



DISSERTATION

Titel der Dissertation

„For me, the fulfilment of life is to marry and to have kids!”
The life concept theory is based on the framework of the life
course approach, explaining big life course transitions on
the example of fertility.“

Verfasserin

Mag.^a Katrin Fliegenschnee

angestrebter akademischer Grad

Doktorin der Philosophie (Dr. phil.)

Wien, 2013

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt: A 092 122

Dissertationsgebiet lt. Studienblatt: Soziologie

Betreuerin / Betreuer: Uni. Prof. Dr. Rudolf Richter

Content

Acknowledgements.....	5
1 Introduction.....	6
2 Theoretical considerations.....	11
2.1 'Second demographic transition' and 'gender equality theory'	11
2.2 Economic theories	13
2.3 Theory of Planned Behaviour	15
2.4 Miller and Pasta approach	16
2.5 Life course approach	18
2.5.1 Critic on rational acting.....	25
2.6 Social networks.....	26
2.6.1 Network and interaction.....	26
2.6.2 Social control.....	28
3 Short description of Austria.....	32
4 Research question.....	41
5 Methods.....	41
5.1 The scope of qualitative methods	41
5.2 Principles	42
5.3 Developing a Theory.....	43
5.4 The objective hermeneutics	45
5.5 Sequence analysis - Rough analysis:	47
5.6 Grounded Theory.....	48
5.6.1 Theoretical sampling	50
5.6.2 Memos	51
5.6.3 Literature	52
5.6.4 Open coding	52
5.6.5 Axial coding.....	54
5.6.6 Selective coding	56
5.7 Why using two approaches?.....	57
6 Research design.....	58
6.1 Theoretical sampling.....	60
6.2 The Problem-Centred Interview	63
6.3 The guideline	65

6.4	Network Card	66
7	The “life concept theory”	70
7.1	The core category - Life Concept.....	75
7.1.1	Social Role	95
7.2	Social requirements	109
7.2.1	Internalised social norms vs. indirect pressure.....	109
7.3	Personal conditions	148
7.3.1	Direct social pressure.....	148
7.3.2	Inconsistencies.....	155
7.3.3	The couple perspective	161
7.3.4	Shape.....	177
7.4	Thinking about a child is a process.....	185
7.5	Feeling Ready.....	192
8	Summary	200
8.1	Life concept	201
8.1.1	Role.....	202
8.1.2	Internalised social norms vs. indirect pressure.....	202
8.2	Personal conditions	205
8.2.1	Direct social pressure.....	205
8.2.2	Inconsistencies.....	206
8.2.3	The couple perspective	206
8.2.4	Shape.....	207
8.3	Thinking about a child is a process.....	207
8.4	Feeling ready	208
9	Conclusion	208
10	References	219
11	Appendix:.....	251
12	Abstract English:.....	259
13	Zusammenfassung Deutsch:	261
14	Lebenslauf	263

Figure 1: PAP: Period Average Parity and TFR: Period Total Fertility Rate by year	33
Figure 2: Mean age of mothers at birth and first birth in Austria	35
Figure 3: Employment of mothers and fathers with children under 15 years in percent	36
Figure 4: Employed mothers or being on parental leave, their working hours and the age of their youngest child.	37
Figure 5: Percentage of children in institutionalized daily childcare from 0 to 2 years. For Austria and Vienna in percent.	40
Figure 6: The network card looks like this.	67
Figure 7: The life concept model:	72

Acknowledgements

I owe special thanks to my supervisor Professor Rudolf Richter, who has always encouraged me to go one step further. His intellectually stimulating PhD seminars, as well as his useful comments on the drafts of my PhD were very helpful. Besides, I want to thank Professor Ulrike Froschauer who was so kind to act as second reviewer on very short notice.

I was very fortunate to have the opportunity to write my PhD thesis at the Vienna Institute of Demography (VID) of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. The lively and friendly atmosphere at the VID, its high scientific standards, its interdisciplinary and international orientation were all very conducive to my work. I truly appreciate the support of my VID colleagues and friends. My special thanks go to Caroline Berghammer and Isabella Buber-Ennser who readily took time to discuss my ideas. I am especially grateful to Heike Barakat who kindly agreed to do a careful language editing.

Parts of this dissertation were analyzed together with colleagues and I am very thankful for this valuable help to Christine Geserick, Priska Flandorfer, Regina Webhofer, Florentina Astleithner, Julia Uhlik and Michaela Potančoková. Especially valuable for me were the friendship and help from Michaela Reischitz (†).

I certainly also thank all of my interview partners who really showed me their ideas and views and helped me to understand what it means to make a fertility decision.

My special thanks go to my family: My parents who have always shown me that education and science are something very valuable. To all my friends who are some kind of family and who heard many stories about my research, but never complained. My dearest thanks go to my husband Freddy who tried to encourage and to support me wherever he could and to my daughter Rosalie and my son Peter who showed me that being a mom is nothing one should be afraid of, but a wonderful experience.

Introduction

Never before was the mean age at first birth as high as today which makes the current situation historically unique (Beets, Schippers et al. 2011). In 2004 when the author first started to study the issue of fertility in Austria the author was confronted with the fact that fertility rates across Europe had declined remarkably in the past few decades. These very low levels of fertility are reducible to the fact that in general individuals have been postponing their fertility after 1990 – no matter their age or marriage duration (Lesthaeghe 2001). Considering a historical perspective we can see that the average age of first birth before the Second World War was somewhat higher than after the war (Beets 2011). However, the mean age of first birth has never been as high as in the current cohort (Beets, Schippers et al. 2011). It is argued that especially the postponement of the first child is one of the most prominent features of fertility patterns during the last three decades in developed countries (Sobotka 2004, Sobotka 2011). However, recent quantitative studies point in the direction that the postponement seems to slow down or will even come to a halt (Goldstein, Sobotka et al. 2009).

However, even if the postponement of fertility should slow down we want to look at this quantitatively already well researched issue from another point of view and use qualitative methods to get a better understand why individuals act the way they do. This research wants to answer the question which factors influence individuals' behaviour. Which social structures guide their behaviour and in what way? How do individuals consider big life course decisions in general and how does their individual approach become obvious with respect to fertility. The life concept theory gives answers to these questions and will show what guides individual behaviour in different social settings.

The literature offers various explanations for the fact that people delay childbearing. Scholars agree that this issue is highly connected to other life course elements such as partnership, education and work or uncertain

economic conditions (Spielauer, Schwarz et al. 2003; Sobotka 2004; Sobotka 2008). Education is described as crucial when it comes to explaining the postponement of fertility (Marini 1984.; Rindfuss, Morgan et al. 1996; Hotz, Klerman et al. 1997; Liefbroer and Corijn 1999; Buber 2001). This shows especially for women who entered higher education and constitute now more than half of the graduate and postgraduate students in many European countries (Sobotka 2004). It can be concluded that education has a major impact on postponing childbearing as well as on family formation plans, regardless of gender and country.

Additionally, findings indicate that being in the upper earning quarter is associated with having a child later in life (Henwood, Shirani et al. 2011). However, postponing parenthood does not affect only well educated individuals: Nowadays, also women with less education have their children later in life. The postponement started with higher educated women, was then well received and adopted by women with lower education. One can argue that postponement is easy and popular today (Beets 2011), culturally accepted or even approved (Rindfuss, Morgan et al. 1996; Sardadvar 2010; Sardadvar 2011). However, not only fertility is affected, quantitative studies have shown that also other life course transitions like marriage are postponed (Baxter and Evans 2013). Behaviour has changed as living on one's own, unmarried cohabitation, or having a child out of wedlock have become more popular in Europe (Billari and Liefbroer 2010).

In the last years birth rates have been increasing after the age of 30 (Smock and Greenland 2010) but fertility on the whole has decreased. The question to answer is whether fertility has decreased because norms and desires have changed or because structural conditions have increased opportunity costs (Friedman et al. 1994). One can assume that both elements have affected fertility. However, it is not easy to disentangle them.

When it comes to fertility the focus in the literature is very often on women. However, not only the age of the mothers has shifted but also the age of the fathers and fathers are in general even older than mothers (Beets 2011;

Henwood, Shirani et al. 2011). Recently, also males have increasingly moved into the focus of interest regarding fertility behaviour. Additionally, scholars concentrate more and more on the couple perspective (Eckhard and Klein 2006) and argue that people have linked lives (Elder 1994).

Why is it important to study fertility behaviour? One reason is that many scholars agree that childbearing delay leads to a higher level of foregone childbearing (Gustafsson 2001; Smock and Greenland 2010). However, the issue is complex and has a gender asymmetry. In a longitudinal study in the US it was shown that women who were enrolled in college had a 33% higher probability to end up with fewer children than intended compared to their peer male students. Men somehow seem to have fewer problems with “having it all” (Quesnel-Vallée and Morgan. Philip 2003). A similar result is true for a large study in Germany that shows that for well educated males in contrast to low educated ones postponement of fertility does not lead to forgone childbearing. Whereas, again, the picture is the opposite for women (Helfferich, Klindworth et al. 2006).

Parenthood has become a choice (Doorne-Huiskes and Doorten 2011) and does not constitute a necessity any longer: it is only one possible way of how to design one's life (Sevón 2005). It is argued that modern contraception has made the fertility decline possible (Bongaarts and Watkins 1996) as it has led to the situation that children need to be considered, reflected on and decided for (Kapella and Rille-Pfeiffer 2004). Nevertheless, parenthood is still valued high and most of the young people want to have children (Henwood, Shirani et al. 2011, Thomson, Winkler-Dworak et al. 2013) and a family of their own. However, parenthood is not compulsory anymore (Burkart 2007) and to make the decision to have a child does not seem to be an easy one. Huinink et al. (2008) found in their research that people have a high willingness to have children; however, there is a huge discrepancy between wishing and actual behaviour. Many people do not achieve the fertility level as intended at young age. In general, having fewer children than intended is more common than overachieving (Quesnel-Vallée and Morgan 2003).

Various studies show the relation between labour-force participation and fertility rate (Kohler and Kohler 2002; Engelhardt and Prskawetz 2004; Kreyenfeld 2004). Reasons for low fertility and postponement are often assumed to be economic rationality as well as job insecurity (Caldwell, Caldwell et al. 2002). Other scholars argue more with the incompatibility of family and work. Most women decide to work for some time after having finished their education. They want to establish themselves in the labour market before having children to make the return to their job after parental leave easier. In particular well-educated women tend to postpone parenthood when entering the labour market (e.g. Kreyenfeld 2004). The professional possibilities for women have raised a conflict between career and motherhood and in many countries it seems to be very difficult to combine the roles of mother and worker (Borchardt and Stöbel-Richter 2004). Engelhardt and Prskawetz (2004) point out that if there are no or only few supporting facilities, it is mainly the women who work less in the labour market and take care of the children.

That women are solely responsible for household and children was only the case in rich families before the twentieth century as poorer families couldn't afford to lose the income of the mother. Only during the twentieth century women staying at home became the norm for all social classes (Doorne-Huiskes and Doorten 2011). During the last decades there has been a sharp increase of female labour force participation and this has been mainly caused by mothers joining the labour force (Wernhart and Neuwirth 2007). Today, working mothers are more and more accepted; however they remain the primary responsible care giver (Doorne-Huiskes and Doorten 2011). It is pointed out that women do not want to live a traditional life anymore but their more modern gender concept is often not supported by their male partners (Helfferich 2001). It can be said that nowadays women live more like men than vice versa (Testa and Toulemon 2006). In a representative study in Austria people showed an ambivalent picture regarding the issue if a mother of a child under three should work. Half of them agreed the other half did not. The higher the education of the interviewees the more likely it was that they agreed that a mother with a small child can work (Kapella and Rille-Pfeiffer 2007).

McDonald (2000a) sees the combination of liberal economy and traditional, male-dominated family organisation fatal for the level of fertility. It should be pointed out that children are valued and necessary for the whole society and not just for their parents. Kreyenfeld (2004) argues that welfare states have already responded to the changes in female labour-force participation by trying to support the reconciliation of work and family. A look at Europe shows that countries offering better facilities for combining work and family life have higher fertility rates. Childbearing and career are more compatible in northern Europe and France, and this fact is often used to explain why women have more children in these countries (Kreyenfeld 2004; Lutz 2005). Issues like the possibility to work part time, and the availability of childcare or child friendly policies, are mentioned (Sobotka 2004). Scholars assume that policy-makers should prepare more institutional support to allow mothers of young children to combine employment and family. Additionally, it is argued that policy-makers should aim to increase the gender equality and aim for more participation in housework and childcare for males (Caldwell, Caldwell et al. 2002). In Austria a good father is still seen as one who is responsible for the economic security of the family. However, in a quantitative study in Austria it was shown as well that half of the interviewees agree that a good father takes on family related duties (Kapella and Rille-Pfeiffer 2007).

Because a lot of quantitative research has been done the author will make a difference and offer insights that explain statistical patterns with the help of qualitative findings (Henwood, Shirani et al. 2011). Behaviour patterns can only be understood if they are related to the underlying processes (Willekens 1991). Ni Bhrolcháin and Toulemon (2005) argue that not much work has been done on the precise behaviour mechanism that stands behind the change in fertility behaviour. Nauck (2007) criticizes that the values of children are never satisfyingly related to the opportunity structure and barriers. Bridging hypotheses are missing where social action context and individual action can be connected.

Some approaches discuss the importance of culture (Borchardt and Stöbel-Richter 2004; Burkart 2006). Culture provides the normative and meaning-

giving rules of how to behave (de Bruijn 2006). Social or cultural evaluation of family size and gender-specific role models are important to consider when understanding behaviour (Bühler 2006). To focus on this cultural aspect more was suggested by Burkart (2006).

A lot is known about fertility and how possible elements like education can postpone childbearing. However, which mechanisms have an effect on fertility behaviour and how the social context affects individual thinking and therefore also behaviour is mainly neglected. This thesis will try to make a contribution in this respect and show how a life concept is handled and which elements influence a possible behaviour.

Theoretical considerations

In this chapter important theoretical assumptions that are relevant to consider when talking about the postponement of fertility and the issue of fertility in general will be discussed. All theoretical approaches here give us a better understanding of the issue under research. All of them are important in family sociology and demography as well as for this thesis.

1.1 ‘Second demographic transition’ and ‘gender equality theory’

Several theoretical approaches have tried to explain the postponement of fertility as well as the decline. One of them is the concept of “the second demographic transition”. This theory tries to explain the phenomenon that we live in a society where fertility is already lower than mortality (de Bruijn 2006). The main assumptions are: that ‘individual autonomy’ and ‘female emancipation’ are the driving forces when it comes to the issue of delaying family formation. Since women have access to modern contraception their autonomy regarding fertility has increased (Lesthaeghe 2003). In general, it is argued that individuals have much more freedom today with respect to the goals they want to achieve compared to the past (Lesthaeghe 1983).

In this approach it is pointed out that the fact that women have increased their participation in education and the labour market hinders fertility. Another crucial assumption here is that the change in fertility is connected to a value change. The value of children has changed and this has strongly influenced family and fertility behaviour. Children are still considered important but the hierarchy of the value system has changed – so the assumption (van de Kaa 1987; Lesthaeghe 2003). During the first demographic transition the relationship between males and females changed whereas during the second demographic transition women's control over children increased constantly. Women have gained responsibility at work but they are still responsible at home. Men on the other hand do not share much responsibility inside the family but women share economic ones (Goldscheider 2000). Hakim (2003) assumes the real cause why the fertility rate has dropped is the contraceptive revolution “female control of fertility replaces male control” (Hakim 2003, p.350).

Van de Kaa argues that people behave mainly in ways that are considered legitimate in a society, follow existing values and norms and do not act against them. To understand what is going on we have to observe their behaviour, i.e., how they appreciate their lives and what guides them (van de Kaa 1987; van de Kaa 1996; van de Kaa 2004). Even if it is assumed that people follow existing norms in this approach it is argued that norms are losing their directive power and have reduced their influence on demographic behaviour compared to the past. People today have a wide range of possibilities to act considering fertility and choices are strongly influenced by individual value orientation (Lesthaeghe 1983; Lesthaeghe 2001; Lesthaeghe 2003). Fertility is described as an individual or a couple decision to satisfy private needs and not a social duty (van de Kaa 1997). Kohler (2001) discusses that the second demographic transition theory assumes fertility behaviour as an adoption to changing conditions in the environment.

In his ‘gender equality theory’ McDonald (2000) considers gender roles as the most important factor when looking at fertility. Here, it is assumed that fertility has fallen to a moderate level once gender equality started to rise and women

gained power over the decision-making process of fertility. It is further assumed that high gender equality regarding education and labour market decreases fertility whereas high gender equality in institutions that deal with members of family can raise the fertility again (McDonald 2002). In general, it is argued that the status of women has altered and this also has consequences for the fertility rate. He argues that the low fertility level in developed societies can be explained by considering inconsistencies in gender equality (McDonald 2000). Countries with a conservative attitude towards the role of women are precisely those with low fertility levels. In an equal society, roles would not be determined on the basis of gender. Women today do not want to be financially dependent on their partners. Therefore, he argues they have to combine work and family, which is difficult in many countries. He describes the combination of liberal economy and traditional, male-dominated family organisation as being fatal for the level of fertility (McDonald 2000a).

1.2 Economic theories

A rather prominent place in family sociology as well as in demography is taken by economic theories. These theories explain the issue of postponement of fertility by assuming that individuals act rationally and calculate both, costs and benefits of their actions (Becker 1992). One of the representatives is Easterlin (1980). Here, it is assumed that concepts such as the standard of living and living arrangements are formed during childhood. Experiences during socialisation in childhood shape young people and are the basis for most of their ideas about the future, like their earnings prospects. It is argued that low unemployment rates and high wages indicate a good future, while the opposite will be true during recessions. People try to reach a very specific type of standard that was already determined in their minds during their childhood. In times of recessions, reaching the preferred standard of living will take longer with the consequence that fertility will be postponed (Easterlin 1978; Easterlin 1980).

Another theory to be discussed here is the “new home economics” approach (Willis 1973; Becker and Lewis 1974; Becker 1992). The main assumption is

that people aim to maximise their lifetime utility. The decision for a child is made by calculating all costs and benefits to maximise the personal utility. Fertility decisions are understood as a function of individual preferences and costs of children. An interaction between quantity and quality of children is assumed in this connection (Becker 1992). When talking about fertility, the cost of time should also be considered in detail. When income is rising, the time spent on childcare gets more valuable as well (Becker 1965). Following this argument an increased educational level of women has a strong positive effect on the quality of the education their children receive but a strong negative effect on the number of children (Becker 1992). Additionally, it is assumed that the standard needs of a child are getting higher and higher, and to have children has thus become a really expensive issue these days (Becker and Lewis 1974).

As we have already seen in other approaches the fact that female education and employment rates have increased, is directly connected with the declining fertility. Here, the idea of opportunity costs is used to explain why the decision for a child is not that easy. It is assumed that not only wages as such are considered when making a fertility decision but also the fact that one is losing income when taking maternity leave or working part time (Becker 1965). The opportunity costs are interconnected with education. Higher educated women lose more income than lower educated ones if they reduce their working hours or leave the labour market for childbearing (Willis 1973; Hotz, Klerman et al. 1997). People have to invest a lot in their education and it can be assumed that they want to get something in return, for instance, a good salary. In particular well-educated women want to get settled in their jobs before entering motherhood. It is assumed that the costs of a child immediately after having completed one's education are high. The issue of the right timing is considered as crucial again, especially for women with a high level of education. When thinking about fertility, costs and benefits of having a child have to be considered and this includes the optimum timing of childbearing (Becker 1992; Hotz, Klerman et al. 1997). Additionally, the standard new home economics theory considers preferences to be constant (Willis 1973).

The effect of wages on female fertility decisions is especially strong on first

birth. Looking only on wages, however, would be too short sighted. Economists argue that also the expected further earning has to be considered as well as policies that influence behaviour. Economists assume allowing women to stay as shortly as possible out of the labour market to increase their life time income would increase fertility (Gustafsson 2001).

It is pointed out that the economic approaches cannot fully explain fertility behaviour. Especially norms and social conventions are not considered adequately within economic approaches (e.g., Engelhardt and Prskawetz 2004; Liefbroer and Corijn 1999) as well as the process and the actual decision-making that are very often neglected (de Bruijn 1999).

1.3 Theory of Planned Behaviour

The social-psychological “theory of planned behaviour” (TPB) was invented by Ajzen and Fishbein (Ajzen 1988, 1991; Ajzen & Fishbein 2005). This theory is based on assumptions about decision-making and is not only used when talking about fertility decisions. The aim is to describe the factors that influence a decision to predict behaviour. Intentions are assumed to be good predictors of behaviour, especially when people have their behaviour under volitional control (Ajzen and Fishbein 2005). Fertility intentions are assumed to be specific ideas which refer to a concrete fertility plan. In their assumption intentions – which are assumed to capture motivational factors – are the crucial elements of individual planned behaviour. The TPB defines intentions as something that refers to a concrete outcome, like having a child in a special time frame. In this respect intentions are seen as conscious actions that are understood as reflected decisions (Ajzen 1991).

According to the TPB approach, fertility intentions are directly influenced by three independent determinants: attitudes towards behaviour, social norms and perceived behavioural control. Beside these three determinants there are the background factors. They consist first of individual factors: like personality, experiences or emotions. Second of social factors: like education, age or gender and third of information factors: like knowledge or media. These factors

do not influence intentions and behaviour directly but they influence the intention by affecting attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen and Fishbein 2005).

It is assumed that fertility is mainly a result of choices. However, the decision for a child needs to be seen in a specific time frame. Parity and period specific intentions are better predictors of behaviour and it is assumed that the fertility decision is a couple's joint decision (Billari and Philipov et al. 2009).

Different from the economic theories, here it is assumed that individuals do not act rationally but reasoned and make systematic use of the information available to them. People consider the implications of their actions before they decide to engage or not engage in certain behaviours (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980). Decisions are made after one has considered their implications carefully. Ajzen and Fishbein assume that also emotions play a role as background factors. (Ajzen and Fishbein 2005).

Previously, researchers criticised the fact that the TPB individual and emotional level are not considered adequately. They criticised that in this theory of planned behaviour the action is described as too rational and human behaviour cannot generally be described as reasoned (Gibbons, Gerrard et al. 1998; Armitage and Conner 1999). It is argued that human action is too much simplified. Additionally, it is discussed that it is not clear what happens between the intention and the decision itself and which factors interact here (Perugini and Bagozzi 2001).

1.4 Miller and Pasta approach

Based on the above shown criticism of the TPB Miller and Pasta (1995) developed their own model to explain how people make their fertility decisions. They first argue that in different studies and surveys intentions are operationalized in different ways. Several kinds of questions concerning fertility intentions were asked in surveys and all of them have been interpreted as intentions. Researchers often use the terms desires, preferences, intentions

and expectations as synonyms without giving good and clear definitions, which neglects the necessary and important differentiation (Miller and Pasta 1995).

In their approach they distinguish between desires which are what people want to do and intentions which are considered as what people plan to do (Miller 1995; Miller, Severy et al. 2004). It is argued that motivations, attitudes and beliefs lead to desires. Desires are wishes and do not directly lead to action. They further assume that attitudes and norms do not influence intentions directly but desires and only via them affect intentions. One important difference of desires to attitudes is that a desire can be satisfied but an attitude cannot and this is especially interesting when it comes to fertility decisions (Miller and Pasta 1995). Also other scholars argue and have shown that desires should be focused on when talking about decision making (Perugini and Bagozzi 2001). Hoffman and Hoffman (1973) discuss that values affect the desire to have children. Bühler (2006) argues that people formulate their intention on the basis of their desires and their situational circumstances. People change their intentions because of changing situations.

Desires represent what a person wants. These wishes do not directly lead to action but they need to be translated first into an intention which is a conscious commitment to act in a certain way and a specific time plan. This means they have a concrete idea to act in a certain way. They point out that the influence of significant others especially of the spouse is extremely important when talking about fertility decisions and the timing of a child (Miller and Pasta 1994). Fertility decisions must be considered as a couple's decision. Individuals take into account the perceived desires of significant others as well as situational factors in order to formulate their intentions. In this definition planning takes also situational conditions into account (Miller and Pasta 1995).

Miller and Pasta (1995) distinguish between different intentions. Intentions about a child should be considered differently than the intentions about the timing of childbearing. They also argue that the number of children should be considered separately. Miller and Pasta (1995) point out that especially for the first child the issue of timing is crucial. For additional children this issue is not

that important anymore.

1.5 Life course approach

The most promising approach for this thesis is the “life course approach” and the assumption about how people consider the issue of fertility in their life course. The approach gives this research a very important theoretical orientation. Most of the assumptions shown now will be taken as the base line for the “life concept theory”. The theoretical orientation came from the desire to understand social pathways, their effects, and their relation to social conditions (Elder, Johnson et al. 2003). The life course is defined as several transitions of events or roles that individuals experience as they age from birth to death (Mayer 2004; Jackson and Berkowitz 2005). Fertility behaviour is one special event in life and especially the timing is a fundamental element as it shapes the life course (Billari 2005). Huinink and Kohli (2010, p.1) define fertility behaviour as something that “... is embedded in a changing multi-level pattern of socio-structural, institutional and cultural, conditions of the life course (external conditions), and influenced by (stable or dynamic) biological states and physiological conditions, cognitive capabilities and subjective dispositions (internal condition)”. Fertility can be understood as an interdependent act of a multidimensional process.

Three assumptions can be named:

1. First, the life cycle is a process and so is human development. Previous decisions and experiences shape meanings as well as expectations and therefore also actions (Birg 1987, Huinink 2000; Elder, Johnson et al. 2003; Mayer 2004; Huinink and Kohli 2010). Experiences restrict and broaden future decisions (Blossfeld and Huinik 2001). However, even if we consider this as important, previous experiences and their effect on the life course are hardly known (Huinink and Kohli 2010).
2. Second, a person lives in different life spheres. They are not only

interconnected but depend and compete with each other (Huinink 2000, Huinink and Kohli 2010, Huinink and Feldhaus 2009). Huinink (2000) argues that different phases in life have different social conditions. The aim on which people focus and want to concentrate on in future is very important for their behaviour. As we can see, fertility represents one element in a person's biography, however, it is interlinked and depends on other parts of the life course like career or partnership (Höpflinger 1997).

3. Third, the life course of one person is connected to others as one belongs to a social group and behaviour is orientated on values and norms of the society itself (Birg 1987, Huinink 2000; Mayer 2004, Huinink and Feldhaus 2009). It is assumed that there exists some kind of pattern that people try to follow; social frameworks that influence behaviour and culturally structured ideas about a good life are seen as giving direction (Burkart 1994). The time and the place people live in shape the life courses. The social-historical influence is expressed through the social network (Elder et al. 2003).

We further have to understand that these three assumptions interact with each other. The life course approach is time and context related. Social history and personal biography depend on each other. An interplay of experiences and the socio-historical context in a multilevel process is assumed as a life course is highly affected by the time and the space where this process takes place (Elder and Caspi 1990). Further, we have to consider that there are intra-cohort variations as well. Members of one cohort can react in different ways to social circumstances. However, there is some kind of period specific social understanding and framework of boundaries of roles, relationships or identities (Cohler and Hostetler 2003). Social normative regulations constrain possible sequences or virtual biographies. The virtual biography is influenced and changed by already made experiences (Huinink 2000).

The existence of norms is emphasized within the life course approach (Settersten and Mayer 1997). It is assumed that there are norms concerning timing and sequencing of demographic behaviour, which lead to an informal structuring of the own life course. Höpflinger (1997) argues a decision for a child

is something individual but that there are social norms which shape the opinion when it seems to be preferable to have a child. An age-appropriate behaviour which is guided by age-related informal norms is assumed. The life course is described as externally shaped and normatively expected. These issues address one's own interests and responsibilities and accordingly regulate the decision (Diewald and Mayer 2008).

Blossfeld and Huinink (1991) assume that normative expectations exist in society. That young people attending education should not enter parenthood would be one example. They further assume that finishing education is an important step into adulthood which will further lead to parenthood. Settersten (2003) discusses that it is often assumed that people have a "cognitive map" about their life course in their minds. This gives people the possibility to prepare themselves for coming experiences. These expectations guide and evaluate behaviour. Birg (1987) assumes a virtual biography. This is the perceived set of possible action strategies an individual is able to realise and which is not stable but changes constantly, based on made experiences and conditions. Huinink and Kohli (2010) assume that there is a variation of life course patterns between different social classes as well as between gender and generations. One point that is unclear is how people manage to deal with conflicting norms from different groups (Settersten 2003).

Scholars have been arguing that stable structures bring forward a decision more easily. It is assumed that individuals who follow social organised pathways are more likely to encounter success (Furstenberg 2005). Even if we assume such pathway with some kind of social order (Kohli 2003), it is argued that the life course today is open for acting and interpreting and more than that, it is a necessity to deal with it individually. People need to deal and to plan their own life scripts. Because of this flexibility individuals tend to lose stability (Kohli 2003). There is the assumption that individuals face a greater complexity of possible life paths than in the past (Widmer and Ritschard 2009).

Connected to this some researchers discuss the idea of the de-standardization of life courses. Here, it is argued that traditional normal biographies lose their

normative power (Schröder 2007). Today, in private life no clear or strict “norms” exist to shape the life course (Brückner and Mayer 2005). Beck (1986) argues that people today lack traditional safety and guiding norms. However, now there are other institutions which shape the life course. There is pressure to design the own life course which means that one needs to take over responsibility and makes decisions for oneself. Hogan and Astone (1986) argue that in modern societies fewer direct pressures for social conformity exist and that older people face stronger age norms than younger ones. The new freedom for designing one’s life course brings the risk that it can also more easily collapse. Young people have to deal with absence of institutional support, normative control and a clear life script (Settersten 2003). Especially when one takes pathways that are not widely shared important support is missing. Individuals need to play a much more active role especially regarding decisions because of the lacking structure (Settersten 2007). We have to note that great national differences regarding de-standardisation were found as well as the fact that social groups or gender are differently affected by it (Widmer and Ritschard 2009).

One example is that today the self-evidence of family and partnership that hold a lifetime is not given anymore the decision process is extremely difficult and very complex. Long term planning for children is therefore more and more complicated (Huinink 2000). People consider if and when to have a child quite intensively but they often face conflicts regarding their decision (Huinink, Schröder et al. 2008). Individualisation broadens individual acting possibilities but on the other side asks for one’s own initiative assertiveness. The own life history needs more and more reflexivity and needs to be planned (Burkart 2007). Huinink (2000) argues that especially men but women as well slowly reduce the normative structures toward family. People have to follow fewer norms connected with partnership and family than in the past. That is seen as strongly connected with the emancipation of the women. As a consequence individuals get in conflict between the wish for a child and the low desire for a long-term close link, that can hinder the career ideas of a woman (Huinink 2000).

On the one hand they argue that partnership has also gained importance in the last years but on the other hand they discuss that a partnership is hindering individual freedom. They see that family is losing its importance because the individual needs and social acceptance and status which are mainly gained via work would be bound by having a family (Huinink 2000). Education as well as career are becoming attractive patterns for action that make the decision to start a family unattractive (Schröder 2007). However, individuals will try to make their actions also safe for the future. Questions of combining family and work but also which social status a person wants to reach have to be considered (Huinink 2000).

As already mentioned, a life course needs to be understood as a process during which people change from one status to another. The dimension of time is very important. Life time is a central and restricted resource. A decision about an action is a decision about how to use time. The different life spheres of a person are very often in conflict with each other (Huinink 2000). To get all the information to make a decision needs time. What is important is very often connected with a special time horizon which can create pressure. The consequences of a long time and far reaching decision have to be considered very well (Huinink 2000). Fertility is assumed to be highly affected by time and age related programs inside a society (Huinink and Kohli 2010).

It is further assumed that people are pushed to get goals in a special time frame, like their education or children (Huinink and Kohli 2010). The life course is conventionalized as transitions that are connected to age. Settersten (2003) discuss that people seem to share knowledge about the right timing of experiences and roles by other members of the same group. The experiences are restricted to a special period of life. These so called “social clocks” are known and considered regarding the own timing (Settersten 2003). Not only the institutional level but also the social network of a person has a huge influence on individual behaviour (Huinink and Kohli 2010).

Huinink and Kohli (2010) point out that the issue of timing needs to be discussed with the partner. If different ideas about the right timing exist fertility is

delayed. Huinink and Kohli (2010) assume that people consider their fertility plans quite intensively, because the consequences of a child are quite far-reaching. People want to be sure about their future expectations and plans before having the first child. Then they really can take over responsibility and make sure that they can combine other elements in life with parenting. As in many other theories it is also here assumed that people consider caring for children as something that needs a good economic and personal basis. To have stable economic circumstances would be important to get prepared in this respect (Huinink, Schröder et al. 2008).

Settersten (2007) makes clear that young people today cannot achieve economic and even more important psychological autonomy in the same way as the cohorts before them. The models of the past do not fit the conditions and the behaviour of today. However, people still have ideas about age-related behaviour and orient their lives accordingly.

Huinink and Kohli (2010) describe that the decision for a child is connected with constraints. At first one needs to have a suitable partner and even if this partner exists one might be confronted with biological infecundity. Huinink (2000) assumes that partnership and parenthood today are relevant for most people because of the psychological benefits. However, how people manage to combine the different wishes and needs during their life time and how they combine the various activities are difficult questions. To concentrate on special things is one solution. In a rather short time period individuals need to deal with several competing demands. It is assumed that for example education and labour market entry have temporal priority over fertility (Huinink and Kohli 2010).

People try to realize individual ideas about their lives. Which aims they will realize depends on costs and utilities, so the assumption. These aims are often not easily combined because the areas of life have different foci. When we consider children and work we have the additional problem that these costs and utilities are very different to calculate against each other because they are based on different grounds. It is argued here with opportunity costs. A decision for a family is therefore assumed to be connected with many conflicts. People

will not decide for a child as long as the balance of costs and benefits are not clear (Huinink, Schröder et al. 2008). Additionally to the rationally calculated decision also normative and emotional feelings play a role and it is argued that a mostly rationally thinking person will make the decision not to have a child because costs and benefits are not totally possible to calculate (Huinink, Schröder et al. 2008).

Burkart (1994) argues that calculating rationally is often not of importance when it comes to the decision for a child. However, normative considerations that are connected to motherhood and career are very crucial. Huinink et al. (2008) on the other hand assume that there is always a rational decision behind behaviour. However, they admit that it is likely that calculating pros and cons of this decision will not always lead to a clear decision.

Hogan and Astone (1986) are convinced that plans of young people affect their transitions later in life. Blossfeld and Huinik (2001) make clear that purposes, motives and plans of an individual are different compared to the realized future. For example, not everybody who wants to have a career will be able to put his/her plan into action. Helfferich (2002) points out that the plan for someone's life is often modified and the decision for a child is postponed rather often.

Huinink and Kohli (2010) criticise that the life course approach misses a coherent theory. A dynamic theory of individual action does not exist. It has to be noted that people not only switch from one sequence to another but that the question of what people do and how they do it is very important (Jackson and Berkowitz 2005). Another missing interlink is the one between psychological dispositions and social constructed life courses (Mayer 2009). Blossfeld and Huinik (2001) point out that "soft" data about the structure in which a decision is taking place are often missing. Therefore it would be interesting to understand the decision-making process. The subjective decision-making process has been mainly neglected until now. Blossfeld and Huinik (2001) argue that a combination of qualitative and quantitative research can help to understand better what is going on. Settersten (2007) argues that we have much to learn from young adults with respect to how they plan their transitions, set their goals

and decide for strategies to meet their dreams.

This research is trying to make a difference here. Taking the assumptions of the “life course approach” as the base line the author will show how fertility behaviour at parity zero is considered. The “life concept theory” is a concept that needs to be seen in the framework of the “life course approach”, however, goes one step further in showing how social and individual mechanisms are interplaying.

1.5.1 Critic on rational acting

Not only the economic literature in most of the demographic theories assumes that individuals act rationally when intending to optimise their utility function (Johnson-Hanks 2007). Rationality is considered as behaviour that calculates costs and benefits to maximise personal utility over time (Becker and Murphy 1988). It is the appropriate use of reason to make the best choice while taking into account what is really the best interest under the given circumstances (Tomer 2008).

Kohler (2001) argues that the economic approach has been criticised by the assumption that preferences are well defined because of rational decision-making. He points out that economic incentives are important elements in making a fertility decision, however, they are not the only ones. It is also argued that the principle of utility maximisation does a very poor job when judgements are mainly emotionally driven (Johnson-Hanks and Walchuk 2005). Simon (1978) criticises that people are not able to evaluate and to learn about all possible alternatives and therefore are not in possession of all information. They want to satisfy their aspiration but do not want to maximise their utility.

Another critic refers to the assumption that individuals act rationally when it comes to fertility behaviour: Burkart (2006) argues that the rational action is seen as a simple assumption that cannot be proven with empirical research. One problem while analysing rational behaviour is that we never know what is considered to be the costs and benefits and how people calculate it (Zintl 1989).

To make a decision is rather often connected with inconsistencies; to assume rational behaviour is criticised as unlikely in such situations. Because individuals rather often face a dilemma where they have difficulties to judge which one of the alternatives they should decide for as well as being overstrained by too many things to consider (Burkart 1994). It happens rather often that people sense different utilities that compete with each other at the same time. Assuming rational behaviour in such a situation is therefore difficult (Fennell 2006). Another argument against rational behaviour is that several studies have shown that pregnancies are often unwanted or unintended and therefore cannot be assumed to be grounded on rational decisions (Schröder 2007).

It is argued that neither the rational utility maximising individual nor the passive one who is blindly following cultural values is an adequate assumption. We further have to assume that the motivation of individuals is beyond pure economic interests (Joshi and David 2006). Additionally, it is argued that not all decision makers are equally capable of analysing a situation in the same way and will come to different conclusions even if the information that is provided is the same for all (Miljkovic 2005). Miljkovic's solution is to set aside the question of whether a person acts rationally or not because other questions would be more interesting to answer.

1.6 Social networks

1.6.1 Network and interaction

We can assume, as already argued, that an individual's behaviour depends on the structural and personal surroundings. Wasserman and Faust (1994) argue that social actors are embedded in a social network with social relationships and cannot be understood as isolated individuals. Structures are considered to have an influence on behaviour as well as other actors and should not be neglected when observing behaviour (Jansen 2003, Marsden and Friedkin 1993). Social interaction is an interplay between actors and the behaviour of one person refers to others. Scientists who follow the SI focus on social acting and interacting (Vester 2009). To get a better understanding of people's social

environment, it seems interesting to study their social networks.

Some studies in demography have focused on the social influence of network partners and their effect on fertility decisions. Individuals are embedded and connected to a social network that influences their preferences and opinions – also when talking about fertility decisions. (Bühler and Philipov 2005; Behrman, Kohler and Watkins 2001) Bongaarts and Watkins (1996) discuss that during interaction with network partners ideas are shared and these influence fertility decisions. Reflecting on the social network partners as well as on the surroundings will help us to understand why and how individuals and couples reach their fertility decisions.

Rindfuss et al. (2004) assume that the social influence of network partners is strong, with the effect that people orientate their behaviour toward persons within their network. When other network partners have already taken a special decision, e.g. to have a child, one as well will take this decision more likely. This phenomenon is defined in the literature as “homogeneity”. The social network is defined by many people that one has chosen freely, except family members, work colleagues, or neighbours, people rather often have friends who are of the same age, have a similar status and very often also a similar living situation (Hollstein 2001). Ajzen and Fishbein argue that the “...normative component refers to his perception that most people who are important to him think he should or should not perform the behaviour”. (Ajzen, Fishbein, 1980, p.60).

It is argued that couples often consider their fertility decision as a private matter, however, their ideas and behaviour are connected to the behaviour and ideas of other people in their surroundings (Bernardi 2004). Even if we assume childbearing is a couple’s decision we need to have a deeper look at the way how friends react and have an impact on the decisions. Settersten (2007) discusses that the older young adults get, the more their decisions are connected and depend on other important people in their lives, like their spouse. Of course, especially this person is relevant when talking about fertility behaviour.

1.6.2 Social control

Here, the focus is on social control. During the data analysis it turned out that mechanisms like social norms or social pressure might be important when it comes to fertility behaviour. Because this issue emerged during the research a short theoretical discussion of the literature seems necessary.

Social control refers to mechanisms that guide and regulate individual behaviour within a social group. Social norms are one very important element. A social norm can be understood as a bunch of expectations how to behave and which focus should be given to a situation (Vester 2009). They are rules of behaviour (Bahrtdt 1994) which give individuals orientation about right or wrong behaviour (Lamnek 2008). Social norms are the basis for social acting. Social norms compel individuals to act in a special way (Schimank 2000). They give orientation for a relative stable and consistent acting. It is assumed that social norms belong to a group of people and refer to an acceptable behaviour (Liefbroer and Billari 2009). However, norms do not dictate a specific behaviour but mainly give a range of tolerable behaviour (Schäfers and Kopp 2006).

There is the general assumption that norms as well as social roles are internalised during socialisation (Schäfers and Kopp 2006). Individuals learn how to behave in different situations and this gives orientation in life (Zimmermann 2000). In the SI it is assumed that during primary socialisation people learn to take over the view of significant others. One learns to see oneself with the eyes of others while still referring to a relative concrete group. The secondary socialisation is oriented toward a rather unknown and much bigger group. Here, it is assumed that one takes over the views of the generalised others. One is part of a complex social group and identifies oneself with their norms and rules and learns to take over the appropriate roles. Socialisation is a lifetime process (Vester 2009).

Arguing in line with the SI it is important to note that norms are not seen as static elements. Individuals are not static; they are active and creative actors who do not blindly follow roles and norms (Koob 2007). Individuals can reproduce, shape or negotiate norms and values to their personal benefit (Joshi

and David 2006). It is assumed that norms and rules guide the behaviour of individuals but again not in a static way. Norms are more seen as giving orientation than strict rules of behaviour. Furthermore, norms are assumed to be too abstract to give clear acting instructions (Koob 2007).

Each person acts according to social roles (Schäfers and Kopp 2006). A social role is connected to a social position (Vester 2009). A person who carries a social role is confronted with expectations regarding a special set of behaviour possibilities. These expectations can also change (Schimank 2000). Once a person has internalised the expectations connected with their role there is no need for sanctions because the person will take care of the fact that all expectations are fulfilled (Schimank 2000). Roles are defined by social norms which guide behaviour. By acting like is expected people confirm the existing roles (Schäfers and Kopp 2006). It is argued that an inter-role conflict can occur, which means that different roles get in conflict with each other (Vester 2009).

It is assumed that individuals follow norms mainly because they fear sanctions (Lesthaeghe 1983). Not fulfilling the norms is guided by negative sanctions (Bahrdt 1994). Sanctions can be rather mild or very drastical (Lamnek 2008) from a nasty look up to being arrested. Sanctions are a part of social control (Vester 2009). Liefbroer and Billari (2009) assume that most sanctions are inflicted by close network members like parents or friends.

Social control is an effort to influence a person in all day social situations or it shows in sanctions by formal institutions like the police. Social desirable behaviour is the aim (Schäfers and Kopp 2006). However, there can be social control without sanctions as well. This is the case when individuals follow norms that they have internalised during socialisation. This refers to the tendency that external control is more and more transferred to internal control (Vester 2009). This internalisation is argued by Elias (1982). In his study about rituals and behaviour in former ages he explains that external control via societal power has been transformed over the centuries into internalised norms for behaviour (Elias 1982). Social control so to speak includes also guidelines which are

internalised and belong to a personality. It is pointed out that in our society more and more norms are internalised and so behaviour is guided (Schäfers and Kopp 2006). Based on this idea it is argued that when internalisation of norms occurs there are no sanctions needed to bring individuals to fulfil these norms. Social norms become what people desire and there is no discrepancy between the interests of an individual and a group. The norms become the ends that people desire. Once norms are internalised no differences between norms and a personal values as well as social- and self-interests are assumed. Internalising social norms has the effect that people will follow these norms even without social pressure (Horne 2001; Horne 2003) and the self-control mirrors social control (Helle 2001).

In connection to this it is argued that cognitive biographical scripts about the normal life course become more important (Kohli 1985). Social conventions are transformed into institutionalised ways of thinking. It is assumed that age normative conceptions are internalised and guide the life course. No external institutional control is necessary because people orient themselves on internalised frames (Heckhausen 1999).

Bahrdt (1994) discusses in his book that there are norm conflicts as well which make clear acting difficult. Additionally, it can occur that people get in conflict with their norms in practice and this creates a problematic situation (Horne 2001).

Values also guide individual's behaviour. Values, however, are only general guidelines for acting and have no direct directive (Schäfers and Kopp 2006). Values point to preferences and aims people tend to follow. They give orientation and help to assess a situation (Vester 2009). It is assumed that value pluralism creates conflicts and is a burden for individuals (Schäfers and Kopp 2006).

