

A biographical account on women labour force participation and conjugal love

Eric D. Widmer, Michelle Ernst Stahli, Jean-Marie LeGoff, Rene Levy, Manuela Schicka

December 12, 2011

Abstract

In this study we examine how career patterns of women after child birth and their subjective evaluation influence conjugal satisfaction. Data are drawn from the study "Social Stratification, Cohesion and Conflict in Contemporary Families". 1534 couples in Switzerland were interviewed, among which a subsample of 807 couples with at least one child living in the household were selected. To analyze objective careers of women, the labour force participation pattern after child birth was used. To examine the influence of subjective evaluation of one's career, we focus on various variables such as feelings of sacrifice towards the family and lifestyle preferences. Results show that an interruption of labour force participation increases the risk of feeling less in love for women but not for men. It also increases the risk of divorce. A couple with work-oriented women also has a higher risk for divorce and less conjugal love for both women and men.

1 Introduction

A large number of studies stress gender inequalities in household and paid work as main factors of conjugal conflicts and the weakening of conjugal love. Labour

participation and conjugal life are two major ways to social integration in contemporary societies. Paid work provides a sense of self-identity that is scarcely replaced by other means. Conjugal relationships have the same so to speak identity function in the private sphere. Indeed, instrumental and expressive functions ([16]) have become much more blurred in advanced capitalistic societies. Work, as love, has a true importance for the social and emotional stability of individuals, and love, as work, has some undeniably "instrumental" aspects to it. It follows that some kind of systemic linkage should exist between love and work. However, no compelling empirical evidence supports the hypothesis that a strong link connects conjugal love and the distribution of paid and domestic work between spouses or partners. Therefore, it remains to be seen whether or not conjugal relationships and work support or on the contrary weaken each other. Whether it is one, the other, both or none, the interdependencies between work and love form a crucial issue for the future of long term intimate commitment in late modernity.

This paper intends to approach the interrelation between work and love in a life course perspective. The impact of equality and inequality of participation in paid and domestic work belong to life trajectories and life projects in which the overall pattern of social participation in both fields over time plays a key role for understanding conjugal conflict and the persistence or weakening of conjugal love. In that respect, one should stress that womens' and mens' involvement in domestic chores and paid work over the life course keep on being distinct today in a large number of European countries, including Switzerland ([15], [21]). The turning point of the differential participation of men and women in family and occupational activities corresponds to the time of the birth of the first child. After it, trajectories of men and women strongly diverge. To become parents means that inequalities between sexes are generated. When couples become

parents, women face a large amount of new domestic tasks regarding the child care, as for men there are usually little changes. The new domestic tasks which occur with the arrival of the first child lead to a traditional division of work. Even if partners plan to share tasks equally, women are doing the largest part of the domestic tasks after the child is born ([13]). The transition to parenthood is indeed a critical time for professional careers and domestic work of women (less so for men), as it causes the investment in domestic activities to increase largely. It is also a crucial time for love as there is a decrease of conjugal satisfaction in that transition ([17], [14], [22]). Therefore, the way in which this transition is experienced by women may have an impact on their intimate feelings toward their partner.

2 Couple Satisfaction

Tenants of individualization theory emphasize the impact of an unequal division of domestic labour between men and women as a main cause for conjugal problems and breakups in contemporary couples. Although women are more active than in the past in the labour market, men's contribution to housework is still low. Many women do not understand or accept this inequality anymore ([2]). By the expansion of the labour market since the 1960s women are nowadays to a large extent employed ([8]). Several studies deal with female labour force participation and satisfaction of women and men. Data from the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH) showed a significant risk for union dissolution when the wife is employed ([19]). Another study deals with the influence of female labour force participation and gender-role attitudes on the perception of marital quality of women and men. The sample consisted of 452 married couples where husbands were employed. The higher the education of men the more satisfied women are with the relationship. Higher education goes

together with less traditional role expectations, and lower traditional role expectations lead to higher satisfaction for women ([23]). Gender-role ideologies also influence marital satisfaction. The more traditional the gender-role ideologies of men and the more traditional women perceive it as such, the lower the quality of marriage is. The authors point out that the perception of gender roles is more important for marital quality than the labour force participation of women ([23]). One study compared dual career men with traditional career men in regard of marital quality. The results show that marriage is an element of quality of life. Based on a sample of 136 dual-career men (both partners are working) and of 137 traditional-career men (only the man is working), it was hypothesized that the labour force participation of the wife decreases the life satisfaction of both partners because men could feel a diminishment in their role as breadwinners. The results however did not validate this hypothesis ([11]). Based on a longitudinal sample of 286 full-time employed dual-earner couples, it was found that womens' marital quality is mostly sensitive to the male partners' contribution to educational tasks and that women do not react to changes and differences of earning in their couple ([3]). Based on the data of the International Social Survey (ISSP), another study found that attitudes toward domestic work influence conjugal conflicts and womens' happiness more than welfare state regimes and actual participation in the labor market ([5]).

