



CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN FERTILITY DESIRES AND REPRODUCTIVE BEHAVIOR IN AUSTRIA: THE ROLE OF PARTNER CONTEXT

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Motivations:

- Having a birth is a dyadic decision
- The effect of disagreement on subsequent fertility behavior is an under-investigated research topic
- Absence of a theory of couple fertility decision-making process which explicitly considers the dyadic nature of reproduction as well as the disagreement effects of couple decisional process

Decision process:

HEURISTIC	DESCRIPTION	EFFECT
Sphere of interest	Prevalence of partner in whose sphere of interest childbearing lies	Birth occurs if the partner in whose sphere of interest childbearing lies wants it
Golden mean	Equality of partners in negotiation process	Birth will be depend on the final outcome of couple interaction
Socio-economic power	Prevalence of partner with more access to economic resources	Birth occurs if the partner with more access to economic resources wants it
Social drift	None of the partners wants to change the status quo	Birth is postponed

Source: *Testa et al. 2011*

Research Hypotheses (1/2)

- ***H1- Absolute difference effect***

Disagreement effects will not depend on which of the partners wants to have a child and which does not

- ***H2- Double-veto power effect***

Disagreement will be closer to agreement on not having a child than on agreement on having a child

- ***H3- Gender effect***

Women will have more decision power than men in case of disagreement

Research Hypotheses (2/2)

- ***H4 Two-child norm effect***

Disagreement will be solved in favor of a child if a two-child family size has not been achieved yet

- ***H5- Gender equality effect***

Partners in more gender-egalitarian relationships will be more prone to solve their conflict in favor of a birth

- ***H6- Bargaining power effect***

Partner with more bargaining power is likely to prevail in case of disagreement



Data:

Survey:

Longitudinal study: “*Familienentwicklung in Österreich*” carried out by Statistik Austria between 2009 and 2013

Analytical sample:

2,604 heterosexual couples who were able to conceive a child in 2009 and in which:

1. One of the partners answered the questions on fertility desires at the first wave (2009)
2. The same partner was re-interviewed at the second wave (2013)

Definition:

Survey questions (2009):