As already discussed one can assume that members of a social group share the same symbols. This helps people to act and react in ways which are accepted by the community. Sanctions and social pressure are the key

explanations why people behave according to standards (Hammel 1990). Social pressure has the function to make a society conform. Enough pressure will influence behaviour so the assumption (McNicoll 1980).

Social pressure is defined as something that comes from outside, from the environment, and is connected with sanctions to make sure that people act according to social norms (Schäfers and Kopp 2006). Social pressure can be described as “[t]he structure of sanctions and rewards associated with behaviours produces social influence when the individual considers these social costs and benefits as relevant and behaves accordingly” (Bernardi 2004, p. 536).

Van de Kaa (1996) notes that fertility and family formation are strongly influenced by rules that refer to adequate behaviour. Although other scholars argue that there are changing social norms that lie behind the changes in fertility behaviour. Social norms help to explain variation in behaviour – between and within different societies (Joshi and David 2006). Liefbroer and Billari (2009) assume that social norms regarding demographic behaviour are still present. They argue that there are age norms for life events and role transitions and these norms indicate in which age range a behaviour should occur and when it is inappropriate to perform certain behaviour because one is being too young or too old to become a parent, for example. There is not only a biological clock but also a social one as normative concepts about timing are shared by the social group. That leads to the situation that people conceive good and bad times for events. A chronological age structure provides meaning to the life span (Heckhausen 1999). Age deadlines seem to be internal timetables to keep people on track with regard to the social-clock (Settersten 2003). Settersten further argues that age norms seem to be gender-specific.

Additionally, there are age-sequential structures that limit potential sequences (Heckhausen 1999). These sequencing norms regulate in which order events should occur. Like after finishing one’s education one should gain some experiences in the labour market instead of immediately aiming for a child. Liefbroer and Billari (2009) point out that expectations about appropriate fertility

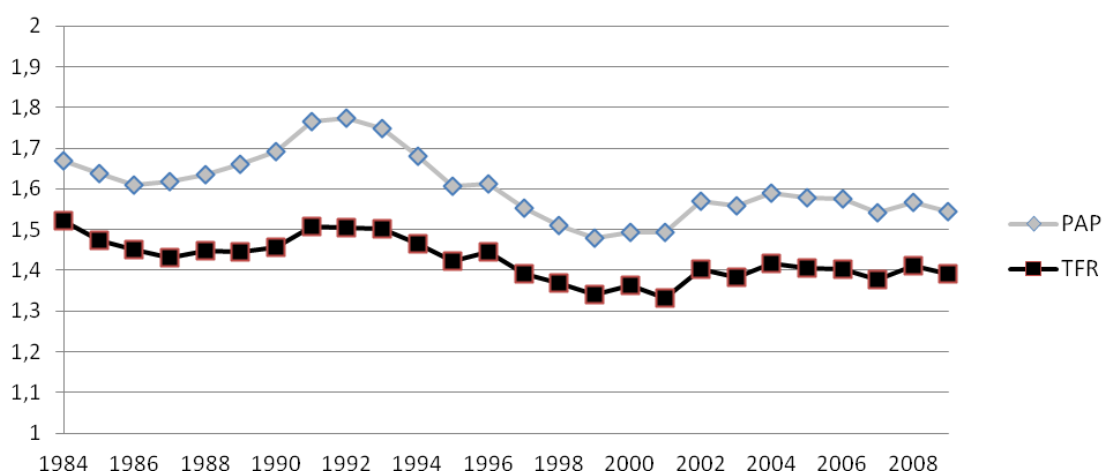
behaviour are important for shaping one's life course. Sanctions, however, are considered to be rather mild and only connected to specific norms.

To sum-up,, several theories try to explain how fertility decisions are made and which issues influence this decision. Additionally, the author also wants to shed light on the topic of social control, because it appeared to be an important issue in the data. Now the situation of Austria will be discussed to show which elements are of importance and to get a better understanding in which frame the data should be seen.

Short description of Austria

The situation of Austria at hand will be discussed in the following chapter. In the years between 2000 and 2008 Austria had a TFR (total fertility rate) – which is the mean number of children born during one calendar year – of 1.4. The PAP (period average parity) – an indicator of total fertility based on period parity progression ratios – was between 1.5 and 1.6. Figure 1 shows the TFR and the PAP. The TFR is one of the most used period fertility rates, however, this rate does not precisely reflect the actual fertility level and is not very close to the completed fertility rates of one birth cohort in a given period of time. The PAP has the advantage that it is controlling for the actual parity composition and is less affected by issues of timing one's childbearing (Zeman, K., T. Sobotka, et al. 2010).

Figure 1: PAP: Period Average Parity and TFR: Period Total Fertility Rate, 1984-2009



Source: VID – Homepage, Geburtenbarometer – Annual data on births and fertility rates in Austria and Vienna, 1984 – 2009 (Sobotka, Zeman et al. 2010)

One can say that Austria is one of the countries with a very low fertility rate. Considering Vienna foreign-born women contribute a great deal to the fertility rate in Vienna. Whereas the TFR of Austrian-born women is 1.11, for foreign-born women it is 1.38 (Zeman, Sobotka et al. 2010).

Considering fertility in a historical perspective we can say that there was a steep fall of fertility after the First World War and during the economic crisis and a steep increase after the Second World War. After 1963 there was again a steep decline of the total number of live births. (Prskawetz, Sobotka et al. 2008). The 1910 cohort had a low completed fertility of 1.75 based on a high level of childlessness and one child families. During the baby boom a sharp increase of larger families as well as a decrease of childlessness occurred. One child families have been rather stable since the 1960 and the group of women with no children has increased to some extent, however, the numbers have not reached the very low level of the cohort of 1910. The norm of having two children has constantly increased since the 1910 cohort (Sobotka 2005).

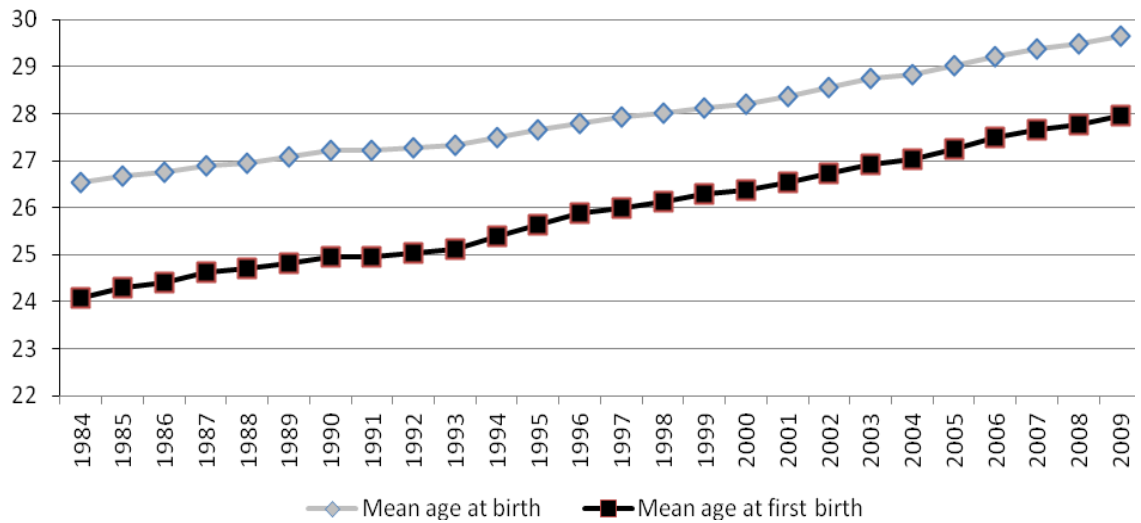
The number of 4th birth and higher dropped by 81% from 27.600 in 1962 to 5.200 in 1990. The TFR dropped from 2.82 1963 to 1.46 in 1990. Austria is one

of the countries with high childlessness (Prskawetz, Sobotka et al. 2008). Vienna shows – in several respects – different fertility patterns than the rest of Austria. In Vienna the rate of childfree women is higher than anywhere else in Austria (Zeman, Sobotka et al. 2010). 25% of the women born between 1955 and 1960 who live in Vienna are childfree whereas this is true for only 16% in the whole of Austria. Also, the cohort born between 1931-35 in Vienna had a completed fertility of 1.68 children whereas in the whole of Austria it amounted to 2.45 (Prskawetz, Sobotka et al. 2008).

Fertility is very often linked to social class which is operationalised with women's education as well as to their increasing labour market attainment (Smock and Greenland 2010). This is interesting to study because some scholars point out that highly educated people tend to the extremes compared to the lesser educated: they more often want more children and at the same time more often want to stay childfree (Smolka 2005). In general, the tendency to have three or more children has decreased constantly. Today, in many European countries women want to have two, one or even no child at all (Velde 2011).

As figure 2 shows the mean age of mothers at birth has risen constantly over the last decades. The mean age in 1985 was 26.7 years whereas in 2008 it was 29.5 years. The age of the first birth was rising during this time from 24.3 years to 27.8. Fertility above the age of 30 has been rising constantly during the last years (Sobotka 2005) Mothers are getting older these days. This rise in age is mainly due to the increase of fertility rates above the age of 35 and a decrease of mothers at very young ages under 25. (cf. VID-Homepage).

Figure 2: Mean age of mothers at birth and first birth in Austria



Source: Statistik Austria, Statistik der natürlichen Bevölkerungsbewegung, Marc 2011.

The peak in fertility has shifted to the age of 28-30. Especially an increase in the postponement of first birth is observable. Microcensus data show that higher educated women frequently postpone their fertility plans up to their late 30ies (Sobotka 2009). However, the increase of age can be observed in all educational groups (Prskawetz, Sobotka et al. 2008). Considering Vienna the age of first birth shows a very diverse picture with more births at very young and at high ages (Zeman, Sobotka et al. 2010).

Even if the mean age at birth was rising constantly during the last years there is evidence that postponement of fertility runs its course. Postponement exists but it seems to be slowing down. Austria is a country that is considered to be one of the “lowest-low” fertility countries (Goldstein, Sobotka et al. 2009). These are countries with a TFR of 1.3 or lower (Kohler, Billari et al. 2002). Many European countries were counted in this group. New numbers show that the TFR of Austria has risen. It is still at a low level, however, it has – for the first time since the 1960s – increased not only in Austria but across the whole developed world (Goldstein, Sobotka et al. 2009). This leads to the assumption that the postponement of fertility is a phenomenon that will likely come to an end because women cannot postpone indefinitely as there are biological limits

(Kohler, Billari et al. 2002).

While the TFR had been going down since the 1960ies the female labour force participation had been going up and reached a level of 65% in 2003. Women with tertiary education even had a percentage of 82% (Prskawetz, Sobotka et al. 2008). However, Austria is far from having a fair share of labour inside and outside the household. As Table 1 shows, over 95 percent of males who live in a partnership and have a child work full time whereas only 38 percent of the women do so. Here, more than 60% of the women work part time whereas only 4 percent of the men do

Table 1: Employment of mothers and fathers with children under 15 years in percent

Eltern mit Kindern unter 15 Jahren nach Erwerbsstatus	Full time	Part time
Fathers within a partnership	96	4
Mothers within a partnership	38	62

Source: Statistik Austria, Familien und Haushaltsstatistik, Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus, Annual Average 2006.

Maternity leave is a social right in Austria. Women have the right to leave their work place during a certain time – in Austria 16 weeks – and return to the same workplace. It starts 8 weeks before the calculated due date and lasts until eight weeks after the birth of the child. At this time women get 100 percent of their earnings. Austria was the first country to permit women to take a six months unpaid leave in addition to maternity leave in 1957. In general, it has a long tradition in Austria to encourage mothers to exit the labour market in order to care for their children (Neyer 2003).

In 2002 there was a change in the parental leave regulations. Since then it was no longer connected with the previous work experience and it could be taken up to 30 months with a fix amount of 436€ per month no matter how long one took the leave (Prskawetz, Buber et al. 2006). This motivated many women to stay at

home longer with their children (Riesenfelder, Sorger et al. 2006). This regulation was operative during the time of the interviews and especially women referred to this system as being too conservative and not supporting their ideas.

Since 2008 the parental leave payment regulations got more flexible. Now, one can choose between three variations, one with a maximum of 18, 24 or 36 months after the birth of the child if the partner takes also parental leave for at least 3, 4 or 6 month. Otherwise the money is only being paid for 15, 20 or 30 months. Depending which variation one chooses the payment is around 800€, 624€ or 436€ (Prskawetz, Sobotka et al. 2008). Since 2010 there is a new regulation that gives parents a fourth alternative. One can take 14 month parental leave; again the partner needs to take 2 months otherwise it is only 12 month of payment. The payment is 80 percent of the wage that was earned in the year before parental leave. (Accessed on 22.7.2011:

<http://www.femail.at/infomappe-elternkarenz-kinderbetreuungsgeld.html>)

The older their children the more mothers are integrated in the labour force and the more children a woman has the less she works. In general, the number of women working part time increased during the last years. It can be said that better educated women stay shorter at home with their children and return quicker to their paid work than lower educated women (Wernhart and Neuwirth 2007).

Table 2: Employed mothers or being on parental leave, their working hours and the age of their youngest child in percent.

Women with children at the age of	Parental leave	Under 16 hours	16-35 hours	36 and more hours
0-2	53	15	19	13
3-5	0	18	59	23
6-14	0	11	51	39

Source: Statistik Austria, Familien- und Haushaltsstatistik, Ergebnisse des

Mikrozensus, annual average 2006.

What we can see here is that mothers with children under 6 years are mainly part time employed. For children between 0 and 2 years more than half of their mothers are on parental leave. Only when children are getting older the share of full time employment is rising, however, also here mothers return to work mainly part time. Single mothers have a higher chance of working full time but only 53 percent of them work full time once their children are 6 years or older.

Considering the regulatory framework, both mothers and fathers have the same right to take parental leave (Scambor and Fasshauer 2006). Detailed data on parental leave are missing, only data from the social insurance are available. They show how many men and women received parental leave allowance. The respective picture is not very detailed, however, because women in general take more months of parental leave than fathers. The share of men who received parental leave allowance has risen slightly during the last years. In 2004 only 4 percent of fathers received allowance and 5 percent in 2009 . However, the share of males being responsible for their children at home is still very low. Table 1 shows the share of males who take parental leave by type of parental leave allowance.

Table 3: Parental leave allowance, by sex and duration type in percent

all December 2009		36 months		24 months		18 months	
female	male	female	male	female	male	female	male
95	5	96	4	95	5	90	10

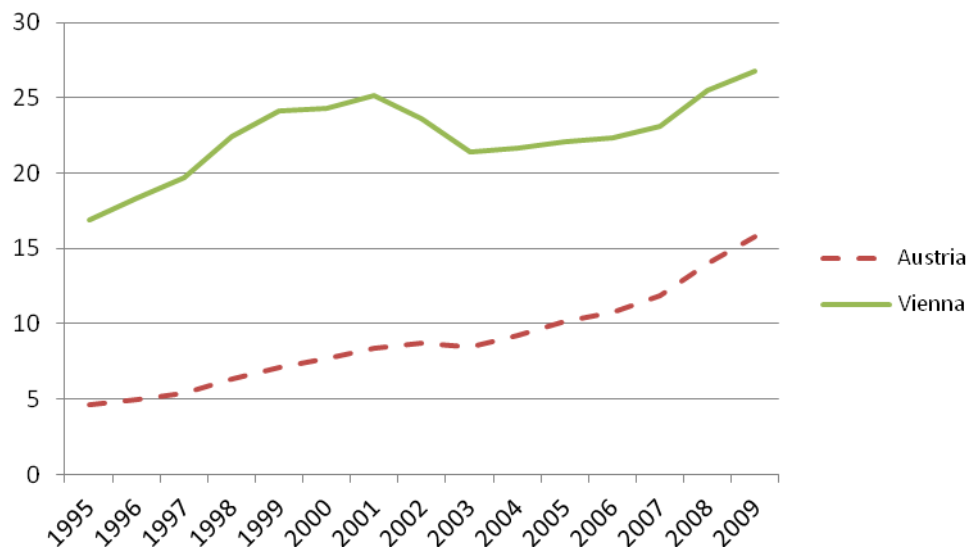
Source: Bundeskammer für Arbeiter und Angestellte, Wirtschafts- und sozialstatistisches Taschenbuch 2009. Access: 22.07.2011.

The shorter the time of parental leave the more males participate. Ten percent of the males took parental leave when the shortest version of the possibilities is used whereas only four percent decided for it when the parental leave was 36

month. Sweden had a very effective family policy which aimed to increase male participation in child care and parental leave. With the effect that in 2001 70 percent of males took parental leave (Scambor and Fasshauer 2006).

Childcare centres become more available and are nowadays better accepted in the US as in the past (Rindfuss, Morgan et al. 1996). In contrast, in Austria a representative quantitative value study shows that institutional child care is only accepted for children of three years or older and that 60% of the respondents believe that a mother should be together with her children the whole day when they are under one and a half years old (Kapella and Rille-Pfeiffer 2007). These points of view are also visible when we look at the data of childcare under three. In Austria children under three are mainly cared for in non-institutionalised arrangements. The attitude that institutionalised care will harm children is widespread. Because the number of children under three in daily childcare is obviously rather small the council of the European Union, as part of the Lisbon package, recommended to follow this fact in Austria (Plantenger and Remery 2009).

Figure 3: Percentage of children in institutionalized daily childcare from 0 to 2 years in Austria and Vienna.



Source: Statistik Austria, accessed, 22.07.2011.

In Austria institutional care is to a large extent provided part time or full time with a lunch break and mainly starts from the age of three. There are large differences by provinces. The best supply for children until two years is given in Vienna where mothers have the highest chance to work also fulltime soon after having their baby (Neyer 2003).

To conclude Austria is a country with a low TRF. Many women decide to have no children at all, however, the biggest group are still women with two children and this group has been growing during the last decades. On the other hand the number of families with many children (3+) has been decreasing rapidly and one child families have stayed rather constant. As in the whole developed world the mean age at birth has risen. However, it is likely that this phenomenon will come to a hold. Mothers in Austria participate in the labour market mainly working part time whereas fathers mainly work full time. Especially with younger children women stay at home or work only some hours a week. The share of males who take parental leave is very low in Austria with around five percent. As well as the share of children who attend an institutionalised childcare under three is low.

After describing Austria and its important elements the author is now going to define the research question, as well as the method with which the author of this thesis wants to answer this question.

Research question

The fact that people in most parts of the world postpone fertility is well documented however the explanations why this is the case are often not satisfying. The starting point of the dissertation was therefore the question why people postpone their fertility and how the social networks influence this decision. During the research the idea of the “live concept” emerged and the focus changed more in the direction which factors influence a life course transition. The dynamic interplay of many different elements came into focus and guided the research. This research wants to answer the question how important life course transitions are considered and which issues are narrated when talking about these events on the example of fertility.

Methods

1.7 The scope of qualitative methods

Demography and quantitative research are very closely interlinked. Qualitative approaches on the other hand did not have much impact on research until recently. In the last few years this has slowly been changing. Using qualitative methods is a way to reflect on the complexity of a life course (Billari 2005). The transition to parenthood cannot be reduced to attitudes or structural conditions, but rather needs to be seen as embedded in individuals complex lives (Burkart 1994). The wish for a child is considered as ambivalent, complex and not always conscious, which makes it complicated to study with quantitative methods (Borchardt and Stöbel-Richter 2004). Additionally, Settersten (2003) argues that it is difficult to get people talk about issues that are taken for granted. However,

here qualitative methods can help.

1.8 Principles

In qualitative research there are principles one should follow. The principles are openness, flexibility, slowness, gradually, preliminary, revisability, communication, process character, reflexivity (Berg and Milmeister 2008). Especially openness is a very important principle. The researchers need to be open to be guided by pertinence systems inside the field and not because of prior defined ones (Hitzler and Honer 1997).

Qualitative research is most effectively done in teams (Gilgun 1999). At least parts of the analysis should be done with other researchers (Knoblauch 2003) or results shall be discussed in a group (Froschauer and Lueger 1992). The author tried to follow the principle of analysing in a group as good as possible. At the beginning and also in between whenever it was possible the data was analysed in a group. At the beginning the author analysed very intensively with a colleague. Later the author participated in a group of several PhD colleagues where analysing the data was rotated from one another. And during one seminar the author had the chance to analyse an interesting part of the data with a seminar group and Prof. Knoblauch. Thanks to all of them.

In grounded theory it is postulated that people who collect data also analyse it. The connection to the field is essential. Whereas the objective hermeneutic focuses on the text and the idea that the ideal case – analysing the data without knowing the text – is postulated (Hildenbrand 2004). The ideal case would be to work in a team where one part of the team knows the data and has been inside the field and the other part has not. In this research separate file research and analysis was not possible due to personal restrictions. However, while analysing in a group nearly nothing was said before the analysis about the interviewee so some parts of the analysis were shared by people who did not know anything.

It is also suggested – and was done before starting with the research at hand – to reflect the own ideas and knowledge about the topic. To avoid the fact of

having too many prejudices and to stay as open minded as possible (Knoblauch 2003). Here, it is not the aim to verify or falsify ideas during research but to make sure that the researcher stays as open as possible to allow the data to speak and to allow other issues that were not even expected to come up.

One of the most important principles from this point of view in qualitative research is to study circularly. That means that collecting data and analysing it will not follow one after the other but that they are interrelated (Corbin and Strauss 1990). This guarantees that new findings and ideas will influence the sampling so that new questions can already be dealt with during the research process (Knoblauch 2003). This is one strong point of this approach because it permits permanent reflection (Flick 2002). With this concept there will be the chance to test new hypotheses that emerge during the analysis. It influences the data collection; therefore, it seems to be the right way to go about interweaving data collection and analysis from the start (Miles and Huberman 1994). Not a theory is the starting point of research but an area of study and what is interesting to the area (Truschkat, Kaiser et al. 2005). The relationship between theory and social reality is very important in qualitative research. In the centre of consideration is the social reality and from this social reality theories are deduced (Froschauer and Lueger 1992). So to say, the theory is not the starting point of the research but the result. After each analysing phase, the focus may be somewhat changed as some issues appear to be more interesting than others. Categories are verified, falsified, modified or adjusted. First hypotheses are developed and at the same time tested (Lamnek 1995). After this step, new data are collected and analysed again. It is a circular process with the aim of developing and clarifying categories and hypotheses and therewith the emerging theory.

1.9 Developing a Theory

Qualitative methods are the most promising approach to generate a theory. Because theories, especially in the field of fertility decisions, are often neither detailed enough, nor satisfying, this strategy seems very promising. Middle-range theories should be generated which are neither too abstract; i.e. they do

not lack empirical relevance nor are they too concrete; i.e. they do not lack explanatory significance (Pidgeon and Henwood 2004). The emphasis in qualitative research is on induction (Gilgun 1999), which means that a theory is developed inductively from the data. However, as scholars have pointed out, abduction is also important when discovering a grounded theory. One can assume that each researcher has some kind of pre-knowledge that influences the interpretation. Here the theoretical knowledge helps to interpret surprising empirical results and one is able to make an intellectual jump that adds something very new (Reichert 2007). Following the ideas of Anselm Strauss the author considers that a theory has a dimension of extensity and density. Extensity refers to the possible applications and density to how detailed a theory is formulated (Helle 2001). The relation between theory and social reality is important. Theories are driven by the social reality. Qualitative research has a theory generating function (Froschauer and Lueger 1992).

An analysis is only temporarily completed when the focus of interest about a specific aspect is exhausted. A theory is therefore a permanent process of theoretical discussion and modification. The reduction of complexity is made in many small steps (Berg and Milmeister 2008). A researcher must admit that social phenomena are complex phenomena and therefore theories need to allow for that. A developed theory needs to explain behaviour patterns that are relevant and problematic for all research questions. A theory is explored around one or more core categories which explain most of the variations (Strauss 1991).

The aim is to reach a conceptual level (Berg and Milmeister 2008); not only a descriptive level (Oevermann 2002). Qualitative research thinks conceptually about social phenomena (Gilgun 1999) and hence produces conceptual relationships (Pandit 1996). Concepts and theories should closely reflect the studied phenomena. The concepts need to become related with each other to form a theoretical narration of the reality (Strauss and Corbin 1996).

During the last decades of research in family sociology there can be seen a stagnation in bringing theory and empirical research together. Qualitative

research can help here in observing small subgroups to generate theoretical ideas (Abraham 2006). The generated theory should challenge or enlarge existing theories or show new directions. In the end the own theoretical work needs to be related to other theories (LaRossa 2005).

There need to be a clear differentiation between the method of data acquisition and data analysing (Oevermann 2002). More important than the method of interview is the analytical methodology (Oevermann 2001b). It is essential to explain the single steps of the analysis in detail to make it comprehensible to others (Berg and Milmeister 2008). The author adhere to this viewpoint and will now carefully explain how the author has analysed the data.

In this study objective hermeneutic sequence analysis – in particular rough analysis – is linked with the coding principles of grounded theory. Froschauer and Lueger suggest that sequence analysis be used in the beginning if different methods are applied. “Sequence analysis supports (next to textual advantage) the sensibility for rough interpretation methods.” (Froschauer and Lueger, p.62). Following this suggestion at the outset, sequence analysis was used. By doing so, hypotheses were developed. In a second step, categories and more hypotheses were produced using grounded theory.

1.10 The objective hermeneutics

As the author of this thesis has already shown, the mean age of childbearing has increased during the last decades. We can therefore assume that childbearing behaviour is socially affected. How this social structure is composed and how it effects the individual acting is an interesting question to follow. Objective hermeneutics now assumes that human behaviour is not only based on individual consideration but is embedded in a structure of a collective (Lueger 2000). Individuals face objective structures of interpretation patterns. Acting is always culturally shaped (Oevermann 2001a). The objective hermeneutics follows the idea that social arrangements are reproduced in social interactions (Flick 1996). Further, it is assumed that each turn in interaction implies a selection between possible alternatives. A social structure arises when

these turns of interaction are connected. Actors decide how and what to communicate and these decisions are not necessarily made consciously, however, selectivity is not contingent. Their decisions refer to a whole set of dispositions e.g. values, social status (Maiwald 2005). These elements are of interest if we want to understand how social structures affect our behaviour.

Objective hermeneutics assumes that all expressions have an objective meaning independent of the speaking subject. These meanings are not manifest for the acting subject. Norms and rules are represented in these meanings. Each small meaning represents the structure of the social world. An answer is never given by chance. In a conversation there are always manifest and latent moments. To reconstruct the objective latent meaning structures are of main interest because they guide action (Froschauer and Lueger 1992).

Objective hermeneutics does not want to reconstruct subjective dispositions or perspectives (Oevermann 2002). The aim of objective hermeneutics is to reconstruct the meaning structure behind actions – so to say the rules for action (Reichert 1995b). The idea is that structures build reality and can be reproduced and transformed. Structures are the space of action that facilitate and restrict actions. Subjects are not aware of these structures only when they reflect about them (Reichert 1995a). Additionally, structures are reproduced as well as transformed (Reichert 1995b).

Social structures are essentially structures of meaning which arise in the interplay of actions. As a result the concrete interaction ought to be analysed. You look at sequences which are the units of interaction and you look at the “Gestalt” which refers to the shape of the segment. The focus is on the overall structure and not on the single utterance. Especially the meaning within the context is of interest in objective hermeneutics (Maiwald 2005).

Meaning has always collective components, because it is learned during acting in the social world and has therefore always also collective aspects. However, meaning is not always fully conscious and is not identical with subjective intention. The meaning of an action in a special social setting has to be

explored (Lueger 2000). The method is trying to get methodological controlled implicated meanings. Not only the manifest information of the conversation shall be the only focus as the latent one is important (Hitzler and Honer 1997). Latent structures refer to objective meanings that are generated by rules (Oevermann 2001b). Because of these meanings it is important to be a member of the language and society and to have much time (Reichert 1995a). These meanings will give us an understanding how fertility decisions are shaped and what influences individuals to postpone their fertility wish.

1.11 Sequence analysis - Rough analysis:

Starting with sequence analysis, some hypotheses and many ideas were developed. The author decided to start with this method because she wanted to develop ideas based on the data and to avoid being too much directed by theories that already exist. Doing rough analysis structural aspects which indicate latent structures are focused on. The selected sequence was split in small sequences. Different interpretation steps are done to analyse the data. Here, the focus is on the context in which an action is performed because it is assumed that this context influences the acting scope. The structure of the interaction is of interest not the subjective meaning (Froschauer and Lueger 1992).

Several interpretation steps need to be done. The first step is to make a short description of the content. In a second step assumptions about the intentions are made – what is the meaning of producing this message, what does the interviewee try to provoke? The next step is to focus on structural aspects. Issues like – what is the frame in which such a text can be produced, what are the norms or rules which provoke such a statement? – are analysed. The next step is to ask for structural consequences. What are the consequences of certain behaviour? How would the environment react if a person acts in a certain way? How does the acting context look like based on this information? And on the last level it has to be asked how systems stabilise or modify their structures. (Froschauer and Lueger 1992). In answering these questions carefully hypotheses on the interaction structure as well as on the social

structure are developed and by doing so the actual situational context becomes clearer (Maiwald 2005).

In the course of the interpretation hypotheses are developed about the social environment of the person speaking and of the interview situation. These hypotheses are being checked against other points and reviewed all the time. Assumptions are adapted during the whole analysing process to reach maximal structural variation. How action structures are characterized and which correlations are visible are the elements of interest. The principles of action rules or the function of the rules or action patterns should become visible (Froschauer and Lueger 1992). With sequence analysis it is possible to look at the data very carefully. It allows analyses in great detail as the data are analysed in a very complex way (Flick 2002).

1.12 Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is strongly connected with the ideas of symbolic interactionism and pragmatism (Pidgeon and Henwood 2004). Glaser and Strauss are rooted in the Chicago school of symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionism is a language-oriented framework (LaRossa 2005). The ideas of interpretative sociology create the baseline for understanding society in this thesis.

In this research the author followed the guidelines of Strauss and Corbin and used 'open coding', 'axial coding' and 'selective coding' (Strauss and Corbin 1996). Grounded theory is based on the idea that the social world consists of elements which are integrated and the job is to discover them and their connection. Therefore, grounded theory can only be discovered and not invented. Grounded theory can be understood as a dialog between researcher and data from which a storyline is developed (Berg and Milmeister 2008). Connected to the research question the author wants to understand what hinders or motivates people dealing with their life concepts, with a special focus on fertility.

An open research question marks the starting point of the research – it is the

guiding idea (Böhm 2000). How much should be done and concretised at the beginning is a much discussed question. However, the research interest should be broad enough to let the data speak for themselves and change during the research process (Pidgeon and Henwood 2004). The motivation of this study was to understand what influences individuals, regarding their fertility preferences.

Grounded theory takes always a conceptual perspective. The aim is to build a grounded theory which is a collection “of integrated conceptual hypotheses systematically generated to produce an inductive theory” (Glaser and Holton 2004). It should be kept in mind that a theory emerges from all data. All data are compared to generate a concept (Glaser and Holton 2004). Additionally scholars argue that abduction also plays an important role when developing a grounded theory (Reichert 2007).

Grounded theory is often called the method of constant comparison. All statements are compared carefully and tested against already existing categories in order to find similarities and differences to build a rich theory. While doing so new theoretical ideas and hypotheses are generated as well as a complex theory that corresponds to the data because it is developed as the data emerges (Glaser and Strauss).

The centres of interest are phenomena. It can take a long time until a theory is generated. Many categories will be generated during research but later discarded. Data are coded regarding their relevance to phenomena (Strauss 1991). Analysing means making systematic comparisons of the existing categories and codes as well as on the new data. The aim is to organise all ideas that came up during the analysis. During analysis the theory is getting more and more abstract and less descriptive (Knoblauch 2003). Analysing here means to break down the data in an analytical way. Its purpose is to give the analyst new insights by breaking through standard ways of thinking about or interpreting phenomena that are reflected in the data (Strauss and Corbin 1996).

Grounded theory is a set of categories that are centred on a core category and the connections between them are described carefully (Glaser and Holton 2004). During the research the concepts are worked out in relation to the data with the aim to develop theoretical insights. Coding is the central process by which theories are built through a process of abstraction (Flick 2006).

The analytical process consists of permanent comparison and questioning. While doing that one makes hypotheses about relations within the data. All ideas, categories or hypotheses are provisional and need to be approved by the data (Strauss and Corbin 1996).

1.12.1 Theoretical sampling

Theoretical sampling is also an important element while using grounded theory. This is a process of data collection for generating a theory. Gaps in the theory or new fields of interest guide the new data collection. The next object of interest is chosen by theoretical criteria. The sampling is, so to say, on theoretical grounds (Corbin and Strauss 1990) and the cases are selected stepwise (Flick 1995). It is not a random sample of persons but based on conscious decisions. Interviewees are chosen because of earlier theoretical considerations. The sampling is guided by theoretical ideas during the whole process (Lamnek 1995). At the beginning new categories must be generated from the data. After a first round of analysis new data will be gathered while the scope of the research has for sure already changed slightly (Pidgeon and Henwood 2004). Which persons will fit the study later on is decided during the research process and is not restricted from the beginning. In qualitative research one search for informants about a culture and informants are asked because of their cultural competence and not for their statistical relevance (Bernard 2002).

The collection of new data must be oriented on the analytical questions, hypotheses, correlations and categories which have been generated during the research process. While doing analysis and writing memos many new questions will arise and guide the sampling. The group the researcher focuses on and the

theoretical ideas behind this choice are important for theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling is used to generate additional categories connected to the core category and the others (Strauss 1991). Oevermann (2002) suggests searching for cases with a potential maximal contrast. Also Strauss (1991) argues that it is necessary to find contrasting cases to develop a rich theory (Strauss 1991).

The end of a qualitative research project is defined by theoretical saturation. The theory is developed when 'theoretical saturation' is reached, which means that new data will not bring new insights to the research field (Flick 1995). Collecting and analysing data will lead to a saturation of categories and their hypotheses (Helle 2001). Theoretical saturation is reached when the connections between the categories and their properties are well developed. The core category must be approved again and again. Conceptual saturation is necessary to build a good grounded theory. A rich grounded theory is generated when the material has been sorted. Sorting the concepts will bring theoretical order and often a higher conceptual level (Strauss 1991).

1.12.2 Memos

Next to theoretical sampling writing memos is a necessary element in developing a grounded theory. These are theoretical notes about the data and the connection between the elements. Substantive and theoretical categories are developed while writing memos (Glaser and Holton 2004). Memos can be about all kind of things. However, to write memos about the concept is highly important because multiple indicators are needed to theoretically saturate a concept (LaRossa 2005). Memos are written to explore and to develop the content. Later, more focused coding is done to develop the core categories and their connections. At the end the analysis should have overcome a purely descriptive level and reached a more abstract and theoretical level; the mentioned memos will help this process (Pidgeon and Henwood 2004). This needs to be done during the whole research process. Memos make the previous knowledge of the researcher explicit, or show how a document was developed; they make explicit what is behind the codes and detailed memos

give insights into the interpretation process (Berg and Milmeister 2008). By writing memos the theory is formulated and revisited (Corbin and Strauss 1990). During the whole process impressions, associations, questions and ideas are noted in memos (Flick 2006). Especially during the analysis it is very important to make breaks and write memos (Strauss 1991).

1.12.3 Literature

When to consult the existing literature is a question which has to be asked and answered. It is a diversely discussed issue (LaRossa 2005). In the beginning, extensive literature search is not recommended, however, when to turn to it depends on the conviction of the researcher (Knoblauch 2003). Pandit (1996) suggests to use the literature in the end to anchor the developed theory in the existing literature. What is similar or different and why should it be discussed in the end. On the contrary, Strauss and Corbin (1996) consider using the available literature already at the beginning as adequate. For them, literature can be very helpful in finding gaps in research. As well as answering questions which have not been satisfactorily answered with other methods (Strauss and Corbin 1996). All assumptions and information a researcher has right from the beginning should be reflected on in any case because this influences the whole research (Truschkat, Kaiser et al. 2005). the author has included the literature stepwise. With little knowledge about the state of the art and the existing theories at the beginning which increases during the research. A lot of reading however was done more to the end of the study.

1.12.4 Open coding

Open coding is a process for finding the right label for a phenomenon, it helps to ask questions such as “What is it?” and “What does it represent?” about each sequence, comparing the text step by step to label similar phenomena as being equal (Strauss and Corbin 1996). Open coding is labelling and categorising concepts that are found in the data. Asking questions about the data is necessary to label similar things (Pandit 1996). These labels are abstract. Phenomena are identified and concepts are grouped around these phenomena.

Dimensions and attributes have to be developed because these show the connection between the categories. Each category has its own profile with specific attributes (Strauss and Corbin 1996). Open coding is used to understand the text and to develop categories as well as to put them into order. Similarities and differences must be distinguished (Flick 2006). The data must be analysed in detail especially at the beginning. To look through the data and to quickly make bunches of categories is not recommended. Only later the researcher can decide quicker because they already know the phenomena (Strauss 1991).

When doing open coding sequences are analysed. The aim is to develop concepts and their dimensions. This generates many questions as well as some preliminary answers. The real meaning is not that important. The aim here is to open the data which means that any interpretation is possible. The interpretation is only at this point in a trial. The researcher should believe everything and nothing to be as open as possible (Strauss 1991). In the literature this is compared with a room full of toys that should be grouped into clusters. The scheme which will be followed is not known from the beginning but developed during the process (Berg and Milmeister 2008). While doing coding it is not enough to get categories. The properties of the phenomena as well as their subcategories must be generated (Strauss 1991).

During the coding process slowly developing the theory is the aim. The process of analysis is spiral and makes use of different procedures in order to make patterns visible. The theory is developed during the whole process and is not put on the data from the outside (Berg and Milmeister 2008).

Open coding should lead to the phenomena. Actions, events and interactions are compared with each other to find differences and similarities. They are grouped into categories and given conceptual labels. Properties and dimensions are identified. New questions are generated by doing so that guide the further research (Corbin and Strauss 1990). It is important to note that each code is only preliminary.

While doing open coding codes are verified as well as saturated. Once the codes are saturated to some extent the researcher needs to look for the core category and the relations to the other categories (Strauss 1991). A very important aim at this point is to develop a core category (Strauss 1991).

Conventional categories like age and gender should not be used at the beginning. They might become important during the research process but should not be seen as given (Strauss 1991). In the category system the issues of age as well as of gender appear, however, they are not present right from the start but gradually developed as important factors. Age seems to be very important when it comes to the decision when to have a child. Gender appeared in several categories because men and women seem to perceive and realise many elements differently and consequently gender seems to have an important impact in some respects. The author will describe this in detail in the theory.

While doing open coding also hypotheses are developed, which explain how the phenomena are related to each other (Strauss and Corbin 1996). A number of concepts as well as their indicators are identified and in a next step linked (LaRossa 2005). During sequence analysing, some ideas are already developed. This makes the open coding much easier because several ideas are already in mind. The same applies to axial coding and the search for connections between the categories.

1.12.5 Axial coding

While the aim of open coding is to break up the data (Strauss 1987, p. 29), axial coding puts these together in a new way while making connections between the categories. Many categories and their subcategories are developed as well as their connections with each other (Pandit 1996). The main task in the analysing process is to develop hypotheses. These should give us an idea how phenomena might be related with each other. These hypotheses permit assumptions and direct the data collection (Strauss and Corbin 1996). Axial coding is about developing hypotheses. These hypotheses describe relations

between or among variables (LaRossa 2005).

Here, categories are related to their subcategories and with each other. Again, all relationships must be considered as provisional until they are verified against the incoming data (Corbin and Strauss 1990). It is important to note that as much differences as possible should be found (Truschkat et al. 2005). A specific category is analysed intensively. The aim is to develop the context around a phenomenon (Strauss and Corbin 1996). The knowledge about the relations between the categories should be the aim (Strauss 1991). The strategies behind people's actions should be looked at. The context is the terms under which interaction strategies are done. Furthermore, conditions which hinder or support a specific action and its consequences should be dealt with. Actions have consequences. Hypotheses about the consequences and the terms under which actions are taken are made as well as conditions why a phenomenon appears (Strauss and Corbin 1996). The structure of relations between the phenomena should be discovered here (Flick 2006).

A category stands for itself as an element in the theory that represents a phenomenon (LaRossa 2005). Two problems can arise: first that categories are made from the outside and are not derived from the text and second that in the end there are too many categories (Berg and Milmeister 2008). In this respect the level of abstraction of a concept is highly important. It should be abstract to function as a good concept for the data but it should not be too abstract because it would carry too much information for one category (LaRossa 2005).

Switching between open and axial coding should not be a linear process but rather a more circular one. Hypotheses do not emerge immediately; it takes a long process of searching, comparing, and finding. There is a constant interplay between developing hypotheses and checking them (Strauss and Corbin 1996). Data must be continuously compared and checked to make sure that the findings are stable; otherwise the categories must be changed.

The author visualise axial coding as building together a watch. Whereas open coding is to identify the single elements, axial coding is to understand how

these elements need to be put together to make the watch work. Especially explaining how the gears are interlocked with each other is necessary to understand the mechanisms behind them. It is not enough to know all components; knowledge about their interaction is crucial.

1.12.6 Selective coding

Selective coding is analysing on a more abstract level. It is very similar to axial coding, the difference is that the core category is put in relation to the other categories and all the categories are also related to each other. Not all categories are equally relevant for the research question. The core category is a category with the greatest explanatory power (Pandit 1996). Here, the analysis is systematically about the core category. Other codes are subordinated; in fact only those which have a relevance for the core category (Strauss 1991).

This coding process is used to synchronise the data and to make the concept homogeneous. The main story should be explored here. The storyline around which everything else is draped should be developed and described. The red thread should become visible. The categories connect to the core category which makes the categories rich in content. The main story and the most important problems should be discovered in this phase (Strauss and Corbin 1996).

The core category is specified which describes the central phenomenon of the study (Corbin and Strauss 1990). This category should be well saturated (Pandit 1996). The core variable is the one with the most analytical power because it pulls the other categories together. This needs to be a rather abstract one as this variable should have most of the connections to all other variables. This variable is very important to tell the story (LaRossa 2005). Each category must have conceptual density. The more abstract the concepts are the wider the explanatory power of the grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss 1990).

Structural patterns should be visible (Corbin and Strauss 1990). Data should be related in a complex way, linkages and validation are the main focuses here

(Pandit 1996). The theory's aim is to discover patterns in the data as well as conditions under which they apply (Flick 2006). Theoretical saturation is reached when nothing new can be found in the data and all categories and their relations to each other are defined (Corbin and Strauss 1990).

1.13 Why using two approaches?

Combining different methods increases utility because strengths can be made use of and weaknesses will be reduced. Linking these two approaches allows for a more analytical view of the issue and helps to develop a theory with a deep understanding of the topic. Using different analysing methods also helps to stay as open-minded as possible throughout the whole process.

One disadvantage of objective hermeneutic sequence analysis is its big effort. Therefore, it is only possible to analyse very few data and connecting the results from several interviews is also not very well developed (Flick 1996). It is more difficult to build up a theory and to combine great amounts of data with each other (Flick 2002). A weakness of grounded theory is the potential infinity of options for coding and comparison (Flick 2002). As well as staying on a rather descriptive level.

In combining these two methodologies The author has the chance to get a very detailed picture at the beginning of the analysis as well as checking interesting or unclear parts. Starting with sequence analysis has the advantage that a certain number of hypotheses are already developed before starting with grounded theory. This was very valuable when the author started to code the data because the author does not face the problem of ending up with too many codes. In addition, from the beginning the codes are not too descriptive and categories are easily developed. Additionally, whenever more interesting issues or puzzling parts emerge during the whole research process sequence analysis makes it possible to focus even more on the issue und to get it clearer. From experience the author can say sequence analysis is best used to get a very good idea about the phenomena, grounded theory helps to connect the data

and to make a theory out of it.

Research design

Postponement of fertility was a very big topic in demography during the last decade. At the beginning researchers asked the following questions: why do individuals postpone the issue of fertility even if they have a working relationship and are around thirty and how does the social network influence the decision? Rather often the answer to the question of postponement is that individuals want to focus on their work and career and this takes time. However, the author will show that this is only a very narrow view and cannot explain the behaviour in detail. Especially neglecting social norms is from this point of view problematic because individuals seem to orient their behaviour on internalised social norms. Therefore, the research question changed from the question why people postpone fertility to what are the important elements that influence important life course decisions and how they interact.

The author defines postponement as an act where people are sure that they want to have children, but nevertheless consider the current situation as not optimal or good enough, for whatever reasons, to decide for a child. In this approach the author assumes that couples who state that they want to have children, however, not at the moment are considered to be postponing.

Postponement of fertility is something rather normal today. Liefbroer and Billari (2009) found in their research that postponement of parenthood was not seen as something that is sanctioned by others.