The distribution of housework, the perception of fairness regarding housework and the impact on marital quality and stability are highlighted in various studies ([7], [4], [25]). For the risk of divorce, there are no significant results for men, but for women It was found that the risk of divorce raises when they feel an unfair share of housework ([7]). Family work is obviously gendered, and women spend more time on household tasks than men. Their perception of fairness and marital satisfaction is therefore lower than that of men. For men there is

usually no relation of perception of fairness and marital satisfaction ([4]). The relationship of paid and unpaid work to marital satisfaction was examined in a study on 550 married employed women. If possible, men were also interviewed. The study focuses on two-earner married couples. The perception of fairness of the division of housework is less likely for women than for men. Husbands who have more equal gender role ideologies are more likely to be satisfied than husbands with conventional attitudes ([25]).

Gender role attitudes is also a key for evaluating one's partnership. Some attention was paid to that matter by research. Gender role attitudes are divided into traditional and liberal. A liberal gender role attitude is related to paid female employment. It was found that gender role attitudes influence both mens' and womens' marital satisfaction. Traditional role attitudes lead to a higher marital satisfaction. If the woman has a more traditional gender role attitude, there is also a higher marital satisfaction for their husbands ([26]). In a three wave study about marital instability over the life cycle, it was found that if wives' gender roles became more egalitarian during the study period, marital quality declined. On the other hand, an increase in mens' egalitarian gender roles lead to an increase in husbands marital quality. Non traditional attitudes mentioned in the first wave were positively correlated with divorce in the second and third wave ([1]).

Hakim's (2002,2003) preference theory helps to understand which influence life style preferences and values have on decisions concerning the labour force participation of women and men. The focus lies especially on women to explain their choice between family and paid work. Hakim points to the coexistence of three types of attitudes based on data from the National Longitudinal Surveys from 1960. The largest group are the adaptive women, who time after time adapt to the external situation by choosing a combination of paid work and family life

without having a special preference for one of the two sectors. Adaptive women often work part-time after having a child. Another type of strategies are shown by the work-centred women, who focus on paid work and build their family life around their job, while remaining, for most of them, childless. The third group is constituted by home-centered women. They usually skip paid work after marriage and work only in time of economical necessity. Home-centred women have larger families than other women ([10], [9]).

Overall, researchers stress the minimal impact of occupational factors on wives' happiness and underline the importance of wives' views on fairness about the division of household labour, the marriage and gender role attitudes ([18], [23], [25]). Research however fails to provide empirical evidence about the correlation between the actual division of labour in couples and conjugal love. Contrary to some assertions of individualization theory ([2]), empirical results available so far do not support the hypothesis that conjugal conflict and the weakening of conjugal love is embedded in a gendered division of household and paid work. It is interesting to note, however, that Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) emphasize that the issue behind conjugal conflict might be related with life projects and biography rather than synchronous fairness issues. The family organization at one point in time may play today a less central role in self-image and biography as jobs and careers have become part of womens' life projects. Expectations of equality in the household division of labour is embedded, according to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, in biographical changes which make more and more women experience alternative life trajectories to the home-maker trajectory ([2]). Despite their overly optimistic tone about the increasing presence of women in career jobs ([24]), Beck et al. provide a valuable suggestion for research on the factors of conjugal satisfaction and love. Rather than focusing on the division of paid work and household labour between the partners at a

single point in time, Beck et al. emphasize the various meanings that a division of labour may trigger according to the overall life course and life projects that both partners, but especially women, have developed.

In this respect, there are some indirect evidence that life trajectories indeed matter for the way in which the division of household labour influences partnerships. It has been shown that the transition to parenthood is a crucial factor influencing conjugal stability. New tasks, especially domestic care, are usually done by women. Even if women do not support the traditional division of domestic and paid work, after the birth of the child the division of household cores becomes more traditional. This could lead to disappointed expectations, which result into a negative meanings associated of conjugal love. Some research indeed has shown that conjugal satisfaction declines when children are present ([22]). When conjugal love is examined, life course trajectories must be considered. The transition to parenthood serves as a proper indicator to examine the couples satisfaction as it is linked to new tasks and maybe a new division of work within the couple.

