic work by the partner | | −0.035* | −0.032* | −0.045** | −0.043** |
| | | 0.966 | 0.968 | 0.955 | 0.958 |
| Number of hours spent for the paid work by the partner | | −0.014+ | −0.008 | −0.005 | −0.007 |
| | | 0.986 | 0.992 | 0.994 | 0.993 |
| **Age** | | | | | |
| Age | | | 0.792*** | 0.723*** | 0.756*** |
| | | | 2.208 | 2.061 | 2.130 |
| Age square | | | −0.015*** | −0.014*** | −0.015*** |
| | | | 0.984 | 0.985 | 0.984 |
| **Sociodemographic variables** | | | | | |
| Occupational status: ref part time | | | | | |
| Occupation full time | | | | −0.725* | −0.769* |
| | | | | 0.484 | 0.463 |
| Occupation housewife | | | | −0.432* | −0.396* |
| | | | | 0.649 | 0.673 |
| Occupation training | | | | 0.180 | 0.220 |
| | | | | 1.197 | 1.246 |
| Occupation looking for a job | | | | −0.016 | −0.020 |
| | | | | 0.984 | 0.980 |

*Continuation of Table 3 on the following page.*

*Continuation of Table 3.*

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 | Model 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Education: ref. middle level of education | | | | | |
| Education low | | | | −0.059 | −0.014 |
| | | | | 0.942 | 0.985 |
| Education high | | | | 1.062*** | 0.984*** |
| | | | | 2.892 | 2.674 |
| Household | | | | | |
| Income, equivalized, net | | | | | 0.0001* |
| | | | | | 1.000 |
| **Random effect** | | | | | |
| Standard deviation | 1.389*** | 1.390*** | 1.399 | 1.426*** | 1.421*** |
| Variance component | 1.928 | 1.934 | 1.957 | 2.033 | 2.020 |
| Chi-square | 1 487.552 | 1 486.053 | 1 210.549 | 1 203.257 | 1 199.376 |
| Log-Likelihood | −3 928.944 | −3 930.521 | −3 753.801 | −3 740.265 | −3 754.495 |

Note: + p < .1;* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001. Mode of estimates: full maximum likelihood. N = 1 034; observations = 3 137.

will want another child. Women who are housewives usually have more than one child, and they are less likely to intend to bear third or fourth children. Moreover, women with high levels of education develop intentions to have a child within 24 months more often than women with middle educational levels.

The last model indicated that the couple's level of income was positively related to the intention to have another child. This means that the security of an adequate household income supports the possibility of having another child.

## 5 Conclusion

Results of regressions confirmed our hypotheses. First, there is a strong effect of family and gender attitudes as well as of social support on positive fertility intentions among both childless women and mothers. Coefficients remained especially significant in the case of mothers when age and control covariates were added. Practical support seemed to play a role in fertility intentions, but the significance disappeared when age was introduced in both groups of women.

However, as expected, intentions to have children were strongly related to age, which is interpreted as an indicator of a given phase of the life course. For both childless women and mothers, there is a finite time in the life course when the intention to have a child seems more likely to appear. Three phases can be described.

First, there is a period when women do not yet want to have a child, especially when they are in academic or professional training. In a second phase, intending to have a child becomes much more common. Childbearing intentions weaken with age, for both childless women and mothers. There seems to be a relatively stable normative window in Switzerland that is considered an appropriate timing for childbearing – "not too young" and "not too old". This is consistent with the findings of Sauvain-Dugerdil (2005). On the basis of Swiss FFS data collected in the 1990s,[12] she found that among women who did not intend to have a child, the youngest women often mentioned insufficient housing conditions or the difficult conciliation of their professional and family lives; the eldest, though still in their reproductive years, mentioned reasons related to age.

The separate analyses for childless women and mothers usefully show that childbearing intentions depend partially on different factors for the two groups. In Switzerland, couples are likely to adopt a more traditional role-set after the transition to parenthood (Levy et al. 1997; Le Goff et al. 2009). This process is reinforced when a couple has at least one child. In this case, couples in traditional role-sets do not intend to have any more children, mostly because they have already achieved their desired family size or because the traditional role-set was a consequence of parenthood. On the contrary, in the case of childless women, those who hold more egalitarian attitudes are more likely to intend having a child within two years but not necessarily those who actually are in a more egalitarian role-set (with the exception of those who are in a school or a training). In addition, women who consider labor market employment to be synonymous with independence are less likely to have children.

One could argue that since we measured fertility intentions, we measured at the same time gender roles-set indicators and gender attitudes, and differences between the two groups were due to selection processes. However, the childless women in our study were not definitively childless, so there is no reason to believe that most of them were profoundly different from mothers, apart from the fact that they had not yet experienced the transition to parenthood.

In a context where reconciling employment and family responsibilities is not easy, given the poor availability of childcare services in Switzerland (Branger et al. 2008), childbearing is probably and understandably experienced as a threat to a woman's independence. The conservative parties' insistence on the mother's unique role in her child's development and education and their resistance to the development of alternative childcare systems seem to depress childbearing intentions and contribute to the fertility decline and the higher ages when women transit to parenthood.

12 The Fertility and Family Survey was commissioned by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office in the early 1990s. This survey enabled Switzerland to take part in the international Fertility and Family Survey (FFS) project launched by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

This study shows with a certain degree of confidence that more egalitarian couples are more likely to intend to have a child, other things being equal. This confirms, to a certain extent, McDonald's (2000) hypothesis at the micro level. When the couple maintains gender equality in the private sphere, within a context in which gender equity is promoted in the public sphere as well (as in Switzerland), the effects on fertility intentions are positive. Both egalitarian roles and satisfaction with the division of household tasks make it more likely for a woman to want to have a child. Important co-determinants of such intentions include couple's equal time devoted to paid employment and the possibility of emotional support. Other factors play substantial independent roles, however. The aspiration to be independent is an important factor that is not necessarily related to holding egalitarian values or a more equal workload share. Similarly, the couple's economic situation, especially in the presence of one or more children, conditions heavily childbearing intentions.

Our analysis was limited to childbearing intentions over a two-years time period, as this is claimed to be a relatively good predictor of actual childbearing, compared to life-long intentions or family size intentions (Philipov et al. 2009). Provided that intentions remain relatively stable over time, our next steps are: a) to investigate the correlation between intentions and actual fertility two years later and b) to analyze the reasons for possible mismatches between intentions and realizations. The first step is intriguing because of the existence of a fertility intention-behavior gap, currently one of the most-debated empirical issues in family demography (Philipov et al. 2009). The second step is to verify whether, apart from reasons due to a couple's fecundity problems, the fertility gap may be due to a change in intentions. Changes in fertility intentions during the life course are well-known, but not much research has been done on changes over relatively short-term periods. In particular, we are interested in identifying the causes for possible changes. Women may abandon previously held childbearing plans, temporarily or for good. Or, on the opposite end of the spectrum, they may switch from negative intentions to positive ones. Are these changes dependent on changes in attitudes, changes in material conditions and activities, or changes in couples' role-sets?

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