In this sample there are only couples whose partners have the same opinion regarding the principle decision whether they want to have children or not. Some of the interviewees are rather unsure if they want to have a child or not. However, also here it is clear that both partners perceive the situation in a rather similar way. These couples have not agreed on anything yet. Additionally, there are also some interviewees who do not want to have children at all. In that case also the partners argue in a very similar way. So, none of the interviewed

couples have different visions regarding the principle decision to have or not to have a child. Also in other studies it has been shown that couples often have general agreements about having a child or not (Schneewind, Vaskovics et al. 1996).

In line with qualitative methods the author started with only very basic knowledge about theories and empirical work in the field of fertility. Only after some time the author got more and more familiar with the existing research and especially theories. During this research process, selective coding and developing the category “life concept” the issue of postponement is more and more altered in the direction to show what influences the life concept of young individuals regarding the idea of children. The author shows a model that explains how different elements influence the life concept and shape behaviour. The author will demonstrate which factors are important when it comes to big life course decisions. The “life concept” is based fully on my interview data.

“Almost no attention is paid to women’s intentions, values, and motivations, and to how these differ from those of men” (Hakim 2003, p.351). In this research a lot of attention is given to these elements and how they are perceived and understood by gender. The author asks about the logics and patterns that form people’s choices considering the complex issue of childbearing. The author wants to spread light on the meanings that are attached to fatherhood as well as on motherhood and how they are connected to other important elements in life. The author moves beyond statistics and believe that the close listening increases the validity of the interpretation – an assumption shared by other researchers (Henwood, Shirani et al. 2011).

In demography several studies as well as theories discuss the issue of fertility intentions (e.g., Ajzen 1991, Engelhardt 2004, Miller and Pasta 1995). In the theory of planned behaviour, Ajzen notes that people have intentions of behaving in a certain way (Ajzen 1991, p. 181). This study perceives the issue of fertility slightly differently. Intentions are considered to be reflected decisions. With regard to individual fertility they refer to a concrete plan with a clear outcome, like having a child in a special time frame. Intentions are very clear

and people know what they want. In this approach the issue is more how people would like to lead their lives. Even if this wish is quite clear, The author would not call it an intention since the future is too dependent on other factors – on persons as well as on changing desires. Miller (1995) has pointed out in his research that people often quote that they want to have a child within 2,79 years, however, they intent to have a child in 3,01 years. That shows that intentions and desires are not the same thing. Also other studies have found that several pregnancies are wanted but not planned. Planning, wanting and intending seem to be different issues (Helfferrich 2001). Dommermuth, Klobas et al. (2009) differentiate between short-term intentions that are concrete, which means that people want to have a child now and long-term intentions where they consider having a child within the next three years. It is pointed out that concrete intentions have a better prediction power than the other ones. In line with that finding others show that only short term expectations about the timing of fertility are significant and that they modify during the life course (Schoen, Astone et al. 1999). Concluding on these remarks the author does not speak about intentions because the “life concept” shows that fertility is not concrete enough to talk about intentions and because of rather vague time plans and ideas it is from this point of view the wrong term because people perceive the issue of fertility differently and not as something that is clear and well planned.

1.14 Theoretical sampling

One argument in demography is that people postpone their wish to have a child because of their education. Women with higher qualifications need more time to complete their education and also often intend to work for a certain time before having children (Spielauer, Schwarz et al. 2003; Sobotka 2008). However, they not only wait until a higher age to get children—Lutz (2005) also reports that in western Germany around 40 percent of women with tertiary education are expected to end up childless. In Austria around 30% of all highly educated women are childless and this figure has been relatively stable over the years in Austria (Spielauer 2004). Because the issue of education is so much discussed in the literature about highly educated persons and because the author wants to understand why they have chosen a childless life or are still postponing fertility

– and who or what influences them in this choice – was the starting point of this research. Because postponement of the first child is of interest for this research, it was decided to interview women and men around age 30. At this age, it is very likely that they have already taken some conscious decisions concerning fertility in one or the other direction. Other prerequisites concerning the interviewees are that they should have no children – an exception was made for two partners who already have a child, one participated in the interviews one not – and should live in a partnership. In a representative longitudinal Australian survey it was found that fertility expectations change quite dramatically also in a rather short period of three years. The most important factor here is the partnership status. Having to find or having lost a suitable partner has quite an effect on the own fertility expectations (Mitchell and Gray 2007). Because the interest is on why people postpone their fertility wishes this factor was excluded by focusing on individuals who are in a partnership.

The author concentrated at the beginning on highly educated women she ended up with many well educated individuals. It was shown in other research that the increase of female education affects the postponement of fertility. Women with higher education wait longer for the birth of their first child. It was also decided to start with a very homogeneous group (highly educated, living and/or working in Vienna) but then the group diversified at a later research stage. In order to gain understanding about fertility decision making both males as well as females need to be studied (Presser 1997). These were the theoretical considerations at the beginning of the project.

In this project, the snowball sampling method was used (Bernard 2002). The author wrote an email message to all people she knew and asked them to forward it to their friends. Attached was a description of what the author was looking for. In the first round persons around 30 living in a relationship and not having any children so far; additionally they should not know the interviewer personally and should have a university degree were asked for. Interestingly only females replied to the email but because the interest was on the couple's perspective the author asked for their partners' views as well.

After having conducted the first interviews and analysing some of the respondents' answers the idea that individuals have a "life concept" or put another way that individuals have some ideas about how life should look like was developed. The author wanted to know how these issues are perceived by individuals who do not want to have a child. In this round the author tried to find individuals for which children do not play a role.

Later on when the life concept became clearer the author wanted to see if the issue of the life concept is connected to higher educated individuals only and if lower educated people will have a different view on these issues because it needs some argumentation and seems highly connected to social norms. As a consequence, in the last round the author searched for lower educated individuals.

21 interviews were conducted with 13 women and 8 male partners who agreed to give an interview. Five partners were not interested in giving an interview, mainly due to time constraints and one couple split up before the author could conduct the interview. The interviews took place between autumn 2005 and autumn 2007. The interviewed women were between 24 and 34 years old and had been living in their partnerships for at least three years. Males were between 25 and 42 years old. The interviews took place at the apartment of the interviewees, at coffee houses, at the Vienna Institute of Demography or at the interviewer's place. The interviewees decided where they wanted to be interviewed in order to make the situation as comfortable as possible for them. Each interview lasted between 60 minutes and two hours.

Table 4: Interview partners by education and sex

Education	University/ tertiary education	Above high school/ post- secondary non tertiary education	High school/ secondary education	Apprenticeship/ primary education
Women	8	1	2	2
Men	1	1	5	1

In most cases the partner was less educated than the woman and in two cases the partner was still studying besides working. However, all women and men were working except one woman who was studying.

All interviews were conducted in German, transcribed in German and analysed in German. The categories however had only been in German at the beginning and were switched into English soon afterwards. All shown quotations mirror the spoken words as closely as possible and the author also made an effort to show specialities like discontinuations or repetitions of words.

1.15 The Problem-Centred Interview

Concerning the methodological questions, guideline interviews – in particular the problem-centred interview (Witzel 2000) – seemed a useful technique for this research. This kind of interview has the advantage not to lose track of the topic, and it is also an open form which leaves enough room to allow insights into personal views. A problem area can be highlighted from different perspectives. The interviewee can still define the important aspects, however, the researcher can focus on special issues (Lamnek 1995). In contrast, standardised methods need to define the relation in advance and are restricted to it. What the interviewed person defines to be important cannot be understood with these methods (Hollstein 2001) but only with qualitative ones.

The concept of problem-centred interviews has three basic principles. The first

one is the problem-centred orientation. This means that the focus of research is on socially relevant problems. The interviewer observes orientations and actions with the intention to understand the participant and to ask problem-centred questions. During the interview, the interviewer is working on comprehending the subjective view of the respondent, thus making the focus of the research grow increasingly clearer (Witzel 2000).

Object orientation highlights the flexibility of the method, which is needed in order to observe the object in optimum conditions. The combination of different methods is a very important instrument. The narrative part is essential to understand the personal views, and with the network card it is easier to compare and analyse the networks (Witzel 2000).

Process orientation is the third principle of this concept. The focus of the interview is on the reconstruction of orientations and actions. The interviewee should get the feeling that s/he is taken seriously and that s/he can trust the interviewer. This atmosphere is supposed to motivate the interviewee to talk about memories and to motivate self-reflection. In this atmosphere of cooperation the participant and the interviewer should look again and again at different aspects of the same problem to find new formulations that allow various viewpoints. It also helps animating a situation where it is possible to tell stories to reduce the artificialness of the research setting (Witzel 2000).

Witzel suggests using a short questionnaire about demographic data at the beginning of the interview to have also some descriptive data (Witzel 2000). The author followed the suggestion of Flick (2006) and asked these questions in the end to prevent the interviewee of getting used to these short cut questions and answers as a possible consequence could be that the interviewee does not narrate during the interview.

Reflecting on this interview method it appeared as convenient to have a rather detailed guideline at the beginning. This helped to capture all issue at the start and to give a feeling of comfort for me as a researcher. However, the more interviews the author conducted the clearer were the limitations of the guideline.

While at the beginning the guideline had posed many “why” questions during the course of research the author started to focus increasingly on “how” questions, i.e. questions that aim for a narration and less for an argumentation. The problem centred interview method tends to focus on argumentations and less on narrations. Considering these experiences an episodic interview would have been more useful because it focuses more on narrations and less on argumentation.

1.16 The guideline

The problem-centred interview started with a narrative part. The participants were encouraged to speak about their lives. The assumption being that the interviewee is the expert of her/his life (Flick 2002). At the beginning a biographical question was asked. The starting point of the narration is the time when people left school. All things that have been important since then—not only the facts one normally tells when asked for a biography—are asked for. In this part the focus is on the subjective view of the past years. As long as the interviewee was talking the interviewer hardly intervened (Knoblauch 2003). After the narration, the next questions concerning topics that were not detailed enough were asked to be completed as well as statements that need clarification. Only elements that have been mentioned by the interviewee were discussed (Oevermann 2001b). This stage was followed by topics that were not mentioned but are necessary for the research (Lamnek 1995, Mayring 1990). Children were often not an issue in the narrations of the past so relatively often a question about fertility wishes had to be asked. At the beginning the author asked: “How do you think about children?” It became clear that this question does not aim for a narration and sometimes people had difficulties to answer it. Relatively quickly the author changed this question to: “When you think back, how did the issue of having a child come up the first time?” Also after this question immanent questions followed. This kind of question produced very detailed narrations.

Later, after detailed narrations on the issues of children, family, education and

partnership a qualitative ego centred network was conducted. In many cases one about “important” persons, “emotional” close persons and “supportive” persons. In the end of the interview some general statements about society were asked: what reasons do individuals perceive for people postponing fertility in Austrian, or what is the ideal age of a mother? After that the interviewee was asked to visualise her/his life in twenty years. At the end a rather short quantitative questionnaire – like suggested for problem-centred interviews – was used, however, it brought not much additional information. Because interviewing and analysing were interlinked and not separated processes, the centre of interest changed over time but the main topics remained the same. The following issues were discussed during the interviews: partnership, education and work, family plans and children, families of origin, social networks as well as values and personal aims. The main part of the interview was how the interview partner perceives his/her situation regarding fertility at the moment and about future family plans.

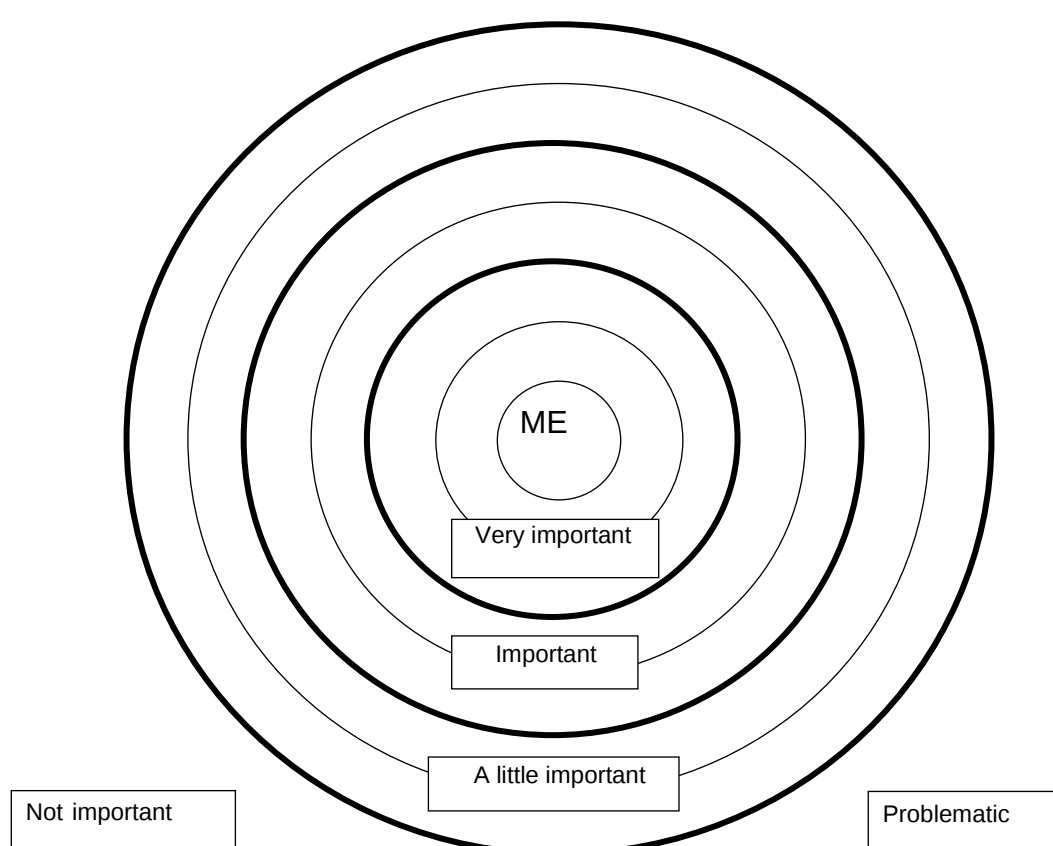
After each interview a memo was written to keep the interview situation better in mind. It includes, for instance, how the atmosphere was during the whole interview, if some questions seemed to make respondents uncomfortable or if they had difficulties understanding certain questions or if something or somebody disturbed the interview, like a phone. All interviews went smoothly. The author was fortunate that all interviewees seemed to feel well and most of the time answered the questions interestedly.

1.17 Network Card

Considering the network analysis there is the assumption that individuals are embedded in a social network. Structures are important social elements and need to be considered because they shape the acting possibilities. Individuals are not isolated from each other (Jansen 2003). Because the issue of social networks is a complex one, participants are requested to fill out a network card. the author followed the idea of Kahn and Antonucci (Kahn and Antonucci 1980). The purpose of this diagram is to provide the interviewee with some kind of framework to describe the social network in somewhat detail (Antonucci 1986).

This made the description about their social network more comfortable for the participants. Social networks are a complex category and “...very difficult to observe” (Behrman, Kohler and Watkins 2001, p. 2). Using this device, it seems likely that a more detailed look on the issue is in fact obtained. Figure 6 shows how the card looked like and in the appendix one can see how it looked once filled in. However, it is not a picture of a real card because of anonymity the author copied one of the cards but changed the names on the post-its.

Figure 4: The network card.



Participants were asked to place their network partners into this card. In the centre of this card there is the person him/herself. Network partners who are very important/supportive/close are to be noted close to the ME and persons who are not that important are to be placed further away. Problematic or unimportant persons can be also taken down on this card.

Ego centred networks where the individual is the only source of information were conducted (Hollstein 2001). They consist of information on relations of one particular person (Breiger 2004). The aim is not only to describe the network structure because the author have not collected or analysed the alteri-alteri relations (Diaz-Bone 2006) but to explain how the life of the participant is possibly influenced by others. The author have followed the “affective-networks-approach”. The focus is on emotional networks, that means persons who are important and connected to oneself. Most of the times concentric circles are used (Hollstein 2001). What the participant narrates in connection to the issue of fertility was in my case the focus of interest. It was a tool to get a better understanding of the complex issue of social networks. Not the position per se of the network partner on the card is important but mainly what the interviewees narrated in combination to visualising their social network. Social relationships are focused on and the relation between the relationship (Hollstein 2001). The cultural meaning of ties is interesting to look at (Breiger 2004). In the research the focus is on the issue of meanings of relations and in what way individuals consider their network partners as meaningful and how the network partners are narrated in connection with fertility behaviour. Because of the lack of space and time the author has not focused too much on the network analyses. However, the most important findings are included in the theoretical model “the life concept”. The network card but especially the narrations that were given to the card enriched the concept in several respects – they made it broader and helped to better develop it.

Three different kinds of ego centred network cards were used. One that asks for “emotionally close persons” one about “to get support” and one about “important people” (see figure 6). The author wanted to see how individuals use these three different cards and which one or how many are sensible to use. All cards are shown at the beginning of this interview section. However, during the interview half of the people refused to answer the third card of “importance” because they pointed out that they have answered the question already in detail and their picture would look identical to “emotional closeness”. The other half of the people used all three cards, however, only very few made a clear distinction between the cards “emotional closeness” and “importance”. In most of the

cases the card “importance” showed most network partners. It was argued that some people can be rather important without being emotionally close but it was not done the other way around. The conclusion is that a network card about “important people” would bring more insight than one about “emotional closeness” because during the interview the interviewees anyhow narrate their connection and how their relationship is working and how close people are. With one card about “importance” nothing and nobody will be missed. The distinction between “importance” and “support” however was very helpful. Support was in most of the cases connected with financial support as well as friendly turns, like helping to move. In half of the cases less people appeared on the support card, only two interviewees had more people on this card. Compared to the “important” card the closeness to the own person changed in many cases on the “support” card. Some pointed out that their mother is emotionally closer to them, however, when it comes to support they can count on both parents in the same way and the father was on the support card more often closer than on the important card.

It was required from the interview partners to put only one person on a post-it and to stick it inside the network card. However, again and again some interviewees refused this command and put a group of people on one sheet. Rather often the parents appeared on one sheet but also whole groups of friends. Especially with the second and the third card people got rather parsimonious. In general none of the interviewees had difficulties to do what was asked. Most of them did it without hesitating. Some of them moved their alteri to another place when talking about them; in most of the cases a bit closer to the ego.

The family is for all interview partners very important. Also other research has shown that family members are the most important persons when one is asked to explain the own social network (Grünendahl, Minnemann et al. 1997). Not one interviewee neglected the family in their network. Even if some parts of the family have been described sometimes as problematic they are still considered at least as important but in most of the cases as emotionally close. When both parents are still alive both were put into the network, as well as the siblings. Not

one interviewee neglected a sibling, also when the contact was described as not so intensive. All appeared on the card and in most of the cases rather close to the person. Half of the cards had more family members than other network partners the other half had more friends. The family of the partner was for half of the interview partners also important and showed up on many cards. More men also put their partners' family members on their cards than the other way round. Only two men had no member of their partner's family on their card and in both cases they had a rather intense network anyway, whereas only three women mentioned also some members of the family of their partner on their cards. Except for questions of support several female partners narrated that they can count on the family of their partner.

The smallest network contained four persons and the biggest one about twenty. Six people had a network that was smaller than ten persons, nine had one between ten and fourteen and six people had a network of more than fourteen. This did not depend on gender. All interviewed individuals narrated that they are very happy and satisfied with their social network and feel well.

Some also used the possibility to describe a person as problematic. This was in four cases a friend with whom they had difficulties but are still emotionally affected. In three cases this person was the father. This did not depend on the fact whether the parents were divorced or not. And in one case it was an ex-wife, a sister and a colleague. The father and the sister however appeared on all cards still even if they were described as rather problematic in one or the other way.

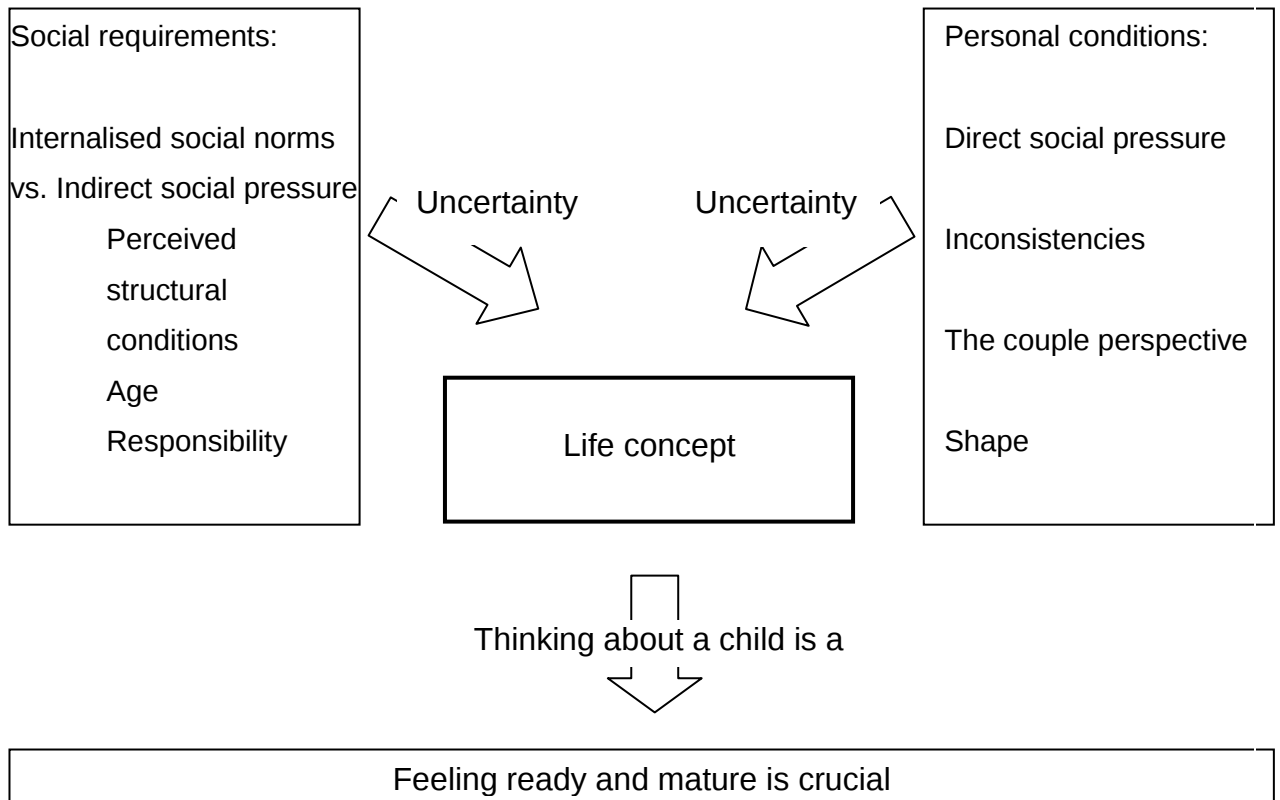
The “life concept theory”

The “life concept” elaborates how people deal with important and huge life course transitions with regard to fertility. The approach is based on qualitative interviews with Austrian women and some of their partners regarding their fertility ideas. The author wants to show how people reflect their potential child bearing behaviour. Many elements are important for this behaviour and they

interact and influence each other. The author will show how individuals perceive their situation and what influences their thoughts about a possible behaviour. The theoretical concept – shown in figure 6 – changed quite tremendously over the research process and developed slowly to the concept as it is today. In the appendix the author shows some stages of the development.

In this approach it is assumed that people have a life concept which helps individuals to navigate through their lives. The life concept consists of wishes and ideas people have about their lives. Children are one of these big and important ideas. The author does not want to speak here about intentions, as already argued because intentions are considered as rather clear. The “life concept” however is not a clear idea of the future but is changing often depending on circumstances and experiences someone makes. Wanting to have a child or to stay childfree is an important element of the life concept. Which role someone wants to take in the future and how life should change or should stay the same are the elements of this category. Because this category is the core category of this theory it is connected with all the other categories, which will be explained in detail below.

Figure 5: The life concept model:



In the life course approach fertility behaviour is defined as something that is embedded in external conditions – like social-structural and internal conditions – like individual capacities. These conditions can be stable or dynamic; so fertility needs to be understood as an interdependent act of a multidimensional process (Huinink and Kohli 2010).

Additionally, it is assumed that there is some kind of social requirements – so to say the external factors even if the author would not call them external – and personal conditions.

These two factors are important and influence the individual life concept. On the left hand side we have categories which all can be described as social requirements. These are elements that are given and strongly connected to the society one lives in. As a consequence people have to deal with them. They affect their life concepts in several ways.

The category “internalised social norms vs. indirect social pressure” explains which social conventions have been perceived by the interviewees. These rules are guiding individual behaviour and shape the life concept in a rather strong way. What is accepted and expected in a society and more precise in a social group is very important for the own ideas. It is assumed that norms are internalised and function as a guide for behaviour. The data point in the direction that these internalised norms create indirect social pressure. Especially when one wants to act differently to these perceived norms indirect social pressure is perceived. It is described rather often that no matter how one would behave s/he would feel social pressure because it is impossible to fulfil all social expectations.

The “perceived structural conditions” are important because they define the acting scope in which a person can act. Because a person perceives only a special range of possible acting alternatives her/his acting is limited to them. Especially the working, living and financial situations are very important and strongly connected to individual life concepts. These factors are often the reason why people change their life concepts, because also the perceived conditions change. However, these elements are in the category internalised social norms because social norms seem to shape the ideas about what one wants to have and how the conditions are evaluated.

One’s own “age” and what one should have achieved at a certain age is driven by shared images. In their life concepts, individuals have rough ideas about the ideal age for having children. Women are stressed by their own age. Especially those above 30 worry that they will fail to implement their life concept in time. Men are much more relaxed about their age, because they think they can postpone parenthood even longer than women. In all interviews, the woman’s age is more extensively discussed than that of men.

The issue of “responsibility” is presented in a gender-specific way. Whereas females describe that responsibility guides their behaviour, males narrate that responsibility is an issue that will evolve, once a child is born. In both cases

responsibility is a very important issue. All these elements and how they are perceived effect the own life concept.

On the right hand side we have so called “personal conditions”. These are elements that are connected with personal experiences. Here, social interactions with others play a very important role. In particular the partner is the most important person regarding the issue of childbearing.

“Direct social pressure” describes social pressure that is perceived from others; in many cases from close individuals who question the individual’s behaviour. Especially when the pressure is against the own life concept people realise and narrate it as unpleasant. However, dealing with direct social pressure was described as easier compared with indirect social pressure.

The category of “inconsistencies” describes that rather often conflicting norms are perceived and that especially women have the feeling that no matter how they act they will lose out in any case. Everything should be perfect in all respects before one decides to have a child and also with a child which makes the decision very difficult because this can only lead to a contradiction.

The issue of fertility is one that needs to be discussed at least with the partner. “The couple perspective” describes all the problems connected with this necessity. At least all interview partners in this research agreed that they realise the need to communicate with their partner regarding this issue. Because both partners do have a life concept the adjustment of these two is very crucial. Partners can have similar ideas or different ones. However, all interviewees agreed that the issue needs to be handled together, even if actual communication about it is very seldom the case.

The category “shape” describes experiences that people have during their lives and these of course shape the life concepts intensively. This begins with the own childhood but continues all the time. What people within the social network experience or witness is very important for their own life concept. These experiences can lead people to want something in a similar way or to decide

that this experience is something that they do not want to make.

All these categories can create or less often reduce uncertainty; an issue that affects the question of fertility a lot. To make a decision is not easy but when uncertainty is high it gets even more difficult.

Considering the issue of fertility seriously it needs to be understood as a process that often needs time. It was described as an idea one needs to get used to. Very important in this respect is the fact that oneself as well as the partner need to “feel ready”. Here, the author talks about the inner readiness to take over the role of a parent. To feel grown up enough and to be ready to fulfil all the requirements individuals perceive to be essential with respect to fertility is described as something one needs to get used to. From this point of view the readiness is crucial for the decision to have a child.

Additionally, the author has to say that gender-specificities, as well as many similarities connected to the issue of fertility have been found. The author is now going to describe the categories and their connection to each other in detail.

1.18 The core category - Life Concept

The author wants to describe the category “LIFE CONCEPT” – which is the core category – in somewhat more detail. It covers the fantasies, the ideas and the wishes that show how life should ideally look like. The author goes in line with the understanding that a life course is a continuum where individuals look backwards and forwards while making experiences (Elchardus 1984). Future ideas shape the life concept, however, the life concept does not need to be understood as a concrete plan. Monnier (1989) has assumed that because people constantly overestimate their future fertility they likely have only a possibly future in mind, rather than expressing a well thought strategy. The life concept needs to be understood as a concept and not as a concrete plan as too many things are vague and not clear and further development will affect the life

concept. Additionally, we can assume that people consider distant future events as abstract ideas considering fertility as the joy a child will bring. Only when the event gets closer individuals are more likely to focus on concrete issues like costs and time issues (Dommermuth, Jane et al. 2009).

It can be argued that mainly individuals with higher education may plan their lives. A quantitative study has shown that childless people who stated that they want to have a child within the next five years were significantly more successful when they were higher educated (Testa and Toulemon 2006). With this data one cannot say who will be more successful, however, we can say that all individuals in this sample, no matter how high or low educated, have an idea about how life should be in the future; they all have a life concept.

Many researchers have concluded that for most people parenthood and family are not questioned because they are a central element in life for them (Richter 1995; Schneewind, Vaskovics et al. 1996, Goldberg et al. 2012). This has been also shown in the qualitative research of Borchardt and Stöbel-Richter (2004). Their interviewees discussed and considered the question when to have a child but the principle fact that one wants to have a child was not in question – it is a fixed part of their life concept. Also a qualitative research in East Germany has shown that in this part of Germany children belong to a normal life course. People did not make a big deal about conditions or consequences compared to people interviewed in Western Germany (Bernardi, Keim et al. 2007). In East Germany compared to West Germany people have considered children more a biographical matter of course which was not so strong connected with financial or personal issues. However, the authors of this quantitative study came to the conclusion that in general it can be said that most of the young people in Germany want to have children one day (Goldstein, Kreyenfeld et al. 2010). Stöbel-Richter and Brähler (2008) have found that children are still a relative stable aim in life that even increases during the life course. In this sample two women and one man make it clear that they do not see a child as an important element in their life. One couple can be identified as undecided as several elements are pointed out that hindered them to have a child. All other interview partners in this sample want to have a child in the future.

The desire for a child can change over time. It has been assumed that this desire is a combination of long-term goals and current elements (Stanford, Hobbs et al. 2000). Also in the narrations it is found that some people changed their desires depending on many different elements.

The women and men in this research want to have accomplished certain things and several conditions should be more developed before they want to have a child. The interviewees have very precise visions of what the ideal conditions for having a child would look like (Fliegenschnee 2006). Scholars have shown that people want to create fundamental basic conditions for a life with a child before one decides to have offspring (Stöbel-Richter, Beutel et al. 2005). In this research men refer to their actual situation and how this situation is or is not compatible with a child; they present the ideas and wishes of their partners as very important. For both it is true to say that in their narrations the emphasis is not on the conditions, but on the wish to have ideal conditions, and that they come close to the personal life concept. These ideal conditions are connected to internalised social norms. Perceptions of the future can be very different. In this category the different elements of life concepts are shown.

One wish that is uttered is that the surrounding conditions should be settled by the time childbearing is realized, to have the best conditions for the child (Fliegenschnee 2006). To have jobs and to earn enough money so both partners can enjoy a good life is a very clear and comprehensible wish. The conditions should be as good as possible because with a child a new period of life begins. Consequently, until individuals have the feeling that the conditions are not ideal, the postponement of their fertility plans is very likely. Today, it seems that the conditions that are wished for are becoming more and more demanding. Because people tend to have many ideas and wishes for the future the realisation of all is difficult. The question of how one will manage to satisfy all ideas is in most of the cases not answered. When so many elements are considered it is possible that an ideal solution is not likely to arise. However, in this sample women present themselves as responsible individuals who extensively try to consider all elements, to get close to their life concept.

“Well I mean, I do think about how I will manage all this so that it will be o.k. for me, and the way I imagine it.” (Nadine, female, 28)

This is an issue that causes uncertainty because too many elements are unknown and in most of the cases they are not in the hands of the individuals. In general, ideas about the future are very theoretical. They are dreams of how life should be but they are not cost and benefit calculations. The future is too uncertain to make good calculations in this respect and there are too many elements to consider. Men in this sample narrated differently about their ideas concerning life with a child, at least they do not discuss so many obstacles as women do. Borchardt and Stöbel-Richter (2004) have argued that women consider children as an issue that affects their whole life concept whereas men consider children as only affecting parts of their life. This can be one reason why males have not so many ideas about life with a child compared to women. Women realise that they are stressed by these issues, however, this is due to the fact that in most cases they need to make plans because they will take over the care responsibilities at least for a while. The interviewees worry that their life concepts might not come true and that they might not have the possibility to live their lives the way they would like to. This was especially noticeable for women who want to have children. If they do not have the feeling that they will reach their aims, their uncertainty rises.

“You see, this is my fix and I don’t know if (my ideas) are realistic, and I don’t know which part of it I should drop to have, let’s say, half of the things I want to have.” (Silva, female, 30)

Although the ideas about ideal conditions and situations may differ, all want to meet their ideals as closely as possible. To know that some things will not be ideal makes them worry (Fliegenschnee 2006a). Liefbroer (2005) has found that it is more important for women to feel generally secure than it is for men. In this research we cannot conclude for whom security is more important, however women connected several issues with uncertainty. The life concept of how life with a child will be is, to a large extent, connected with worries. They mention

their fears that dreams and wishes might not come true or that they will not be able to provide the future that they imagined.

Uncertainty about the future with a child can make it difficult to find an acceptable solution. If one wants to come close to the life concept, however, many issues are unclear; one strategy to avoid the issue is to postpone childbearing. Women as well as men want to offer their children the best opportunities. However, in this sample men often presented their life concepts not so intensively connected with worries. On the other hand men narrate sorrows women do not touch. They fear that they aim for the wrong things. Like that their ideas of upbringing are not adequate or that they will make the wrong decisions or that they will not be able to care for the child in the right way. They report a rather huge uncertainty connected with their own ideas.

Worries that are connected to the life concept have been presented differently by gender. Women worry that they will not get what they want whereas men fear that their ideas in general are not the best. During the interviews, fears and uncertainties are spontaneously touched upon many times while narrating many different issues. The interview includes a question on people's fears with regard to children. Only few concrete answers are given with regard to this question. This reinforces the hypothesis that fears are something subconscious. In other research it has also been found that all interviewed female participants have many ideas and wishes about their future and how their life should look like (Goebel 1997). Quantitative research has shown that women in general have more conditions they consider than men. Especially the readiness of the partner, financial safety and their own employment conditions as well as the quality of their relationship are of importance (Huinink, Schröder et al. 2008). In this sample it appeared that men refer very much to the opinion of the partner. In the narrations it appeared that they switch several times between their ideas and the visions of their partner.

Women on the other hand mention the ideas and wishes of their partners rather seldom. These are mainly considered when the couple reports one or the other topic of discrepancy or when the timing is considered. One very important issue

regarding postponement of fertility which is mentioned in all of the interviews is the topic of work and career.

Both men and women consider work as a very important element in their life concept no matter their education. Scholars have pointed out that people today not only work because of economic necessity but also because people want to work; this is especially true in better paid and interesting jobs (Hakim 1999). Women do think about their own employment situation much more than men. As scholars have shown frequently (e.g., Liefbroer and Corijn 1999; Buber 2001; Kreyenfeld 2004; Hotz et al. 1997), the professional career is a very important issue with regard to postponement of fertility. Here, it is the fear of forgoing the possibility to find an interesting, well-paid job with a child. Not only needs the man a stable and safe workplace but also the woman. Both need to be ready and need to feel safe to start a family – this fact makes decisions even more complicated. Jackson and Berkowitz (2005) have found in their research that the typical behaviour in the US of men and women is to work first, then get married and only afterwards have children. This concept is even more consistently followed by men than by women. In this case the timing of fertility is strongly connected to both working situations. In this research, the career of the woman, or at least the work she will do in the future, is an issue that is considered intensively. However, Hakim (1999) has argued that highly educated women do not automatically put career before family life. We cannot say how it is for all women, but in this sample we have less educated women who are much more career-oriented than academics. Seeing work as not that important element in life or at least not as the most important one seems to make the wish to combine motherhood and work easier. In this sample none of the women and also none of the men narrate that they want to stay at home with the child for too long. Nobody of the sample wants to present his/her life concept as reduced only to childcare and household; an issue that has been also pointed out in a study in Poland. Also there women stated that they do not want to be only housewives (Mynarska 2009). Working is seen as an important element in their lives.

Considering how the issue of work was presented, one can say that men on the

other hand do not talk so much about their own work with regard to their future children, mainly if they consider parental leave seriously. Work seems so intensively linked to a man's life that no matter if they consider children or not they do not have the need to connect their ideas about fertility to their work.

Interestingly, one idea which is discussed – nearly by all interview partners – is the issue of parental leave of the male partner. In a qualitative study in Vienna it has been found that women narrate about the financial issues as a reason for the decision who was taking parental leave, however, the crucial point is the individuals' wishes how to live life – so most of the interviewees followed their own life concept (Neyer 1998).

“... I would like that he also takes parental leave, but we will see ... I mean if it [a child] were to ‘happen’ now surprisingly, this would not be possible so therefore I would like to postpone it for some years (laugh) ...” (Isabella, female, 30)

A woman presents a clear picture and ideas about her life but also about the life of her partner. In her vision, her partner should take at least some parental leave. However, for the interviewed woman's partner, this would not be possible at present, so she prefers to wait and hopes that in the future conditions will be different and her ideas can materialise (Fliegenschnee 2006). This holds true also for others. Interviewed women say that ideally their partners should also take parental leave. In the literature it has been argued that financial conditions are the main argument when it comes to the question who takes parental leave (Scambor and Neumayer 2006). Studies have shown that in better educated couples with more earnings more men take parental leave; at least for some time (Buber, Berghammer et al. 2011a). Additionally, it has been shown that higher educated people have a higher agreement about parental leave of the male partner (Kapella and Rille-Pfeiffer 2007). It has been assumed that in these units it is no problem to forego some money even if the man earns a lot more than the woman (Scambor and Fasshauer 2006; Scambor and Neumayer 2006). In this study women see their partner's parental leave as a benefit for their partner and children. They want that their children will have a better

relationship with their father than they had to their own. Different to these interviews a qualitative study several years ago in Vienna has found that women have rather negative attitudes about their husbands being with their children and dealing with them as well as with the household. It was rather often assumed that the men would not be capable to take care for the children well (Neyer 1998). However, in the cited study individuals with children were asked whereas in this sample only childless individuals are interviewed. A quantitative study in Austria comes to a similar conclusion and has shown that around 40% of women do not want that their partners take parental leave and the same percentage of men does not want to take it either (Riesenfelder, Sorger et al. 2006). In contrast to these findings in this study the male interviewees point out that taking parental leave would be a desirable scenario in their life concept. Of course, we have to bear in mind that not all partners were willing to give an interview and some of them are leading a rather conservative life. The men who gave an interview, all consider parental leave to some extent as a possible option. Here we can assume that the picture of a modern man who is also responsible for caring issues is at least socially desirable or that the interview partners consider this picture as something the interviewer might want to hear. However, some are very clear about the fact that parental leave is a valuable and important issue for them.

“For me it is crystal clear that I want to take half of the parental leave, because this is important for me” (Günther, male, 29)

Some of them like this man are very sure that they would take parental leave but most talk more about it as an ideal situation. As also others have concluded that parental leave of the father is often only a desirable scenario because the percentage of fathers who are for some time responsible for their children is increasing only very slowly (Seward and Richter 2008). The men who consider their own parental leave seriously and work in a field where normally no man takes such decision talk a lot about their career and how such – admittedly interesting experience – would affect their future career. They have many concerns and point out that this decision would depend from the situation at that point. Very similar to the female interview partners the sorrows to miss good

working opportunities are mentioned. The ideas about parental leave are close to reality when women will take the main part of the leave. However, in this sample there is also one couple who considers that the man could take a longer parental leave than the woman and one couple wants to share it equally. All the others consider only a short time if at all.

Men in the sample narrate the issue of parental leave in a rather passive way as something that is not in their power to decide. They point out that the situation is very relevant and that the job circumstances are the crucial point. They do not talk like it is their decision but rather they are the prisoners of the situation. Not only parental leave most of the issues connected to fatherhood and especially connected to decisions are presented by men in a very passive way. This will be discussed again later. Considering the political side it has been argued that women are still considered to be the ones who will take parental leave and mainly take care for the child (Mesner 2006). The perception of parental leave is presented gender-specific, whereas women present it as something they have to take, while men point out that it would be nice to take it. Women do not present their own parental leave as something beneficial, as so many worries are connected with this issue and no woman thought about the possibility not to take parental leave. This point will be discussed later again. As the author has shown in 2009 only 5 percent of all people who got childcare allowance were male. This shows parental leave in Austria is still a female issue. It can be assumed that other mechanisms are stronger than the idea of being a father at home. However, during all interviews it is pointed out that in principle also the father taking parental leave would be the ideal scenario. This is discussed, but not often considered seriously, because facing many obstacles. Other research has shown that fathers are willing in principle to stay home for some time and already that matters a lot for couples (Seward and Richter 2008).

One point connected to finances as well as to social norms is the issues that people want to offer their children very much. Both men and women narrate about a life with a child where the child can have all the comfort it needs. They want to offer their future children as much as possible. When they wait longer until they have children the more they are financial stable and the more they are

prepared and the more they can offer their child.

This idea of offering children much is highly connected to social norms and will be discussed again. The issue of education, which has been often mentioned in the literature, is an important element as well. It has been shown that the level of education hinders the transition to parenthood for women as well as for men in a study about the Dutch (Liefbroer 2005). In this study all interview partners want to finish their education, and only afterwards children are considered as an issue. People want to have everything in order to somehow minimise the risks when stepping into a new period of life.

Not only one's own conditions and ideas are of relevance but the situation and the perspective of the partner as well. Because the author mainly focuses on people around 30 with higher education and only younger lower educated individuals very few were still in education. Being in education and having a child is described by the interviewees as irresponsible. Many of the issues in this category are strongly connected to the category internalised social norms. Especially when one wants to finish things people are rather strict in this respect. Several things should be concluded before a new life can be started. Without that the interviewees are sometimes not even willing to talk about future plans. Things that should be finished can also be issues that need to be clarified and people want them to be solved. Like the decision where they want to live in future.

Not only education but also other difficult details need to be clear. Finishing one thing means also being ready for something new. To have a child is a very new part in life so many feel that things should be finished and clarified before. Acting according to their own interests is much discussed by both genders. Some have the idea to wait for some time so that their aims will be reached and a child will be welcome, however, until some of their own objectives are not reached a life with a child is not preferred.

“At the moment, moment it would of course so to say hinder reaching my aims a little bit” (Walter, male, 35)

The own person and their aims are often presented as something that hinders fertility. To lose freedom and independence is an issue which is discussed. Liefbroer (2005) has found in his research that young well educated females and males in the Netherlands highly value individualisation and consequently have tried to avoid the far-reaching commitments of family life. Also in this research freedom is valued high – at least in a special age range. Men refer very much to the issue of individualisation and point out that they are aware of the fact that with children they will lose their freedom and would have to give up their independence. They report that they are afraid of not being able to fulfil their needs when having a child. A child constrains freedom and being ready for this different phase in life is crucial.

Having a child means to place another person in the centre of interest and this of course reduces personal freedom, an issue that men presented as central regarding the fertility question. Also other scholars have concluded to decide for a child and become a parent today is a complete break of one's biography. Especially for women it means to forgo many things that constitute the modern world, like independence and self-dependency (Beck-Gernsheim, 1997). Interestingly, in this study only males complain about the future lack of independence. A finding that has been also shown in a qualitative study in the US where males saw fatherhood menace their free time (Henwood and Procter 2003). Women in this study realised difficulties for their working possibilities or their financial independencies but do not narrate about losing freedom like men do. The perception which part of life a child will effect is gender-specific, whereas women mainly discuss that children will affect their working life, men consider that they will reduce their individuality and their leisure actives.

Already in the seventies it has been found that college boys talked more about money and costs and the loss of personal freedom, fulfilment and satisfaction when asked about their ideas regarding their future family lives, whereas women have talked more about love and happiness (Hoffman and Hoffman 1973). Also in this research it is visible that the issue of freedom connected to children is differently discussed by gender. However, women in this research do

not talk much about love and happiness. One can hypothesise that for women much has changed since the seventies whereas for men only a little. In any case, a child would bring changes and this is not always seen as preferable. The child will be the person that will be in the centre of interest and the own aims need to be neglected to some degree. This can create worries.