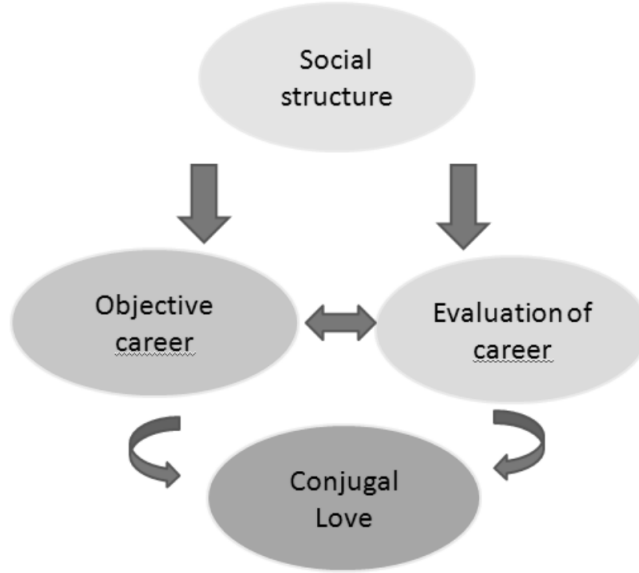
3 Summary and Hypotheses

It is notable that both occupational careers and their subjective evaluation depend on a large set of structural factors, some stemming from the direct impact of social (more specifically institutional) structures, some with an impact mediated by cultural aspects. In another publication ([6]) we found that three sets of variables predict mothers' labour force participation: position in the occupational structure, family workload, and, although to a lesser extent, lifestyle preferences. Self-employed women and professionals are more likely to maintain, at least partially, their labour activity. The extent of the family workload, measured by the number and age of children, influences the material possibility

of managing the double workload of family and employment. In addition, a home-centred lifestyle preference inhibits maintained employment. The impact of additional variables such as the availability of institutionalized childcare, the household income or the place of residence, support the hypothesis that some of the roots of conjugal love dig deep in a set of interrelated cultural and structural factors supporting gender inequalities. As for subjective careers, they are also shaped by social structures. In their case, the life style preference, the parental gender model experienced during childhood and the support of a well-equilibrated network provide less frustration about ones' career, and therefore a distinct type of subjective career. Based on this set of results and the literature review, we propose a theoretical model in figure 1 linking conjugal love to the social structure through the mediation of occupational careers and the evaluation of them. The social structure determines the occupational careers as well as the evaluation of careers. The given possibility to combine labour force and family, for example, is a major factor for the labour force participation of women. If part-time work, flexible working hours as well as a good child care structure are available in a country it is easier for women to keep working after the transition to parenthood. If these factors are not available women usually have to give up their work at least for a period of time. The evaluation of ones own career goes together with ones' own gender role attitudes and ones' own expectations regarding ones' own career. Gender role attitudes can also be given by the social structure as they are mediated during the socialization. The evaluation and the occupational career influence each other. Occupational careers and the evaluation of them are then expected to have an impact on conjugal love.

Overall, we hypothesize that occupational trajectories that fall short of their promises may lead to frustrations that eventually endanger conjugal love. More

Figure 1: A theoretical model linking conjugal love with the social structure



precisely, one hypothesis can be derived from the reviewed evidence. Both occupational careers (i.e. a woman's sequences of paid work) and their evaluation (i.e. the satisfaction or frustration a woman feels regarding her objective career) may have a detrimental impact on conjugal love. Furthermore, we hypothesize that the woman's labour force participation makes the risk of divorce increase. The research literature also leads to the hypothesis that an unequal share of household work will lower the conjugal satisfaction, especially for women, as where traditional gender roles will increase it, especially for men.

4 Data

The data used in the analyses are drawn from the study "Social Stratification, Cohesion and Conflict in Contemporary Switzerland", a representative survey of 1534 married and unmarried couples living in Switzerland ([24]). The study's primary goal was to examine how conjugal functioning is influenced by part-

ners’ social status and position in the life course. The sample for the project was drawn randomly using a non-proportional stratified design based on the three major linguistic areas of Switzerland. Data collection took place between October 1998 and January 1999. In 2004, a second wave of interviews was organized, which was limited to interviews with women because of money constraints. The subsample considered here focuses on 807 couples with at least one child of any age living with them. The specific profile of this subsample is highlighted by the following means: women’s mean age is 39 years, the mean duration of their relationship 15.5 years, the mean number of children 2.25.