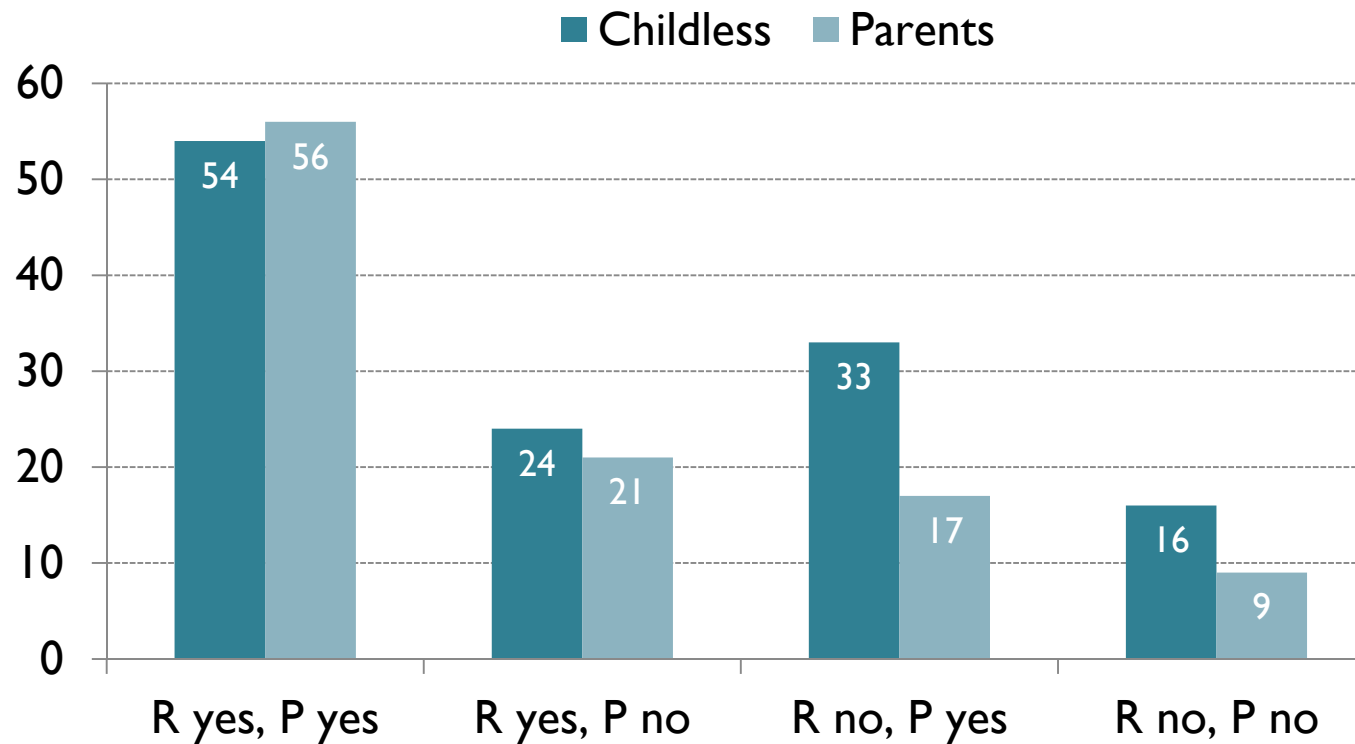
1) *Do you want to have a child now?*

2) *Does your partner want to have a child now?*

	PARTNER	NO	YES
RESPONDENT			
NO		Both no	R no, P yes
YES		R yes, P no	Both yes

Descriptive Results (1/2):

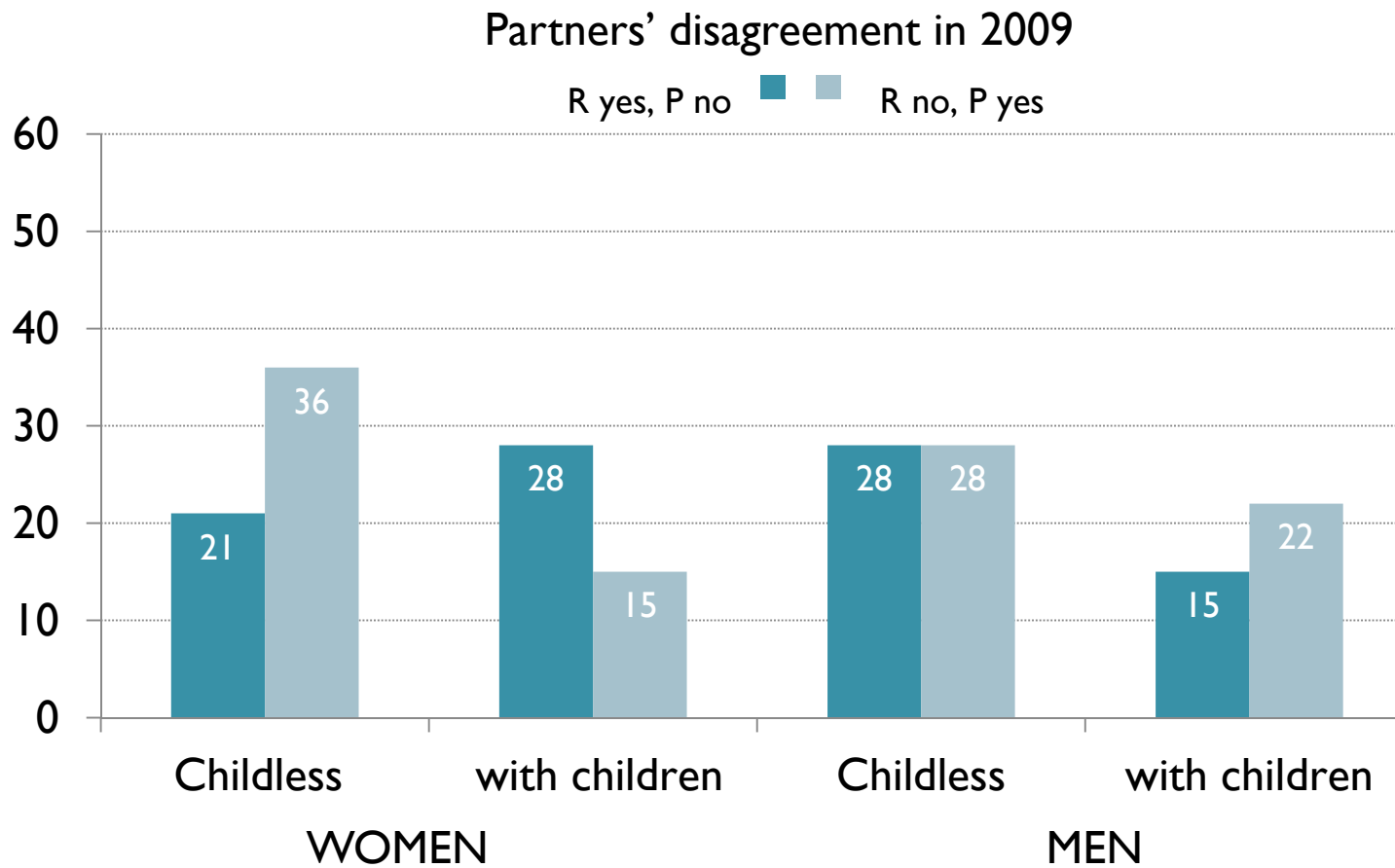
Couples having a child in the intra-survey period by partners' short-term fertility desires in 2009