“Considering reaching my aims it would be difficult just now, I really think this would be a matter of concern because I would not reach them.” (Martin, male, 33)

The freedom of an adult life without having to take other persons into consideration will then be pursued. An issue that has been also found in a qualitative Australian study and in a research in the Netherlands: especially young people want to enjoy freedom and want to settle themselves professionally but also personally (White 2003; Rijken 2009). With a child the focus of attention shifts from oneself to the offspring. Bergnéhr (2007) has found in her research that decisions about family planning cause stress and anxiety. In the focus group discussions it was made clear that people want to concentrate their lives on themselves and do what they want before they are willing to have a child. In this research women and especially younger ones talk more about the fact that they want to experience several things before becoming a mother. However, they have wishes to do things but they do not talk about losing their freedom. Their own needs are not an issue that is discussed, like we have seen with the males. That the topic is raised in connection to their work will be shown later. Women in this sample, additionally, do not consider the fact that another person will be in the centre of interest. Sometimes they narrate that travelling before a child is born as an element of their life concept. These are also well accepted arguments concerning postponement of fertility. People should make all things they want before starting a family. They want to experience several things before the “big cut” will be made.

The interview partners narrate that they want to do things which are simply easier without children. The timing of children during the life course is

considered in detail. Miller and Pasta (1994) have found in their surveys that, having enough time to adjust to marriage, enjoying life with the husband and dealing with financial issues before having a child were the most frequent used arguments considering timing. To enjoy the partnership is also narrated in this study and is an argument that is accepted within society.

In this sample many interviewees argue that the idea to live a life without children is seen as not preferable. They argue that children are a part of their life concept; a life without children is simply not their wish. Other research has shown that individuals who want to have a child view children as a necessary element in their life and they are convinced that children are the greatest joy (Mitchell and Gray 2007).

“For me this belongs simply to life. For me the fulfilment of life is to marry and to have kids, this old fashioned, conservative, conservative way of living.” (Denise, female, 24)

Children are rather often described as an element that does not need to be achieved immediately, however, that one wants to have at one point in future for sure. Höpflinger (1997) has argued that it is often very difficult for people to explain their fertility wishes and the advantage to have a child; especially in a society where children are connected with emotional values. A child is often such a clear and important issue that the reasons for a child are not narrated only the fact that people want to have them because they belong so naturally to the life concept. In this sample for most of the interviewees, children are a crucial part in their life and they argue that a child will bring a huge change. Many things will be different once the child is there, which is often seen as a welcome scenario in which something new can begin. In general, in this sample not many interview partners are indifferent about this issue. However, when they are not clear which way they want to choose they decide not to have a child for the time being with the knowledge inside that there is still time to decide later. Other interview partners are rather unsure if a child would fit in their life concept, and some are rather clear that they want to stay childfree.

For interview partners who point out that children are not of importance also their life concept plays a role. They argue that a child simply does not fit to their plans, ideas and their life today.

Well, they are at the centre of interest then, which means the whole life really changes by 180 degrees, and I feel so good in my own life that I don't want to change this (Karin, female, 32)

A child would influence their life in a quite tremendous way and this would mean that they have to change their habits too much. What others value, that life will get a new drive with a child and will become different is what they do not want in their life concepts.

In a big qualitative research in Australia it has been found that women who want to stay childfree their lifestyle and that they do not want to change anything was mentioned to be the reason (Carmichael and Whittaker 2007). Also here this is an important argument. One can argue that children are simply not an element or aim in their life concepts. Especially the personal desire for a child is necessary and the interviewees explain that this is what they are missing. The wish to have a child and to become a mother or a father is simply not there.

„I have never felt the need, so, when you give me a baby .. I just try not to drop it.“ (Liane, female, 33)

The interview partners who point out not to intend to have a child argue not with rational arguments. To have no desire holding a child cannot be considered as a rational argument against a child. The author had expected that people will argue against children with their careers or because of the missing money. However, what is visible here is that they are very similar to those who want children, only the other way around: the former group also states that the wish for a child is the crucial point, but in their case they are lacking that wish. Having a child and becoming a parent is obviously something that must follow a strong wish. The feeling and the desire need to be there. One woman refers to others who forecast that she will have the wish for a child when she reaches a certain

age, however, also this she doubts.

In literature it has been often mentioned and also shown that there is a positive correlation between intended childlessness and a career plan (Philipov, Speder et al. 2006). Surprisingly, in my sample women who point out that they do not want to become a mother do not talk much about their career. One even narrates that she wants to have a half-time job when she is fifty and enjoy her life. They talk about their jobs as something that they like but that is not dictating their lives. This is very surprising because they talk in the same way about their jobs and career as being one element in their life concepts as people who intend to have children. The author does not want to say that there are no women who put their career before having a child – an issue that has been also confirmed in other studies (Carmichael and Whittaker 2007). However, the interview partners in this research simply have other arguments than their work.

“I do not feel a need (to have a child). And if I should feel there is such a need, it would be imposed on me from outside. (...) but when I sit down and listen to myself ... there is nothing.” (Liane, female, 33)

The need and the desire for a child are simply not there. The author assumes in this approach that the desire for or against a child is the driving force behind fertility behaviour. There can be people who are not sure how important their desire for children is, however, if they act or not depends on exactly this. Also other research has shown that women can have or cannot have the desire for children and that this drives their lives (Meyers 2001). Carmichael and Whittaker (2007) have also found that some women do not feel the need to become a mother, they simply reject the maternal role, pretty close as described in the example above. Parenthood in Austria is still an element of a normal biography. To stay without children has to be argued because people expect a different behaviour (Borchardt and Stöbel-Richter 2004). People who want to have a child are not that much questioned compared to people who choose to stay childfree, at least in the perception of the interview partners.

Women who have a rather clear preference for staying childfree narrated that it

is difficult to talk about the issue. They have the feeling that they need to explain themselves even if they have difficulties to do so. To become a mother or a father is seen as the normal life concept by all interview partners. Because they act differently they have the need to explain their behaviour not only during the interview.

In the literature and also here it is assumed that fertility is a matter of decisions. On the other hand, one interviewee points out that the decision for a child is not actually a decision, because one needs to have the desire for a child and if one simply does not have it then there is not much one can do for or against it. In another study it has been shown that males who are very work oriented tend to stay childfree and focus on their job (Schneewind, Vaskovics et al. 1996). The author has to admit that she has only one male in my sample who wants to stay childfree at least for the moment. However, also he does not argue with his job or other rational arguments:

"There is still now at the moment no need to have a child." (Thomas, male, 32)

We cannot conclude from this one man how all men react and consider this issue. We can only say that he presents his opinion to stay childfree less clearly, compared to the women who are much clearer about their ideas. No matter how the couple wants to live in the future attitudes for or against a child have to be discussed. However, he is not that clear and points out that a child is simply at the moment no issue and he refers a lot to his partner.

Whereas women refer very much directly to their feelings and point out that they do not feel the need to have a child, this man only points in the direction to stay childfree at the moment. Additionally, he makes the connection to his partner, while the women clearly talk about themselves. Again here we can see that men in this sample refer very much to the opinion of their partner. Also other research has shown when women report that they do not want to have any children, a quarter of their partners are unsure about their own wish (Berrington 2004). The author does not want to say that there are no men who have a clear wish for or also against a child as there are interviewees who state their wishes.

But the one man whose partner does not want to have a child is not so clear about his idea. Quantitative studies have shown that childless women report a stronger wish to have a child than men (Stöbel-Richter, Beutel et al. 2005). One can hypothesise here that in general women are the decisive factor regarding the fertility decision than men.

Unlike the last examples in this sample for most of the interview partners a child is a very important element in their life concepts; some even talk about the idea of adopting a child. In this sample we had some gender-specific views in which men had more difficulties with the idea of adopting a child. Biological children are seen as closer to oneself. Some of the couples have talked already about this issue and they narrate difficulties regarding this topic. How the couples will decide on the issue of adoption cannot be answered here only that the idea of adopting a child is not considered as an easy one.

The household is an issue women do not want to manage by themselves. Quantitative studies have shown that in Germany two thirds of the housework are done by women only and one is shared equally (Goldstein, Kreyenfeld et al. 2010). In this sample most of the interview partners are eager to show that they share responsibility in this respect. Women mention that they are afraid that with a child this issue will be their own concern. They are proud of their equal relationship and do not want to lose this later in life.

In West Germany it has been shown that with a child women reduce their participation in the paid work force and men their household chore. However, also when women work full time their male partners often do not participate much in the housework or with the children (Helfferrich 2001). Very much in line with these findings another study in Germany has shown that most of the males work full time and a quarter even more than that. Once with a child 44 percent increase their engagement at work (Helfferrich, Klindworth et al. 2006). In other research it has been shown that women described a rather emancipated future whereas males were more ambivalent which part they will take (Borchardt and Stöbel-Richter 2004). Beck-Gernsheim (1997) has argued that the equality question is exclusively focused on the issue that women try to adopt a male

behaviour. She has concluded that this only ends in the result that women have now a double burden of family and work. A scenario the women in this sample want to avoid. Not to lose what they have already acquired in their partnership is part of their life concepts. In this research as well as in other qualitative research it has been found that gender equality in connection with children is only mentioned by females. In an Australian study they have found that males perceive more traditional gender roles as positive (White 2003). In this study this is not the case, however, to worry about the loss of equality is only a women's issue. Also other studies have shown that this is mainly a women's issue (McDonnell 2011). In a qualitative study in Vienna it has been pointed out that women are the driving force to imply equality in household and childcare tasks (Neyer 1998). The literature has assumed that especially the lack of gender equality is the driving factor for low fertility. Women today do not want to be reduced to home and children and should not be treated like that (Tsuya and Oppenheim Mason 1995; Neyer and Rieck 2009). McDonalds (2000a) has pointed out that media and the government should support women to get gender equality. But he also highlights that men should realize that they risk their descendants if they do not change their roles within families.

"Building a nest" and preparing everything in advance makes it easier to cope with a child in the future (Fliegenschnee 2006). Some want to live in the countryside, however, before that can come true they need to save money and find a job in a rural region. When this may come true is very uncertain. Where to build a nest and start a family seems crucial. Often people talk about the place to live as if such a decision is irrevocable. This means that the decision needs to be made very carefully. To have a child is described by some as becoming sedentary and therefore is connected with their place of residence. In line with the assumption of the life course approach the author shows that people are guided through their lives by ideas such as "taking one step after the other", or "finishing one thing before starting a new one" (Fliegenschnee 2006). Many things need to be clarified and finished before they think about having a child. In their views with children many things are not possible, therefore, it is so difficult to decide for a child because so many different things need to be decided and ready. Sometimes it is described as a clear sequenced process.

“... well, it should be like that: ... I should be settled in my job to some extent, so that I know when I come back I will still have all the possibilities. And yes, so, financially, because for our apartment, we have a mortgage, and that should be paid off first.” (Elisabeth, female, 27)

Here, it is more described as a stepwise process or a sequenced process. The literature of the life course approach often talks about the sequencing of the life course and also that these sequences are shaped normatively (Heckhausen 1999). An issue that the author sometimes observes as well. Like finishing one's education or an important project, being settled in the job, finding a good and adequate apartment and only then the issue of childbearing can be discussed.

However, these steps change all the time and are often not that clear and a good and stable planning is rather difficult. Some scholars argue that the ability to plan one's life depends on a relative stable and certain future. Something that is not given today (Settersten 2011). However, even if this is the case people try to plan and act according to their life concepts even if they face a lot of uncertainty. As the author has already shown the future is unsure and this is discussed during the interviews. Nobody knows what the future has in store, but if the situation is already bad nowadays, people will delay their fertility plans. As Kreyenfeld mentions in her paper, not only the current economic situation has an impact on fertility but also the way, in which people judge their future (Kreyenfeld 2005). However, future requirements are difficult to assess. The worry of losing things they have worked very hard for - such as chances on the labour market or the standard of living - also came up during the interviews and is in fact uttered by women and men. Especially when they think about their small luxuries they have created in their lives they do not want to lose it. A child would mean to have less money because for many in their life concept not both will work full time and this can possibly reduce the standard of living.

However, the worry about the financial situation is not the only element that is important for women as well as for men but also the health situation of mother

and child. If the woman suffers from health problems, the question regarding the best possible support for the child is very important (Fliegenschnee 2006a). Interview partners narrate that they are afraid that their children might not be healthy. However, this issue is mainly brought up by interview partners when the woman suffers from health problems (Fliegenschnee 2006a). That a child would not be healthy and especially would be handicapped is very often mentioned by men who are afraid about such a perspective because this is something they are afraid of.

Yet, interviewees knew that being too afraid to have a child would mean to live a life without children. Gerson (1985) has noted in her research that women fear the negative consequences of remaining childless. For them this means being socially stigmatised, lonely in old age and missing a major life experience. Also in this research both women and men explain that not meeting their life concept and staying childless is something they are afraid of.

“The topic of being unable to have a child is, of course, an issue. One that people are afraid of—well I am also afraid of it.” (Manuela, female, 27)

The rational reaction of being afraid to be physically unable to have a child would be to try to have one as soon as possible. This holds true for women as well as for men. The younger a woman or a man, the more likely she is to get pregnant. However, people postpone childbearing to a higher age even though they are aware of these facts (Fliegenschnee 2006a). They fear that it can simply be the case because of biological reasons or that their partner is not sure enough about the idea of having a child. In the literature it has been stated that motherhood is often a part of the self-fulfilment of a women (Velde 2011). However, in this research also male state that one day being a father would be a deep wish.

Because both need to have similar life concepts, differences about ideas of the future make it often complicated and can produce worries. When a couple cannot agree on several ideas interviewees worry that they will not get what they really want. Uncertainty about what will happen in the future and how

things might turn out is a very intense state of mind. It is very difficult for the interviewees to explain their feelings toward parenthood. The issue of uncertainty and fears comes up regularly but is not easy for the interviewees to talk about (Fliegenschnee 2006a).

Talking about feelings is not easy and finding the right words why someone behaves in the way s/he does is often hard. The topic of fears often comes up during the interviews in different ways. Especially if their job or financial situation is concerned, uncertainty among women but also of men are high (Fliegenschnee 2006a). Similar attitudes have been found in other studies. Ranjan (1999) has found that the increase in uncertainty about the future income could lead to the postponement of fertility decisions. In Germany, in 1992 financial uncertainty had a significant and negative effect on childbirth, while in 1996 employment-related uncertainty had a significant and negative effect on childbearing (Bhaumik and Nugent 2005). The literature discusses uncertainty though mainly in the form of economic uncertainty. In this research, the topic is more diverse and not limited to financial aspects. Fears of men and women are presented differently. It has to be mentioned that all interviews were conducted before the economic crisis in 2008. One can assume that especially fears connected with financial aspects and future scenarios have been even increasing during the last years. However, recent calculations have shown that the economic recession has not left visible marks on the fertility trend in Vienna (Zeman, Sobotka et al. 2010). This is a hint that fertility cannot be so easily linked with economic circumstances. However research found that strong economic concerns perceived by women reduce fertility (Hofmann and Hohmeyer 2013). The economic crisis had not the same effect in each country and the social status, the party and the age need to be considered as well (Goldstein, Kreyenfeld et al. 2013).

1.18.1 Social Role

One very important subcategory of the category life concept is how people perceive their future identity and role. Some scholars have argued that individuals express their identities through role selection and how they perform

roles (Mortimer, Staff et al. 2005). As the author has mentioned in the theoretical part of this thesis, McDonald (2000a) considers gender roles as the most important factor when looking at fertility. He argues that in societies with a low level of gender equality and rather traditional perceptions of gender roles fertility rates are very low. We will have a closer look on this assumption and see that also during the interviews a lot is discussed about gender roles and conflicts connected to them.

Hoffman and Hoffman (1973) have written in the seventies that motherhood is the major role in a woman's life. Already when they are children they fantasy that they will become a mother. Adulthood and motherhood was strongly connected at this time. Today we can assume a more ambivalent connection between femininity and motherhood. We can see a change in our societies where the post-adolescent phase is prolonged. This refers to the phase in which people are no longer adolescents, and not adults yet (Vester 2009). Because the concept of motherhood was much more differently presented than the concept of fatherhood in this research, the two perspectives will be described separately. Men think about their roles as fathers and describe their personal development in connection with children. However, to be grown up is for both sexes today not necessary connected with children but somebody with a child is definitive considered as adult.

Especially the well-educated men want to present themselves as persons who aim to be a good father. In their view a good father is not only responsible to support the family financially. They discuss that they want to be part of the development of their children and want to care. The own children shall grow up nicely and the men see themselves as crucial parts in the education and the care-taking. The interview partners point out that they want to be more than the "bread winner men".

It has been argued that men today do not want to be solely responsible for the household income (McDonald 2000a). In this research men want to point out that they do not want to be reduced to this and want to participate in the growing up of their children. However, even if they want to care not only

financially they report that they will be mainly responsible for the household's income. When we consider what they say about their life concepts we can see that ideas concerning the future life of men are mostly discussed regarding the framework conditions and not with regard to their potential role as fathers. Men in the sample present no clear picture about their role as a father in comparison to their female partners who presented in detail their role in a family in the future. It is very vague and unclear. Some even have the feeling that their life will not change too much once they are fathers.

Men only narrate that they do not want to be reduced to the earner, however, how exactly they want to participate is not discussed. What they want to do and how they want to make a difference compared to the only "bread winner fathers" is left out. They do not report any ideas how they will be an active and caring father. Merging these two roles is not considered as a problem but simply assumed to be necessary. Also men who really express the wish to take some parental leave talk rather shortly about their role of a father compared to their role of a worker. They do not describe to see a conflict in these two roles. They have vague ideas and want to be at least an active father. It is not clear how they define being an active father or being there.

Scholars have argued that today, there are no clear norms how a father should behave (Seward and Richter 2008). In the literature it has been stated that men mainly reject the old description of a father, who is only responsible for the financial wellbeing. Males point out that they actively want to participate in taking care for the children. But the acceptable level of involvement remains much less for fathers than for mothers. Even if the ideal picture of fatherhood has changed the male participation in domestic labour is still very limited especially when one compares it with the sharp increase of female participation in the workforce (Henwood and Procter 2003). It has been concluded that being a successful adult, for men is still very often connected with their work identity and only very few define themselves as fathers in the first place (White 2003). Because the author only interviewed childless couples the author cannot compare this with this findings directly, however, we have seen that males have not many ideas about their role as a father. We have to consider that in

Austria fathers who do not participate in child care are seen as traditional and not modern. The interview partners were rather eager to point out that they want to be the modern type of a father. Being active and participate in all things regarding child care are mentioned quite regularly.

In literature it has been concluded that women have a rather realistic expectation about consequences of children whereas men assume rather ideal children (Rijken 2009). Considering this data one can agree on this statement. In an Australian qualitative longitudinal study with males and females interviews have been made before and after the first child was born. Nearly all men had planned before the child was born to be involved and to get emotionally attached. However, they underestimated the amount of time this would take. Only one male really participated in the caring responsibilities and reported the more he was involved the closer he got to his son. The others had the idea that being a good father means being there. They referred to playing football or fishing. Because a new born child has different needs this left the males helpless as they did not knew what to do because they missed guidelines or role models. They postponed their ideas of being a father because of their unrealistic expectations (Barclay and Lupton 1999). We are also confronted with the issue that males have not a clear idea of what caring means and describe themselves as the person who will play and have fun with the child. Because only few role models of men taking parental leave exist, men do not have many ideas about how to deal with babies. It has been pointed out that this strongly depends on the work place and the profession of the men (Neyer 1998).

In another Australian qualitative study many interview partners reported disappointment about the way how they were fathered. With a father who was not only absent but also not interested in his children. Interestingly, in this study that did not lead to a reflected handling of the topic because most of the male participants preferred a rather traditional division of duties with family and work (White 2003). In a qualitative study in the US with males it has been shown that the ideal picture of a father was highly connected with attitudes like caring, participating and nursing. Good fathers share responsibilities in domestic life as well as with their children. It was pointed out that nearly all males favour this

picture of a good father. Bonding with their children was seen as something preferable and being only the bread-winner was dismissed. Such images and discourses so the conclusion of the researchers have a normalizing function (Henwood and Procter 2003). This is also very intensively presented in this interviews. In another qualitative study it has been argued that men have a clear idea about their role of a father. They expressed that they do not only want to be the provider but as well as being emotionally involved (Henwood, Shirani et al. 2011). However, in this research - compared to how the females have presented the roles of mothers - the author has to conclude that men have no clear picture. Also in the cited studies it was not explained in detail what this all means and how men will succeed in being more than just bread-winners. They further argue in this study that men were in a conflicting situation between being only the provider and wanting to care (Henwood, Shirani et al. 2011). In this research it is found that the conflicts males present are much less compared to the conflicts women perceived. There is a change in the perception of new fatherhood. However, even if the males are eager to be these new fathers there is evidence that it is difficult to achieve. They point out that they want to be present also during the day and not only during nights and during vacations.

“Many fathers simply miss it and then you see that the kids are happy when the father comes home but how the daily routine looks like, especially during vacation what some friends narrate that they are completely overchallenged because they simply do not know what normally happens.” (Florian, male, 28)

However, even if they realise that they want it differently they do not narrate how they would act. Additionally men argue that their work is absolutely crucial for them. To bond with the child seems to be connected to the amount of time and energy one has for the child (Barclay and Lupton 1999). Some interviewees make connections to how their parents dealt with the issue of fertility. To be different than the generation before is not an easy task.

Women presented the issue of being a future mother in a rather intensive way. Concerning the last generation, female interviewees compare themselves with their mothers, like when they have gotten their children.

The mother seems to be, to some extent, some kind of reference point. Also other research shows that women compare their own fertility behaviour with their mother's. It has been argued that not only males but also females do not have good role models because their mothers faced completely different circumstances, so young women have to make their own decisions and this is very difficult (Beck-Gernsheim 1997). If the mother worked really hard for the family this can be a picture which should not be followed. Modern women do not want to be oppressed with becoming a mother. They still want to have their personal freedom and possibilities for actions – even with offspring. Very often the decision against a child is based on the fact that the woman does not feel ready. Women want to develop their own personality and this can be a reason to postpone the fertility plans (Beck-Gernsheim 1997). In the narrations it is pointed out that they want to do it in a different way than their mother.

“I grew up in another parent relationship insofar that my father was working and my mother was at home it was that was another distribution of roles, like we will have it and to revise and to say yes it will be different.” (Bianca, female, 30)

Mothers provide a role model for their children; even when this is not consciously done. However, the person by her/himself is evaluating it and this has a huge impact on the decision for or against children (e.g. Gerson 1985). Interestingly, the male interview partners do not refer to their father, neither in a positive nor a negative way. They talk about other males today and how they are solving the issue of fatherhood but no narrates about their childhood and the role their father took and how this affected them.

In this study an issue that is also connected to the ideas of fatherhood is the question of taking parental leave or not. The author has already discussed the issue as an important part of the life concept. Males present parental leave of a man as something that would increase their reputation and so their self-esteem as a father. Men describe a father who is taking parental leave as a person who gets much admiration and that people will envy and admire this man.

In a qualitative study in Vienna with fathers who took parental leave for some time it has been shown that often their partner was the driving force to take parental leave. Additionally, rather often their parental leave was also connected with changes in their work place or their new orientation regarding their career or bad working conditions. Only seldom the wish to take care for the child was pointed out to be an important reason (Neyer 1998). Males present themselves in a very passive way that they cannot do anything against their situation. Whereas only very few point out that they actively reduce things like going too much abroad. Men make clear that they need to care about their career but they narrate it in a very passive way. In that way they manage to show that they would prefer to live the ideal fatherhood but are bound to the conditions.

In a quantitative study it has been shown that in principle more than half of the interviewees agreed with the statement that a good father should take parental leave. However, in the same study nearly none of the respondents had taken parental leave (Kapella and Rille-Pfeiffer 2007). The author has also in the interviews a principle agreement that taking parental leave would be ideal, however, in most of the cases a BUT is attached. Whereas for women it seems to be beyond debate to take parental leave, at least for some time. Only the question of how long is an issue. Women showed in their narrations the pattern that they will take leave, once a child is there in any case. Studies have shown that motherhood is still a very important concept for a female identity, however, how to implement it was not automatically given but needs to be decided (Engstler and Lüscher 1991). Women discuss their future roles intensively. They worry that their life will change quite tremendously. They often point out that they do not want to change too much. They have the wish that things which are important today will be still relevant in the future. One reaction to all these uncertainties can be to postpone fertility for some time. At least then there would be the chance that time will change several things and uncertainty will be reduced and this offers the chance to get closer to the own life concept. The image of being a mother seems to be a negative one. Women are rather eager to point out that they do not want to be reduced to this role only. Whereas in the perspective of males, they do not show difficulties with this. They are on the

other hand eager to point out that they do not want to be reduced to work only. However, as it is presented, men refer to less problems or at least to less considerations with adopting the role as a father.

“Well I would at least plan this and would ask my friends to remind me again and again that that I am not only a mother but that there is also a life beside that.” (Karin, female, 32)

The nightmare of this interviewee is to end up as a mother who does not see anything else but their children. Gerson (1985) has already found in the 1980ies that domesticity was no longer structural and ideological supported as it was in the 1950ies. Also in this research it appears that mothers who are extensively concentrating on their family life are not seen as favoured future role models. Some interviewees refer to examples from their social network and the sadness and the frustration that comes along with being a mother. Also other research has shown that women who do not want to have children, refer to women who had it very difficult in life. No positive role models who had a good life without children are mentioned but negative ones who suffered as mothers (Carmichael and Whittaker 2007). A phenomenon we have also seen in this research. The participants do not tell us that they want to stay childfree because they know a person who did it this way and this is desirable. However, they report that they do not want to end up with 5 children and completely overworked and refer to friends who used to be strong and have a good life, but after having children, they are now suffering and have a rather sad life.

To be only a mother is presented as not enough today. A woman wants to attend herself to more issues not only to the fact that she is a mother. Also other scholars have pointed out that as long as the role of a mother is expected to give satisfaction or benefits, women will choose to become mothers. In their research in Japan the results suggest that women's attitude toward family have changed. But the social setting was still the same, men gave priority to work and their conveniences were more important than those of women. This discrepancy makes women shy away from family formation in Japan today, so the author's conclusion (Tsuya and Oppenheim Mason 1995). Exactly this

seems to be missing. The prestige of being a mother seems to be not very high in our society or at least in the eyes of the female interview partners. As a consequence women need to be very sure that they want to have children otherwise they will get frustrated, so the fear. Her role and her involvement are discussed by both genders. Scholars have argued that some women had no other possibility than staying home so they tried to identify themselves through their role of a good mother (McRae 2003). The interviewees point out that they do not want to be only a mother and get their feedback only from this part of life. Being only a mother is presented as not enough today.

Being a mother is connected with a rather static and not dynamic life; motherhood is not seen as something that one wants to achieve. If it is the only thing one can be proud of than it is not enough. Additionally, today's women do not want to get their self-esteem only from being a mother. In the literature it has been argued that motherhood has a very bad status and is only connected with much work, tiredness and no acknowledgement (Burkart 2007). Also other research has shown that motherhood and the role of a mother as well as taking care of children was very low valued by society (Schneewind, Vaskovics et al. 1996). Or that children are seen as little social value in our market oriented society (McDonald 2000a). However, in this research it is different: not the child but more the role of being a mother is connected with only very little value. Scholars have mentioned that motherhood is not perceived as an open-ended question but as a fixed notion that is shaped by the respective culture. It can be concluded that motherhood is perceived as a problem in Western culture (Oakley 1993). Women should submit themselves to conservative family ideas and make a lot of sacrifices but at the same time in liberal economies women can achieve great rewards (McDonald 2000a). What counts in life are not your children but what you have achieved somewhere else. Being part of the labour market has been also associated in another research with acknowledgment, personal development freedom and money (Goebel 1997). The interviewees perceive that being at home with the children is not enough and one will be blamed by others why s/he does not want to make anything out of her/his life?

Women discuss the burden and consequences of having a child a lot. They do

not assume that staying at home and caring for the child will be a pleasure and fun. They assume that having a child all in all will bring pleasure but not taking over the role of a mother and not the fact that parental leave could bring joy. Hoffman and Hoffman (1973) have mentioned already in the 1970ies in their paper that women quoted more negative consequences of children for their life than men. Also in West Germany women perceive childbearing to be a bigger burden than women in the East (Engelhardt 2005). Also here, being a mother is connected with rather traditional ideas whereas having a career and earning much money is connected with being emancipated and modern. Similar to men most women want to live according to their picture of a modern woman. To decide for the rather traditional mother's role is therefore not easy. To be a modern woman and to have children is described as rather difficult. Especially regarding work and finding the balance between being at home and at work is narrated intensively by women also in respect to their role perception. In some of the interviews, the women explicitly say that they do not know which role they should prefer because in any case they will lose something. Scholars have argued that today it is still difficult to combine work and motherhood and in knowing this women tend to delay having children because no matter for what they decide they will experience disadvantages (Huinink and Mayer 1995). What it means to be a good mother is also not clear to them. No matter how one will behave others will judge.

"I have the feeling as a mother today you cannot please everybody in society in general. Those who are only at home are only at home and those who are working ... are not at home." (Manuela, female, 27)

Which role a woman wants to take on in the future is an issue that is connected with many uncertainties. The issue that women face conflicting requirements will be discussed later in detail. To decide consciously against the role of a career woman of what some were also dreaming off is a rather difficult decision. It has been somewhere else argued as well that being a mother today is on the one hand very challenging but on the other hand unappreciated, it is connected with high demands and the doubt that one is not competent enough to be a good parent (Burkart 2007). In the interviews women showed the tendency to

talk about the role of a career-woman and the role of a mother as an either-or decision. The question what is more important to be a mother or to be a career woman is very difficult to answer. They want to be good in what they do. They do not want to do only some job and not care if they work well or be only at home but do not offer their children much. To be good – or even perfect – at both roles is described as very difficult to imagine. Bergnéhr (2007) has pointed out that people today want to be good at work, have a good working relationship and should be loved by their friends and family. To fulfil all this roles perfectly makes life really complicated. This makes it difficult to decide in favour for the mother role. Scholars have pointed out that women struggle when trying to choose between the two roles as they often prefer to combine both but do not know how (Beets 2011).

“...I am 34, this means this is exactly the, that peak where you have to say O.K., now I will concentrate with full power on my career or, errrrr, planning a family.” (Daniela, female, 34)

Here she speaks about her career in very dynamic words compared to a family which is connected with a full stop. She has the possibility to get on in her career with full power, or to pause and start thinking about having a family. Scholars have argued that paid work has increased in its importance to individuals (Kroismayr 2003). Burkart (2007) has argued as well that today, women perceive the alternatives between career and being childfree or starting a family with the high risk of ending as single mothers. In this research it is presented that a career is valued by the society more than motherhood. The effort and work of a mother is not valued high (Klepp 2004). A comparative quantitative study between Germany and France has shown that a rather traditional view on gender stereotypes had a positive effect on the wish to have a child in both countries, whereas a negative attitude toward employed mothers had only in West Germany a negative effect on fertility wishes. That has shown that in France it is simply not in question whether a mother is working or not, both acting alternatives are either way accepted (Ruckdeschel 2009). However, in East Germany a country with a tradition of working mothers, women have a rather pragmatic approach of combining employment and children (Boehnke

2009). In which way men participate in child care seems to be more negotiable. The participation of women is more seen as a given fact, and connected with a lot of effort and exhaustion. The positive joy a child will bring is assumed to be in the future when children are older.

Women look at the care responsibilities with much respect and point out that these are hard work and often not fun. Especially the early years are associated with loss and the fact that you have to give much. Scholars argued that motherhood got more demanding over time and that this can be connected to the lower birth rates (Crespi and Fontaine 2012). Work and the caring responsibilities seem at least in the head of women and men still rather traditionally distributed. It has been stated in the literature that for a man combining labour market career and family is self-evident. For women this is not so easy to combine because they want to make everything properly but additionally fear to become overburdened (Beets, Schippers et al. 2011). In their narrations the interview partners refer to others in their social network, to people who are much more burdened with their children.

Some scholars have argued that today there is still a strong social norm in favour for motherhood (Huinink and Mayer 1995). Women who argue that they do not want to have a child narrate social pressure to have one. On the other hand women who want to become a mother do not see the value in being a mother any more. The role of a mother is perceived to bring burden and stress, whereas the role of a father is described as fun and enjoyment. However, women point out that a child will also bring joy to their life even if they have to face many obstacles and if having a baby means a lot of exhausting work.

Considering the caring responsibilities in the perspective of the women it is described as a burden, but they still favor the idea of having a child. Men presented the caring responsibilities more as a gift and connect it always with joy and satisfaction. In their views it would be great to take parental leave or to play with their children, as this is described as being a lot of fun.

Men also consider the role of their partners. They realise that women are often

under pressure and criticise that. The right timing is very important because the danger that a woman will become a frustrated mother because she has sacrificed too much is mentioned. Furthermore, they realise that the role of the man is not very often questioned whereas the role of the women is very much.

Not only what role one wants to take on in future but also how a child will affect the personality is mentioned. The author has already discussed that the reasoning for a child is often difficult to state. This issue has also been revealed in a study in Finland in which pregnant women could hardly find an answer to the question why they wanted the child. Their ideas were based on desires and emotions (Sevón 2005) which are emotional needs (Borchardt and Stöbel-Richter 2004). Other studies also point out that the personal development is connected to childbearing (Goldberg et al. 2012). Also in this research it was pointed out that a child is a personal development that one cannot substitute. A child will change one's life and this is seen as an excitement that should be experienced. Men perceive children as being fun and they will have the chance to identify their own child inside them again. However, for several interview partners a child is simple a part of their life concept that should be fulfilled in any case. A child is seen as the only and logical further development when all other steps in life have already been taken, like having a stable relationship and being grown up. Without a child such development is simply not possible. However, because it is a big step to change the whole life style such a decision needs time. One needs to be hundred percent sure that this is the right decision and that s/he is ready for such a step. Also in this research it appeared that the reasoning of having children is connected with emotional satisfaction, however, in most cases people have difficulties to answer the question. Rupp (2005) has argued that today women and men face different biographies than in the past. However, family and offspring are still for most of them high values. Family is still for most individuals relevant and hardly substitutable (Huinink 2001). Having a family and children is described as enrichment in life that one aims to achieve. Both men and women point out that children will be a challenge and will increase the meaning of their lives. They will change their way of thinking and will help them in their personal development.

Even if it is difficult to decide for the role as a mother, a child is seen as something that will enrich life. However, in the sample for women it is difficult to decide for motherhood because it is too tightly connected with traditional role models. Men paint a rather colourful and bright picture of being an active father even if their ideas about fatherhood are not very clear compared to women's perceptions who paint a rather clear but dark picture of motherhood.

Another issue that is connected to parenthood is the fact that one can consider her/himself as a real adult. To be a father or a mother means to be really an adult who takes over responsibilities and does not care for her/himself only. With a child you have to take over responsibility and to have a new view of life and the world.

„I am very curious about the new role how it will feel when you are the adult.“
(Florian, male, 28)

To have time for their children and to offer them things, being active together with them is mentioned. In a quantitative value study it has been shown that the female partner is still the preferred person who should take care for small children. Even if above 50% stated that they believe that both the father and the mother could take care for the children in the same way. Who should take care especially for babies is, however, the mother (Kapella and Rille-Pfeiffer 2007). Also other scholars argue that child-care is still a matter that concerns women (Crespi and Fontaine 2012). How people think about themselves is shaped by the social group they are embedded in. Changes in social identity are assumed to happen gradually and not abrupt because the assumed changes need time to build (Emler 2005). An issue also in this research visible. The picture of a modern mother or a modern father is something one wants to live up to. However, because often role models are missing individuals have problems in visualizing the new role well. For males in this study it seems to lead to very vague ideas and very general statements and for females to a rather pessimistic and negative picture of motherhood. Scholars have argued that only if women are satisfied with the conditions that shape their role as mothers the fertility rate will increase again (Hakim 2003). Based on the findings it is not

assume that with improved conditions fertility rates will increase automatically. To modify especially the bad image of the maternal role would change more from this point of view. However, the structural conditions are important. The next category will deal with this issue.

1.19 Social requirements

The author come now to the category of social requirements. By this the author understands elements that are more or less given but how they are perceived is very closely connected to social norms. How people perceive their situation is extremely driven by the fact that one lives in a special environment and social setting. Acting possibilities are only perceived because the shared meaning of the symbolic world is assumed.

1.19.1 Internalised social norms vs. indirect pressure

The author wants to refer to symbolic interactionism, where the “generalised other” is discussed. The “generalised other” describes that one is able to look at oneself from the perspective of others (Richter 2001). While doing this an individual understands what kind of behaviour is expected and appropriate in this special social setting. This assumption is very helpful in understanding the following category.

Further, the author wants to refer to the concept of “internalised norms” (Elias 1982) that is already discussed in the chapter about theoretical considerations. Here, the assumption is that internalizing social norms have the effect that people will follow these norms without social pressure or sanctions (Horne 2001; Horne 2003). Even if social pressure of others is assumed not to be needed, data in this research point in the direction that people pressure themselves to behave according to these norms. This is named “indirect social pressure” because not a direct interaction with sanctions was observed but individuals reflecting on their own behaviour. Indirect pressure is marked by the fact that it is not directly connected to another person but rather to a norm of how people think they should behave and try to follow this. The author defines

indirect pressure as pressure that is realised although nobody directly asks you to do something. During the interviews it is very difficult for the participants to locate the source and/or to put the finger directly on the issue. In this research the author assumes that internalised norms lead to indirect pressure that guides the behaviour of the individuals. Additionally, a distinction is made between indirect pressure and direct social pressure. Direct pressure on the other hand is defined as pressure that one realises because people ask a person to behave accordingly. One knows who makes the pressure and in which way one should behave, this will be discussed within the category “direct social pressure”. When it is considered that social norms are connected to social pressure then it is likely that also internalised social norms are somehow connected to internalised social pressure.

What is considered as valuable and what is therefore expected in a society is an important factor for fertility behaviour. Bühler and Philipov (2005) have argued that individuals belong to, and are embedded in, a social environment. People know how the social network will react towards a child and if they will have support nor not. Van de Kaa (1996) has mentioned that fertility and family formation are strongly influenced by social rules. Members of a social group share the same symbols. This helps people to act and react in ways which are accepted by their community.

It has been argued that social pressure is a very complex issue and difficult to study with survey interviews (Namboodiri 1983). Using here a qualitative approach a lot of issues that are connected with social pressure are found and hint toward social norms. The author has found that social pressure can be created by the partner, the family, friends or other network partners, via general information, the perceived conditions, the own life concept, or by the models presented in the media.

Blossfeld and Huinink (1991) have argued that there exist normative expectations in society and that they guide people’s behaviour. Accordingly, young people who attend education should not enter parenthood. Finishing education is an important step into adulthood which may further lead to

parenthood. In this research interviewees realise that their acting is limited by rules and they leave only a very restricted framework of action and not much variation is seen as possible. There are pathways realised that are connected to an appropriate life course. Being in education or while making the first experiences at work and at the same time becoming pregnant is disapproved (Sevón 2005). The author will address this issue again. Women's mothering might be regulated by norms as well. They need not be too young or too old, have the "right" economic conditions and should be in a certain social position, like having a partner (Woollett and Boyle 2000). The way individuals orient themselves, which opportunities and constraints they face and which strategic action they take is very closely linked to a specific time and space (Mortimer, Staff et al. 2005). Beck-Gernsheim (1997) has argued that norms connected with getting a child are constantly increasing. A child must be born in absolute optimal conditions. Individuals who do not want to act according to what is "normal" face difficulties and will be questioned. It is argued that people do not perceive much support from society if males take parental leave and because of this lacking support they do not feel good to take over this role.

Men as well as women complain a lot about the missing understanding for caring males. Individuals perceive that neither politicians nor people seem to enhance the situation so that men will have better circumstances to take over also more caring responsibilities. Several female interviewees complain about this, because the current situation means that they will have to carry most of the responsibility and often feel alone. People who behave rather traditionally are seen very critically by several interview partners. A woman who points out that she does not want to have a child argues that this is one reason not to have a child. Because the male partners are not willing to take an equal part, regarding caring responsibilities.

No matter if female or male all interview partners who have life concepts which are different from the "normal" one in Austria complain that it will be rather difficult to act. Mothers who do not stay very long at home are seen as uncaring mothers whereas fathers who want to stay at home are seen as milksops. Scholars have argued that also men would like to put more focus on their soft

side and spend more time with caring, however, feel forced to adopt a rather traditional male behaviour (Beets, Schippers et al. 2011). Also these interview partners refer to perceived internalised social pressure to act like all do, because this will not provoke much reaction.

Both sexes complain a lot about the lack of understanding and report this makes their choice even more complicated. In general, qualitative research has shown that people who know someone who displays a more innovative family behaviour like cohabitation in Japan have a more positive attitude toward these forms of behaviour. They further have assumed that this refers to social pressure towards traditional family behaviour (Rindfuss, Choe et al. 2004). An argument the author can agree on. The social pressure to act as it is “normally” done is perceived by all of the interview partners.

If one does not want to act like all the others do one reaction is to wait until time passes and things are getting more like one wants to have them. Several interview partners complain about missing acting opportunities. When they are younger they have the hope that several things will change, however, the older they get the more frustrated they are.

„General I have the feeling that on the one hand there are still very traditional values but we wait always for day X that is not coming.” (Manuela, female, 27)

Again and again the issue is discussed that their own behaviour would not really fit into the perceived norms that are present in Austria today. This creates uncertainty about one’s own behaviour and how others will judge it. Considering social conventions one or two children are the norm. Exactly these numbers are reported. To have no child or more than two is described as unusual. Three or more children are only discussed as a possible scenario. People refer to the perceived norms as guide of their behaviour. In the perspective of women they have the possibility to choose between different models of living. They can be housewives and mothers or career women or something in between. Because there is no clear role model, it can be difficult to decide which role fits best. Additionally, this freedom to choose comes with the conflict of deciding. Women

describe the feeling, no matter how they decide, they will come in conflict with others and also their ideas in their life concept. This is already discussed within the category “social role” in detail.

In this interviews men showed the tendency to perceive less social constraints than women regarding fertility plans. Women narrate several guidelines which they need to follow, which makes their life more complicated. The ideal man would have as much pressure as the woman because he would have to afford as much as the woman regarding his work and his family life. However, in the eyes of the interviewees men are much easier excused out of their duties at home than women.

As a man somehow you have it easier, because still in this conservative Austria people assume and want to assume that the women will take the caring responsibilities and needs to take them.” (Florian, male, 28)

Being the bread winner and then being nice to the children during the weekends is described by the interviewees as totally accepted within society. Even if men in this sample tried to stress that their life should look different. Here, it has to be mentioned that some of the partners did not agree to an interview and most of them were described by their female partners as hard working. It is likely that many of these men have rather traditional life concepts regarding family and duties. As well the issue that the interviewer is a young academic woman and interview partners also tried to please her.

Liefbroer and Billari (2009) have found in their research that men hold to stronger norms regarding family behaviour than women. They have concluded that women are more aware of the fact that people can end up as e.g. single mothers easily today and should not face disapproval. How to act and to react heavily depends on the social environment one lives in. In this sample highly educated women narrate that they perceive several norms that show how they should behave. Or at least they narrate more difficulties to fulfil their internalised social norms because they are contradicting. We can assume that people who have somewhat higher education are forced to think about their acting and the

consequences intensively. In this sample lower educated also consider much about the right timing but it is narrated in more detail and with much more indirect social pressure realised by the higher educated ones.

Another expectation which is rather intensively discussed is the fact that people should offer a child extremely much. Also in other qualitative research this has been found (Kapella and Rille-Pfeiffer 2004). One issue in this respect is that the perfect parent has to be “always there”. This requires much time and a lot of passion and energy. Normative expectations especially on motherhood are very high. Rupp (2005) has discussed that financial issues are considered and that standards of having a child are very high. Not only that the surroundings should be prepared perfectly also when the child is there only the best things need to be bought.

Having and buying status symbols, like special clothes, a townhouse or a special pram, are connected with the image of being good parents. Parents need to offer their children everything and in the best ways. Also in Poland couples have been interviewed and agreed on the fact that children are nowadays very costly (Mynarska 2009). The expectations of childless young people about a life with a child are extremely high and this makes the decision to have a child to a difficult one. Because internalised social norms indicate a picture of many things that should be there or need to be as good as it gets.

„For me the most important purpose in life is that I say my aim is now my two children to be able to offer them something to care for them and to be always there for them.” (Denise, female, 24)

In this quotation that is about the reasons of having children the data refer to social norms. Not only that she wants to have two children the most common family type she also wants to take care of them and to offer them a lot. Also the idea that a mother needs to take care and to be always there is expressed. Expectations about parents have risen and parents ambitions to provide the best quality care needs some kind of economic stable foundation (Huinink and Mayer 1995). economic conditions will be discussed again.

Another norm seems to be that young adults are constantly reminded to plan their own life and to manage it properly (Settersten 2003). On the other hand they are aware of the uncertainty of the future. Because women perceive that everything should be perfect. This picture can be communicated and created by the media and shape one's own ideas (Knoblauch 1996).