4.1 Dependent variables

To measure the feeling of less love the respondents statement “feel in love” was taken. This question has four response categories from very true, quite true, quite false to very false. Answers were dichotomized ‘between “very true” and “others”’. More men than women answered that they feel less in love (51% for men and 46% for women). Conjugal dissatisfaction was measured by asking: “Overall, considering your way of going along, your intimate life and the communication between you and your partner, how would you rate your relationship?” with five response categories ranging from “really bad” to “really good”. Because of the highly unbalanced distribution of responses on this variable, we split between “really good” and “others”, as previous research shows that this split produced strong correlations between the dissatisfaction scale and other measurements of conjugal quality ([24]). The number of men and women who are not really satisfied is almost the same (53.3% of women and 52.2% of men). Break-ups were measured by the question from wave 2 whether women broke up with there partner from wave 1. Almost seven percent of women answered that they divorced or separated from their partner of wave 1. The distribution

is shown in table 1.

Table 1: Dependent Variables

	women		men	
	N	%	N	%
less in love				
yes	432	46.1	413	51.2
no	372	52.5	394	48.8
missing	3	0.4	0	0
Total	807	100	807	100
dissatisfaction				
yes	430	53.3	421	52.2
no	377	46.7	382	47.4
missing	0	0	3	0.4
Total	807	100	807	100
Divorce				
yes	55	6.9		
no	539	66.8		
missing	212	26.3		
Total	807	100		

4.2 Independent and control variables

The independent variables include measures of the objective careers, the women's evaluation of their careers and control variables. The distribution of variables are shown in table 2.

In order to measure the impact of women's career on love, various predictors are at hand. Reduction of labour participation was measured asking the women whether they had reduced or interrupted, at some time, participation in paid labour because of the children. In combination with their actual labour activity, we construct a variable dealing with the occupational and family life course of mothers in terms of four situations: never reduced or interrupted (working career, 13.5% of women), reduced at some moment (combined careers, 34% of women), stopped for children but currently active (interrupted careers, 21% of women), completely stopped and actually at home or never worked before

(homemaker, 31% of women). These four constellations are a good approximation to the four trajectory types we found in a longitudinal analysis of retrospective data ([24]). The data show that all mothers of the sample do have the role of homemaker to a significant extent, but not all of them exclusively. Note that these four sequence types of mothers' labour force participation cannot be considered to constitute an ordinal scale. Maintaining, reducing, interrupting-and-returning, or stopping definitively are not simply different degrees of "proximity to labour", reinforced or weakened by some predictors in a monotonous way. Rather, they represent different types of situations that must be explained separately.

Three variables concern womens' subjective evaluation of their occupational trajectories. Women who reduced their labour participation were asked if this change represented a large, small, or no sacrifice for them, and the perceived effect of motherhood on their career was measured by asking if their children represented a limitation for their occupational career at the present time. 39% of the women answered that they perceive the career limitation as a big or small sacrifice. Children as a factor of career limitation was stated by one third of the women.

We also tested the impact of lifestyle preferences ([10], [9]) by combining two questions about career priority and the ideal role distribution between partners. Career orientation is measured by asking women if, at the present time, the improvement of their occupational status is a high priority, a moderate priority, or no priority at all for them. Her preference about role distribution while living with school-age children is captured by a question with five answer possibilities that have been recoded into a dichotomy: preference for equality ("mother and father spend the same amount of time at home and at work", "father stays at home more than the mother" and "whether father or mother does not matter,

one of the two has to stay at home") vs. preference of gendered role segregation ("mother stays at home, father works" and "mother works part-time"). Mothers with a high career priority are considered to be work-centred whatever their ideal role distribution. 13% of the women of our sample belong to this category. Mothers who mention moderate or no career priority but an ideal of non-segregated work-family balance are considered to be adaptive. One third of women belong to the adaptive women. Mothers declaring moderate or no career priority and a preference for a segregated role distribution are classified as home-centred. Preference theory leads one to expect that a non-segregated work-life balance ideal and the presence of career priority favour mothers' labour participation. In our sample, different from Hakims' study, the biggest part of women are home-centred (57%).

In addition, we test the actual division of household labour, distinguishing couples in which the man does more domestic tasks than the woman, about equal, the woman does more than the man, the woman does everything or almost everything. The half of the couples share their housework in this way that the man does more than one hour but the woman does more than he. An equal share of household labour is observable for only 10% of the couples. A non-traditional work share, where the man does more housework than the woman appears only in 6% of the couples. In one third of the couples the man does less than one hour housework and the women more. The traditional work share (woman more than man) is the common pattern in Switzerland.

Several control variables are used to examine their influence on conjugal love. The level of education of women is used in the model for conjugal love for women. Simultaneously the mens' level of education is used in the model for men. Three categories are used: low level of education, medium level of education and high level of education. Among women 37% have a low level

of education and 17% a high level. Among men we find only 12% with a low level of education and 21% with a high level. The age of the youngest child living in the household is introduced because literature has shown that the age of the child can influence couples satisfaction. The variable is divided in three categories: Preschool child (less than six years old, 37%), School age (six to 16 years old, 50%), and Postschool age (more than 16 years old, 13%). As a last variable the couples nationality is taken into account. Here we divided in five categories: Both are Swiss (70%), one Swiss and the other one socialised in Switzerland (6%), the other one socialised in an occidental country (9%), the other one socialised in another country (3%), and both foreigners (7%).