Couple short-term fertility desires in 2009

Descriptive Results (2/2):

Couples having a child in the intra-survey period by partners' short-term fertility desires in 2009



Multivariate Results (1/3)

Testing H1 Absolute difference effect of disagreement

	Childless		Parents	
Model I				
Both yes	1.78	***	2.26	***
R yes, P no	0.51		0.84	*
R no, P yes	0.83	**	0.51	
Both no (ref.)	-		-	
AIC	1024		889	
Model II				
Both yes	1.78	***	2.26	***
Absolute disagreement	0.69	**	0.65	**
Both no (ref.)	-		-	
AIC	1022		888	
N.CASES	1059		1564	

(*p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001)

Multivariate Results (2/3)

Testing H2 *Veto power effect of disagreement*

	Childless		Parents	
Model I				
Both yes	1.78	***	2.26	***
Absolute disagreement	0.69	**	0.65	**
Both no (ref.)	-		-	
AIC	1022		888	
Model II				
Linear specification of both partners' desires	0.87	***	1.06	**
AIC	1021		890	
N.CASES	1059		1564	

(*p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001)

Multivariate Results (3/3)

Testing H3 Gender effect of disagreement

	Childless		Parents	
Model I				
Both yes	1.78	***	2.26	***
Absolute disagreement	0.69	**	0.65	**
Both no (ref.)	-		-	
AIC	1022		888	
Model II				
Both yes	1.85	***	2.40	***
Both yes * Men R	-0.17		-0.31	
Absolute disagreement	0.74	**	0.78	**
Absolute disagreement * Men R	-0.14		-0.32	
Both no (ref.)	-			
AIC	1026		891	



What about the other hypotheses?

- **H4-** The effect of disagreement does not change across parities
- **H5-** Couples with a more gender egalitarian division of domestic tasks are **not necessarily** more egalitarian in childbearing decisions than those with a gendered distribution
- **H6-** Couples in which partners have the same power in decision-making are **not necessarily** more egalitarian than couples in which the distribution of bargaining power is gendered



Summary:

- The disagreement effect on subsequent reproductive behavior will not be signed (conflict effect)
- In case of disagreement, the childbearing outcome will be located in between that coming from agreement on having a child and that coming from agreement on not having a child
- Men are more influential at parity zero and women afterwards. However, multivariate analysis shows that both partners have equal influence in decision-making



Implications:

- Models including only women's or only men's desires are likely to be miss-specified

Caveats:

- Subjectively reported partner's desire may not reflect exactly the partner's objective fertility desires
- Ideally, research on couple decision-making should be based on a double source of information on partner's desires, i.e., subjective and objective reports

Accuracy of the perception of partner's short-term fertility desires:

Distribution of proxy and actual partner's report and proportion of error by partners' combined short-term fertility desires and couple's parity

Partners' desires	Childless respondents (%)			Parent Respondents (%)		
	Proxy	Actual	% correct	Proxy	Actual	% correct
Both yes	17	15	76	9	8	84
R yes, P no	6	9	76	4	5	91
R no, P yes	7	11	56	8	10	58
Both no	70	65	89	79	77	94
Total	100	100	84	100	100	90
N.cases	266	266	223	530	530	477

Thank You!



Questions?

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**Correspondence between fertility desires and reproductive behavior in Austria:
the role of the partner context**