K: "There are simply always enough good reasons against a child, and I think so much fear is produced from outside ..."

I: "Where do you think these fears come from?"

K: "Well, from the media, from politics and from what others are saying."
(Daniela, female, 34)

This woman is afraid of having a child. She is worried that her life concepts will be very difficult to pull through. She has the feeling that she should consider this problem very carefully because an intelligent woman should know which risk she is taking. Even if she can not exactly locate the source of her pressure, it is unpleasant for her and this is, to some degree, influencing her decisions.

Women showed the tendency that they fear about their future life because they explain that the media create a lot of worries which make them think twice about their actions. In the following quotation a woman refers to "others" but not to concrete people. She argues that expectations of others who are emotionally not important to her, affect her feeling of being ready (Buber and Fliegenschnee 2001).

"I think you need a thick skin, because others may think you are an uncaring mother if you do not stay at home the whole time (...). I guess I am not ready for this, I have to cotton on to this idea so that I will have a thick skin at the time [I have a baby]." (Manuela, female, 27)

We can see in this quotation that her life concept is not like the "normal" one. This produces indirect social pressure for her, because she assumes that others will react on her behaviour. Hoping that as time passes, things will change or also that they will deal more easily with that kind of pressure when

they are older, is her strategy. But still what others say influences one's behaviour. Hakim (2003) has assumed that women are highly responsive to social pressure. This of course creates a strong feeling of uncertainty and worries. Expectations on women are that they work in their jobs or have children, and both should be done in a perfect way (Fliegenschnee 2006a). On the one hand it is narrated rather often that there are too many obstacles considering childbearing. In the literature it has been stated that today couples can also choose to be a family without children and this is accepted widely in society. However, women who point out that they do not want to have a child narrate that they have to defend their behaviour. To like children is socially expected, the interviewees who point out that children are not included in their life concepts stress that they like children and that others know this even if they also discuss that they do not belong into their life concepts.

Women in this sample who stated that they want to stay child free justify themselves during the interview because children are a part of life and valued in our society. In the traditional thinking women need to be mothers to own a special social status. Schoen et al. (1997) has assumed in their research that although children are cost intensive they provide their parents with "social capital". Because of a child people possibly enhance their status and their position in their social network can also be strengthened with a child. They argue that social capital is the crucial factor when talking about the value of children. However, this value is to some extent connected to indirect social pressure. To have a child only to gain social status was dismissed by the interview partners.

In general, the interview partners showed the tendency that much more social norms were realised for women. This does not mean that men do not face norms but connected with parenthood only very few issues are presented. The interviewees conclude, no matter if male or female, that in general men face less pressure.

In the perspective of the interviewees a child is seen as important to gain a special status, however this was only discussed for women. Without a child they

seem to be less valuable. While a man on the other hand, from this society's perspective, seems to have no problems in growing old without offspring. It is, unfortunately, not possible to answer the question why men are not that much connected with pressure than women regarding their behaviour. Several explanations seem possible like indeed, men face less pressure how to behave at least regarding family issues, have fewer possibilities to behave against existing norms, ignore the things that are expected more easily or men are simply not seen as that important regarding the issue of family. The person who takes over most of the caring responsibility faces social pressure with regard to the "right" behaviour. There are some examples in the narrations about persons in their social network who have decided to live another life than the "normal" one in Austria. However, the examples are rather limited and they point out that these people come from another socio-cultural background – like they grew up in another country - and are therefore not ideal as role models. In the following, we can see that the interview partner refers to social conditions which belong to another social setting and simply do not have value here. Acting as normatively expected is important to feel well.

„They have a three year old son and are now 28 and both already have their PhD and this is. Well they come from another country there are other social conditions.” (Florian, male, 28)

What exactly these other social conditions are is not referred to but he points out that it is impossible to take these persons as role models because of this reason. Apparently, it is difficult to transfer standards from one country to another. The social conditions are different and lead to completely different behaviour. Their frame is simply too different to the own one. Based on this it is assumed that internalised social norms show the acting scope. In the interviews there is the perspective that a family is not valued within society today. To be self-concentrated is very important and its value seems to be higher, whereas family and taking over responsibility lose ground because everyone is concentrating on his own needs.

To decide for a family with children can be rather difficult when one perceives

that it is not valued very high inside society. Some scholars have argued that people today face less control and structure (Huinink 2000). Or that there is a decrease in traditional social norms (Beck-Gernsheim 1997). However, based on the data it can be argued that simultaneously there is an increase of other norms which are guiding the behaviour. It can be agreed that traditional norms are decreasing, however, there is not a vacuum as other norms might gain more importance instead. Also other studies have shown that individuals who want to become parents feel the need to follow the norms and try to meet certain criteria like having the right age, completed education and so forth (Schwiter 2011). No comparison can be made in this research but the findings point in the direction that constraints have changed and people realise many acting alternatives. As a consequence it is likely that some norms are violated. Indirect social pressure is perceived as a result because it seems to be very difficult to act without getting in conflict with some internalised social norms.

1.19.1.1 Perceived structural conditions

When talking about life concepts we need to have in mind that people live in an environment with certain settings. A social historical influence on individual behaviour is assumed also in the life course approach (Elder 2003). Gerson (1985) has pointed out in her study that the structure has to be considered when talking about personal perceptions and options. These structural conditions are the base line for any other idea of the future. Several of the perceptions are seen as given and often as not changeable or they are seen as necessary to be taken care of, which restricts behaviour, at least in the view of the individual. This refers to social norms that show how things should be and how one should react in certain circumstances. People perceive only special acting possibilities, within the framework they live in. Because the conditions are very important for the timing, women consider them intensively and often evaluate them as not good.

Women have a rather despaired view of the future and their situation. They realise their options with a child are very limited and consider the circumstances

as crucial. On the macro level scholars have shown that countries with a low level of fertility are also those with a low level of female labour force participation and vice versa (Engelhardt and Prskawetz 2004). Speaking of the data the author has to say that in principle the issue of work is very important for interviewed women. To make a decision about childbearing the working situation of the person is necessary to consider. Quantitative work has shown that employment and fertility are parallel careers that interact permanently with each other (Willekens 1991). For interviewees it is a rather difficult issue because in the sample we have women who work in such a specific area, or in a small firm, or have limited contracts which make them stay as long as possible. Job security is an important issue when talking about fertility. However, even with staying as long as possible several women realise that a child will mean the end of their career. In their perspective having a family and a career are two scenarios which seem not compatible.

Women have started to behave like males and are successful on the job market. This creates a lot of social pressure on women – they delay child bearing to stay in the success story (Velde 2011). To have a child is one of the serious decisions in one's life-course. Bergnéhr (2007) has argued that people connect with parenthood many anxieties. One has to make a decision without knowing the consequences. The interviewees assume that they will have less time and a child will affect their relationship as well as their work. During the interviews women made clear that in their view they have to stay as long in their job as possible to be settled and save.

“There is my panic, I think I will never be settled in my job with what I am doing...” (Silva, female, 30)

Not to be settled enough means to live a life in uncertainty. To be settled seems normatively expected and this produces indirect pressure: She wants to act according to the norms, however, realises that this can be very difficult in her field. Interviewees talk for example about fix-term contracts that create worries about the future. Women pronounced the fear that with a child their chances to have and to keep an interesting job will decline. It has been found in a study in

Germany that employees with fixed-term contracts have a higher risk of unemployment. Which shows that these people face a higher economic uncertainty not only that they feel it but they have a higher uncertainty to cope with (Kurz, Steinhage et al. 2005). Burkart (1994) has argued that women forego their work related development once they decide to have a child. With a child their flexibility at work will be somewhat reduced and therefore they fear others will have more chances to have the jobs they want to have. Liefbroer and Corijn (1999) have argued that having a child will threaten the future income situation less when a relatively high position has been reached already. Buber (2001) has stressed that highly educated women try to work for some time after having finished their education to gain work experience. The interviewed women and not only the well-educated think that if they have more experience they will have better possibilities once with a child.

What they are most afraid of is not to find a good job when they return to the working world or to have no prolongation of their fixed-term contract. They feel that they will lose some kind of social status because they have worked hard to reach this position and a child will bring cutbacks. Ranjan (1999) has argued that in many countries a decline in fertility can be observed when the economic situation becomes increasingly uncertain. Job security is vanishing, in particular for young employees. For well-educated women, any uncertainty in their work relations makes them postpone childbearing (Ranjan 1999). Women but also men have put a great weight on financial and employment issues regarding their fertility decision (Neyer and Rieck 2009). Especially if the woman wants to work in a particular field or to specialise in something, couples are more under pressure to consider their actions twice. Therefore, many women remain in the working process for a longer time so as to get better opportunities afterwards. They aim to reach some rather undefined point in their career after which they will be 'safe'. In a quantitative research in Sweden it has been shown that women want to stay for two years in a full time employment until they decide to have a child (Santow and Bracher 2001). In this research most interviewees agreed on the fact that it is rather difficult to know when one reaches this point of security (Fliegenschnee 2006) or that reaching this point means to wait for too long or even forever.

It seems that having a save job means to be able to act responsible which on the other hand might be a normative expected behaviour. However, this normative expected behaviour contradicts the actual situation and this leaves women with the feeling of hopelessness. The fear of being not able to act according to these requirements in connection with work is very strong so that the issue of work came up in every interview with women (Fliegenschnee 2006a). This holds true also for women who state that they do not intent a career.

For some interviewees this is easier to talk about because it only depends on them and they have the feeling they can prepare and will manage. Some have already reached the position where they feel save enough to have a child and start to concentrate on other issues. In line with other findings we can see that the women who want to follow a rather traditional pathway seem to have fewer difficulties and face less uncertainty about their future attributes (Oppenheimer 1988). Another normative expectation seems to be that a good mother is measured by the time she has for their children and not by the quality she offers in that time. At least this is how the interviewed women describe what in their vision is expected from them. Following the normative pathway like the following woman describes it is something that brings advantages.

„Considering my job situation I would prefer part time work I think this is still the best solution you do not completely lose access to your job but you still have time for your child.“ (Isabella, female, 30)

This woman tries to show her modern side in explaining that she wants to work, however, she also wants to be responsible for and have enough time for her child. Following these role models that are present in Austria do not seem too difficult. To act differently is described as being not so easy. It is often mentioned that the dual income situation today is a necessity rather than a choice (White 2003). However, the author argues that working is something that women want to do because it is some kind of norm. On the other hand how much work is appreciated and when to return back to work is perceived

differently. It was shown in other research that employment continuity depends on the political regime. Full time employment of mothers was the highest in regimes that supported working mothers and in liberal countries with low support from the policy. This brings the authors to the conclusion that also social norms operate on the country level (Stier, Lewin-Epstein et al. 2001). One can see that there exist many sorrows connected to the own life concept. Having different ideas makes life more complicated because people have to deal with risks many of which are not known in advance (Settersten 2011).

„I will likely feel committed not to work 40 hours yes I mean I cannot say it yet how it definitely will be, but from my feeling it will be like that.” (Johanna, female, 29)

We can see that she perceives being part time employed as the social norm and doing it differently would give her a bad feeling, she seems to feel indirect social pressure to act as the others do. In West Germany that has a rather similar cultural background as in Austria: it has been shown that women who want to have children and work already face conflicts on a normative level. To work and to be a mother that lives up to the existing ideal of a mother is only realisable with difficulties (Ruckdeschel 2009). Another quantitative study in West Germany has shown that full time employment for mothers is very low; only 16 percent were fulltime employed when they had children under 16 years (Helfferich 2001). Women assume that full time work is not compatible with being a mother (Engelhardt 2005). In interactions no matter if with network partners or while consuming the media a picture how someone should behave is build. Even if we assume that there are several different life styles (Richter 2006) with different ideas to lead a good life, we have also seen many similarities. For the woman quoted above her job is very important, however, she is rather unsure that she will get back to a 40 hours position soon. She argues that she would feel guilty or that she would feel constrained to behave like the others behave and therefore stay more at home than intended. Women who work fulltime shortly after a child is born are very rare. To balance all the different expectations and to come to a solution that makes oneself happy is described as not easy.

On the one hand women reflect that they realise what is expected from them. They should work and should be good in what they are doing but once a child is there they should be ideally mainly mothers at least for a rather long time. On the other hand women report that work belongs to their life and that a working woman in general is valued high. However, not very soon after the child is born and later they should work only part time because the first priority of a woman should be her child. In the perception of the interviewed women it seems difficult to bring all these expectations together. A qualitative study in West Germany has shown that women as well as men consider a very traditional behaviour regarding fertility. Women explained that they would stay at home around three years and men pointed out to be responsible for supporting the family financially (Bernardi, Keim et al. 2007). Contrary to that in this sample are also several individuals who at least struggle with the idea to live a traditional life. How they will really manage in the end is of course not possible to say. However, they present themselves as modern individuals who want to act differently than it is the norm, and connected to that, they realise difficulties.

The norm seems to be that women are responsible once a child is there, back out of the labour market at least for some time and then return with reduced working hours. In a large longitudinal study in Germany they have shown that women pursue their career in a way that is comparable to their partner's strategy before having children, however, they were not able to follow this in nearly all cases once a child was born (Schneewind, Vaskovics et al. 1996). According to Liefbroer (2005) women expect a child to strongly influence their future career. They think their career opportunities will decline when having a child. We can see that women somehow want to reconcile the two roles and still do the work they really like. However, they are quite realistic in appreciating that it is difficult to settle in a job and have the chance to have an equally good job after having a child. It is not only the money that motivates them to get settled in their careers but also the approval by others that a good job brings. We have to consider that we are talking about women with no children yet. Things might be different if we talk to mothers. However, having a career as well as an interesting and safe job are important for the interviewed women

(Fliegenschnee 2006a).

Another issue is the job security. Even women who have a relatively stable job fear ending up jobless. Not the real situation is important but how people feel and perceive the situation. If someone has an unstable job but feels secure, this will affect his/her acting, as well as the other way round. Women perceive that they will be punished and that they will not have the chance to get a good job with a child anymore. They narrate this sorrow as a matter of fact one needs to accept with no chance of escaping as this quote shows:

“Obviously, it is very difficult eeehh for a woman to be permitted to have a child eeehh without thinking of what she will lose, I mean without being punished for it. And for me this sounds rather hopeless.” (Bainca, female, 30)

The issue of finding and having an interesting and well-paid job and how to keep it without losing too much once a child is there is raised several times. A child will hinder career in any case, so their argument. Another difficulty with uncertainty is that it is not easily understandable. Some researchers have found that in East Germany women’s childbearing decisions were affected when the women realised a difficult personal economic situation in the way that they had a lower risk for a birth. In West Germany, especially the probability that one faces unemployment affects childbearing and the impact was for females higher than for males (Bhaumik and Nugent 2005). Other researchers have found a relationship between economic uncertainty, the first birth and the educational level of women. Higher educated women tend to postpone their fertility plans when the employment uncertainty was high whereas lower educated women often respond to this situation with having a child (Kreyenfeld 2010). In this research the women present themselves according to the idea of the “modern women” who want to act responsible and the work situation is considered to be important in this respect. Interviewees point out that their job situation is one reason for postponement even if they consider their job at the moment not as optimal. Still they will have gained work experiences and they will have the feeling to have better chances with a child. Interestingly, the education of the women is not that important but their affection to their work is as well as their

need to be financially independent. Also in her qualitative study with women who returned to their paid work rather soon after their child was born, Kroismayr (2003) has argued that all had a rather strong identification with their job. However, no matter how important the job is interviewees considered their own working situation as very important regarding the question of timing. The conclusion can even be that there does not exist any right moment, because whenever one interrupts work, it will have a negative effect.

Some women in this sample describe the situation as rather drastic. When to decide for children is difficult because employment and children are in their crucial stages at about the same time (Willekens 1991). Mills and Blossfeld (2005) have argued that today young adults face a great level of structural uncertainty. Especially connected with the labour force (Mills and Blossfeld 2005). One element of structural uncertainty that creates sorrows is fixed-term contracts which were mentioned for being one important reason to postpone. Interview partners were struggling with such kind of contract no matter if male or female. They narrate that in their surrounding many people are affected by this development however, they wait until the situation is safer even when nobody knows when this will be. However, the level of security does not only depend on the contract form. It was as well argued that bigger companies increase the level of security because it is more likely to have a comeback to the old working place.

In a representative survey in Australia it has been found that individuals who want to have children put their emphasis more on a secure job and career advancement than people who want to stay childfree (Mitchell and Gray 2007). This supports the hypothesis that parenthood is connected with a lot of responsibility; an issue that will be discussed later in detail. The author shows that women can have a rather pessimistic opinion regarding their work and becoming a mother. In a qualitative study in the Netherlands several parents (male and female) have reported that career and education had nothing to do with their fertility plans because until one point in life they did not think about having a child seriously (Rijken 2009). An argument that the author cannot agree on from the women's perspective in this sample, however, it is

understandable from the male perspective of this study. Men showed a different pattern regarding their own working situation in connection with fatherhood. In general it can be said that children have a small impact on the employment of males but a rather substantial one on women in Austria (Plantenger and Remery 2009). In this project, it is an issue for those who have unstable jobs as well, like fix term contracts and men who seriously consider taking parental leave.

Especially how long they can take parental leave without being punished is discussed. Whereas for women half a year is seen as too short, men in this sample referred to this time frame as being the maximum that can be taken, others talk about one year. Again this might refer to a normative expectation how one should behave. The time out is perceived to have a maximum timeframe. Here, we can see that men also face rules of behaviour and they want to act according to them. The fear of making this experience and having to pay too much for it is mentioned.

Also other studies have shown that men's general willingness to seriously consider taking parental leave is very low. Fears of losing career opportunities are seen as crucial (Schneewind, Vaskovics et al. 1996).

"I think that then I would feel guilty that I neglect my career a bit." (Florian, male, 28)

As we have seen, women showed the tendency to feel guilty when they work too much, once a child is born, whereas men feel guilty when they neglect their career too much. This brings us to the hypothesis that women still feel mainly responsible for taking care of the child and men define themselves by their career. To have a guilty conscience needs to have a reference to something or someone. This quotation refers to the idea that a hard working person does not take a break at any time and to focus on the career. No matter if male or female a career is considered to be valuable. Especially when they work in areas where parental leave for men is not that common, they discuss it intensively. In the interviews both sexes assume that parental leave will affect their future

career. However, parental leave was presented differently for both, men and for women. Men discuss that staying at home with the child for some time would be a desirable scenario and that they would try to have some time off to take parental leave, however, they also point out that they are to some extent powerless regarding their work. They present several obstacles that are difficult to overcome. Also here different expectations of how to behave get in conflict. Even if the author can show some similarities concerning uncertainties of women and men, men in this study showed the tendency that they barely worry about their future working situation. Even those who want to take parental leave show a very relaxed way of dealing with the issue. They presented their situation, as well as the situation of their female partner as not so important, because one can deal with all issues, once they are there.

In this study not one positive element is found by the women considering childbearing and job opportunities, not even one optimistic view that a child will not harm the career intentions. Compared to the women, men presented the issue of fertility as an issue that one can solve, whereas women showed the pattern that in their view it is as barely solvable.

“But I think whatever I want to reach I can also with a family, maybe only 15 years later or so.” (Günther, male, 29)

None of the women has such a relaxed opinion about their own working situation. We can however assume that most of the men will not take parental leave even if all point out that this would be a desirable scenario. Even if the own working situation is not discussed intensively males talk about the working situation of their partners. They estimate their security and their labour market possibilities. They are aware that their situation at work will in any case influence the timing question intensively, no matter how good educated they are.

To find a good solution with which she will be happy with, is seen as very important for both. They know about their ideas regarding work and what they plan and what they are waiting for and take them seriously. We should also

bear in mind that arguments about financial uncertainty as well as job insecurity are socially accepted in Austria. Invoking them is much easier than other arguments (Beck-Gernsheim 1997). This can be a very important reason why people argue in this direction. To argue to stay longer in your job because of better chances afterwards will in many cases stop further unwelcome questions. To be ambitious regarding your job is seen as something valuable and appraised within society. This is strongly connected with acting responsibly. In a study in East Germany they have argued that young women put work even before family (Adler 2002). This is a finding the author of this thesis cannot confirm or reject. However, from the author's point of view it is a bit more complex. Women in this study point out that work is important and none of them want to be reduced to motherhood only, but also none of them puts work before children or argues that work is the reason why they prefer to stay childless. Of course in this study it is not a representative sample, however, the author argues that the issue is more complicated. To present oneself as an ambitious, modern and independent woman is simply very highly valued and therefore also shown as an ideal. However, in this study a woman does not put work before her family life, no matter if considered with or without children. This has possibly to do with the young age of the respondents (21-29) in the German study (Adler 2002). Others have argued that the career as the focal point in life is only important for a minority of women (Hakim 2003; McRae 2003). There are work-centred as well as family-centred women who focus on different things (McRae 2003). What is more important in life will be in the focus of the life concept and will guide individuals.

Additionally to work also other perceived structural conditions are discussed. Some authors have found that economic uncertainty has a strong impact on fertility decisions (e.g., Kreyenfeld 2005; Bhaumik and Nugent 2005; Kohler and Kohler 2002). There is an agreement that in general economic considerations are important regarding the fertility decision, especially in young age (Sassler, Miller et al. 2009). Financial security is also in Germany an issue of high priority in connection with fertility (Boehnke 2009). This research shows that financial sorrows are present and that individuals consider their economic situation, as well as their prospects, for the future in this respect.

Today people have the feeling that they should have set up already a lot before a child is born. There should be a financial basis because it is assumed that with a child saving will not be possible. People narrate that they feel the need to act responsible and to wait until the financial situation is rather good. However, as people mention that this is very difficult even without a child, they are concerned with a child they will not manage at all. Thirty years ago people did not have the need to be financial stable to have a child. Also because of these perceived normative expectations it is becoming more and more difficult to start a family. The interview partners do not expect an increase in their standard of living once a child is there. Gerson (1985) has argued that a child very often makes the mother economically dependent on her partner. If a couple splits up, it is mainly the woman who takes care of the children. Lesthaeghe (2003) has stressed that all indicators show that men very seldom assume any family responsibilities in this case, even if they consider their children as important. Single motherhood has increased in many European countries (Neyer and Rieck 2009). The fear of becoming a single mother is strongly connected with concerns about the financial future. The decision to have a child is associated with long-term costs and uncertainties that have a significant impact on a household's economic situation and social structure (Bühler and Philipov 2005). Long-term commitments require some stability in life and a certain economic basis (Kurz, Steinhage et al. 2005). As mentioned above, the worries about financial issues tend to revolve around an uncertain job situation and around not having enough money to survive. Considering the financial independence, this data show the pattern that women aim for a certain degree of security and want to be still independent. Their own financial independency is very important. Also other research has shown that women consider themselves as financially responsible (Goebel 1997).

Even if women are in a stable relationship, they point out that they need to be able to support a child by their own. All interviewees were in partnerships, but women showed the tendency to consider their own work and earning situation to be important for their financial security (Fliegenschnee 2006a). To be economically independent is an issue for many young women (White 2003).

The interviewees talk a lot about a good life with a child but without financial support from someone else. Fears concerning financial issues came up in the interviews, sometimes in a very dramatic way (Fliegenschnee 2006a).

“...and you don’t know if you can risk having a child or if you’ll be unemployed and on welfare at age 40. ... This is difficult to judge, can I risk it?” (Daniela, female, 34)

Some interviewed women fear that they would not be able to survive. And yet, these women live in Austria, which is a rich country with a good social security. In a study in the Netherlands it has been shown as well that in this welfare oriented state young people face economic uncertainty (Liefbroer 200). Fears in the literature are often connected with economic stress. If people have trouble earning enough to support a family, fears about the future are reinforced (Easterlin 1980). However, the author wants to point out that it is not the situation per se but how people perceive it. Also other scholars have argued that the personal perception of the economic situation is more important than the overall economic circumstances (Santow and Bracher 2001). When an individual feels able to overcome certain constraints they are more likely to form concrete plans for fertility (Dommermuth, Jane et al. 2009). Many of the interviewees are well educated, still some women fear to become poor after having a child. To have a child and not being able to support it, is properly described as a situation one wants to avoid.

Also with a child, women think that they should be able to support themselves and the child financially alone. An element that has appeared also in other research where young women in East Germany stated that they do not want to be financially dependent on their partners (Adler 2002). McDonald (2000a) has argued as well that women today do not want to depend on their partners. Having the feeling of potential financial insecurity makes women delay their fertility plans. Many women around the age of 30 have no savings and this fact causes stress. Kreyenfeld (2004) has mentioned that one reason for delaying fertility is that people want to have enough economic resources before having a child. Things should be accomplished or at least “put in order” before thinking of

building a family (Fliegenschnee 2006). This again refers to social norms which guide the behaviour of individuals; having a secure financial basis today is perceived by the interviewees as normatively expected. A comparative study in Europe shows that the evaluation of economic insecurity differs by country (Bould et al. 2012). That shows that cultural norms seem to be important regarding fertility decision. In a qualitative study in Poland it has been pointed out by many participants that financial issues are important considering fertility, however, they should not be too important otherwise people will forgo childbearing (Mynarska 2009). The issue of financial security is one that also males regarded as important.

There seems to be some kind of precondition that allows you to become a parent today. Men and women need to build up a somewhat independent economical life before having children. This is nowadays more a general rule and does not only refer to higher educated individuals any more (Doorne-Huiskes and Doorten 2011). People have the feeling they need to behave in a special way that is regarded as good within the society they live. The financial surrounding should be as good as possible to offer the child everything. This issue is discussed by interviewees, but mainly by these who have not yet settled financially. To have a child means that your life changes. And this affects also financial issues. Some interviewees think that a child means that they will have to make cut backs. Their convenient life will get more difficult and people consider this as an obstacle.

To lose the comfort that one has acquired is seen as not preferable. Others have much more concrete financial issues to deal with like paying back a mortgage that should be finished before a child is born, because afterwards there will be enough other things to deal with or to have too many debts so that starting a family life will be more difficult. Men talk not that much if at all about financial matters. They point out that they want to be prepared and save some money and be in a better financial situation as at the moment, but these arguments are not connected with real sorrows. We can assume that also some of them have financial issues to deal with; however, none of them presented it as a matter of worries. It has been found in a qualitative study in Austria that

financial arguments were named as reasons that women took the parental leave alone, however, when the women earned more this was not necessarily leading to the decision that the male partner took the leave. The financial issue is important, but the question if it is the most important one - as often implied by researchers - is the basic question (Neyer 1998).

Connected with the financial situation is the living situation. The best case would be when a couple lives in a house or an apartment that is big enough for a family even before they consider having a child. As much as possible should have been paid back from the mortgage and the living situation should be as good as possible. Several things should be finished or settled to have a better start. The perceived conditions dictate what people think and what acting alternatives they see. It is discussed that the state should have the duty to take care that people feel safe enough to start a family but this is what they miss in Austria. Future is seen as uncertain and we can assume that this feeling has not changed during the economic crises. Children will increase uncertainty and not reduce it in the perception of the interviewees. What the state offers is criticised by them. They do not see that they are supported especially when they want to live another life than the typical Austrian. Where only the mother stays at home - ideally three years - and afterwards works part time and the father is mainly financially responsible. Northern countries have much more flexible working conditions than Austria (McDonald 2000a). Of course now nearly only women work part time and are mainly responsible for family and children. "If the gender equality model of the family were to be fully implemented, these working conditions would be available to both parents regardless of gender" (McDonald 2000a, p.10).

Again, the author wants to stress the fact that the structural conditions are always evaluated by the people. Not the situation by itself but how a person perceives it is important. One can think this apartment is not big enough for a child whereas others can think the opposite. How a job or the financial situation is evaluated is in this respect very important for the acting alternatives one realises. However, even if people evaluate the situation perceived acting possibilities are shaped by social rules which guide people's behaviour. In a

qualitative study in Germany it has been pointed out that people mentioned a difficult environment and that this was the reason for not having a child at that moment, however, when these elements did not change and individuals got older they reduced their requirements (Engstler and Lüscher 1991). Research has not come to a clear conclusion which uncertainty at what point during the life course effects fertility in which way (Beets 2011). That points in the direction that not the requirements and conditions per se are the issue, but internalised social norms and how a situation is evaluated and the feeling of being ready for a child, because when one is ready the conditions seem to lose their importance. The issue will be discussed again in the category “feeling ready” again.

Engelhardt (2004) has found in her research that financial aspects are not that important regarding fertility but institutional arrangements are much more important. To combine employment and family life needs support on the political level to provide better structural conditions (Stöbel-Richter Yve, Beutel Manfred et al. 2005). Similar to these ideas Mahringer (2005) has pointed out that reducing childcare costs in Austria would increase the labour-force participation of mothers. He further argued that the quality of childcare also affects the employment of mothers in the same direction. These findings suggest that women who want to be active in the labour force need good and affordable childcare systems, otherwise they will postpone or entirely forgo childbearing (Mahringer 2005). It has been shown that there is a positive correlation between labour market participation of mothers and the availability of childcare as well as a negative correlation between employment of mothers and a structure where childcare closes before lunchtime (Wernhart and Neuwirth 2007). However, even if the issue of childcare is discussed in the literature, it is not mentioned in the interviews. None of the interviewees perceives that s/he is worried about not finding adequate childcare. An issue that is often discussed in the literature and shown to be significant why women postpone in some countries like the Czech Republic (Klasen and Launov 2006). I have to note here again that only childless people have been interviewed. The issue of combining work and childcare can be a huge one after a child is born. However, interestingly when they talk freely about their wish for a child and the conditions attached these

interviewees do not touch the issue of childcare facilities. Concluding on this the data point in the direction that social norms of how to behave are the driving force. When it is accepted to give a child in a crèche or a Kindergarten more people will do so and this will lead to more availability. From this point of view social norms are very important to focus on because they seem to influence behaviour.

1.19.1.2 Social Indicator Age

The issue that there exist age norms connected to family decisions is commonly agreed on (O'Rand Angela and Krecker 1990; Liefbroer and Billari 2009). As have already discussed with regard to the theoretical considerations of the “life course approach” it is assumed that age has a social component (Elder and Caspi 1990). Hogan and Astone (1986) discuss that there are normative expectations about the right age for life transitions, such as becoming a parent. They describe that there is some sort of age-appropriate behaviour and this is guided by norms. Dieward and Mayer (2008) define them as age-related informal norms. In quantitative studies it has been shown that age has a very positive and strong effect on the timing of childbearing (Dommermuth, Jane et al. 2009). Here, it is assumed that social norms about the right timing of parenthood for both females as well as males effect behaviour (Quesnel-Vallée and Morgan 2003). People orient themselves on others. What, how and when others act is very important for the own behaviour. This indicates social norms – how one should behave in a special time frame. To study, to work or to have a child seems highly connected with certain ages. Interviewees report that they perceive rules at which age certain abilities or experiences should be acquired. Of course there is some flexibility about the right age, however, this has its limits. Rights and duties are highly connected to age within a life circle (Elchardus 1984). The interviewees in this study also refer to their own age and this affects their acting scope.

Borchardt and Stöbel-Richter (2004) have shown in their research that women reflect about their own age and how old they want to be when becoming a mother. These women have an optimal age in their mind. They have ideas

when and how they want to achieve their aim to get a child whereas males are described as not so reflected. The author has already discussed the issue that females consider their life concept in more detail compared to men regarding fertility in the category “life concept”. Settersten (2011) has pointed out that age related ideas organise the individual life course. When people consider the right timing, their age and often the age of their partner is crucial. Because individuals have a rough idea how their life should look like they make a rather vague plan when children will be an issue. Interview partners considered their situation with respect to their own age and narrate a time frame were they can have a child and this is seen as a wishful idea.

All interviewees who are below the age of thirty are relatively relaxed and talk about their wish for a child as something they want to have in the future, however, there is still enough time to have what one wants. Even if the time is not right now and if too many things are not settled yet, women below thirty presented themselves as relaxed. Also other scholars have pointed out that delaying the fertility decision until the woman is 30 and above seems to be normative today (Carmichael and Whittaker 2007). However, interviewed women who are above thirty perceive much more stress regarding the right timing and how they will be able to have all what they want. Failing to gain the achieved goals has negative consequences for the self-evaluation (Heckhausen 1999).

“I know that I should have done more for my age I have fore sure an age problem so with the age of 30.” (Bianca, female, 30)

Some women report that they are stressed by the fact that they are already older than they want to be. Or at least they wish that they would have achieved more in this time. When their life concept includes to have more children, or to be a mother who is not too old they need to find a way to have what they want very soon in future. We can see here that this person refers to some ideal and some social norms, some level of achievement – something she does not have. This produces indirect pressure for her because she wants to follow these norms, however, does not know how to handle them. Some scholars have

argued that people today face less control and social norms regarding the 'when' to have children. It is assumed that there is emancipation from social pressure about the timing of family formation (Huinink and Mayer 1995). However, in this study it appeared that interviewees, and especially women, refer to indirect social pressure. They argue that they realise social pressure connected to age and that they are trying to relax and not to act accordingly to this pressure, however they do not know how to handle it anyway.

"This whole issue of age pressure I am taking the wrong way I know that but it is not easy to get rid of it." (Silvia, female, 30)

As we can see here this women refers to an internalised age norm and this creates indirect social pressure. She discusses the issue of "age pressure" and that it is her personal issue, that she creates the pressure by herself, however, she still sees no way to escape. The worries about the right timing and its consequences seem to increase with age. The feeling that the remaining time is shorter and shorter and that not all things will become possible might bring up more worries. However, they realise if they wait too long they will miss the chance to have a child at all.

Also other research has shown that fears about the negative consequences of never having children grow when women enter their thirties (Gerson 1985). In her study in Poland, Mynarska (2009) has argued as well that the timing when to have a child is considered and highly connected with the right age. Especially when the respondent had the feeling that time is short the fear to stay childless was mentioned. To avoid the fears sometimes it helps to ignore the issue (Burkard 1994). This is something younger interviewees explained, however, the older they get the more concerned they are. Interviewees discuss the issue of time frame and when it will be possible to have a child. Regarding the own age, the partner can also be an issue of uncertainty. When s/he does not make a clear statement when it will be possible to have children, the partner can be stressed because s/he realises that time is short.

Because they have made the experience that time is passing but not much is

changing and so they start to feel uneasy because they want to have already reached more especially when they compare themselves with others. The issue of age is discussed very gender-specific. Men in this sample consider a child seriously when they have reached a certain age. In the perception of women, 30 is a benchmark to start worrying about their fertility wishes, while men showed the pattern that this was the time when they start thinking about children seriously.

“To really consider it I have only started after my 30th birthday. This is such an incisive birthday when you have a three at the beginning.” (Martin, male, 33)

For men in this research the age of thirty is connected with adulthood and that's when they start thinking about starting a family. Women in this sample have in general already thought much about this issue and know in most of the cases what they want at that age. People orient their behaviour on others who are the same age. This, however, does not depend on gender.

When close persons decide to start a family the own time concept can be affected. Deciding about children and family is connected with the own age and the social network one lives in. However, not only close persons from the network but also other sources can make people think about their age and where they should already be. Individuals report that they compare themselves with others and that they want to live their life in a special way. When they realise that others already have clearer ideas about their life in the future and that they have prepared much more than they have, many struggle and stress that they will not be able to have all what they want. They start to make comparisons between their own situation and others who are their age or even younger but already ahead with their life concepts or have more and concrete plans how to fulfil these.

“Of course the confrontation with with some younger ones who are better in special respects or who who really know what they want.” (Silvia, female, 30)

What others who are in the same age range think and what they do function as

a parameter for most people. Often, these age guidelines are treated as an inherent feature of life, however, the author as well as others assume that it is a product of normative commitments (Elchardus 1984). Even if someone does not want to get in touch with the issue of fertility people from outside will remind him/her that this issue needs to be considered because time has come. At a special age all kind of network partners will refer to the issue. This will be discussed in the category “direct social pressure” in detail. People know when it would be appropriate to have a child. Within the life course perspective it has been emphasised that norms exist regarding the right timing and also about the appropriate sequencing of life course events (Settersten and Mayer 1997).

What people of the same age do influences the own situation and decisions (Santow and Bracher 2001). It has been assumed that the proper timing for parenthood is regulated by culture and norms. When and how to design the life course is not a completely free choice (Sevón 2005). The knowledge about the right timing is shared by other members of the same group. These so called “social clocks” are known and considered regarding the own timing (Settersten 2003). The interviewees refer to the concept of social clock and point out that one will be reminded by others that time has come to have a family, as well as people realise that they are in the right age to think about these issues. There is not only a biological clock but also a social one (Heckhausen 1999). In general, we see the pattern that even if both partners talk about their age, the age of the woman was much more discussed during the interviews than the age of the man. In this sample none of the women refers to the age of her partner as an issue of concern, even if some have a partner who is around ten years older. On the other hand the age of the women is presented to be important when thinking about parenthood. Additionally interviewees realise that the time pressure for males is not that high, and even if they still postpone it for some years, it is not a problem.

Here like with other issues regarding fertility they are much more relaxed. Men showed the pattern that they feel that they still have time. It was argued that men enjoy more freedom regarding their age and fertility. The interviewees do not refer to concrete conventions regarding the age of the father. Of course also

the father should not be too old, however, because it is a fact that in general some males are able to conceive a child also at very high age there is the feeling that only the age of the mother is important. At least that is what the interviewees refer to. Because it is biologically possible to have a child also at an older age men in this study have been rather relaxed concerning their age. Only the biological restrictions for women are mentioned.

The fact that also the age of men can increase problems regarding the fertility wish was not discussed in this study. Even if research has shown that also the age of the male partner influences survival and mental health of the child (Newcombe and Tavendale 1964). Also the advanced age of men decreases the chance of having a child and increases the risks for genetic disorders like down syndrome or autism (Henwood, Shirani et al. 2011). However, in the interviews only the age of the woman is discussed by both genders.

“That women simply have a special time frame where they can have children, reasonable and safe” (Franz, male, 42)

The author has already pointed out that the age of thirty is crucial for interview partners. Men show the pattern that they get more and more familiar with the idea of having a child the older they get. In the literature it has often been mentioned that education has a powerful effect on the postponement of fertility (Marini 1984). However, also for women with less education the age of first birth is rising. The postponement started with higher educated women and became popular also by the lower educated ones (Beets 2011). We can observe that people who have been in education for a longer time the right age of having children is higher compared to less educated ones. No matter if the education has been at university or at other institutions. The amount of time they spent in education seems to be important. For less educated ones the right time to have children starts a bit earlier. For men this seems to be very much connected with higher age. Scholars have argued that age gets more important when people get older. Having children turns into a priority the older women get, even when the other disadvantages stay the same (Engstler and Lüscher 1991). In this interview data this also holds true for men. There can even be the explanation

that some years ago they were not sure if they wanted children at all, however, this has changed quite a bit. Now they have the feeling that the older they get the greater the desire to have a child. To become a father means to take over responsibilities and give up freedom; it seems that with increasing age men are ready to accept these restrictions.

There are social conventions when people should start to think about having a family and the interviewees are conscious about that. Interviewees mention that one can be too young to have a child or too old. There are normative conceptions about good and bad timing. These are internalised and shared by the social group (Heckhausen 1999). From many interview partners it is mentioned that being a parent too early is not preferable. They refer to friends who have become parents at their age and are now overloaded or single parents. To have children too young is not seen as preferable. Also other quantitative research has shown that individuals perceive an upper and a lower age limit when one should have a child (Liefbroer and Billari 2009).

“There are very often deterrent examples of mothers who have children, a very young mother, ...so, she got her daughter with 24 ” (Silvia, female, 30)

Already the age of 24 is seen as too young to be a good mother. Age is connected with performing the mother role well. Analyses of discussions in an internet forum in Austria have shown that women perceive young mothers, who are in their young twenties as not so good mothers compared to them who are in their thirties. It was also found that only older women distanced themselves from younger ones not the other way around (Sardadvar 2005). In a study in Germany it has been found that also for men there seems to be a time frame in which it is accepted to become a father. Being too young was equally bad assessed as being too old (Helfferich, Klindworth et al. 2006). The interview partners point out that it is not a wise decision to have a child too early in life. Qualitative research has shown that women reflect about their age and when they ideally should get pregnant. Some interviewees realise that they are younger than the average and worry because of this fact (Sevón 2005). Most of the interviewees point out that being too early a mother is nothing preferable.

Not only others but also women themselves who get pregnant rather early in life –with 18 years - are seriously concerned of being too young and often consider abortion (Sassler, Miller et al. 2009). However, being too young or being too old is very much connected with the culture one lives in. In a comparative quantitative study it has been shown that in West Germany women feel too old to have a child earlier than in France. It seems that different age norms are perceived (Ruckdeschel 2009).

These are social boundaries people think someone should not exceed. Men as well as women should not be too old to have a child to be physically and emotionally healthy enough to handle the whole situation. Settersten (2003) has found in his research that people quote age limits for different kinds of behaviour like childbearing. However, these limits were different within different groups. On the other hand consequences were seldom mentioned when someone missed the named deadlines. Settersten has therefore concluded that visions of the life course are complex and flexible. When the personal timetables are close to the cultural ones it is described that development is easier and the other way around.

Scholars have argued that women who are too old are often perceived as selfish whereas males are more seen as heroic. This implies that males seem to have not such a strict age norm compared to women (Henwood, Shirani et al. 2011). Even if it is shown that age norms are much stricter and much more considered for women also men should not be too old when having a child and definitely not too young. In a qualitative study in the Netherlands the biological clock has been mentioned by older women when the timing when to have a child becomes more important, however, also males referred to their age. Not so often than the women but still, they did not want to be too old fathers (Rijken 2009). In this sample men rather seldom refer to their age; they as well as their female partners consider the age of the man as not that important.

In an East German study it has been shown that women around the age of 40 consider themselves as too old to have a child (Boehnke 2009). Other studies have referred to the issue that men have a broader age limit than women in

older age (Liefbroer and Billari 2009). To start a family one is supposed neither to be too young nor too old. To have a child exactly in this time frame was narrated as necessary, however, not as easy. In their research Huinink et al. (2008) have looked at childless women and men and their wish for children. They found that higher educated women give later birth in general and have a more flexible age norm regarding the question when it is alright to have a child. However, not only age norms regulate fertility behaviour. The author will now come to the issue of responsibility that influence it as well.

1.19.1.3 Responsibility

The issue of responsibility is a very important one. It was already mentioned to several times. Men, as well as women, mention this point quite often during the interviews, however, they present their ideas about responsibility with a different focus. Women showed the tendency to understand responsibility as something connected with acting responsibly and thinking twice about every step they take. In the perspective of men responsibility is connected with the idea that they will have to take over responsibility once a child is there. This is something that is discussed intensively, especially the younger ones who haven't reached the age of 35. One needs to be ready for a child to take over the responsibility for it.

In this sample men talk rather much about this issue, whereas women nearly touch it, one can hypothesize that men do not have to carry much family responsibilities without a child. At least they think having a child will change their situation dramatically. Connected with responsibility it is also assumed that their flexibility will be restricted. Because he will be responsible for another person his own feelings and wishes will be placed after the one's of the child. To have a child is described as a conscious act. Nothing that appears immediately and out of the blue and a person needs to be responsible enough to care for the baby. Also a quantitative representative study has shown that males in Germany between 25 and 35 years would not have a child at this time in their lives as offspring would collide with their interests and because of the

huge responsibility (Helfferich, Klindworth et al. 2006). With a child people will experience new things and a child will bring a new form of responsibility.

„Because it is then a really different experience a complete different responsibility” (Jakob, male, 36)

To have a child will increase responsibility but a new kind of it. This means that one should be very sure that this is the right thing to do. To feel grown up enough to be a father is something that needs to come from within. Scholars have assumed that a new norm of responsible parenting is in development (Huinink and Mayer 1995). Other qualitative research has shown that men consider their responsibility a lot before having a child but only from a financial point of view (Bernardi, Keim et al. 2007). This shows that responsibility is an issue that is traditionally connected to fatherhood, however, here responsibility is understood in a broader sense. Interviewed men in this sample report uncertainty because they are not sure if they act responsibly in the appropriate way. To be responsible for a child brings the burden that everything should be done in the best way. However, what is exactly the best way is often difficult to say. Interviewees refer to the fact that they will have to carry the responsibility and this brings also the risk to do something wrong.

In this interviews men report that they are afraid to act irresponsibly. As the author has already discussed, they are unsecure that their ideas of a good education and a good life for a child are wrong ideas. When they postpone their fertility plans they do not need to face responsibility at the moment. Men showed the tendency that they shy away from the fact that a child will bring responsibilities which they have to carry. In East Germany the normal life course of women was shaped by the fact that they had to combine work and family life. Institutions supported this behaviour but the demand to combine work and family was only given females not males. The responsibility for the family has been carried by the women and was not shared (Pohl 2000). This seems to be different in Austria today at least in the perspective of the interviewees who consider children as an issue both partners are responsible for. Children are seen as a much bigger responsibility for men than in previous

generations which results in the fact that men wait until they are mature enough to take over this responsibility (Henwood, Shirani et al. 2011).