Table 2: Independent Variables

	N	%
Reduction of labour force after child birth		
Maintained, currently active	109	13.5
Reduced	272	33.8
Interrupted	172	21.3
Not currently active	253	31.4
Total	807	100
Feeling of sacrifice		
yes	316	39.1
no	491	60.9
Total	807	100
Feeling of actual career limitation		
yes	267	33
no	540	67
Total	807	100
Lifestyle preference		
Work-centred	104	12.9
Adaptive	242	30
Home-centred	461	57.1
Total	807	100
Household task sharing		
Man more than woman	46	5.7
Man and woman more than 1 hour and equal	84	10.4
Man more than 1 hour and woman more than man	401	49.7
Man less than 1 hour and woman more	272	33.7
missing	4	0.5
Total	807	100.0
Woman level of education		
low	298	36.9
medium	367	45.5
high	139	17.2
missing	3	0.4
Total	807	100
Man level of education		
low	97	12
medium	538	66.7
high	171	21.2
Total	807	100
Age of youngest child		
Preschool (less than 6 years old)	302	37.5
School (6 to 16 years old)	400	49.6
Postschool (over 16 years old)	104	12.8
missing	1	0.1
Total	807	100
Couple nationality		
Both Swiss	567	70.3
One Swiss and the other one socialized in Switzerland	46	5.7
One Swiss and the other one socialized in an occidental country	70	8.7
One Swiss and the other one socialized in another country	24	2.9
Both foreigners	59	7.3
missing	40	5
Total	807	100

5 Results

Two regression models were run for each variable, one for women and one for men.

Figure 2: Results of logistic regression

	women			men		
	Model A		Model B	Model C		Model D
	Less love	Dissatisfaction		Less love	Dissatisfaction	Separation
Reduction of labour participation of the woman owing to children						
Maintained, currently active	0.82	1.54		0.91	1.13	1.43
Reduced	1.58*	1.14		1.36	1.07	3.48**
Interrupted, currently active	1.71*	1.37		1.07	0.92	2.67
Not currently active	1	1		1	1	1
Feeling of sacrifice by woman						
yes	1.50*	1.60*		0.97	0.91	0.78
no	1.00	1.00		1.00	1.00	1.00
Feeling of actual career limitation by woman						
yes	1.25	1.14		1.11	1.20	2.33*
no	1	1		1	1	1
Lifestyle preferences of woman						
Work centred	1.58	1.75*		1.62*	1.36	5.33***
Adaptive	1.32	0.85		1.33	1.40	1.49
Home centred	1	1		1	1	1
Household task sharing						
Man more than woman	0.97	0.50*		0.98	0.86	3.99*
Man and woman more than one hour and equal	0.99	1.32		0.74	1.14	1.50
Man more than 1 hour and woman more than man	0.73	0.87		0.56**	0.50***	1.33
Man less than 1 hour and woman more	1	1		1	1	1
Woman level of education						
low	1	1		-	-	1
medium	1.01	0.67*		-	-	0.73
high	1.38	0.82		-	-	0.34
Man level of education						
low	-	-		1	1	1
medium	-	-		1.00	1.20	1.05
high	-	-		1.46	1.43	0.98
Age of youngest child						
Preschool (less than 6 years old)	0.95	0.78		0.72*	1.19	1.60
School (6 to 16 years old)	1	1		1	1	1
Postschool (over 16 years old)	2.73***	1.28		1.37	1.60	1.16
Couple nationality						
Both Swiss	1	1		1	1	1
One swiss and the other socialised in Switzerland	0.84	1.65		0.86	0.87	1.34
One swiss and the other socialised in an occidental country	0.45**	1.60		0.60	0.88	1.59
One swiss and the other socialised in an other country	0.44	1.37		0.93	2.59	4.46*
Both foreigners	0.50*	0.80		0.58	1.13	2.02

Model A uses the feeling of love of women towards their partner as the dependent variable. Changes in the occupational career of women after the transition to parenthood have a significant impact. A reduction or interruption of the labour force participation leads to a higher risk of feeling of less love. Feeling of sacrifice regarding the career because of the child increases the likelihood that women feel less in love. No significant effects for the life style preferences and the division of household labour were found. The presence of a child of 16 years and older leads to a higher risk that women feel less in love to their partner in comparison to couples with a child between six and 16 years living with them. Couples where one partner is Swiss and the other was socialised in a Western country and couples where both are foreigners have a lower risk that women feels less love in comparison to couples were both are Swiss.

Model B considers the risk of being dissatisfied with their conjugal relationship for women. Occupational career have no significant impact. But women who felt that a sacrifice regarding their career because of the child have a higher risk to be dissatisfied with the relationship. Life style preferences show also significant effects on womens' dissatisfaction. Work-centred women have a higher risk of being dissatisfied than home-centred women. For the division of household labour, women feel more satisfaction if their partner do more housework than they do.

Model C describes the results for mens' feeling of love. There are no significant effects of their occupational career. Men with work-centred women have a higher risk to feel less in love with their partner than men with home-centred women. A traditional division of housework leads to more feelings of love of men.

Model D focuses on the effects on being dissatisfied with the relationship for men. Once again no significant results for the changes in the occupational

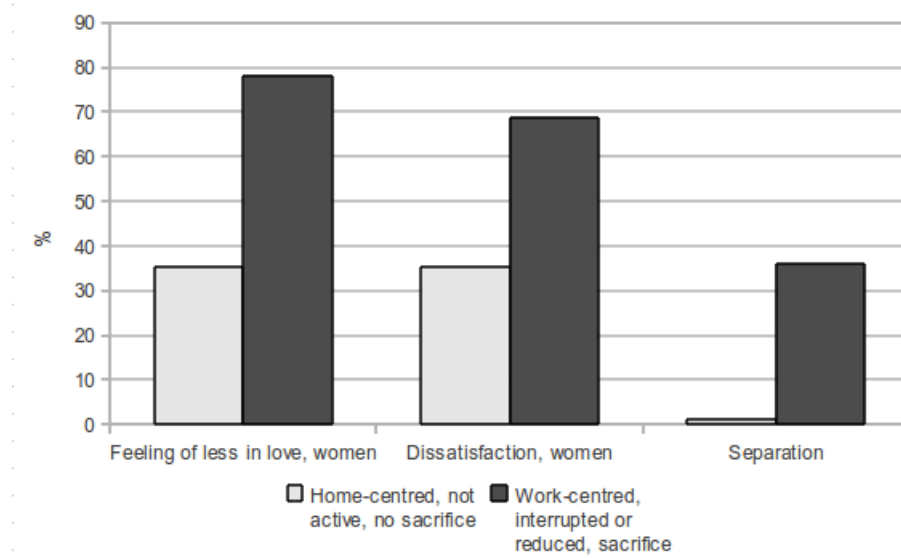
careers of women and their evaluation were found for men's dissatisfaction. And again, a traditional share of household labour is more comfortable for men, as there is a lower risk for them of being dissatisfied.

In model E the influence on the risk of divorce between wave one and two is shown. Changes in occupational careers have an effect on divorce when women reduced their labour force after the birth of a child. The risk is twice as high as for couples where women did not work before childbirth and are not active after. Feeling of career limitation of women because of the child leads also to a higher risk of divorce. Couples risk for divorce is five times higher when the women is work-centred as when she is home-centred. When men are doing more housework than women, there is also a higher risk of divorce between the two waves than when there is a traditional work share. Nationality influences the risk of divorce; couples in which one partner is Swiss and the other socialized in a non - Western country have a higher risk of divorce.

To show the interaction between the single variables in regard to the dependent variables, we combined the women who were declared as home-centred, are not currently active and indicated that they did not bring a sacrifice. As the opposite group we combined women who are declared as work-centred, reduced or interrupted their work after birth and who indicated that this was a sacrifice for them. All other combination are put together in the "other" category. The figure 3 reveals how the dependent variables are distributed among the two groups of women. More women who are work-centred, who reduced or interrupted their career, and felt that this was a sacrifice, felt less in love with their partner than women who are home-centred, are not currently active and did not bring a sacrifice. The same is true for dissatisfaction with the relationship. Even for divorce the same pattern is shown even if to a lower extent. The same cross tables were done for men but the results proved not to be significant.

Overall, the results show that changes in occupational careers have only impact womens' feeling of love and on womens' dissatisfaction. Men seem not to be touched by this. Gender role attitudes otherwise show effects on womens' and mens' conjugal love and on the likelihood of divorce. As already shown in the research literature, traditional attitudes lead to more satisfaction. The traditional division of household labour has positive impacts on mens' conjugal love whereas a non traditional share of household and paid work influence womens' satisfaction positively and their impact on divorce is negative.