„Yes, kinda being afraid of the responsibility. Because you are really are 100 percent responsible for this small living being” (Florian, male, 28)

In this sample we see the pattern that this issue is discussed only by males. Only the older men who already wish for a child do not talk about this issue connected with worries. All other men talk at length about the issue of responsibility and if they are ready to carry it. To find the right way to act and to live well with the responsibility consider many males in detail. To be a good parent today means taking over fully and consciously all responsibilities (Sardadvar 2010). Even if men point out that being responsible is an issue that concerns them they also made clear that they want to carry this responsibility when time has come. Men presented themselves as being capable of being a father when the time has come. Especially the ones who wish to become a father soon consider themselves as ready and mature to take over responsibility. In the interviews women narrate that they are already waiting for their partner to take over at least some kind of responsibility. In their views a child would help that their partners will grow up and to take over this responsibility. In another qualitative research it has been found that new parents have to learn to shift attention from their persons towards their child and need to stop acting like a child (Settersten 2011). Considering the women in this sample they showed the tendency that they want to make the experience and to become a grown-up and a mother. The woman in the next quotation connects expectations of a future behaviour with responsibility.

„This maternal responsibility is probably different. I feel this and I think I will never work fulltime as long they have not reached a certain age” (Johanna, female, 29)

In her view being a responsible mother also means to act like a good mother and to reduce the own wishes and needs. We can see here that the narration is more a matter of fact and less – as we have seen with the males – connected to

sorrows. Also in her research Goebel (1997) has found that all women narrate that they have the feeling that they have to reduce their working ambitions once a child is there. In this research it was also described not as a decision but more as an issue that is not really negotiable and refers to internalised social norms. On the other hand it is pointed out that the spirit of the labour market requires a full investment in paid work in order to make a career (Widmer and Ritschard 2009). An issue that women seem to be aware of, because this is something they struggle with during the interviews. In this study men do not narrate such an expectation on them. Which goes in line with the findings of Widmer and Ritschard (2009) who have pointed out that women took most of the flexibilisation of the economy on their shoulders. As a consequence uncertainty is present in women's occupational trajectories. An issue that the interviewees seem to have noticed. In general women in this sample talk more about taking over responsibility for a child as something that they will manage. They are convinced that they will have time to get used to the idea and that they will grow with this challenge. They report that they do not seriously consider this issue to be a problem.

The ideal case would be if both feel responsible for the child and share it so the burden for all would be diminished and as a consequence is easier to carry. Borchardt and Stöbel-Richter (2004) have found in their qualitative research that males connect the issue of responsibility with parenthood. However, they point out that also women want to be responsible mothers. But they have not defined the term responsibility. Women in this study talk about responsibility, however, in a different way. They narrate that they feel the indirect pressure to plan everything. We can see that also the issue of responsibility seems connected to internalised social norms. Interviewees narrated the feeling that it is expected from them to know what to do and they should act according to their plans. Without planning, having a child would be seen as irresponsible. To act without thinking about the consequences is seen as not advisable. The freedom to choose whether to become a mother or not brings also the responsibility to carry the consequences of the own choice (Sevón 2005, Schwiter 2011). In line with this statement one can argue the interviewees in this research state that if conditions are perceived as bad it is wiser to postpone childbearing. The fears

about the consequences of having a child are rising, because nobody knows if the conditions will be better in the future. For individuals the social pressure to take over responsibility for the things that happen to oneself has increased (Burkart 2007). In her article, Kreyenfeld (2005) has verbalized the common notion that people who are responsible will postpone childbearing till they are financially able to support a family. They want to act responsibly and therefore they consider their actions very carefully (Fliegenschnee 2006a).

“I am more the type who thinks somehow it will work out, if I really want something. But then I think this is really naive, (laughs) because then you ... maybe you are in an awkward situation.” (Daniela, female, 34)

The interviewed women in Vienna narrate that they want to act responsibly and want to know which consequences the childbearing decision will have for their lives. Settersten (2007) has pointed out that autonomy is connected with responsibility, which shows that young adults are aware of the fact that their actions affect others. The fear of acting not responsibly enough can end up in not acting at all. Women should know which consequences their childbearing decision will have for their lives. In the perspective of the interviewed women the feeling of having the need to act responsibly and to know what is expected from them makes the decision rather difficult. Women showed the tendency that it is very important for them to point out that they know all the consequences and to show that they have considered many details, in order to show how responsible they are: Having and keeping a job or knowing the financial situation and caring about it. Being able to support oneself is described as being responsible and such behaviour is valued. However, this is seen as rather difficult and so to act responsibly is therefore seen as difficult. There exist many rational arguments against having a child and every interviewee is able to name several arguments against having a child or at least for not having a child at the moment. Arguments for a child are not as clear cut and more of an emotional nature (Kapella and Rille-Pfeiffer 2004; Stöbel-Richter Yve, Beutel Manfred et al. 2005). In a qualitative study in the Netherlands couples who got parents at a very young age did not mention the issue of responsibilities. They pointed out that they did not care too much about the consequences (Rijken 2009). In this

study it is very much the opposite. Some of the women even have the feeling that if people act responsibly in the future, they will never have a child because reflecting all the details will bring one to the conclusion that the responsibility is too much and it is wiser not to have a child.

Because so many arguments against having children exist the most responsible behaviour would be to stay childless. The interviewees report that they want to act responsibly. Not only regarding their financial situation but also regarding their career or their living situation or because of their relationship. All things should be in a perfect condition because only then they have the chance to act responsibly. No matter what happens after a child is born, the women showed the pattern that they have the feeling that they will have to carry the consequences. An issue that also other scholars have pointed out and this can result in an uncertainty to be able to carry all this responsibility (Kapella and Rille-Pfeiffer 2004). If there are reasons for not having a child it is seen wiser not to have it. The only problem is that there are always rational arguments for not having a child at a certain time. In a longitudinal study in Germany couples argued as well with rather rational arguments for postponing childbearing. Their work, uncertain financial situations or an apartment that was considered to be too small were mentioned (Schneewind, Vaskovics et al. 1996). In his research, Burkart (1994) has argued that decisions are always subject to social constraints. In this society, it is more accepted to argue with rational arguments than with emotional ones. A decision – and especially one that has such profound consequences like childbearing – should be reflected well.

As the author has shown in this chapter, women in this sample presented the issue of responsibility connected to the fertility decision. In the perspective of the men they realise that they will have to take over responsibility, once a child is born. We can hypothesize here that women already carry responsibilities in their private and family life, whereas men do not seem to have to carry so much – or at least do not reflect about it - until a child is born. On the other side we can assume that the decision to have a child is more difficult for women and that they need to consider everything because she has to carry the consequences. Men present themselves as more relaxed regarding this issue

because they do not feel the need to be so much involved as women do. In both cases responsibility seems to be connected to internalised social norms. To behave and to take over responsibility is something individuals perceive as required from them.

1.20 Personal conditions

The author has shown societal conditions and how they affect the perceived acting possibilities in the last chapters. Now the author wants to discuss the influence of personal conditions. The opinion of the social network has a strong impact on people's behaviour (Liefbroer and de Jong Gierveld 1993). Not only the fertility behaviour of a couple should be in the focus but also the behaviour of other households which influence these decisions (Kohler 2001).

The author wants to point out especially significant others and their potential influence on the fertility behaviour and how direct social pressure is perceived. Because of personal relations there is a high level of personal attachment as well as social control. These elements give the personal acting limitations (Huinink 2001).

1.20.1 Direct social pressure

Social networks are not only a source of support but can also be problematic or create conflicts (Burkart 2006). Considering direct social pressure it needs to be mentioned that women in this sample discuss and reflect a lot about social pressure. As the author will show, the partner can be a major reason for direct pressure. Also Gerson (1985) has reported that the male partners provide the major resource of social pressure. This can be expressed in both directions for or against a child. In this research no difference has been found in this respect, no matter if males or females, social pressure can be produced by the partner. However, social pressure can also be generated by other sources. In particular parents and, especially mothers, have a great influence (Fliegenschnee 2006). Literature defines social pressure as a reason to behave according to norms (e.g., Bernardi 2004, Hammel 1990). Here, it might be defined in a slightly broader sense. Because indirect social pressure was discussed already the

author will refer now to direct social pressure. Here, the term is understood as the fact that others question the own behaviour with the aim to influence it in their own interest. However, the result of social pressure does not necessarily need to be expected behaviour. Because pressure is not a pleasant feeling, one strategy is to simply avoid the topic. The network analysis is quite insightful regarding direct social pressure. How close network partners act, handle their life and question the lifestyle of others has a huge influence on the own life concept and also on behaviour. Their dealing with similar problems creates also expectations on the own behaviour and this constitutes social pressure.

Direct social pressure can come from different sources. Because the decision for a child is described as a joint one with the partner, s/he can be a great source of pressure. The network analysis reveals that the partner is for all interviewees in this sample the most important person in their social network. All mark the own partner as the closest person in their social network card. The timing when to have a child and how to handle the new situation is very much discussed during the interview. Conflicting ideas about fertility behaviour create pressure for both the woman and the man. Men in the sample refer very much to the ideas of their partner. They argue that satisfying their partner's ideas and dreams seems difficult and produces an unpleasant feeling.

“There is quite a weight of expectations that well it must be self-evident that I am willing to take care of the child. In general I want that, too, but when this is permanently suggested and you are always confronted with this expectation then you feel you are under pressure, yes?” (Florian, male, 28)

When her ideas are very concrete and not exactly match the ones of the partner, or if her expectations on the partner are so strong that he has the feeling that he cannot decide freely, then direct social pressure is narrated. To handle this issue can be rather difficult if things are not negotiable. Men showed the tendency that they are not so sure if they are able to fulfil all the expectations of their partner. The author has not found a clue that also men have very detailed expectations on their partners unless the couple has already discussed it in principle and agreed on very vague but principle behaviour.

However, many expectations on men are mentioned. Because this is seen not always as easy or they are not really sure what their partner expects from them, pressure and uncertainty is narrated.

The interviewees refer to the expectations of their female partner and that they are not always sure if they can fulfil all expectations completely. This creates uncertainty in some ways. Many issues need to be considered and shared. Some scholars assume that individuals prefer the approval of close network members and that they may modify their behaviour accordingly to satisfy the others (Bongaarts and Watkins 1996). In this research it is not assumed as an easy process. Not even pursuing a goal with the approval of the partner is seen as an easy thing. The time frame can be a great source of pressure. Especially for those who want to have a child rather sooner than later; stress was reported because they fear that they will not get all the things they want to have because time is running. On the other hand, the delayer is as well confronted with stress because the partner constantly reminds her/him that s/he should start to work on this issue. This will be discussed within the category “couples’ perspective” intensively.

Considering direct pressure the author wants to distinguish between pressure for and against a child. Interviewees, women as well as men, narrate that they feel social pressure with regard to their fertility decision. Close network partners, like the mother, remind individuals that they think they should have a child rather sooner than later. The fact that persons who are close discuss their views can create pressure. The feeling of pressure is an unpleasant feeling, and avoidance is one strategy to cope with it. All interviewees refer to their parents and in many cases especially to their mother as the second closest person, next to their partner, in their networks (Fliegenschnee 2006). Only very few consider their parents as not that important or even as problematic in some respect.

„I got quite some pressure from my father, following the slogan that my sisters already have children all in all he has .. one, two, three, four grandchildren but he still has no son and heir” (Franz, male, 42)

Interviewees narrate that others want to convince them to have a child rather sooner than later. Such kind of social pressure to have a child has as well been found in other research (Keim, Klärner et al. 2009a). In the recent literature normative pressure is described as a key element of childbearing decisions. The own network and what significant others perceive and how they evaluate the fertility question influences the own behaviour (Billari, Philipov et al. 2009). Dommermuth, Jane et al. (2009) have found that the approval of significant others has a positive effect on the short-term intention. They further assume that the degree of acceptance of a child in their networks is connected with significant others, and that the network also has the power to delay a fertility plan. However, the issue that social pressure can be rather unclear and especially contradictory is not even mentioned here although this can significantly influence behaviour. However, the two mentioned studies have shown that the attitudes of significant others have an effect on fertility intentions (Billari, Philipov & Testa 2009, Dommermuth, Klobas & Lappegard 2009). Especially when parents are old and ill and wish to have a grandchild, people refer to this and notice that they will hurt their parents if they do not satisfy their wishes before they die.

The expectations of members of the social network can influence the ideas for or against a child, however, they need not lead to action. Not only parents but also siblings can start to be nasty when they want to force their family members to have a child. Older siblings or also siblings who have decided to start earlier with a family can be annoying in this respect. They expect others to follow them in a very similar or even the same way. However, most of the interview partners describe such expectations as uncomfortable although they state that they not necessarily decide accordingly. All interview partners point out that the decision for a child is a joint one by the couple. When only one partner of the couple is already in a position where s/he wants to have children the pressure from outside can be even more unpleasant.

“His sister asked us ‘when will you have a child’. I didn’t reply, you know, what should I say – HE does not want to? [laughs] As for me, I am ready to have one anyhow” (Silvia, female 30 years)

Also for the outside world both partners should support the fertility decision. It should not mirror what is expected from others but should show the couple's decision. Not only family members also close friends or other important network members can create pressure. For most of the interview partners this is annoying no matter if they are male or female. If one does not act accordingly, as it is normally done at a certain age, network partners are questioning why the person does not act like the others do. Not only the issue of children but everything that is expected that someone should have done at a certain age can annoy people. The pressure is perceived as highly especial when the ideas of others are not similar to the own ones. However, as the author shows there are examples where people narrate that they realise social pressure to have a child since a long time but they still do not have children yet. So, the author does not jump to the conclusion that direct social pressure will bring people to a quicker decision regarding childbearing.

In this research not only the pressure to have a child is narrated but also pressure to rethink building a family which makes the decision for a child difficult (Fliegenschnee 2006). Interestingly this is only mentioned by women. They refer to friends or other loose network partners, like their father, and describe that these persons question their ability to be a good mother or that they see other aims or life concepts for them like being a real career woman who does not have children at all. When close network members have a different opinion about the perfect life they can create pressure to act as they think is right. To decide for a child will be difficult because they will always have in mind that others expect other things from them. It is not easy to act because the opinion of others and what they think seem to be rather.

The expectations of members of the social network can influence the decision for or against a child. In her article, Bernardi (2004) has discussed that reproductive behaviour and reproductive ideas are connected with the attitudes of close network partners. If friends do not think s/he would make a good parent s/he is bound to feel insecure. For both men as well as for women it is important what others say. (Fliegenschnee 2006a). One wants to act to some extent as it

is expected but also wants to fulfil the own life concepts. Avoiding the pressure from other persons in this respect can be postponed because then you do not need to face these opinions directly. Also other research has shown that people who do not want to have a child narrate that they are confronted with criticism and pressure, so they avoid the topic (Bernardi 2004). It has been pointed out by other scholars that life will be easier if someone is supported from a close person like the mother (Keim, Klärner et al. 2009a), however, in the interviews it is reported that the decision to have a child is only very marginally effected by that. Considering quantitative research we see that the more a person perceives that the parents want to have a grandchild the sooner s/he will start to have a child (Miller and Pasta 1995). An issue that has also been found in other quantitative research but nevertheless to some degree contradicts the findings in this research. Individuals stress during the interviews that the decision to have a child is a private matter that only needs to be agreed on with the partner, but with no one else.

As discussed above, close people directly tell their opinions and views and how they think the others shall act. Considering this form of direct social pressure one can say that the interviewees conclude that it is easier to deal with that kind of pressure compared to indirect social pressure because they can avoid the subject or even the person. Furthermore, they point out that opinions of others are of interest, however, never that important that they will direct their decisions immediately. It even can occur that direct pressure can create the opposite intended reaction. Interviewees narrate that they are sometimes so feed up with the questioning of others, that they concluded to stay childless at the moment, only to make a statement and to act differently than all the others.

Unlike the quantitative research of Billari et al. (2009) and Dommermuth, et al. (2009) in this research it cannot be concluded that direct social pressure necessarily leads to childbearing. In the following example the interviewee was already married twice and is now in cohabitation with another woman but he is still childless. Even if he points out that his parents do not get tired to remind him to have children, their pressure has not made him to have a child until now.

„This has led again and again to unpleasant situations. Because I have not changed my mind and said I don't care about your ideas this is my life" (Franz, male, 42)

Considering such cases one has to say that this data does not lead us to the conclusion that direct social pressure necessarily leads to having a child. A conclusion also other researchers have reached. Borchardt and Stöbel-Richter (2004) have not found in their study that the opinion and the social pressure of close family members has an effect on the decision to have a child. However, people state that they compare themselves with others around them. Pressure can also arise when people realise that their social network starts to build families. It is described that they develop and that they get further in life. When close people start to change their lives this increases the pressure to also move on. When close network partners are already in a state where one actually wants to be pressure is increasing. However, also when someone already considers family rather seriously then close network partners can motivate this person to make the decision earlier. Nevertheless, when several things are not settled yet and the life concept is too different to the current situation the decision is rather difficult to make.

As the author has pointed out several times especially when a person acts against the norm people question the behaviour and social pressure is realised. Social pressure can influence the ideas of the life concept and also the role that people take on in the future. In this study only people who work and/or live in Vienna have been interviewed. Some interview partners narrate that social pressure on the countryside is assumed to be much higher. In this respect they consider themselves as very lucky because they live in the city. The interview partners are happy that they can choose the life they want to live with only marginal influence from their social network. Liefbroer and Billari (2009) have assumed that most sanctions are imposed by close network members like parents or friends. However, the author of this thesis finds in this data that especially indirect pressure is inconvenient and often actions of close network partners are described more as relieving not creating pressure, but knowing where others are at the same time and where one should or could be, already

effects the interviewees.

„Who applies the pressure? My mother is not the source, important significant others, friends are in the same situation, or partly even in a worse situation. (...) this confrontation with others who are younger but better in some things or who exactly know what they want” (Silvia, female, 30)

We can see here in this quotation that people produce social pressure by themselves – in comparing themselves with others. This brings us to the hypothesis that external social pressure is inconvenient, however, has not so much effect on the own behaviour compared to indirect social pressure that seems to guides behaviour.

1.20.2 Inconsistencies

The author has talked about internalised social norms and how they can produce indirect social pressure. Additionally, the author has discussed that also expectations and opinions of others create direct social pressure. In the literature it is mainly referred to direct social pressure in connection to having a child (Bernardi 2004). Namboodiri has stated that reasons against a child or against having another child are connected with cost-benefit calculations (Namboodiri 1983) but not with social pressure. What could not be found in the literature but which appeared in this study is that social pressure can also be used to avoid having a child, at least for some time and is not only produced from the outside. Additionally, the issue of having a child is highly connected to many other areas in life. The narrated and perceived social norms how to act can create difficulties because rather often the interviewees narrate that the expectations get in conflict with each other. The issue of contradicting norms is only rarely discussed, however, interviewees in this research touch this issue. In this thesis the issue of conflicting social norms was discussed already several times because it seems to be a very powerful issue considering fertility behaviour and especially when considering why people find it so difficult to decide in favour for a family. the author will now refer to this issue once again.

Some scholars have argued that today there is a lack of moral. People do not follow moral norms anymore (Marianski 1994). However, this analysis leads to the conclusion that social norms are still considered because as it was shown they are very important for the behaviour of the participants. Nevertheless, it has to be acknowledged that not the norms that were valued some decades ago are important any longer but others. Additionally, it has sometimes been argued that nowadays the meaning of “family” is in danger (Marianski 1994). However, from another point of view one can assume that today “family” has a more complex meaning because people need to decide for a family more actively than some decades ago as Huinink (1990) has pointed out.

It has also been argued that people today do not face many social norms regarding family formation but follow their individual life plan (Huinink and Mayer 1995). Considering the perspective of the interviewees, the author agrees that the traditional orientations regarding gender norms have lost their regulative force, however, many other norms have taken their places and often make a decision very difficult because many of them contradict each other. Also other scholars have come to the conclusion that today there are different choices how to live one’s life and this can lead to contradicting values and norms (Schwiter 2011). The stability is therefore not automatically given. On the one hand not being responsible solely for the family anymore has given women freedom but on the other hand this has also increased uncertainty (Beck-Gernsheim 1997).

„It is a desperate dealing with the issue. And I think the more often you turn it over in your mind the older you get and the more difficult the decision gets for me” (Daniela, female, 34)

To decide for a child seems difficult especially when one tries to consider the issue with rational arguments. Arguments against children at present are pointed out with rather rational statements: a child would be too costly, the career would be limited, opportunities would decline, the apartment is not big enough and so on. However, arguments for a child seem to be almost never rational arguments. This is another reason why it seems so difficult to decide for a child because the arguments pro versus contra a child are not comparable.

Interview partners had difficulties to explain why they do not have children yet because considering their conditions they estimate their conditions as good enough to have a child. Arguing that only conditions need to be optimal seem - from this perspective - as not explaining the whole situation.

The interview partners no matter if male or female all have the feeling that politicians support a rather traditional family picture. We have to consider that the last interview was conducted in August 2007 and also in these past years things have changed. However, because they have the feeling that modern family patterns are not supported they have difficulties to accept the idea of the traditional mother and father. Rupp (2005) has pointed out that the understanding of the role as a mother is also difficult because many women do not want to be a traditional mother on the other hand the norm does not to use public child care under the age of three is widespread. In this research women who consider childbearing seriously talk very much about conflicting expectations and the pressure to have a career while being a dedicated mother at the same time. Pressure is a feeling that tells you what you should or should not do, but when different or even contradicting things are expected decisions seem impossible. To get as close to the life concept as possible and to make it for everybody right is seen as difficult or even as impossible.

This means, no matter how one behaves, the feeling of getting in conflict with social norms remains and many have the perception that they will lose out in any case. This holds true in particular for women. Well educated women especially but all women should be part of the labour market. On the other hand they should take on all caring responsibilities. Child care facilities are not seen as a good solution at least not before the age of three and men who take parental leave are often considered by others as milksops. Interviewees narrate this as a dilemma they have to deal with. How women could solve this dilemma and who could take care of the child has not been answered and leaves them with the feeling that they will get in conflict with norms no matter how they will act. As research has shown being a mother of a small child under three and going to work instead of taking care of the baby fulltime is not accepted by 50% of the population in Austria. Work is valued very high but a good mother is not

compatible in the view of many with work and especially not with a fulltime job. If a woman works because it is financially necessary is the only argument that is accepted. Working because of subjective reasons is very seldom approved by others. Here, we can again see that arguments concerning economic necessity are accepted in society (Kapella and Rille-Pfeiffer 2007). Gerson (1985) has reported in her book that women face a dilemma. If they decide in favour of family they will be confronted with the opinion that both career and work are important for an independent woman. However, if they decide for their career they will have the dilemma of integrating a child in their life. As we can see already in the 80ies it was difficult for women to make a decision about children. Different normative expectations can lead to a role conflict and uncertainty especially when the normative expectations are perceived to be very high and demanding.

„I think the standard to reconcile all things is pretty high. Work as well as family to make them good. I think that the standard is high which you enforce on yourself. Somehow the bar the bar is very high there is a .. societal ideal concept” (Johanna, female, 29)

To meet this picture of a superwoman is perceived to be very stressful by interviewed women. We have already shown within the category “social role” that women in this sample perceive the value of the role as a mother compared to the role of a working and successful woman as very low. Such a picture is produced also by the media and it suggests what a woman should achieve. The interviewees realise that success is connected to work, and combining work and family life is considered to be rather difficult. Being only a mother is not valued, as the interviewees narrate.

Gerson (1985) has found in her research that people receive contradicting messages how to arrange their lives from their parents. Interviewees got the message that work and education are important but at the same time that motherhood was strongly connected to homemaking. For these women it is difficult to decide what to do because the signs from outside are contradicting or at least difficult to combine. However, mixed messages can come from different

sources. It has been argued that family norms are different in specific population subgroups (Namboodiri 1983). What happens when one belongs to several subgroups with contradicting opinions is here not referred to, however, can be very true in real life. Considering age similar problems occur. Women should not be too old to be mothers but on the other hand not too young. When they are young they should get a good education and then work hard. Again, it is not clear how this should come together. They realise that at a certain age one should have achieved several things and when one is a bit behind this image they start to reflect about it how to reach their life concepts.

The issue of age has already been discussed in detail. Expectations of others can also get in conflict with each other. The social network and how it perceives one's behaviour influences the decisions (Seward and Richter 2008). Also men report some norm conflicts. When people work in a field where all others work overtime, it is difficult to act differently and leave earlier than the others. To be determined and to work not as many hours as all the others, but to go home to have more time with the child is described as difficult. Especially men narrate these problems. Their partners usually expect that they do not work too long hours even without having children, how they will manage this in the future with children is rather difficult to imagine for them. They point out that it can become difficult when the pressure inside the working field is high and at the same time their partners remind them regularly that they should take over caring responsibilities and not work too long. These two expectations are rather difficult to face. Also regarding these elements life with a child is considered as challenging.

This refers to the issue that traditionally males are responsible for the financial security and are highly committed to their work and the new picture of an active and present father contradicts his commitment to work. Again, these are two very different demands that do come together. In a quantitative study it has been shown that a good father in Austria is seen as financially responsible for the family, however, he should not be too engaged in his work. A discrepancy that is not easy to fulfil (Kapella and Rille-Pfeiffer 2007). In the perspective of the men they face as well a dilemma that they would like to take over more

responsibility at home, however, still feel that the norm is that a man needs to work constantly and fulltime.

In this research we can see the pattern that women who want to perform their motherhood in a more traditional way narrate less difficulties whereas modern oriented women narrate many conflicts regarding internalised norms and feel a huge amount of indirect pressure. With regard to that not only the norms regarding family are perceived as important but also regarding being a modern woman, like aiming and achieving things and having a career. In a qualitative study in Vienna it has been made clear that when the men take parental leave then it is a joint decision whereas often when only the woman is at home it is not decided because it is clear from the start and no discussion is needed (Neyer 1998). Performing a more modern role which leaves individuals more choices brings the consequences of uncertainty and that one needs to make a decision and to carry the consequences.

It can be concluded that in this sample more modern women who often belong to the group of better educated women face norm conflicts. Interestingly, quantitative research shows that higher educated people are more tolerant regarding the way of living, e.g. regarding cohabitation or having a child out of wedlock, however, their behaviour is more designed according to norms with respect to finishing education, working, getting married and then having a child compared to the less educated individuals (Sobotka 2008).

As the author has shown here, persons perceive themselves in a situation where the options and arguments are contradicting each other. Because rather often rational behaviour is assumed (e.g. Becker and Murphy 1988, Tomer 2008) when talking about fertility behaviour one can only wonder how one can act rationally when it is not clear what the best choice would be? Especially with respect to this issue that individuals have trouble to decide for the best behaviour because they see in any case disadvantages, a rational behaviour seems difficult to achieve. The issue that norms contradict each other is very often neglected in the literature, however, it seems to have a great potential to explain why people have difficulties to decide in favour for a child.

1.20.3 The couple perspective

In the literature the couple perspective is often neglected when the topic of fertility is discussed and mainly the female perspective is considered.

Nevertheless, scholars have argued that both partners have considerable impact on the fertility decision and therefore both positions should be discussed carefully (Keim, Klärner et al. 2009b, McDonnell 2011, Balbo, Billari 2013).

When the couple has not the same time line more often a child is postponed or not realised (Borchardt and Stöbel-Richter 2004). If the partner has the same ideas and is supportive or if s/he is the main reason for delaying, this has a huge impact on people's actual behaviour. The interviewees shared the perspective that having a child is something people in Vienna want to decide about together with their partner. If they have similar life concepts and same ideas, the topic can be discussed without difficulty and decisions are taken more easily (Fliegenschnee 2006). Especially if both think that now is not the right time, then it is an easy issue.

When both agree on the fact that they want to wait a bit longer the decision to postpone childbearing is easily made. The topic can be discussed in a more relaxed way and the pressure is not high. When they have the feeling that they have still time to decide, then they are somehow relaxed and wait until both want to talk about the issue. The interaction process of a couple is of special interest here (Burkart 2006). In line with other researchers (Stauber 2009; Sardadvar 2010) The author will show that the issue needs some sort of negotiations. Even if it is argued that the communication is far from being clear and rational. The issue of starting a family keeps interview partners busy. They want to have a child but they do not know how to realise their ideas. So they have to consider their situation in detail. The topic of having a child needs to be discussed with the partner. At least the principle agreement - if they want to have a child or not - should be agreed on. The interviewees narrate that they have told each other right from the start that one day they want to have a child. The principle agreement is very often clarified at the beginning of a relationship,

especially if the couple has not been together since ages. In this sample we do not have a single couple who narrates different wishes. An issue that goes in line with other studies (Miller, Severy et al. 2004). Other qualitative research has shown that couples rather often have a general agreement about the issue of children. However, once this is made not much more thinking and talking about it occurs. This holds until one of the partners thinks that it is time to have children or at least to make some kind of plan (Rijken 2009). Interestingly, in this sample there is only one undecided couple who in principle likes the idea of offspring, however, has many doubts about all other issues. All the other couples have a clear idea whether they want a child or not.

All interview partners narrate that they know about the principle opinion of their partner. Another study has found that couples who talk more often about the wish to have a child have a higher wish to have a child. Couples who do not wish to have a child do not talk about it (von Rosenstiel, Nerdinger et al. 1986). A result that is not visible in this data. Because also couples who state that they do not want to have children narrate situations when they talk about the issue very similar to the other couples. However, the author cannot estimate the amount of time they spend in discussing child issues. Based on the narrations one can say that the issue is until a concrete plan is made in general not much discussed.

„We talk about things and then we let things develop. We fix our target the way is clear and now we live and we will see what happens.” (Franz, male, 42)

In any case, no matter if the couple is for or against a child or the partners have different opinions they somehow know what the other thinks in principle. However, the details are not discussed, no time plan is made and no clear decision. This is the reason why the author does not want to talk about intentions – a term that is often used in the literature - because intentions are connected with a concrete time plan and clear ideas. Most of the couples talk about the issue of fertility rather ill-defined. The issues are visualised in the future and not planned. Both point out that talking about the fertility issue is crucial and that they need to make plans and to clarify a lot, however, during the

interviews they narrate rather intensively that these talks do not happen very often and are also not of a concrete nature.

None of the couples studied by Burkart (1994) has shown a pattern of handling the topic. Like it is considered in the rational choice approach (Becker and Murphy 1988) with calculating costs and benefits. However, it is argued that assuming that individuals calculate costs and benefits is much too simple and does not reflect the complexity. The dimensions of the decision need to be seen as completely different aspects that are difficult to calculate against each other. Because of this complexity of the decision strong ambivalences are expected (Huinink 2001). Qualitative research about fertility decisions has shown that the decision to have a child is not wholly rational, clear-cut or conscious (Sevón 2005). Still Huinink et al. (2008) have argued that people state in a questionnaire that they consider pretty well when to have a child. For the authors this is the argument that Burkart is wrong when he assumes that people often do not act on a rational basis in their fertility behaviour. From this point of view it is not surprising that people state in a questionnaire that they consider their actions carefully because this is what is expected by an adult person to do, as shown in the category responsibility. The ideal decision for or against a child should be calculated by everyone. Women consider the issue in detail, however, the author does not come to the conclusion that this will lead to rational acting because the situation is so difficult to judge and many things are contradicting that this seems impossible. The more complex the task the less likely a rational decision is made (Kirchler, Rodler et al. 2001). Additionally, that women consider the situation in detail does not automatically lead to a rational couple decision. We have seen that they want to act rationally because they know they have to carry the consequences but do not know how to decide. A rational decision would likely end in the conclusion not to have a child. In line with this argumentation and in contrast to the economic theories Kirchler, Rodler et al. (2001) have argued that based on their research - a couple diary study - spouses rarely sit around a table discussing objective arguments to reach a decision. Further, people tend not to have a direct focus on one aim. This is often mixed up with other aims and feelings and a decision is never an isolated incident, but connected to the complexity of everyday life. They have

argued that the evidence they see point in the direction that answers that are given in a questionnaire reflect rationality and not that there is a conscious processing of information towards a decision. Additionally, it is rather difficult to define a beginning and an ending of a process. They further argue that many things cannot be answered in a questionnaire because written answers are guided by rational thinking whereas decisions are often guided by emotions. While analysing statements in online forums it got clear that often without much discussion contraception is just no longer used. It is not a clear decision but rather a matter of taking action (Sardadvar 2010). We can conclude that couples rarely discuss the issue of childbearing, they agree tacitly with each other and hardly talk about it. Also when they reach the decision to have a child (Burkart 1994). The interviewees describe the situation when they talk about these issues as talking about wishes and visions and not like making a concrete plan.

Coming to a clear decision based on rational arguments that do not contradict each other is described as difficult. The conversations are perceived as rather diffuse with no clear outcome or time plan. Of course, the author has to say that all interview partners are still in the decision making process regarding fertility and one do not know about the result in the end. Still, the interviewees point out that plans need to be made. Because today people cannot simply follow a script how to shape their life course, the process of planning and evaluating gets more and more important (Huinink 2000). Especially when their fertility plans differ from what others in their surroundings decide. In this case even more discussions and agreements need to be handled because of the rather uncertain situation. It has been argued that people have difficulties to come to a decision because the issue is too complex (Burkart 1994; Huinink 2000). Burkart (1994) has further argued that especially well educated couples have to synchronise their life concepts. However, in this sample the interview partners feel the need to do so. In this study interview partners report that the issue of childbearing is not an issue yet. They argue that it is nothing which they discuss at the moment. It only becomes a topic when people start to think about it; then they reconsider and discuss it in detail.

„We don't speak about it, we do not speak about it, I mean I tell him from time to time ... not not serious really seriously we do not talk about it, maybe more like two forever pubescent ones" (Silvia, female, 30)

Sardadvar (2010) has shown as well that a profound talk about the pros and cons is very rarely done if at all. Other scholars have argued that couples do not discuss the principle agreement to have a child but rather the when and the necessary conditions. Couples without children somehow have a vision of ideal conditions they want to reach. The requirements for that are often rather high compared to parents who oriented their fertility intentions more on the actual circumstances (Rille-Pfeiffer 2009). This again makes the decision complicated because if ideal conditions are unrealistic one will only come to a conclusion with difficulties. Because the issue of having a child is not often discussed the situation needs to be special to stimulate a discussion. The whole issue is so complex that interviewees describe that it needs enough time to talk and the right moment. To postpone starting a family is something that is accepted in society. And it is a way to limit direct pressure from outside until a certain point is reached. The right timing is one of the most discussed issues in this respect which is not only a finding of this research (Kapella and Rille-Pfeiffer 2004; Rupp 2005). Because the timing needs to be perfect for both it is very complicated as so many perspectives need to be considered to make sure the right conclusions are drawn. To decide for the right point in time seems to be something that is very difficult and ideally decided together. Some interviewees narrate that they make plans, but then something unexpected happens and new plans need to be made. Even if a couple has already drawn conclusions this does not mean that their plans will not change again.

„To fix a point in time and it was for me or was for both of us back then very convenient and I have mentally adjusted to this but now her professional situation is apparently different and this means it will be eventually postponed and this is for me at the moment a big deal" (Günther, male, 29)

We can see that even if time plans are made changes of the living conditions can make a revision of the plan necessary. Because fertility depends on so

many things it is difficult to make concrete plans (Rupp 2005). There is a difference between the wish to have a child one day – the so called principle agreement – and the real decision to have one. The decision is connected with considering conditions and the options but the principal wish to have a child can be made much earlier in life (Borchardt and Stöbel-Richter 2004). Some of the interview partners assume that a conscious decision will never be made because there are always reasons against having a child and the ideal case will be that a child happens surprisingly.

Interviewees narrate that they have the same ideas as their partners, however, when their life concepts of a good and perfect future are very different to the situation today they will wait until the situation is better. Still, the decision when to have a child is seen as a difficult one. Even if both partners have the same ideas and time horizon the matter is not easily discussed. Some studies have tried to understand who is more important for the decision to have a child. In developing countries it seems to be the man who is very powerful concerning the decision to have a child. Whereas in developed countries the influence of the woman on the decision not to have another child was visible. For the first child the influence was described somewhat equal (Beckman 1984). Other research in Germany have found that the intention of the women appear to be the decisive factor in fertility decision (Hutteman et al. 2013). In this research one can say that both sexes describe the pattern that the female partner is more active regarding the issue of fertility. Her conditions and her views are crucial and men point out that this is very important because the woman will carry the main responsibility and they are afraid that their partner will be frustrated and completely overloaded, as witnessed with network partners. Consequently, regarding this issue men are described as passive. No matter if the woman or the man answers and independent from who wants to have the child earlier. Like in this example in which he wants to have children rather sooner than later, however is presented as it was only her decision.

„I do not care if I have a child in three, in five or in ten years , this is not my decision” (Franz, male, 42)

This man is rather interested to have a child as soon as possible, however, he is eager to explain that it is mainly not his decision. His partner on the other hand has several other things in mind before she wants to have a child. There is the tendency that women are described as the ones who have ideas and dreams regarding family which will be followed but also that their decision in this respect is more valued. Even if the issue is discussed by both partners and both agree that such a decision needs to be made together the opinion of the woman somehow carries more weight. Also, Rille-Pfeiffer (2009) has found in her research that women have the dominant part in the discussion about timing fertility. Burkart (1994) has shown that especially the plans of the women are important for the fertility decision. A result the author shows here as well as the word of the woman is described as a bit more important than that of the man. In one case the man describes his partner as so crucial that she needs to make the decision for herself and then convince him. When she can convince him that it is time to have a child and that she is ready for this step rather than he is happy to contribute. For this couple it is true that when she is really sure that the time has come, he will get active until then he will remain passive. Not the conditions are the crucial point here, the belief that the time has come makes the difference.

Another pattern that is visible is that women not only reflect their own feelings and circumstances but quite intensively also the situation and feelings of their partner. Men realise that their partners are very interested in their opinions and that they will not make the decision out of the blue. Their trust that she will make the right decision and not overrule him but respect and consider his situation as well, seem to give them the feeling that their partner will make the right decision. This makes the issue for men very easy because they do not need to get involved too much and at the same time know that still their own ideas and wishes will be considered. Also other qualitative research has shown that women consider not only their own situation but the one of their partner as well (Sevón 2005). Although women consider also the wishes and values of their partner it can be difficult because the partner's wishes are often not clear. Couples are aware of some attitudes of their partner, however, they can hardly know all values and preferences. Moreover, we have to consider that goals

change quite regularly (Kirchler, Rodler et al. 2001). Again, the author wants to point out the relative passivity of the male interview partners in this respect. During the whole interview men narrate very often how their partners visualise the future. They can state many things about that issue but have often rather few own ideas.

„Parental leave I have thought about it a bit, . ahm . from my point of view this depends entirely on her” (Markus, male, 25)

Women in this sample on the other hand do not talk much about the ideas and wishes of their partners only when they are in conflict with their own ones; like the timing issue or the number of children. This does not depend on the level of education and is independent of age. This was already discussed within the category “life concept”. Whereas women strongly emphasise the couple perspective, men showed the tendency that the readiness of their female partner tends to be more important than their own. This goes in line with Borchardt and Stöbel-Richter (2004) who have argued that males attribute more autonomy to women regarding the decision when to have a child.

No matter if the woman wants to have a quicker decision process or if the man was already waiting for the woman to decide; in all cases the woman is the person who will have the last word whereas the man is described as more passive, at least this is how the individuals described the situation. As long as his own ideas and time plans are respected and if he has the feeling that the woman will consider his situation as well as hers men present themselves as more or less content with the decision. Miller and Pasta (1995) have found in their quantitative research that neither wives nor husbands have more influence when it comes to the fertility decision once there is a disagreement. However, they have pointed out that men in general are more influenced by the childbearing and child-timing desires of their wives than the other way around. They assume this is the case because the burden of child care is still mainly carried by women. They have additionally found that wives put twice as much emphasis on their own desires related to their husbands whereas the males treated their own as being equal with their wives' wishes (Miller and Pasta

1994). This points in the direction that wives consider themselves as being more central. An issue we can see here as well. Also other researchers have found that a man's wish for a child is strongly connected with his partner's whereas women have their own ideas about this issue and their ideas are described as more important (Borchardt and Stöbel-Richter 2004; Rille-Pfeiffer 2009).

„This is her opinion at least at the moment more no. Yes? And for me it is O.K. like it is” (Florian, male, 28)

We can see here that he agrees with her, but in a very passive way. Other scholars have argued as well that women have more control over fertility decisions than men (Fennell 2006). McDonald (2000) has discussed that men in Australia have the tendency to leave the decision about the timing of the first child to the women. A child does not affect their labour force participation as strongly as women's labour force participation. However, the author assumes here that this has more to do with the category of being and feeling responsible. Men do not feel that responsible for this decision and reduce their behaviour mainly to agreement and support. The author can say that - in general - the data show that men are eager to support the ideas of their partner. They want to fulfil their vision of the future.

The passive males seem to be fine with the situation. The interviewed women however describe a very different ideal situation. They wish for a scenario where the agreement and the shared ideas and feelings of both partners are crucial and none of them has to make the decision alone. Because they want to make the decision together, it is narrated that they will wait until the other one is ready for this step. To have a child and when to have a child is a couple decision as also other qualitative as well as quantitative research has shown (Rijken 2009; Bauer and Kneip 2013). In the perspective of the interviewees it is an issue that needs to be seen from two perspectives. The own one and from the view of the partner. Because they live in a relationship both opinions are relevant in this respect. Even if it is possible to postpone for several years and also to refuse to talk about it one day it needs to be discussed in a relationship.

This can of course increase the time of postponement because they need to discuss and they need to agree. To clarify what one wants and how the partner considers the situation seems very important. Because roles are rather vague today and no clear norms exist it is very important to negotiate behaviour within a relationship (Seward and Richter 2008). Because none of the interviewees wants to decide the fertility decisions alone they have the need to talk about it with their partner.

„ I do not think that one person can decide this alone, especially when s/he is in a relationship. When the decision needs to be made together.“ (Thomas, male, 32)

As we have seen in the last quotations all interviewees consider the decision as a couple decision even if the real decision seems to be more in the hands of the women and women want to see their ideas realised. Nevertheless, both need to be clear about the idea of having a child.

In the consolation of the interview partners there are also couples who experience a situation where one partner is waiting to move on. The partner who is not ready yet can be described as the delayer. Another qualitative study has found that in many cases one of the partners is the delayer (Kapella and Rille-Pfeiffer 2004). These partners want to finish their “things”—like their studies, or a project at work or getting married, or want to enjoy their current life style a bit longer —before making decisions about children. We can say that they are simply not ready to take this step. This makes it very difficult for the waiting partner to act because s/he has to wait until the partner is ready. Especially like in some of the cases where the partner had already waited for a long time and got no hint when this waiting time will be over.

“His studying for me is a very very unfair form of pressure because this has been like this since I’ve known him: his studies always [were the reason or excuse]” (Silva, female, 30)

This situation is difficult to handle because the woman would have to decide

everything herself, and without support she does not want to do it and she wants to do it together with her partner. How this topic is handled in the social interaction has a lot of impact on the well-being of both partners (Fliegenschnee 2006). When one partner is preparing and considering the best ways to act but the other is not ready at all, they only see their chance in waiting. For both men as well as for women that is very unpleasant, however, for women in this sample it seems a bit more problematic because their male partners very often refuse to talk about the future. When the partner is not willing to talk about the issue of fertility and only accepts the general agreement – that one day s/he wants to have children – the person who has to wait is made insecure. These women had difficulties to describe what their partner wants and how to find a good solution, because they know too little about the life concepts of their partners. This was discussed as being very unpleasant.

In this sample only the men try to get rid of the topic as quickly as possible, whereas the delaying women point out that they also prefer to wait, however, they would love to talk about possibilities. Other scholars have pointed out that there is evidence that a serious discussion about having children can be delayed considerably (Carmichael and Whittaker 2007). No decision can be made when the topic is not discussed. What the partner wants in the future is often more an issue of feelings than concrete plans. It is described that talking about life concepts would be ideal to get better ideas what the other one wants, as well as shaping the own ideas. However, the description of the conversations shows rather a short talk than a proper discussion.