Figure 3: Interaction



6 Discussion

The impact of work on love within couples is better understood if embedded in biographical schemes than if considered as a non-temporal issue of equity that individuals and couples settle without considering their history. Indeed, it

turns out that the overall life prospects of partners have much more explanatory power than a synchronic evaluation of the current division of household and occupational tasks within a couple might have. Our study shows the impact of objective and subjective dimensions of occupational careers on conjugal quality. Reduced and interrupted careers raise a risk of feeling less in love for women and raise the risk of divorce significantly for women who reduced their work force. For men no effects of their partners' careers on their conjugal love were found. Men are mostly not affected in their careers when a child is born. That could be a reason why no effects on their conjugal love were found. After having a child it is usually the women who interrupted their occupational careers to take care for the child, as it was already observed in the research literature. But our data do not confirm that the maintenance of labour force participation leads to divorce as it was said by ([19]). This set of results can be interpreted in several ways whose validity future research should try to assess. First, part-time jobs are associated with a large number of negative consequences such as irregular schedules, time-limited engagements, unskilled and low responsibility work, etc. This kind of job may put individuals at risk of poor conjugal relationships, be they women or men. But as women hold this kind of position more often than men, they are the first targets of their potentially negative outcomes. Second, women with part-time jobs may be especially likely to experience double shift situations because they are caught between two master-statuses ([12]), namely occupational and family work, with a clear legitimacy in none, and a rather unclear ordering of importance between both. Compared with homemakers, women with part-time jobs may feel that they are bad mothers because of the compromises that they need to make to accommodate the demands of their work. Compared with occupational full-timers, and especially their male partners, they may be viewed by their employers as second-class employees because of their

inability to perform extra-hours and the emphasis they might put at times on their family obligations. This ambivalence is likely to create much dissatisfaction in ones' life and uncertainty about ones' social identity, which may, in turn, impact on the likelihood of being able to make marriage or partnership work on the long run.

Subjective careers also have an influence on conjugal love. On average, women who felt limited in their career prospects by the transition to parenthood have a higher likelihood to experience a decline of conjugal love. This is especially likely to happen for women with a work-centered lifestyle, who are more likely than others to feel frustrated because of the dissonance between their life projects and the occupational trajectories imposed by well-known structural constraints (i.e. lack of childcare institutions, unfriendly work and school schedules, etc.). For men no significant effects were found. Evaluation of ones' own career is subjective and men are not moved by what their partners' feelings about their own careers. In other words, when women evaluate their career as not good it does not affect the partner. After the birth of a child there are usually no large changes in mens' careers, as they keep on working full time or even increase their load of paid work. There is a higher risk of dissatisfaction and divorce for men and women when women are work-centred. This confirms several studies, which found that traditional attitudes lead to higher satisfaction especially for men and to a lower risk for divorce ([7], [26]). The combination of objective careers and the evaluation and the lifestyle preferences show also higher levels of dissatisfaction, feeling of less love and divorce among work-centred women who reduced or interrupted their work after birth of the first child and in comparison to the opposite group of women. Work-centred women do not have traditional attitudes. They spend a lot of time on the labour market and build their family life around their work and their social life. This

could lead to a feeling of disregard for the men and a feeling of lack of comprehension by the man for the woman, which places the couples in less positive position for duration. Men feel higher satisfaction when the woman has more traditional attitudes, a situation when they can stress their role as breadwinner and the role of their wives as homemakers. They also could feel neglected by a work-centred women which leads at the end to less feelings of love and even to divorce.

The division of household labour shows significant effects for men. The traditional share of housework leads to more feelings of love and to a lower risk of dissatisfaction for men. Overall, various studies show a higher satisfaction for women with active men in the household ([20]). Our study confirms that there is a lower risk of dissatisfaction for women when their men do more housework than she does. However, we also found that there is a higher risk of divorce for these same couples. A reason for this could be that the man feels uncomfortable with this arrangement because if he works more in the household that his partner he could feel hurt in his role of man as a breadwinner.

Overall, this set of results shows that an unequal division of labour between men and women is not per se a sufficient condition of conjugal conflict and of decline of conjugal love. It becomes one when it comes along with frustrations concerning womens' biographical trajectory, the so called "second shift" ([7], and uncertainties stemming from broken occupational trajectories. Rather than focusing on the division of domestic labor at one point in time as a determinant of conjugal love and conjugal satisfaction, research should take biographical sequences of women into account when dealing with the consequences of fairness issues with couples and families. As occupational careers have become a central pathway for achieving self-identity in late modernity, especially in the middle and upper-classes, they have also become important factors of love. As a side

note, it is revealing that almost all existing studies on the consequences of women's employment on family life focus on child development, with no convincing evidence of any effect, either good or bad. Further research is needed to confirm those results taking men's biographies into account.

References

- [1] Paul R. Amato and Alan Booth. Changes in gender role attitudes and perceived marital quality. *American Sociological Review*, 60(1):58–66, 1995.
- [2] Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim. *Individualization*. Sage, 2002.
- [3] Robert T Brennan, Rosalind Chait Barnett, and Karen C. Gabreis. When she earns more than he does: A longitudinal study of dual-earner couples. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 63:168–182, 2001.
- [4] Scott Coltrane. Research on household labor: Modeling and measuring the social embeddedness of routine family work. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62(4):1208–1233, 2000.
- [5] Rosemary Crompton. *Employment and the Family. The Reconfiguration of Work and Family Life in Contemporary Societies*. Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- [6] Michèle Ernst St ahli, Jean-Marie Le Goff, RenÃI Levy, and Eric Widmer. Wishes or constraints? mothers’ labour force participation and its motivation in switzerland. *European Sociological Review*, 25(3):333–348, 2009.
- [7] Michelle L Frisco and Kristi Williams. Perceived housework equity, marital happiness, and divorce in dual-earner households. *Journal of Family Issues*, 24:51–73, 2003.
- [8] Theodore N. Greenstein. Marital disruption and the employment of married women. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 52(3):657–676, 1990.
- [9] C. Hakim. A new approach to explaining fertility patterns: Preference theory. *Population and Development Review*, 29(3):349–374, 2003.

- [10] Catherine Hakim. Lifestyle preferences as determinants of women's differentiated labor market careers. *Work and Occupations*, 29:428, 2002.
- [11] Christopher Higgins and Linda Duxbury. Work-family conflict: A comparison of dual-career and traditional-career men. *Journal of Organizational Behaviour*, 13(4):389–411, 1992.
- [12] Helga Kr  ijger and Ren     Levy. Linking life courses, work and the family: Theorising a not so visible nexus between women and men. *Canadian Journal of Sociology/Cahiers canadiens de sociologie*, 26:145–166, 2001.
- [13] Jean-Marie LeGoff, Ren     Levy, Marl    ne Sapin, and Martin Camenisch. *Transition dans les parcours de vie et construction des in  galit  s*, chapter Devenir parent: changer de vie?, pages 211–232. Lausanne: Presse polytechniques et universitaires romandes, 2009.
- [14] Eugen Lupri and James Frideres. The quality of marriage and the passage of time: Marital satisfaction over the family life. *The Canadian Journal of Sociology/Cahiers canadiens de sociologie*, 6(3):283–305, 1981.
- [15] A. M. Mingu  s and E. C. Ballesteros. *Gender Mainstreaming and Family Policy in Europe: Perspectives, Researches and Debates*, chapter Family, Labour Market and Female Employment in European Countries: A Compared Perspective, pages 97–136. Edizioni universit   di macerata, Macerata, 2007.
- [16] Talcott Parsons and R. F. Bales. *Family: Socialisation and Interaction Process*. New York, The Free Press, 1955.
- [17] Boyd C. Rollins and Harold Feldman. Marital satisfaction over the family life cycle. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 32(1):20–28, 1970.

- [18] Lee Blair Sampson. Employment, family, and the perception of marital quality among husbands and wives. *Journal of Family Issues*, 14:189–212, 1993.
- [19] Robert; Astone Nan Marie; Rothert Kendra; Standish Nicola J.; Kim Young J. Schoen. Women’s employment, marital happiness, and divorce. *Social Forces*, 81(2):643–662, 2002.
- [20] Daphne Stevens, Gary Kiger, and Pamela J. Riley. Working hard and hardly working: Domestic labor and marital satisfaction among dual-earner couples. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 63:514–526, 2001.
- [21] Christian Suter. *Social Report 2008: Switzerland measured and compared*. ZÃijrich, Seismo, 2008.
- [22] Jody VanLaningham, David R. Johnson, and Paul Amato. Marital happiness, marital duration, and the u-shpaed curve: Evidence from a five-wave panel study. *Social Forces*, 79(4):1313–1341, 2001.
- [23] Dana Vannoy and William W. Philliber. Wife’s employment and quality of marriage. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 54:387–398, 1992.
- [24] Eric Widmer, Jean Kellerhal, and RenÃI Levy. *Couples contemporains - Cohésion, régulation et conflits. Une enquete sociologique*. Seismo, 2003.
- [25] Jane Riblett Wilkie, Myra Marx Ferree, and Kathryn Strother Ratcliff. Gender and fairness: Marital satisfaction in two-earner couples. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 60(3):577–594, 1998.
- [26] Anisa M. Zvonkovic, Cynthia J. Schmiede, and Leslie D. Hall. Influence strategies used when couples make work-family decisions and their importance for marital satisfaction. *Family Relations*, 43(2):182–188, 1994.