“It isss, not a real topic, it is similar with the marriage topic, ` from time to time I bring up the topic (laugh) hehe and he answers on that “yes sometime in the future I would like to have children but not yet” (laugh) hehehe and this was the conversation in the most cases.” (Isabella, female, 30)

As we can see here, this is her topic. She brings it up from time to time, and he tries to avoid it. She would like to plan her future life but he is different and wants to wait until the time is ripe (Fliegenschnee 2006). The impulse to discuss the issue of children is often initiated by women (Rille-Pfeiffer 2009). Qualitative

research has shown that often women wait for their partners to get ready (Henwood, Shirani et al. 2011). In line with this findings other research has shown that it needs not to be the women who are waiting for their partner to get ready (Rijken 2009). The issue needs to be a matter close to a person's heart. Other persons, like the partner, family members or friends can ask about the issue, however, until the person is not ready and willing to talk about it, the issue of fertility will not be discussed in detail. The strategy of the women seems to be to wait until he is willing to talk about it. Their problem is that their partners do not talk with them about their life concepts in a satisfying way. Men on the other hand do not refer of communication problems, they present themselves as more relaxed within the waiting position, even if they also sometimes have an urgent wish for a child. In most of the cases the different ideas about timing is rather uncomfortable, for both, the waiter was well as for the delayer. Interviewees narrate that their partners have to finish some things and only then they can concentrate on other things. Having to deal with a new job situation and ideas about having a child are seen as contradictory. To think about the issue needs time but also some kind of space and often one need to have several things finished and clarified before both partners agree to talk about this issue. Males point out that they want to concentrate on other issues than family first. Only when they have solved several things which are important for them they are willing to talk about new ways of life. Their own aims and how to reach them are very important for them.

Burkart in his analysis of our society today has argued that people today are so much confronted with finding themselves that their lives are for a long time provisional. Everything is all the time in question. This makes a decision to have a child rather problematic and unlikely (Burkart 2007). the author does not say that women do not try to reach professional and personal aims, however, in this sample they additionally have much more concrete ideas about their future family life than men. Males showed the tendency that because they do not have clear ideas about life with a child, they need time to get it clear. the author does not say that they do not have a life concept but that their life concept regarding children is vaguer compared to women.

We can assume that women still are responsible for family issues and need to plan much more in this respect. All women have more or less concrete plans about their life with a child. Regarding the right timing we can see that men as well as women have the tendency to wait until also the partner is ready for this step. People have several points where they can disagree on regarding the issue of fertility. The right timing as well as the number of children are frequently mentioned. In most of the cases the controversial issues is not discussed intensively but ignored. Especially the question of the number is postponed because it is argued that these things do not need to be decided now and depend on the situation in the future. Nevertheless, since these issues “should be decided together”, people postpone their wishes. During the interviews men narrate that the issue of children needs to be considered intensively, however, they often do nothing in this respect. If one of the two has problems with deciding the issue gets more complicated. Women report that their partners show the tendency to be no big decision-makers they often delay things simply not to make a decision.

„He never makes a decision he is not a big decider who makes a real job of it, it will not happen. And I would need to surprise him but with these decisions I cannot surprise him!“ (Silvia, female, 30)

Because this issue is something people want to decide together it is not enough to make the decision by oneself. At one point a decision needs to be made but it will get rather difficult if one of them has problems with making decisions, because with this decision a lot of consequences need to be considered and the situation will change quite much. However, it also was argued that some are happy with the distribution of roles and are happy to follow the wishes of the partner, as long as their principles are considered. Additional to the observation of the females, also males by themselves realised that this is not their strong side and that it is complicated for them to make a decision. It is described that very rarely these men come up with own ideas and try to take over the initiative even less frequently. For some interviewees this is the way it is. However, others want an active partner to discuss these things. For all involved it is important that both need to be willing to make this step. Not only the decision,

already the wish for a child should be a joint one as well as all things that follow.

For both sexes it is very important that they have support from their partners. Burkart (1994) has argued that the value of children and the sacrifice someone has to take are for women strongly correlated with the partner's attitude. If the partner is supportive then the other does not have to sacrifice too much. An issue also Gerson (1985) has pointed out. Support of the partner can lighten the load of motherhood. Is the male partner not willing to participate in household tasks and child care it is very difficult for women to decide for a child. If the partner is willing to take care of the child it will be easier for the women to decide for motherhood. Similar results have been found also by Rosenstiel et al. (1986) as well as in this research.

„Because he knows that he will support me completely and this is for me, OH aha, yes, super!“ (Johanna, female, 29)

Regarding their life concepts, combining children and work, or about the life in the future in general, they have the feeling that they can reach their aims only if they get support. They often have several issues in mind that they want to finish and so they need understanding from their partners. In the end both need to have the feeling that time is ripe when they decide to have a child, so was the perception of the interviewees.

Smolka (2005) has pointed out that a stable partnership is for most people the important element to start thinking about having a child. Some studies have focused on the decision toward fertility. They have found that when there is a conflict couples tend to delay the decision (Beckman 1984). Also in this research it is pointed out that a good working partnership is seen as something precious. It is described that it is not self-evident that a partnership is that good but that it is something that is crucial for the well being. In the literature it is stated that because of today's possibilities and because of individualisation people tend to avoid long term commitments (Beck-Gernsheim 1997; Huinink 2000). Even if this statistically might be true the idea to have a long term relationship is from all of the interviewees in this sample the favoured future

scenario. The fear that this commitment will not last long is there but not the principle decision to give it a try.

To spend some more time with the partner alone is also an important reason to postpone childbearing. Interview partners narrate that they worry that their relationship will suffer once a child is there. Because they have seen these things happen to friends they realise that a child can change quite much. A child will in any case have most of the attention so other things will be neglected. The partnership needs to be stable and many agreements need to be made so that this risk can be somehow reduced. That the partner is seen as the right one to have children with is very crucial for the interviewees and has been shown in other studies as well (McDonnell 2011). However, the issue of not having the right partner is seen as important with regard to considering fertility seriously. Because it is considered that a child needs some kind of stability and therefore it is necessary to see the partnership in principle stable, even if nobody can guarantee anything.

Arguments that the current partner might be the wrong one to have children with are diverse. Ideally the partners need to have similar life concepts at least about having a child or not and both must have the feeling that the relationship can survive the next years. Interviewees also argue that when they searched for a possible partner, the shared wish to have a child was an important issue when deciding to start a relationship.

We can find in the literature that couples today have rather high standards regarding their partnership as well as being parents (Klepp 2004). Rille-Pfeiffer (2009) have found that a couple takes the decision to have a child easier when they have an equal distribution of work inside the household, a stable financial situation and a stable partnership (Rille-Pfeiffer 2009). The interview partners point out that their relationship is a good one often they state this because of the time their relationship has been in existence. The interviewed men in this sample are rather sure that they have the right partner for their future, some women, however, are not that clear. To get a clearer perception if the partner is the right one, it is mentioned to make a long journey together to see if it really

fits. People want to test their relationship before making the more serious step toward parenthood and therefore cohabit for some time (Henwood, Shirani et al. 2011). The findings of Liefbroer and Billari (2009) have pointed in a similar direction. They conclude that there are rather new norms appearing than old norms disappearing. One of them seems to be that people should not marry without cohabiting for some time. To test the partnership seems to be especially important for women as they narrate that they want to avoid ending up as single mothers. This explains why they want to be relatively sure to have a partner with whom they can live for the next ten to twenty years to have a family for their children as well as security for themselves.

Bergnéhr (2007) has found by doing focus groups in Sweden that people will only have a child when they have found “the right partner”. A relationship must be assessed as promising otherwise no child will be born. The dominant option is that for a child it is the best to grow up with physically and emotionally involved parents. Parents are considered to be responsible for the well being of the child. Modern women face a lot of uncertainty with regard to a partnership at least the female interview partners have a bigger need to talk about this issue compared to men in this sample. Because having a child is a somehow unpredictable situation all want to be sure that they can rely on their partner.

„In my life there were times were I thought with this guy I do not want to have a child or the relationship is not stable enough ... or not serious enough” (Daniela, male, 34)

Because the right partner is such an important element to think seriously about children it was decided in this research to only focus on couples. The interviewees presented their current partner as optimal to have a family with. Why they still postpone even if the most important element – the right partner – is given was the important aspect at the beginning of the research. To have a child in an unstable relationship is not appreciated by network partners either. Furthermore, this can bring the men but mainly the women in critical situations not only financially.

1.20.4 Shape

The category “shape” (prägen) refers to things that happen in life and have made a person who s/he is today. As the author has already discussed in the “life course approach” previous experiences shape the following life (Huinink 1990). It has been assumed that fertility behaviour is shaped by the intergenerational transmission of norms and preferences, it is highly influenced by the family context (Uhlenberg and Mueller 2003). Micheli and Bernardi (2003), as already discussed in the theoretical part of this thesis, have defined the issue of social learning which is similar to the concept but not identical. This behaviour is called shaping behaviour because our own experiences as well as witnessing experiences of others influence the own ideas of the life concept. Additionally, it is assumed that these experiences affect the own life concept but not directly the behaviour. The own childhood is considered to be important in this respect but also the life as a young adult influences the ideas for the future. The process of shaping has not come to an end just yet (Fliegenschnee 2006). People will persist with some aspects from the past, while they will want to dissociate from others.

As already mentioned, many women show the pattern of having a very detailed picture of how the family future shall look like. In some cases it is even like a sequence. The partner should first find a job, then they should move to a larger apartment, and then they can start thinking about family planning. Some have witnessed similar experiences by close network partners and that has shaped their own life concept about how the process shall look like.

“...this was such an interesting process to witness, at first, they somehow found a flat, then marriage – then slowly the idea shall we have a child or not, hehehe, this slow process was very lovely to watch.” (Isabella, female, 30)

This is a good example for process of shaping. People are not isolated, they are integrated in a social network and therefore they can learn from other people's experiences. The exchange of information with the interviewee's friend is

mentioned here which seems to have had an impact on her view of her own future (Fliegenschnee 2006). She sees what course life can take and she would like to follow in her footsteps. Her life concept is to some extent shaped or at least confirmed by her friend's experiences. Close friends are often asked about their opinion and especially women tend to talk about all kind of topics with close friends. Also, other scholars have argued that especially friends are important to shape a life concept and not mainly family (Goebel 1997). Network members participate in shaping the context for the decision sometimes in a very important way (Bernardi 2004). A strategy to clarify the own wishes and ideas is to talk with friends and family. Also other scholars have found that observing others in dealing with their own life influences the own ideas (Keim, Klärner et al. 2009b). Qualitative research has shown that individuals realise that others in their social network postpone parenthood as well (Bernardi 2004).

„Important significant others, friends are in the same situation, or are partly in a worse situation” (Silvia, female, 30)

This woman refers to the fact that she wants to have rather sooner than later a child, but her present situation is considered as not optimal, however, she realizes that her close friends are in a very similar situation. These facts make the own behaviour easier to deal with. Other experiences make the own behaviour more complicated. The issue that a child could be handicapped is mentioned several times during the interviews and also connected with experiences. It was already shown that handicapped children are an issue and especially males fear facing this situation in this sample. It is argued that they have had experiences with handicapped children and realised that they are different and this brings them to the conclusion that they wish to have it differently with their own children. However, the same issue when connected with experiences can on the other hand reduce fears. Because other people have experiences that handicapped children are not too different from others and that a good life is possible as well. This reduces fears for these interviewees.

Gaining wide experiences helps to find one's own way. Experiences can create

fears or reduce them. This category contains opinions, actions or events as well which people witnessed and from which they would like to dissociate, i.e. things which had a negative impact where people comment, "this I don't like". Some of them know that it is difficult to find and keep a good job, an experience which they have not forgotten and which increases their worries of finding or keeping a job with a child. Because a child will increase the uncertainty, regarding the labour market individuals can connect the experience of not finding an adequate job with this situation and that makes the decision difficult.

Experiences have a great impact on people's perception of the future. Actions or events which people have experienced or witnessed can influence them in a positive or a negative direction. However, not only own experiences are important; when people observe close network partners they also adopt an attitude. One example is having a good friend who is a single mother. To be solely responsible for a child is a horror vision for many interviewed women. Easterlin (1980) has mentioned shaping experiences as well. He mainly refers to the divorce of parents. This is an issue that only some of the interview partners mention, however, not really discuss, but, a divorce or a break up of a couple in their circle of friends is somehow discussed with concerns and sorrows. These aspects are something that especially women in this sample take very seriously.

"My school mate, ... she had a baby when she was still very young and she, yes, she is now a single mother, the father left them very soon, and this made me reflect about it." (Elisabeth, female, 27)

These worries are quite understandable. Scholars have argued that in the last decades the number of one-parent families, most of them headed by women, raised the 'feminisation of poverty' (Lesthaeghe 2003). Several studies have shown that single mothers especially with younger children have a higher risk of poverty (Wernhart and Neuwirth 2007; Plantenger and Remery 2009). In this sample only women are afraid to end up as a single parent. Statistically seen for them it is a more likely scenario than for men and the divorce rate has risen since the 1960s. Lesthaeghe (2003) has argued that one explanation is that people have higher expectations regarding their private relations as compared

to 50 years ago. The quality of relationships is important. Gerson (1985) has pointed out that marriage offers women some kind of stability. Because this arrangement is not that stable anymore, uncertainties are rising, especially for women. If having a child means the woman has to give up her economic independence, she will think twice before having a baby. In this interviews women narrate that they want to avoid ending up as a single mother under all circumstances (Fliegenschnee 2006a). On the other hand no man in this research talks about this scenario. However, also men suffer from separations and divorces especially with children because they have difficulties to maintain their parental role after divorce (Goldscheider, Webster et al. 2000). In this sample not one man mentions worries in this direction.

Another issue that is shaped by witnessing the lives of others is that a child should be well considered. It can influence the wellbeing and only when one is settled one can give a child what it needs. This conclusion is also drawn from an observation where a friend got – in their opinion- children at the wrong point in time and this affected the quality of relationship between mother and child. To be prepared and to be in a good position to take care of the child is seen as crucial. All these experiences make women think how they can avoid such situations to have a good future for themselves as well as for their children. The time when to have children – as already mentioned several times – is very important in this respect because this will make a good relationship more realistic, at least in the perception of these interviewees.

„I think many people get children at a completely wrong point in time. I see it in my surroundings. There are often very deterrent examples of mothers who have children (...) she is working herself to death and has no time for her child.”
(Silvia, female, 30)

When to have a child is one of the crucial questions and parenthood at an inconvenient time is seen as not desirable. The issue of the right age was already discussed within the category “social indicator age”. However, also the issue that a mother should not work too much because she then forgets to care properly for the child is seen as important. This discrepancy between work and

care was already discussed several times. How others solve the issue of family influences the own behaviour. One considers the own situation and compares it with the own life concept and the way others deal with the issue. When others in the surrounding start to have a family, people start to consider this as well. This can motivate to make the same experience or one can realise that the time has not come yet.

Life seems easier when people act according to their social network. However, if the ideas of the right timing are different people feel the need to consider their behaviour well. Still this does not need to lead to a similar action. The own behaviour is compared to what others do. Especially persons from the social network but also people who are in the same social class can act as role models. Making experiences and realising that the own ideas are different shapes the life concept and leads to a clearer picture. The interviewees narrate that they watch colleagues or friends with different life models. People can observe different kinds of behaviour and can approve it or not. It can also be the case that they want to live a life like that but do not see how it could be possible in their situation. In any case what others do and how they manage their lives is an interesting issue to observe and to think about.

“When you see how the others deal with it. In both cases they are now housewives and mothers ... that you must like and I know that SHE does not like that for sure.” (Florian, male, 28)

However, if the role models solve the question but not the way one wants to deal with it, the decision is more difficult. In any case, children in the close network motivate people to think and to talk about the issue. Especially when very close network partners get to this stadium and one is also already close to this step, the motivation to move on is even bigger. We see in the comment again that how to live with a child is connected with the ideas of the woman. His partner does not want to be a housewife and only mother. We want to point out that especially this interview partner narrates more specific ideas about the own life concept compared to other male interview partners, however, also he refers to the life concept of his female partner when thinking about offspring. Also

people who do not want to have children orient their behaviour on what they see and experience in their surroundings. Interview partners report that watching close friends having a child does at least provoke a conversation between them.

Even if it means that the decision not to have a child is confirmed because a child means only a burden and life without one is much easier, people talk about their experiences and what they have seen. What others do and also how they deal with things provokes thinking about the own life concept. Such experiences are stimuli to talk and to bring the ideas in line. Rather often people talk also about persons who do not belong to their close social network and refer to what they do. For the life concept the whole network needs to be considered and not only close network partners. The advantage of this research is that the author got detailed information about the close network, and in addition, also about others when talking about the life concept of the people. Not only what others have experienced but also what someone realises by him/herself influences the life concept. Like the issue that a relationship has lasted for the last couple of years and this is a good ground to have a family. Without a stable relationship both men as well as women do not want to have a family. The relationship needs to be tested for some time. This is already discussed within the category “couples perspective”.

Another important experience in this category is the person's own childhood. Many scholars have argued that people start to think about their own adulthood in their childhood and their experiences shape their life concepts (Easterlin 1980; Gerson 1985; Burkart 1994; Miller 1995; Borchardt and Stöbel-Richter 2004). These early images are not fixed and not stable during the life course. Later on this base line changes by making other experiences in life as well as by structural conditions and normative rules (Gerson 1985). Own experiences make a significant contribution according to the question what to achieve in life and how to act (White 2003) and this starts during childhood. One issue that was presented is the fact that some of the interviewees grew up on the country side. They enjoyed having a good childhood and that shapes the vision of an ideal for their future children.

“I would like ... I enjoyed growing up in a rural area ... I had a super childhood, really, and I would like to offer this to my child, too.” (Daniela, female 34)

This woman wants to prepare the ground for her child in a specific way. She wants her child to grow up on the countryside. At the moment, this would not be possible for her. Her vision of the childhood of her future child is interlinked with her own childhood memories. The interviewees refer rather often to their own childhood memories to explain their life concepts and these are very often connected with positive ideas. Our own personal experiences shape our present lives as well as it shapes our life concept. Burkart (1994) has hypothesised that people with a happy childhood want to give something like this to their children and have a stronger wish to have a child than people who realized a problematical childhood. For people who illustrate a difficult childhood it is very important not to have a child unplanned. All circumstances should be optimal, to provide better circumstances for the child compared to the own childhood. It is important to say that it is not said in his book that a problematic childhood leads to a childless life and the other way round. The experiences one makes after the childhood also shape the views of the future intensively. The author cannot say if a happy childhood leads to a stronger wish for a child. Nevertheless, we can see that what one has experienced is important for the own life concept. Also the question of how many children someone wants to have is very much related with the own childhood and life. Scholars have argued that the size of the family of origin influences the fertility ideal, it is an important identification source (Clay and Zuiches 1980).

„ I don't know I was growing up in a family of four and it is (...) also because I am used to it. I often think . much I want to have like I had in my own childhood.” (Nadine, female, 28)

Especially the issue of siblings is argued with regard to the own childhood. This example shows that life concepts are rather often shaped by the own childhood. No matter if they report that they have enjoyed the companionship or if they tell that they have been a single child and suffered by this circumstance. The own situations with siblings in any case influences the own fertility wishes. Not only

the number of children but also things someone wants or does not want to have in the future are in several respects related to the family of origin. In a German study it has been found that a negative perception of how their mothers had organized their lives motivates women to organize theirs differently (Helfferich 2001). The issue that their mothers were not working and one wants to make it differently, or that the mother as well as the father were working too much and had no time for the children, is discussed and shapes the picture of how the ideal family life should look like.

The way of life is already shaped during one's childhood and many norms and values are settled during this age. What one approves as being good with respect to one's own childhood one also wants to provide for future children as well as avoiding the issues that are now judged critically. However, things one would like to approach differently are not easily changed because role models are missing. Gerson (1985) has found in her study that also bad experiences in the past can be used to argue against a child. Some people witnessed that the family was more a burden than a fulfilment for their mothers. This can lead to the situation of very carefully thinking about becoming a mother. Scholars have argued that if the life of the own mother is evaluated positively it is quite probable that this person will decide for motherhood. If motherhood is evaluated negatively this can very well influence the decision against motherhood. This judgment can also represent an unconscious decision (Gerson 1985).

Also other research has shown that women compare their own fertility behaviour with their mother's decision. If the mother worked really hard for the family this could be a concept which should not be followed. Modern women do not want to be obsessed with becoming a mother. They still want to have their personal freedom and opportunities for actions – even with offspring. Very often the decision against a child is based on the fact that the woman does not feel ready. Women want to develop their own personality and this can be a reason to postpone the fertility plans (Beck-Gernsheim 1997). By observing others and making own experiences the life concept is shaped and future aims are developed.

1.21 Thinking about a child is a process

In line with the life course approach we can say that the issue of children is described as a process (Huinink 2000, Huinink and Kohli 2010, Elder 2003). It changes during the lifetime and is bound to social conventions. The process is not linear. One cannot say that people do not change their minds as this depends on many things during the life course. The interviewees point out that the process should be shared with the partner from the very first moment. Experiencing a child together is a wish that begins already with the communication about a child. If the partner is not prepared for it, no matter whether it is the man or the woman the couple will very likely postpone childbearing. It has been argued that today young women but also men are actively involved in planning their lives (Adler 2002). The principle agreement that one day in the future the couple would like to have a family is in most cases in this sample made, nevertheless one cannot talk here about a decision toward parenthood. Such a decision needs time in order to consider all possibilities so that both partners have the feeling that they can act responsibly. Especially when many things are uncertain and people think that they still have time they will easily agree to postpone. The interviewees describe that the older they get the more they get used to the idea of having children and the desire to have a child is also increasing. Their life concepts are then somehow adjusted with the partner as it was shown above and so the issues get more concrete with time. Qualitative research has shown that there is no long term planning as well as only limited communication involved in the decision (Rijken 2009). Even if it is shown here that individuals rarely discuss the issue with their partner they make some kind of development, however, not a detailed plan. They describe it as a slow process of getting used to the idea and that many things are getting clearer. Interview partners report that they need a rather long time to get used to the idea of building a family. At the beginning the principle agreement is made to have or not to have a child, or still to wait for a clear decision. To think about children and family is in any case a process that needs time and no rush before decisions are made. It is described as an issue that pops up from time to time and reminds the individuals that one day they want to have a child.

It is described as an approach or a personal development and not a quick decision. It has been shown in other research that couples do not heavily discuss the issue of timing. Much happens rather implicit. Even if one of the partners considers pros and cons in detail this is not much discussed with the other (Rijken 2009). Individuals, however, consider several things which need to be given so that children can be considered seriously. Life seems for some of the interview partners like a process with different phases. A family is for most of them certainly one of these phases.

„In our circle of friends there is slowly approaching such a phase where it slowly begins. Relatively simultaneously I have to say. So consistent somehow and all need a new orientation in life and the issue of family is one of these issues.”
(Johanna, female, 29)

We can see here that also the social network is very important. As already shown most of the interview partners refer to their close network partners and consider how they deal with their own life concepts. Several interviewees point out that they are in similar situations as their friends or siblings. Many people have friends in the same age, of similar status (Hollstein 2001) and also very often similar life conditions because unlike kin, friends can be chosen freely (Bernardi 2004). It is described that from time to time life needs to be reorganised. New aims need to be found and the decision for a family is described as one possible and desirable reorientation. A new phase in life will start and all things will change. Not only because one needs to get used to the idea – to decide in favour of something always means at the same time to decide against something else, so the decision by itself seems to be a difficult one (Fliegenschnee 2006). Why some people decide not to have a child is described with the difficulty to make a decision. The longer people consider how they could manage and how they could make it in the best possible way, the more likely they end up without offspring because of all the uncertainty, problems and the feeling that it will be too difficult. Miller (1995) has focused in his research on how positive childbearing motivations influence fertility decisions compared with negative childbearing motivations. He argues that

these two elements do not seem to be antagonists but rather two completely different things. As people want to lead their life in a certain way, a decision is not easy, because very often you will lose something if you decide for a specific thing. The interviewees describe that they have a life concept in mind and that they are waiting for the things to come true. However, it can happen that several things will not happen and individuals narrate that they have the feeling that they can wait forever before their wishes come true. The timeframe when to have a child is rather vague. There are too many elements to be considered and therefore it is difficult to state a clear time. On the contrary, several interview partners reject making too precise plans. To stay vague is also accepted in society and nobody asks for a precise date. The time frame of several years, like three to five years, is mentioned during the interviews.

However, men as well as women have a life concept which they consider as very important and that guides them through life. Even if one argues that people want to reach their aims there are only very few hints that people plan which step they will take. One problem is that there are many ideas sometimes contradicting each other and they often do not know which ideas should possibly be fulfilled. Scholars have found that a rather stable life course with only few interruptions and a steady increase, affects the decision to have a child positively. That indicates that also for males some kind of compatibility from work and family is given (Eckhard and Klein 2006). Several scholars have pointed out that the wish for a child as well as the number of children one wants to have changes quite much during the life course (Borchardt and Stöbel-Richter 2004, Schröder 2007, Dommermuth, Jane et al. 2009, McQuillan, Greil et al. 2010). No matter if the wish is for or against children (Borchardt and Stöbel-Richter 2004). Also other scholars have argued that people do not necessarily have a very clear plan how to act during their life course and that the plans can change. In general they argue that reproductive preferences are highly sensitive (Johnson-Hanks and Walchuk 2005).

He is very vague in his statement and it seems that all kind of variations can be possible. Liefbroer (2009) has found in a longitudinal study that family size intentions adjust as people age – life courses are not stable. People in their

twenties have higher average family size ideals than when they are in their thirties. It has been assumed that this is connected with external life circumstances like breakups or reduced fecundity. Not even half of the interviewed persons reached their intended family size, as they had stated in the first wave. More respondents ended up with fewer children as they had intended than with more children. In a representative longitudinal Australian survey it has been found that fertility expectations changed quite dramatically also in a rather short period of three years (Mitchell and Gray 2007). Several of the interviewees narrate that they have changed their opinion about children already during their life course or that they still see a chance that they will change their mind in the future. This also holds true for the interviewees who point out that she does not want to have a child, however, one can never be hundred percent sure that this will not change in future.

„At the moment I cannot imagine it. And I think it is something that I postpone because I do not want to exclude the option completely like everything in my life, I leave a loophole.“ (Karin, female, 32)

The number of children seems to be not stable and depends on many things like the life concept of the partner. Research has pointed in the direction that fertility intentions are revised quite often during adulthood, however, these intentions stay more constant the older the interviewed women get (Berrington 2004). Considering the data it cannot be said how the fertility ideas will change, but the interview partners especially the ones around 30 and above narrate a rather clear idea about children. However, one cannot say in which respect their fertility ideas will change.

Why people want to have a child is rather difficult to answer for almost all interviewees. Reasons why to have a child are connected with feelings and the idea that in their life concept a child has always been an essential element or at least an element at the moment. Rational arguments are mainly used when talking about postponement whereas feelings are more important when people consider having a child. It is difficult to disprove rational arguments. It is much easier to find rational arguments against a child but the wish for a child is a

rather emotional topic (Fliegenschnee 2006). To balance these different elements in connection with many fears is difficult (Stöbel-Richter Yve, Beutel Manfred et al. 2005). Furthermore, rational arguments are very much accepted in our society so it is easy to argue against a child at least when you are postponing. Whenever people talk about having a child or that someone in their social network has a child the word “happiness” is most of the times connected to it. Only very few arguments can be counted – if at all – as rational, like the statement that one likes to have a person who will be there when one is old or that children will make life more active so that one will stay emotionally younger. Arguments like being financially safe at old age were not mentioned by the respondents. The interviewees want to have children because they think children will emotionally enrich their lives, they want to experience the personal development and the role of a parent, they want to take over responsibility and to be needed and to care for someone intensively, they want to observe the human development and to participate in the life of someone else, leaving marks and to pass on something and they argue that to have a child means to follow the biological instinct. Several arguments have been mentioned in all interviews. Wanting a child is described as a slow process, in which people get used to the idea and this is driven mainly by feelings.

„...and ... and ... yes mmm it was also a bit of a gut decision...” (Manuela, female, 27)

This person talks about how it came to the decision to have a dog. the author does not say that getting a dog and having a child are the same things but one can see that decisions are made often not by calculating pros and cons and making time plans as people would ideally talk about a responsible decision. What the author also wants to show is that decisions are often very strongly connected with feelings and emotions and can be decided very quickly. In this society to act on a gut feeling is not really esteemed. To consider all possibilities and to know all the consequences on the other hand is something that is valued. The difficulty to make a decision based on a feeling while at the same time trying to act responsibly is visible here. This makes it so difficult because what is expected here is difficult to be turned into action. Liefbroer (2005) has

pointed out that speaking in terms of costs, children are costly for women when they think about their own autonomy or their career opportunities. It is not easy to decide for something that will bring so much loss. The interviewees considered their investment in education or in their career and worry how this can be connected with a child. A child would mean to throw away all the efforts and because of that the focus would be on the child and not on their career anymore.

Life concepts are often very complex and individuals know that some of their ideas will not be possible to realize but which ones to drop is very difficult to decide and to judge. Often the amount of information is more than individuals are capable to deal with. The biographical process is complex and people have different opinions and aims for changing things (Engstler and Lüscher 1991). To postpone the decision is one strategy to avoid deciding. Although, it is also a decision not to decide now and to hope that the conditions will become better later in life. Research has shown that several people report that they prefer to make or have already made a “no-decision” considering fertility. It has been argued that the reason behind this behaviour is people being overstrained with the situation (Borchardt and Stöbel-Richter 2004). Interview partners are so concerned to make the right decision that in their view a child that would happen accidentally would be a relieve.

“Then the problem would be solved, . then well if it really would happen without that we well because we use very save contraception, then it is destiny.”

(Bianca, female, 30)

A problem would be solved. Also other research has shown that especially women consider the planning of children as something that can be very problematic. However, especially well educated women of the named research considered the planning as something that needs to be done and prepare themselves to face several difficulties (Helfferich 2001). Quantitative research has shown as well that a quarter of the women are “okay either way” – to become pregnant or not. Which shows that for some planning seems to be difficult (McQuillan, Greil et al. 2010). Neal and Groat (1980) have found in their

research that pregnancies are often experienced as accidents. They have pointed out that it gets more and more difficult for people to decide for a child because we live in an unpredictable world (Neal and Groat 1980). People have difficulties to deal with the responsibility and want to leave it to chance because this would be out of their responsibility (Engstler and Lüscher 1991). This argument goes in line with Becks (1986) idea that today people face many responsibilities and that this is a factor that creates pressure. Other scholars have found that people feel the burden of making the right decision and try to ease this situation by taking more risky actions like reducing their contraceptive method. This reduces the pressure because the decision is then not fully consciously made (Sardadvar 2010). In this research some interviewees even argue that they do not like the idea of planning a child at all. They favour more the idea of a surprise pregnancy.

Because people have many ideas for their life concepts and many of these ideas are in conflict with each other as well as with the life concepts of their partner, the notion of experiencing an unplanned parenthood seems tempting. They argue that too much considering is not beneficial because there are too many arguments against a child. On the other hand they point out that they need to reflect upon everything in detail because only then they can make a responsible decision. This discrepancy is important because it is not clear how to deal with it. Research has found that there is quite a number of women who do not plan or intend their pregnancy, however, consider it a positive event in their lives (Stanford, Hobbs et al. 2000). On the other hand, the share of people who have planned their children is above 50 percent in West Germany (Helfferich 2001). From this point of view this indicates a norm; namely one should act only when the subject has been well considered. Here, we can see that there seems to be a normative necessity to plan, however, the realisation is very difficult and once it happens by “accident” one still can consider it to be a very positive experience.

Because the interviewed couples have no children (yet) no clear statements about the final fertility decision can be made. The reasons that will make them decide for or against a child in the end cannot be referred to here. However,

that the decision for a child is one that is postponed for a rather long time in life is visible because so many elements and parameters are present and need to be considered. People need time to think about all these things in order to find the best way to act. Also, many social norms seem to contradict each other and make the decision more complicated. In any case the decision for or also against a child is a process and feeling ready for this step is here the crucial part.

1.22 Feeling Ready

At this point, the category “feeling ready” will be discussed. As we have already seen for many categories the issue of feeling ready is very important considering the fertility decision. This seems to be the most important element when it comes to the question why people postpone the issue of childbearing. It is highly connected with social norms and the issue of feeling grown up that is needed in order to feel mature enough to take over the responsibility a child brings along.

Other researchers have already dealt with the aspect of “being ready” for a child (e.g. Bernardi 2003, Blossfeld and Huinink 2001, Sevón 2005, Settersten 2007, Müller-Burhop 2008, Huinink, Schröder et al. 2008, Sassler, Miller et al. 2009, Schwiter 2011). However, very seldom it is viewed as an important point regarding the decision to have a child and it is only rarely discussed or defined in detail although many qualitative studies have shown that being ready is a crucial element when it comes to the fertility decision (Sevón 2005; Bernardi, Keim et al. 2007; Henwood, Shirani et al. 2011; Settersten 2011, Schwiter 2011). The author agrees that the feeling of being ready refers also to economic issues, including the own job and the educational situation. This holds true for men as well as for women. Both need to be ready and need to feel safe economically to start a family. Before things, like the own education, are not finished, individuals do not feel ready to make the step toward parenthood.

Not only education but also other complex details need to be clear. To finish

one thing means also to be ready for something new. Having a child is a new phase in life which means many things should be finished and clarified before. In a recent qualitative study on Austria, Rille-Pfeiffer (2009) has argued that women and men want to be prepared for having a child and want to have perfect conditions when entering parenthood. Additionally, people want to ideally make a couple decision, which means that they have to agree about details. Huinink et al. (2008) have found that if only a few conditions are already realized the possibility to enter parenthood sinks. They have further found that the more educated people also point out more conditions to be important. They have argued that higher educated people simply have more issues they consider than others. Consequently, their older interviewees more often stated that several conditions were fulfilled already. The authors have concluded that meeting these conditions increased the readiness to have a child. The German panel survey PAIRFAM (Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamics) (Huinink et al. 2010) includes the aspect of “being ready” (Buber and Fliegenschnee 2001). There, the issue of being ready is understood as a relevant precondition for the intention to have a child within the next two years. The authors consider mainly economic and structural aspects as these have the highest impact on the feeling of readiness. The emotional dimension of being ready is not elaborated (Huinink et al. 2008, Maul, Huinink et al. 2010). However, here the author wants to argue that it is not the sum of all preferred conditions that makes one ready but the personal feeling of being able to be a good parent which is highly connected to social norms. The preconditions and how they are perceived are regarded as important but are not seen as the crucial element for entering parenthood. Even if the preconditions are good some interview partners point out that they still want no children yet. They realize that the conditions are like they should be, but still having a child is not an issue in the coming years. Interview partners argue a lot with personal developments and not much with the conditions at hand. Borchardt and Stöbel-Richter (2004) have reported in their qualitative research that some interview partners do not mention socio-economic determinants at all but talk about their own and their partner’s personal development. This turns out in this study as well: readiness is mentioned again and again and turns out to be one of the key elements when it comes to the issue of fertility.

„I wish I am waiting to get the inner stability to have a child because this is what I expect of myself.” (Silvia, female, 30)

We can see here that it is described as a process and she talks about personal expectations of her own which indicates that internalized social norms are important. When the “inner stability” will be reached, however, is unclear. Buber and Fliegenschnee (2011) have analysed the feeling of being ready in their study and could show that being ready is also in another representative quantitative survey (GGS-Austria) an important element regarding the issue of fertility. Individuals rated the fact that one should feel ready to have a child as more important for the intention to have a child than other issues, like their work or economic concerns. The issue of ‘feeling ready’ and feeling stable and settled enough to be a parent is mentioned with a lot of passion by interviewees. Scholars have argued that often the decision against a child is made because the woman does not feel ready. Women want to develop their personality and this can be a reason to postpone fertility plans (Beck-Gernsheim 1997). Additionally, in this research it turns out that both partners need to be ready; not only the woman. Micheli and Bernardi have mentioned in connection with marriage, that individuals do not consider so much economic difficulties but that they do not feel ready yet (Micheli, Bernardi, 2003). The author does not argue that the decision making processes that lead to marriage and fertility are congruent, however, we can see here that for important decisions in life the feeling of being ready is crucial. Fathers and mothers should be emotional ready for a child and care in an emotional way.

„I think this is a personal thing if you feel ready to have a child or not and only then you should have one.” (Bianca, female, 30)

The question of having a child or not is a question of feelings and sensitivities. Readiness is related with maturity and adulthood. Also other research has shown that people connect parenthood with adulthood (Settersten, 2011, Loftus and Andriot 2012). To feel ready means one has become an adult. Several scholars have argued that becoming a father is a key element of adulthood as

this was stated by several individuals in their research. (Settersten 2003, Helfferich et al. 2005, Helfferich et al. 2006). Hogan and Astone (1986) have pointed out that adulthood is connected with specific roles, like the role of a parent. However, it is not necessarily the case that everybody takes over all roles. It has been shown in the US that young men need some time to make the transition to take over the adult economic role. It takes a while until the career development process is on track. Especially when there are some kind of difficulties regarding the career transition, postponement of marriage is the result (Oppenheimer, Kalmijn et al. 1997). If this aspect is a reason for delaying marriage we can assume that it is even a more significant reason to delay starting a family. In a qualitative study in Poland individuals talked about the fact that they themselves as well as their relationship need to be mature enough to provide the right condition for a child (Mynarska 2009). In this study the relationship is not that much an issue of discussion, however, often the interviewees point out that they need to be ready and mature to take over the new role of a mother or father.

“... that you need to have an idea, meet certain standards, that you want to educate your children well and be a good father, and I thought I am not yet ready for that.” (Martin, male 33 years)

Being able to state with confidence that one could be a good father requires an understanding of what this involves and that points to internalised social norms. The statement above indicates that in society there is an ideal picture of a good parent which people try to follow. Settersten (2011) has found that many individuals in their early 30s do not feel completely and in all shares of life as an adult. In this study one can roughly say that the older the interviewed persons are the more they are convinced to be mature. Nevertheless, the subjective age and the subjective feeling of being adult enough differ a lot. For example, a 24 year old man in the sample is much more convinced that he is already adult enough for having a child whereas a 35 old man talks a lot about the issue of being not ready yet. These two men have different social backgrounds, they live in different worlds so to say. Regardless of how settled they feel most of the interviewees refer to the issue of being mature enough and want to meet this

standard. Having inner stability is seen as crucial to be a good parent because otherwise one cannot concentrate on the child too much because of individual problems. In her study Helfferich (2011) has argued that being emotionally ready for such a step was seen as the most important point to handle the consequences of less freedom and independency in a better way.

Both women and men should be mature when they decide to build a family. In this study it is described as a process, where persons can slowly cotton on with the idea of becoming parents. Not feeling mature enough is stated several times and consequently used as a good reason to postpone the decision for a child. To have a child means to say goodbye to young days. It has been argued that especially well educated people have a longer phase of adolescence which is perceived as a privilege (Helfferich 2001). Additionally one should develop professionally and personally before having children (White 2003). The interviewees refer to the feeling that they consider themselves in a phase where they are still trying to find themselves. Besides, they assume that later in life they will be more stable and this is seen as good basis for having a child. In a qualitative study in East Germany it has been also emphasised that women want to be ready and mature to start a family. Younger women, so the results, are eager to enjoy the childfree time in their lives (Adler 2002). This is very much connected with the fact that they want to be emotionally ready for this step. Settersten (2007) has stated that for many people being mature and ready for a child is regarded as a requirement to become a parent. In the narration it is described that people want to make it properly and this can only be achieved if one is ready for this step.

To have the feeling to act well is connected to the fact that it needs time to get used to the idea. In a qualitative study in East Germany it has been shown that men assume their personal maturity as the crucial element to start a family (Bernardi, Keim et al. 2007). Other research has shown that men who are older fathers are more likely to get more involved in their children's upbringing and therefore are referred to as better fathers (Henwood, Shirani et al. 2011). To wait for the right time is described as important.

Readiness means that people need to develop the confidence to step toward parenthood (Rijken 2009). In a study in Italy couples who had been married for some years argued that they want to wait with children until they feel mature as a couple (Bernardi 2004). Both need to be grown up enough to have the feeling that they are ready for such a step, to take over a new role and to be good in that. As we have shown the decision for a child is described to be a couple decisions. In this context, the feeling to be ready as a couple is important. It is perceived that both need the feeling that being a parent would fit their lives (Buber and Fliegenschnee 2001).

One reason is that, at the moment, we simply do not yet see ourselves able to ... see ourselves as parents. (Florian, male 28 years)

The emphasis on the dyadic perspective goes in line with Burkhart (1994) and a recent study by Rille-Pfeiffer (2009) who have found that couples want to meet the ideal point in time for both partners. Parenthood is understood as a shared commitment (Sevón 2005). Only when both are ready they can proceed and make the decision. The process of the fertility decision can be a rather long one which can take several years until a decision is made (Sardadvar 2010). Other research has shown as well that people change their fertility preferences often from wanting to stay childfree to the motivation to have a child and defined it as a normal process of getting ready (Helfferich 2001). In the interviews it is described that an old chapter in life will be closed and a new one will begin. For this change one needs to get prepared and ready. To start a new phase in life needs to be considered very seriously and both have to express the wish that they want to make that step and at this point in time. To feel that the time is ripe for such a decision should become clear inside a person and should not be motivated from the outside world. Miller and Pasta (1994, p. 232) have argued that the most desirable item about the timing of children was “having a child when s/he by her/himself and the spouse is personally ready”. The personal development and feeling is crucial in this respect. When becoming a parent people need to shift a lot of attention away from themselves towards another person (Settersten 2003). Several interviewed partners argue that they want to be stable and settled enough so that they can focus on someone else. The

feeling to be emotionally ready to make such a step is perceived as very important (Buber and Fliegenschnee 2001). It has already been mentioned that males in the sample report that they are afraid that with a child they will not be able to fulfil their own needs. Another person will be in the centre of interest and reduce their own personal freedom

“The issue of children was always something I have neglected (...) That you wait until you have the feeling of being ready for it ... but also mature in the sense that you can shelve your own needs and lifetime wishes (when you have a child) (Martin, male 33 years)

Also quantitative research has shown that males expect a child will reduce their personal freedom (Klobas 2010). The author has already argued that a child is associated with many sacrifices and that the future parents have to be ready for that. Men showed the pattern that they have sorrows about their personal freedom. They realize that being a father means definitely to say goodbye to the own youth. One interview partner showed a rather drastical picture and argued that the loss of freedom can lead to a depression, because one cannot concentrate too much on oneself anymore. In this sample men focus in their narrations more on their own wellbeing and fear that they will lose in this respect. Another tendency we can see is that men point out that they worry not to be prepared enough to have a child. However, considering their stories, they do not narrate that they are preparing themselves. Women talk more about the fact that they want to experience several things before becoming a mother. Especially younger females talk more about this issue. However, they narrate about the issue of readiness in a very positive way.

„I think that once it is decided to have a child it will be OK. That you then mentally prepare yourself.” (Johanna, female, 29)

The idea of being ready seems intensively connected to social norms of how one should behave. Blossfeld and Huinink (1991) have found that women postpone entering motherhood because of the normative expectation: women are regarded as “not ready” for having a child when they are rather young and

in education. Individuals postpone their fertility plans because they are aware of the connected responsibility and they want to act well in their new role which refers to internalised social norms. Because respondents argue that they want to do it as properly as one should do it. In line with my findings, another qualitative study has pointed out as well that the feeling of being ready to take over the responsibility for a child is crucial (Schwiter 2011). Men consider themselves more able to cope with children when they get older. In a qualitative study it has been pointed out that first they want to concentrate on themselves before having children (Henwood, Shirani et al. 2011). One should be ready for this step and this means to have reached a certain level of individual development because this is necessary to take over the responsibility a child will bring. The consequences need to be carried by both partners and so they should make a good decision not to regret things in the end. Without being ready the responsibility might be too much in the end. Because being a good parent means to be prepared and all interview partners are sure that once they have a child they want to give their best. In a qualitative study with males it has been shown that men want to be responsible for their child and this seems to be more realistic when they are older and ready (Henwood, Shirani et al. 2011). Age related norms seem important for this framework, because when a person feels ready this is also connected to social norms (Diewald and Mayer 2008). The interview partners connect being ready, mature and responsible with each other. A responsible person will wait until s/he feels ready and this means mature for this step.

„Many, especially the somehow responsible persons want to have from my opinion mental matureness.” (Regina, female, 31)

To be ready and able to act reasonably is in the narrations of the interviews connected with being in line with social norms. In the last half century people had a rather clear social timetable. However, today it is not possible for young individuals to achieve economic but also psychological autonomy as early as it used to be. It has been pointed out that models of the past do not fit today (Settersten 2011). Finding once own way through the life course is considered as not easy.

The subject of children is a very complex one. One can have a clear idea about the issue to have or not to have a child or a more ambivalent one. Not only rational arguments as it is often assumed in the literature but also emotional aspects are very important when it comes to the fertility decision (Rijken 2009). Considering the timing when to have a child it is important to realize that it is attached to social and cultural rules of how to behave as a good mother and what is a reasonable female life course (Sevón 2005). In conclusion, social norms seem to be very important in guiding individuals. The point in time when one feels ready is heavily connected to the social constructs when it is appropriate to have a child. Having the right age, being in the right working position, feeling able to take the responsibility as a parent and as a couple are all issues that influence the feeling of being ready. From this understanding feeling ready to experience a new development is the most important issue when it comes to the question when to have a child.

Summary

Using the example of fertility, the “life concept theory” shows how individuals handle major transitions in life. This study is embed in the framework of the life course approach and explains why the life course decision with regard to fertility is especially considered as very important. How other also important life course transitions, like marriage or retirement, are dealt with cannot be answered, however, it is possible that similar elements are at work that influence individuals’ behaviour. It is assumed here that individuals have life concepts in their mind which need to be understood as rough ideas about their future life. These ideas seem to be shaped by internalised social norms and own experiences. The social network and in particular the partner influence the ideas of an individual especially because the issue of fertility is considered to be a couple decision. Approaching the issue of fertility is described as a process and the feeling that one is ready for this step is seen as the crucial element to make the finally decision.

1.23 Life concept

The category “life concept” is the core category. It is connected to all other categories and can be understood as the central theme. It needs to be understood as an interplay of ideas shaping a possible future and not as a concrete plan. In this sample for most of the interviewees children are an essential part of their life concepts; only the questions of when and how are matters of many considerations because individuals want to live up to their life concepts. The author has described the pattern that women talk more about their life concepts regarding fertility. Men in this sample report more the situation at hand or refer to the ideas of their partner. They showed the tendency to report less considered ideas about life with a child. Parental leave of the father is discussed during the interviewees; however, there is a tendency of gender-specific interpretation of it. Especially males show the perspective that many obstacles are in the way to take parental leave. Men in this sample describe parental leave as an option but not as a necessity, whereas women describe their own parental leave as necessary. Several issues need to be settled and fixed to make the decision to have a child. In the perspective of the interviewed men a child will affect their personal freedom. Postponement is a strategy to avoid this inconvenience for some time. It is assumed that a child will change the life extensively; for some the reason why they look forward to having offspring and for others the matter why they avoid having children. The women in this sample who are rather sure not to have children are especially clear about this issue. They argue with very similar arguments as women who want to have children. Children are an issue of desires and in this research it is made clear that one needs to have this desire to welcome children. In contrast to many other studies this study reveals that not only circumstances like one’s career determine a childfree life but the lack of desire. Especially women complain about the fact that they do not know how to reach their life concepts. Too many things need to be considered and are contradicting each other. This produces uncertainties and fears.

1.23.1 Role

In general, one has to say that within this category many gender-specific differences are visible. The author of this thesis shows that mainly the perceived bad reputation of the mother's role hinders women from taking over this role with enthusiasm. Both males and females agree on the fact that women should not stay at home too long to solely take care of the children. It seems that the current ideal of a modern woman is not easily combinable with motherhood that, in the eyes of the respondents, requires a lot of work, devotion and is furthermore connected with very low value. Both women as well as men in this sample are eager to present a modern picture of woman- and manhood. The modern father is supposed to be more than just the bread winner. He should be around and take care of the children also. However, contrary to the female interviewees who showed the pattern of having many ideas about the mother's role, the males showed the tendency to have only very little and vague ideas about what it means to be a modern father and which consequences they would accept in order to be this active father who is also emotionally involved. In contrast to women men present their participation in child care with fun and enjoyment. Women describe it as a burden and view the responsibilities of a mother with a lot of respect. On the other hand children are seen from all who want to have children as something that will contribute to their personal development and will enrich their life. Additionally, a child will mean to definitively take over the role of an adult and that was also seen as something positive.

1.23.2 Internalised social norms vs. indirect pressure

The analysis has shown that individuals seem to internalise social norms and that these are likely to guide their behaviour. Furthermore, these norms can create indirect social pressure. Indirect pressure is marked by the fact that it is not directly connected to a person but rather to an internalised norm that determines how people think they should behave. Individuals who do not want to act according to what is "normal" narrate indirect social pressure, like working full time as a mother or being a caring male. Again and again the issue is discussed that the own attitude would not really fit to the norms that are present

in Austria today. This creates uncertainty. Another norm seems to be that parents should offer their child extremely stable economic conditions as status symbols are connected with the image of being good parents. Additionally, the fact that caring for a child is also connected with being always around, gets in conflict with the idea that women should be part of the workforce as well. Both men as well as women point out that men face less social norms regarding the issue of fertility. However, also men report some social norms when it comes to the point where they take over responsibility for their child and how the environment will react. Additionally, several interviewees report the feeling that “family” is not valued within society today. To be self concentrated is very important and seems to carry a higher value than to take care for a child. To decide for a life with children can be rather difficult when one perceives that it is not valued very high by society.

1.23.2.1 Perceived structural conditions

In this category mainly the issue of work and related to that the economic situation is discussed. These elements are the most researched factors regarding fertility. The interviewees in this research consider especially the job situation of the women. Based on the analysis of the interviews it can be concluded that perceived structural conditions are affected by internalised social norms. The life concept and what one perceives as necessary to do or to have seems to be influenced by what is accepted by society. The female interview partners assume that their working situation would be affected by a child. How long one needs to stay in the labour market to be able to take the risk of having a child was intensively discussed and a huge source of uncertainty. Especially when the situation at work is somehow insecure or women want to work in a special field insecurity is narrated. The level of education is - in this research - not the crucial issue when it comes to the question of combining work and family life, but what seems to make a difference is the level of security and how much they feel committed to their work. A child brings uncertainty to the life concept regarding work and finances and needs to be well considered. Males in this sample consider their working situation only when they seriously want to take parental leave, however, also these men showed the pattern to talk in a

much more relaxed way about their job situation and also here there are statements that all situations are solvable and one does not need to make too many considerations. The other important element is the issue of money. Here, again we can see the tendency that females have discussed this issue in detail. However, for them it is an issue and rather often they consider their personal financial situation and not the couple situation as important.

1.23.2.2 Age

It is assumed that age has a social component. And that individuals have at least rough ideas about the ideal age to have children. There can be described the pattern that for women their own age triggers stress. In this sample especially women above thirty state the fear that they will not be able to achieve their aims. The idea of having several things accomplished by a certain age is strongly connected to the examples of social network partners and internalised age norms. Consequently it is an issue that produces uncertainty. On the other hand for several men in this research the age of thirty is connected with reaching adulthood and starting to think about family. One can describe the tendency that women in this sample have already thought much more about fertility and know in most of the cases what they want, while men are much more relaxed about their age. They describe the feeling that they still can postpone. In general, even if both talk about their age, the age of the woman is much more discussed during all interviews than the age of the man. In this sample women do not refer to the age of their partner as problematic even if some have a partner who is around ten years older whereas men talk about the age of the woman as a restricting variable. But the age of the mother is also connected to being a good mother. Older women are perceived to be the better mothers. Age is connected with performing the mother's role well.

1.23.2.3 Responsibility

Men as well as women refer to the issue of responsibility, however, it is presented in a gender-specific way. Women connect responsibility with acting responsible even before the child is born and think twice about every step they

take. Men presented the issue of responsibility as connected with the idea that they will have to take it over once a child is there. A child will not only increase responsibility but will ask for a new kind of it. This means that one should be very sure that having a child is the right thing to do. Men point out that being responsible is an issue that concerns them, however, they also point out that they want to carry this responsibility when the time has come. Women on the other hand do not assume that taking over the responsibility for a child produces sorrows. For them acting responsibly and knowing which consequences a child will bring is a big issue and influences their life concept. In the perspective of the interview partners women connect responsibility to the fertility decision, whereas men realise that they will have to take over responsibility once a child is there. We need to have also in mind that women carry most of the consequences once a child is there. This issue is very important for both genders because it has a huge impact on the fertility decision and refers to internalised social norms because interviewees perceive that acting responsibly and being responsible is expected from parents.

1.24 Personal conditions

1.24.1 Direct social pressure

Direct social pressure is the feeling that occurs when others question the own behaviour with the aim to influence it in their own interest. However, in this study it is not concluded that direct social pressure is always successful. Considering fertility the most obvious source of direct pressure is the partner, however, also the family, friends or other network partners can create it. Social pressure to have children as well as to avoid them is narrated. Interviewees conclude that it is easier to deal with that kind of social pressure compared to indirect social pressure because they can avoid the subject or even the person. It even can occur that direct pressure creates the opposite reaction when it does not fit the own life concept.

1.24.2 Inconsistencies

The issue of contradicting norms is only rarely discussed in the literature, however, in this research it appears often during narrations. It is an important issue considering fertility behaviour and the question why people have difficulties to decide in favour of a family. Here, is the tendency that women who consider childbearing seriously talk very much about conflicting expectations, like to have a career as a woman and to be independent on the one hand but on the other hand to be a mother and dedicate the majority of the time to the child. When the messages how to behave are contradicting responsible acting seems impossible. This means no matter how one behaves the feeling of getting in conflict remains and women have the perception that they will lose out in any case. This creates uncertainty regarding the life concept. However, also males narrate conflicting expectations. The issue that norms are contradicting is very often neglected in the literature, however, it has potential to explain why people have difficulties to decide in favour for a child.

1.24.3 The couple perspective

The decision about the timing of childbearing is described to be a joint one. Both perspectives need to be considered when talking about this decision. It was shown that in general couples make a principle agreement about having or not having offspring. As a consequence, it can be assumed that most of the couples share the same life concept in this respect. There are couples who are rather undecided as well, however, also they narrate similar ideas. It is further concluded that not much is discussed regarding fertility. Both partners are somehow aware of the other's life concept, however; only very rarely communicate their ideas in detail. Women are presented as being much more active than men, regarding the issue of fertility. They have ideas and wishes and are also more important when it comes to the concrete timing. Men in the sample are rather passive but trust the women that their ideas and needs will be reflected in the decision when to have a child. The interview partner described that one of the partners is perceived as the delayer who puts the partner into the waiting position. In the data the waiting situation for women is described as rather inconvenient because the male partner often refuses to talk about fertility

as a matter of principle. A stable partnership is seen by all interviewees as one of the most important elements when not the most important one to decide in favour of a child. To conclude, the issue of fertility needs to be considered from the couple perspective because it is the interplay of the ideas/wishes/life concepts of both partners that leads to the decision.

1.24.4 Shape

This category describes that own experiences as well as witnessed ones shape an individual's life concept. Especially friends are in this respect a decisive factor. When they are in a similar situation the own one is easier to deal with. Experiences like caring or dealing with handicapped people, or searching for a job, or witnessing friends being single mothers can increase or relieve fears. Nevertheless, most of these examples increase the feeling of uncertainty. Being a single mother is only a scenario females discuss in this study. Having children too early or at a wrong point in time is as well something that is witnessed and negatively evaluated. How others deal with the issue of fertility has an effect on the own life concept. At the same time, missing role models make it more difficult to visualise the own way. Also own experiences and in particular the own childhood shape the life concept intensively. Where and how to live as well as the issue of how many children one wants are aspects that are often decided in connection with the own childhood. Although sometimes individuals state that they want to live a completely different life than their parents. However, both the experiences one has made as well as witnessed shape the life concept in a significant way.

1.25 Thinking about a child is a process

Thinking about a child is described as a process or development and not as a clear cut plan. Interviewees describe that they need to get used to the idea and this needs time; rushed decisions are considered to be not responsible in this respect. It is even realised that intensive thinking about all the issues connected with fertility can lead to a childless life because the decision seems to be too difficult to make when one tries to take every aspect into account. It is described

as very easy to argue with rational arguments against a child. Some even wish for an unplanned pregnancy so the responsibility of making the decision would be taken away. In any case the decision for or also against a child is a process and the feeling to be ready for such a step is here the crucial part.

1.26 Feeling ready

The issue that one needs to feel ready to have a child seems to be crucial. Conditions are important, however, the feeling of being ready is more than the sum of the preconditions. It is the personal development to see oneself able to take over the responsibility a child brings and to perform the role of a parent well. Only when one is stable enough and not too much focused on oneself than s/he is able to be a good future parent. The idea that one needs to be emotionally and mentally mature is assumed to be shaped by social norms and the issue of responsibility. The idea of being ready is therefore considered to be a social and not an individual concept.

Conclusion

Concluding this thesis the developed theory shall be integrated into the existing theories and the most important findings in the literature.

The core category, the life concept, is a rough idea of what life should look like. And this individual idea leads people through their lives. In the “second demographic transition theory” it is assumed that female extended participation in education and in the labour market as well as changes in the value of children have strongly influenced family and fertility behaviour. Children are no longer considered to be on top of the value pyramid (Lesthaeghe, 2003). However, in line with many scholars it is argued here that most people do not question parenthood and family because these are key elements in their life concepts (Borchardt & Stöbel-Richter, 2004; Schneewind, Vaskovics, Gotzler, et al. 1996). In this research children still take a very high priority in the different

life concepts; only the question of when and how to have them is very complicated to answer. Still, it is not possible to compare the findings to data from many years ago. However, interview partners consider children as essential and for most of them it is the most important issue in life. That a family with a child is perceived as the normal standard is also confirmed by the fact that interviewees who want to stay childfree feel the pressure to explain their behaviour. The data suggest that both, the wish to become a parent (Meyers, 2001) and the idea that a child should fit into the future parents' lifestyle (Carmichael & Whittaker, 2007), are still crucial.

In the "theory of planned behaviour" (Ajzen and Fishbein 2005) fertility intentions are assumed to predict fertility behaviour. There is a strong link between planning and the special way someone wants to deal with the issue. In this thesis it is argued that "intention" may not be the right term to consider future fertility behaviour. It is not argued that people have no ideas about their future, they do have them. However, it is doubted that they have intentions when it comes to fertility. Indeed, they have dreams and ideas how their life should look like – which means that they have a life concept. And they have ideas about when or how many children they would like to have, however, they do not have a concrete plan. One can assume that a concrete plan is only made at a rather late point in time: only when the couple has decided to have a child very soon. Here, it is referred to Miller and Pasta (1995) who assume that people first have fertility desires. This is a state of mind that can be satisfied. This goes in line with these findings – people have desires about having children but no concrete plan is made. Only when they are ready to have a child it is assumed that intentions are created.

In line with the "life course approach" it is assumed here that fertility behaviour depends on external and internal conditions (Huinink and Kohli 2010). An interplay shown in the "life concept theory" with the variables social requirements and personal conditions, even though here it is not assumed that social requirements are external conditions because they are normatively perceived and therefore not considered to be external.

McDonald (2000) has considered gender roles to be the most important factor when looking at fertility. When gender equity is missing fertility levels are low in Western countries, he argues (McDonald 2000). This is something that goes in line with the findings of this study. However, we have now a better understanding in what way and why it is the case. In this concept the social role is a very important category. From the data we can see that especially women who want to be modern mothers struggle with visualising their future role. Even if most of the women in this sample want to have a child they struggle with the idea of becoming a mother. The reasons might be that motherhood has a rather low status and value and is considered tiring, unacknowledged work (Mynarska, 2009; Borchardt & Stöbel-Richter, 2004; Schneewind, Vaskovics, Gotzler, et al. 1996). In line with Tsuya & Oppenheim Mason (1995) it is assumed here that modern women do not want to be reduced to staying home and having children. Other studies have shown as well that women face conflicts at the normative level because these two roles are considered to be almost incompatible (Ruckdeschel, 2009).

One can argue that in future it will be necessary to decrease the socio-economic price for having children (Doorne-Huiskes and Doorten 2011); especially for mothers. However, here it is argued that it is more important to increase the status and the value of mother- and fatherhood so that young adults can decide more easily for this role and appreciate the work they do because they connect it not only with responsibility and perfectionism but also with enjoyment and satisfaction. Especially females seem to have the feeling that it is normatively expected to be as perfect as possible when being a mother and to devote your whole life to it even if it is not valued by others. Males connect to fatherhood attributes like caring, participating, nursing and responsibility. Even if the interviewees have this image in mind, they have not explained how they could be such a modern, caring father. This leads the author and others to the assumption that women are rather realistic about the impact children will have on their lives, whereas men have a rather idealised picture (Rijken, 2009).

It is assumed here that behaviour is the result of people's current life situation in

conjunction with social norms and their life concepts. According to Elias (1982), “internalised norms” make people comply with these norms without social pressure or sanctions (Horne, 2001). Internalised social norms are what people desire and in this respect there is no discrepancy between the interest of an individual and a group. The norms become the ends that people desire (Horne 2001; Horne 2003). Even if this is the case, and no social pressure is needed this research shows that people force themselves to behave according to norms. The author has called this phenomenon ‘indirect social pressure’, because it does not involve a direct interaction with sanctions but rather an individual reflexion of the own behaviour. This indirect social pressure which refers to internalised social norms helps to orientate one’s behaviour but on the other hand people narrate also contradicting norms and these make behaving according to norms not easy. Individuals would like to perform according to accepted behaviour, however, they will violate some of the norms anyhow and this of course produces stress.

An assumption in the life course approach is that a person has different life spheres where s/he lives which are interconnected, depend and compete with each other (Huinink 2000, Huinink and Kohli 2010). Based on this idea it is shown here that women show the tendency to be more concerned about their work situation than men when it comes to the issue of fertility (Liefbroer & Corijn, 1999) and their career is substantially influenced by a child (Buber, 2003; Schneewind, Vaskovics, Gotzler, et al. 1996). That women consider it inappropriate to work or study full time when having a child (Goebel, 1997) points to internalised social norms that define these activities as being irreconcilable with motherhood. Especially women worry about their personal economic situation because they do not want to be financially dependent (Gerson, 1985). Following these argumentations it is easy to understand that not the situational conditions per se lead toward behaviour but internalised social norms let people evaluate a situation and that guides their behaviour.

The “second demographic transition theory” assumes that norms have a diminishing influence on demographic behaviour (Lesthaeghe, 2003). This aspect is from my point of view a bit more complex. Based on this research it

can be assumed that norms have not lost their importance. But norms have changed and individuals today follow different norms. The author does not come to the conclusion that people act according to their individual value orientation (Lesthaeghe, 2003) but try to combine the different conflicting normative expectations and are still very much oriented toward what is expected.

The life course of one person is connected to other persons as well as values and norms of the society itself (Huinink 2000). The life course approach mainly focuses on age norms and sequencing norms. Especially age norms are in this concept important, too. The interviewees are aware of their “social clock” (Settersten, 2003), which decisively guides their life concepts. Many works document the existence of age norms for family decisions (Hogan & Astone, 1986; Liefbroer & Billari, 2009; O’Rand & Krecker, 1990). In this sample the interviewee realises that women face time constraints and this “social clock” produces stress. Nevertheless, in general, older fathers (Henwood, Shirani & Kellett, 2011) and older mothers (Sardadvar, 2010) are considered to be better parents. According to Liefbroer and Billari (2009) there are norms for life events and role transitions that indicate when a specific behaviour is inappropriate, e.g. the wrong age, being in education, making first experiences at work (Sevón, 2005), unsuitable economic conditions and having no partner (Woollett & Boyle, 2000). Scholars have argued that the number of norms for having a child is constantly growing. A child must be born into optimal conditions (Beck-Gernsheim, 1997). In this study, men are aware of more norms and higher pressure for their partner than for themselves and as a consequence are more relaxed about most issues. This finding cannot be fully explained. We can only hypothesise that parenthood continues to involve more responsibilities for women who therefore face more social pressure and constraints. However, it was shown that for women and men norms serve as important guides for their life concept.

Huinink (2000) has assumed that partnership and parenthood today is relevant for most people because of the psychological benefits. However, how people

manage to combine their different roles in their various life spheres and how to combine the different activities is a difficult question. We see in the narrations that most of the interviewees struggle with their life concepts. The question how to combine and realise one's aims in life which are usually oriented towards a rather high level is difficult to answer. Not to mention the issue that women perceive that they have to consider their own as well as the ideas of their partner a fact that seems to relax men and to stress women.

Most individuals refer during the interviews to the fact that they want to act responsibly (Helfferich et al., 2006). However, to put this idea into action appears to be more and more difficult as the level that accounts for responsible parenthood seems to be rising continuously (Huinink and Mayer 1995). The author shows here that responsibility is presented differently by women and men. Whereas men describe that they want to wait until they are mature enough to take over parental responsibility, which also others have shown (Henwood, Shirani & Kellett, 2011), women state that the freedom to choose whether or not to become a mother also entails taking over the responsibility for the consequences of the particular choice (Sevón, 2005). As many aspects are difficult to judge or are even contradictory, interviewees also argue that they would prefer to leave their fertility to chance (Engstler & Lüscher, 1991).

In the data not only "indirect pressure" was found but "direct pressure" as well. Liefbroer and Billari (2009) have assumed that most sanctions are imposed by close network members like parents or friends. Especially partners exert a great deal of direct pressure (Gerson, 1985). People's networks and how significant others perceive and evaluate the situation decisively influences their fertility behaviour (Dommermuth, Klobas & Lappegard, 2009; Keim, Klärner & Bernardi 2009). Nevertheless, the literature fails to mention that social pressure can be rather unclear and contradictory. In line with others (Borchardt & Stöbel-Richter, 2004), one can assume that perceived direct social pressure has limited leverage, especially when compared to indirect pressure. Interviewees even say that direct social pressure provokes the opposite of the intended reaction. The influence of network partners and their direct pressure is from my understanding quite limited with the partner being the exception as s/he plays a very important

but also controversial role.

The new home economic approach (Willis 1973, Becker 1992, Becker and Lewis 1974) assumes an interaction between the quantity and the quality of children, the concept of time, and opportunity costs regarding the fertility decisions. The data show some evidence that people want to invest a lot in a small number of children but from my point of view this is mainly driven by norms and not by calculating personal costs. As the author has shown financial arguments are given for not having a child soon, however, the issues of norms and fulfilling the own life concept and especially feeling ready for such a change seem to have a greater potential to explain the behaviour.

In the new home economic approach acting responsibly is considered as acting rationally (Becker and Murphy 1988). This is understood as calculating costs and utilities. Also in the life course approach it is assumed that people act rationally. However, in this approach it is agreed on the fact that not only rational calculating takes place but also norms and emotional feelings intervene and make rational acting difficult. A real rationally thinking person will decide not to have a child because it is not possible to clearly calculate costs and benefits (Huinink, Schröder et al. 2008). In the TPB it is assumed that individuals' actions are reasoned and that they make systematic use of information available to them. People consider the implications of their actions before they decide to engage or not to engage in certain behaviours (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980). From this point of view people want to show that they act responsibly and rationally and want to demonstrate that they consider all options well. It is assumed here that this is done because it is normatively expected and not because it is a cost benefit calculation. However, even if individuals present themselves as willing to act rationally the question remains if they really act that way, as other studies have shown that they do not (Burkart 1994; Sardadvar 2010). To show that one considers all elements carefully is important for the interviewees as it is normatively expected and an internalised social norm. Like in other studies (Keim, Klärner & Bernardi 2009; Sardadvar, 2010) data in this study have shown that fertility requires some sort of negotiation with the partner. Once couples have come to a basic agreement, only very little communication

takes place afterwards (Burkart, 1994), which, moreover, is barely rational, clear-cut or conscious (Sevón, 2005). In addition, people find it hard to weigh rational arguments against emotional desires and to judge their own situation and that of their partner (Kirchler, Rodler, Hölzl et al., 2001). The author also shows that people who do not want to have a child argue also in a very emotional way. They do not argue with their career or give financial reasons. Also for them the fact that they do not have the need for a child or that a child simply does not fit in their life concept is argued.

Easterlin (1980) has argued that people try to reach a very specific type of standard that was already determined in their minds during their childhood. Interviewees refer to their childhood and want to reach several things they have experienced during this time. However, not only the childhood shapes the life concept but also other important experiences. Additionally, the author does not consider only economic terms but add several other areas where people want to achieve things.

Viewed from a couple's perspective, women actively consider fertility. They take into account and plan their own (Burkart, 1994) and their partner's (Sevón, 2005) situation and seem to be more realistic than men (Goebel, 1997). In Austria women have more control over the fertility decision-making than men (Buber & Fliegenschnee, 2011). Often one of the partners waits until the other is ready for parenthood (Henwood, Shirani & Kellett, 2011). In this sample it occurred that men who delay fertility are perceived as problematic because they often refuse to talk about fertility. Interviewees in this study show that the question of how women can reconcile their different aspirations, implement their rather ambitious life concepts. And taking into account their partner's ideas at the same time is particularly difficult for them. However both are important when it comes to the decision to have a child (Hutteman 2013).

The issue of de-standardization of life courses (Brückner and Mayer 2005) and the fact that this leads to a lack of structure which increases uncertainty (Settersten 2007) is found in this research as well. However, this de-standardization seems to be ambivalent because people still have not got the

feeling that they can decide freely without judgment from others. This has the effect that the uncertainty is even higher, because of the lack of clear structures and the fact that people face sanctions by others. Especially the fact that individuals or couples have to decide how and when important life course decisions are supposed to take place creates uncertainty (Beck 1986).

Another assumption in the life course approach is the one that individuals orient towards individualisation. Individuals get in conflict with their wish for a child and their low desire for a long term commitment which can hinder their career. They further argue that family is losing its importance because of the fact that, nowadays, individual needs, social acceptance and status are mainly satisfied through work (Huinink 2000). Burkart (1994) has argued that normative considerations are connected to motherhood and a career is very crucial. He shows as well that individuals are supported by work and value the role of modern working women. The fact that women in this study fear to be reduced to the mother's role shows how low the value of motherhood must be perceived. Also in this research it is shown that the social status is not gained through motherhood but work. For the men this was presented differently because they do not fear the consequences of being seen only as a father. However, they fear to lose their freedom when they have to take over responsibility for a child. An issue that is also connected with the aspiration for individualisation. To fear a long term commitment, however, is not mentioned in the interviews. Only the fear to end up as a single mother and this is only mentioned by females. All of the interview partners have the wish to stay with their current partner for a long time or even forever.

The interviewees' descriptions of the fertility issue are in line with the life course approach, which understands having children as a process, in which own experiences (Elder, Johnson & Crosnoe, 2003; Huinink & Kohli, 2010) as well as those of others shape people's life concepts which makes fertility plans unstable across the life course (Borchardt & Stöbel-Richter, 2004; Dommermuth, Klobas & Lappegard 2009; Johnson-Hanks, 2007; McQuillan, Greil & Shreffler 2010; Schröder, 2007). Fertility is not a simple decision taken at one point but needs to be seen as a process.

Huinink and Kohli (2010) have assumed that there is a variation of life course patterns between different social classes; an issue that this research cannot confirm easily. It has to be acknowledged that this sample consists of much more well educated than lower educated people. However, the few lower educated individuals here have very similar attitudes compared to the well educated interviewees. Still, this is an issue that would be very interesting to focus on in future research projects.

To have a stable economic base is another assumption that is made within the framework of the life course approach (Huinink, Schröder et al. 2008). In principle, one can agree on the issue that all interview partners think about their financial situation and how they will manage to be financially stable. However, they also point out that they will never reach such a secure point before being too old and others stress the fact that they have already rather good conditions but still do not want to have a child. The most important argument is to be ready for this step and this is not only connected to the financial and labour market conditions. The feeling of being ready for a child is crucial for actually having children, a fact also mentioned by several other authors (Blossfeld & Huinink, 2001; Huinink, Schröder & Boehnke 2008; Sevón, 2005). It is, however, only rarely taken into account (Buber & Fliegenschnee, 2011), although its importance is frequently underlined (Bernardi, Keim & v.d. Lippe 2007; Borchardt & Stöbel-Richter, 2004; Henwood, Shirani & Kellett, 2011; Sevón, 2005). Readiness was described as being more than the sum of all preconditions. It is an emotional preparation for seeing yourself as a parent and admitting that you are really grown up. Being ready is shaped by norms (Diewald & Mayer, 2008) that stipulate that people should be mature and ready when they have a child (Settersten, 2003).

Here it is concluded that norms have not lost their regulative power. Only that individuals today follow other norms than the generations before them. When we assume that today people are guided by other norms than in the past than we can assume that these norms make people postpone childbearing. We see that people consider many things to be important for their life concepts and

several issues should be finished before a new phase in life can be entered. Finishing education or getting work experiences are some of these issues just as well as a stable partnership with the “right” person. Interviewees narrate that ideally the couple should live together before getting married and save enough money. People know how they ideally should act by following internalised social norms. The issue that these norms get in conflict like when suggesting to be a modern woman and to be successful and independent at work and financially independent and on the other hand to devote your love and especially your time to your child. Such contradictions leave them with the feeling that one cannot follow all internalised norms and this makes responsible acting difficult. However, especially this responsible acting is what people try to do, because they realise that this is socially required even if the responsibility is differently perceived by women and men. A very important issue is as well to be emotionally, socially and psychologically stable and ready to become a parent. Without being ready to carry the responsibility people will not make the step toward parenthood.

In this thesis, fertility was used as an example to show how major life course decisions are considered. It would be interesting to study also other life course events such as getting married or retiring in order to analyse if these events are considered in a similar way.

References

Abraham (2006). Empirische Forschung und theoretischer Fortschritt in der Familiensoziologie: Korreferat zu Johannes Huininks Beitrag. Zeitschrift für Familieforschung, 18(2): 253-259.

Adler, M., A. (2002). German Unification as a Turning Point in East German Women's Life Course: Biographical Changes in Work and Family Roles. Sex Roles: A Journal of Research 47: 83-98.

Ajzen I., Fishbein, M. (1980) Understanding Attitudinal and Predicting Social Behavior, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Upper Saddle River.

Ajzen, I. 1988, Attitudes, personality and behavior. Open University Press, Milton Keynes.

Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes 50: 179-211.

Ajzen, I. and Fishbein, M. 2005, 'The influence of attitudes on behavior', in The handbook of attitudes, eds A. Dolores, B. T. Johnson and Z. M. P. Mahwah, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, NJ, pp. 173-221. Antonucci, T. C. (1986). Hierarchical mapping technique. Generations 10(4): 10-12.

Armitage, C. J. and M. Conner (1999). Distinguishing perceptions of control from self-efficacy: Predicting consumption of a low fat diet using the theory of planned behavior. Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 29: 72-90.

Bahrtdt, H., P. (1994). Schlüsselbegriffe der Soziologie: Eine Einführung mit Lehrbeispielen. München, Verlag C.H. Beck.

Balbo N., F. Billari and M. Mills (2013), Fertility in advanced societies: a review

of research. European Journal of Population 29: 1-38.

Barclay, L. and D. Lupton (1999). The experiences of new fatherhood: a socio-cultural analysis. Journal of Advanced Nursing 29(4): 1013-1020.

Bauer, G. and Kneip, T. (2013): Fertility from a Couple Perspective. A Test of Competing Decision Rules on Prospective Behaviour. European Sociological Review 29 (3): 1-14.

Baumgart, F. (2000). Theorie der Sozialisation. Bad Heilbrunn, Julius Klinkhardt.

Baxter J. and A. Evans (2013) Introduction, In: Negotiating the life course, stability and change in life pathways. New York: Springer

Beck-Gernsheim, E. (1997). Die Kinderfrage: Frauen zwischen Kinderwunsch und Unabhängigkeit. München, , C.H. Beck Verlag.

Beck, U. (1986). Risikogesellschaft, Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne. Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp.

Becker, G. S. (1965). A theory of the allocation of time. The Economic Journal 75: 493-517.

Becker, G. S. (1992). Fertility and the economy. Journal of Population Economics 5(3): 185-201.

Becker, G. S. and G. H. Lewis (1974). Interaction between quality and quantity of children. Economics of the Family, Marriages, Children, and Human Capital. S. T. W. London National Bureau of Economic Research: 81-90.

Becker, G. S. and K. M. Murphy (1988). A Theory of Rational Addiction. Journal of Political Economy 96(4): 675-700.

Beckman, L. J. (1984). Husbands' and wives' relative influence on fertility

decision and outcomes. Population and Environment 7: 182-197.

Beets, G. (2011). The demography of the age at first birth: the close relationship between having children and postponement. In: G. Beets, J. Schippers and E. R. Velde. The Future of Motherhood in Western Societies. Late Fertility and its Consequences. Dordrecht, Springer: 61-90. .

Berg, C. and M. Milmeister (2008). Im Dialog mit den Daten das eigene Erzählen der Geschichte finden. Über Kodiervverfahren der Grounded-Theory-Methodologie. Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung, 9(2).

Bergnehr, D. (2007). Love and family. Discussions between Swedish men and women concerning the transition to parenthood. Forum: Qualitative Social Research 8 (1).

Bernard, R. H. (2002). Research Methods In Anthropology: Qualitative And Quantitative Approaches - Third Edition. Cambridge University Press.

Bernardi, L. (2004). Channels of social influence on reproduction. Population Research and Policy Review 22: 527-555.

Bernardi, L., S. Keim, von der Lippe, H. (2007). Social Influences on Fertility: A Comparative Mixed Methods Study in Eastern and Western Germany. Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 1(1): 23-47.

Berrington, A. (2004). Perpetual postponers? Women's, men's and couple's fertility intentions and subsequent fertility behavior. Population Trends 1771: 9-19.

Bhaumik, S. K. and J. B. Nugent (2005). Does economic uncertainty have an impact on decisions to bear children? Evidence from eastern Germany, I. f. t. S. o. L. (IZA), Discussion paper series, IZA DP No. 1746.

Billari, F. C. (2005). Life course analysis: two (complementary) cultures? Some

reflections with examples from the analysis of the transition to adulthood.

Towards an Interdisciplinary Perspective on the Life Course. Advances in Life Course Research. Rene Levy, P. Ghisletta, J.-M. Le Goff, D. Spini and E. Widmer, (eds.). New York, Elsevier. 10: 261–281.

Billari, F. C. and A. C. Liefbroer (2010). Towards a new pattern of transition to adulthood? Advances in Life Course Research 15(2-3): 59-75.

Billari, F. C., D. Philipov and M. Testa (2009). Attitudes, Norms and Perceived Behavioural Control: Explaining Fertility Intentions in Bulgaria. European Journal of Population 25(4): 439-465.

Birg, H. (1987) A Biography Approach to Theoretical Demography, IBS-Materialien, no. 23, Bielefeld: Institute for Population Research and Social Policy.

Blossfeld, H-P., and J. Huinink (1991). Human capital investments or norms of role transition? How women's schooling and career affect the process of family-formation. American Journal of Sociology, 97, 143-168.

Blossfeld, H-P., and J. Huinink. 2001. Lebenslaufforschung als sozialwissenschaftliche Forschungsperspektive: Themen, Konzepte, Methoden und Probleme." BIOS 14 (2) pp.5-31.

Blumer, H., (1973): Der methodologische Standort des symbolischen Interaktionismus. In: Arbeitsgruppe Bielefelder Soziologen (Hrsg.), Alltagswissen, Interaktion und gesellschaftliche Wirklichkeit, Bd. 1, Rowohlt, Reinbek

Boehnke, M. (2009). Gut gebildet = kinderlos? Zu feinen deutsch-deutschen Unterschieden im Umgang mit dem Kinderwunsch BIOS - Zeitschrift für Biographieforschung, Oral History und Lebensverlaufsanalysen, 22(1): 12-31.

Böhm, A. (2000). Theoretisches Codieren: Textanalyse in der Grounded

Theory. In: U. Flick, E. von Kardoff and I. Steinke. Reinbek, Rowohlt, Qualitative Forschung. Ein Handbuch, 475-485.

Bongaarts, J. and S. C. Watkins (1996). Social Interactions and Contemporary Fertility Transitions. Population and Development Review 22: 639 - 682.

Borchardt, A. and Y. Stöbel-Richter (2004). Die Genese des Kinderwunsches bei Paaren – eine qualitative Studie. Materialien zur Bevölkerungswissenschaft, Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung Heft (114).

Bould, S., Crespi, I., Schmaus, G. (2012). The cost of a child, mother's employment behavior and economic insecurity in Europe. International Review of Sociology, 2012, vol. 22 (1): pp. 5-23.

Breiger, R. L. (2004). The Analysis of Social Networks. In: M. Hardy and A. E. Bryman. Handbook of Data Analysis. London SAGE Publications, 505-526.

Brückner, H. and Mayer, K. U. (2005). De-Standardization of the Life Course: What It Might Mean? And If It Means Anything, Whether it Actually Took Place. Advances in Life course research, 9, 27-53.

Buber, I. (2001). The effect of the completion of education on entry into motherhood in Austria: or: the real educational catch-up effect. Annual meeting of the European Society for Population Economics. Athens 14-16 June 2001.

Buber, I., C. Berghammer and A. Prskawetz (2011a) Doing Science, Forgoing Childbearing? Evidence from a Sample of Female Scientists in Austria, VID Working Paper 01/2011.

Buber, I. and K. Fliegenschnee (2001). Are you Ready for a Child? A Methodological Triangulation on Fertility Intentions in Austria. . Vienna, VID Working Paper 3.

Burkart, G. (1994). Die Entscheidung zur Elternschaft. Stuttgart, Ferdinand

Enke Verlag.

Burkart, G. (2006). Positionen und Perfektiven. Zum Stand der Theoriebildung in der Familiensoziologie. Zeitschrift für Familienforschung 18(2): 175-205.

Burkart, G. (2007). Eine Kultur des Zweifels: Kinderlosigkeit und die Zukunft der Familie. In: Konietzka, D. and M. Kreyenfeld (Hrsg.),. Ein Leben ohne Kinder. Kinderlosigkeit in Deutschland. Wiesbaden: , VS-Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, : 401-423.

Caldwell, J. C., P. Caldwell, and P. McDonald (2002). Policy Responses to Low Fertility: A Global Survey. Journal of Population Research, 19(1): 124.

Carmichael, G., A. and A. Whittaker (2007). Choice and Circumstance: Qualitative Insights Into Contemporary Childlessness in Australia. European Journal of Population, 23(2): 111-143.

Clay, D. and J. Zuiches (1980). Reference groups and family size norms. Population and Environment, 3(3-4): 262-279.

Cohler, B. J. and A. Hostetler (2003). Linking Life Course and Life Story. Social change and the narrative study of lives over time. In: Jeylan T. Mortimer and Michael J. Shanahan (Eds.). Handbook of the life course. New York, Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers. : 3-19.

Corbin, J. and A. Strauss (1990). Grounded theory research: procedures, canons, and evaluative criteria. Qualitative Sociology, 13(1).

Crespi I. and Fontaine AM. (2012). Transition to parenthood and fertility intentions in Europe. Family choices and child-birth challenges. International Review of Sociology, 22 (1): 1-4.

de Bruijn, B. J. (1999). Foundations of Demographic Theory. Choice, Process, Context. Groningen, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen. Thesis.

Diaz-Bone, R. (2006). Zur Methodologisierung der Foucaultschen Diskursanalyse. Forum: Qualitative Social Research 7(1).

Diewald, M. and K.-U. Mayer (2008). The Sociology of the Life Course and Life Span Psychology: Integrated Paradigm or Complementing Pathways? New Haven, CT, Yale University, Dept. of Sociology, CIQLE Working Paper Series.

Dommermuth, L., J. Klobas, and T. Lappegard (2009). Now or later? The theory of planned behaviour and fertility intentions. Dondena Working Papers 20. Milano, Italy: Carlo F. Dondena Center for Research on Social Dynamics.

Doorne-Huiskes, A. v. and I. Doorten (2011). The complexity of parenthood in modern societies. In: G. Beets, J. Schippers and E. R. E. te Velde. The Future of Motherhood in Western Societies. Late Fertility and its Consequences. Dordrecht, Springer.

Easterlin, R. (1978). What Will 1984 be Like? Socioeconomic Implications of Recent Twists in Age structures. Demography 15(4): 397-432.

Easterlin, R., A. (1980). Birth and fortune, the impact of numbers on personal welfare. New York, Basic Books, Inc., Publishers.

Eckhard, J. and T. Klein (2006). Männer, Kinderwunsch und generatives Verhalten. Eine Auswertung des Familiensurvey zu Geschlechterunterschieden in der Motivation zur Elternschaft. Wiesbaden, VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften. .

Elchardus, M. (1984). Life Cycle and Life Course; The Scheduling and Temporal Integration of Life. In: S. Feld & R. Lesthaeghe (eds.). Population and Societal Outlook: Agora Demography. Brussels, King Baudouin Foundation: 251-267.

Elder, G. H., Jr. (1994). Time, human agency, and social change: Perspectives

on the life course. Social Psychology Quarterly, 57, 1,4-15.

Elder, G., H., and A. Caspi (1990). Persönliche Entwicklung und sozialer Wandel. Die Entstehung der Lebensverlaufforschung. In: Karl Ulrich Mayer (Hrsg.), Lebensverläufe und sozialer Wandel (Sonderheft 31 der Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie), Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, S. 239-271.

Elder, G. H., M. Kirkpatrick Johnson and R. Crosnoe. (2003). The emergence and development of life course theory. In: J. T. Mortimer and M. J. Shanahan. Handbook of the life course. New York, Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers: 3-19.

Elias, N. (1982). The civilizing process: State formation and civilization. Oxford, Basil Blackwell.

Emler, N. (2005). Life course transitions and social identity change. In: Levy R., P. Ghisletta, J.-M. Le Goff, D. Spini and E. Widmer (Eds). Towards an Interdisciplinary Perspective on the Life Course. Advances in Life Course Research. New York, Elsevier. 10: 197-215.

Engelhardt, H., H.-P. Kohler and Alexia Prskawetz (2009). Causal Analysis in Population Studies: Concepts, Methods, Applications. Berlin: Springer.

Engelhardt, H. and A. Prskawetz (2004). On the changing correlation between fertility and female employment over space and time. European Journal of Population 20: 35-62.

Engstler, H. and K. Lüscher (1991). Späte erste Mutterschaft. Ein neues biographisches Muster der Familiengründung? Zeitschrift für Bevölkerungswissenschaft 17(4): 433-460.

Fennell, J. (2006). "It Happened One Night", The Sexual Context of Fertility Decision-Making. Annual Meetings of the Population Association of America.

Los Angeles: 1-28.

Flick, U. (1996). Qualitative Forschung. Theorie, Methoden, Anwendung in Psychologie und Sozialwissenschaften. Reinbek, Rowohlt.

Flick, U. (2002). An Introduction to Qualitative Research - second Edition. London, Sage.

Flick, U. (2006). An Introduction to Qualitative Research - Third Edition. London, Sage.

Fliegenschnee, K. (2006). Children should be a part of my life, but I don't know how to manage it A qualitative fertility study of highly educated women in Vienna. European Population Conference. Liverpool

Fliegenschnee, K. (2006a). There are simply always enough good reasons against having a child! Fears and worries about motherhood among childless, highly educated Austrian women. Die Natur der Gesellschaft. Verhandlungsband des 33. Kongresses der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie 2006 in Kassel. K. S. E. Rehberg. Frankfurt/M.: , Campus. (CD-ROM).

Froschauer, U. and M. Lueger (1992). Das Qualitative Interview: zur Analyse sozialer Systeme. Wien, WUV Universitätsverlag.

Furstenberg, F. (2005). Non-normative life course transitions: Reflections on the significance of demographic events on lives. In: R. Levy, P. Ghisletta, J.-M. Le Goff, D. Spini and E. Widmer (eds.) Towards an Interdisciplinary Perspective on the Life Course. Advances in Life Course Research. New York, Elsevier. 10: 159-176.

Gerson, K. (1985). Hard choice. Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press.

Gibbons, F. X., M. Gerrard, H. Blanton and D.W. Russell (1998). Reasoned

action and social reaction: willingness and intention as independent predictors of health risk. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 75(4): 1164–1180.

Gilgun, J. F. (1999). Methodological pluralism and qualitative family research. In: M. Sussman, S. Steinmetz and G. E. Peterson. Handbook of marriage and the family New York, Plenum. 2nd: 219-261.

Glaser, B. G. and J. Holton (2004). Remodeling Grounded theory. Forum Qualitative Social Research 5(2).

Goebel, G. (1997). Kinder oder Karriere. Lebensentwürfe junger Akademikerinnen und ihre persönlichen Netzwerke. Frankfurt/ Main, New York, Campus.

Goldberg AE, Downing JB, Moyer AM. (2012). Why Parenthood, and Why Now?: Gay Men's Motivations for Pursuing Parenthood. Family Relations 61: 157-174.

Goldscheider, F. K. (2000). Men, children and the future of the family in the third millennium. Futures 32: 527-538.

Goldscheider, F. K., P. Webster, and Kaufman, G. (2000). Men, Parenthood, and Divorce in the Era of the Second Demographic Transition. In: C. Bledsoe, S. Lerner and J. I. E. Guyer. Fertility and the Male Life Cycle in the Era of Fertility Decline. New York, Oxford University Press.

Goldstein, J., M. Kreyenfeld, J. Huinink, D. Konietzka and H. Trappe (2010). Familie und Partnerschaft in Ost- und Westdeutschland.

Goldstein, J. R., T. Sobotka and A. Jasilioniene (2009). The end of lowest-low fertility? Population and Development Review 35(4): 663-700.

Goldstein J., M. Kreyenfeld, A. Jasilioniene, D. Dilan, K. Örsal (2013). Fertility reactions to the great recession in Europe: recent evidence from order-specific

data. Demographic research, 29 (4): 85-104.

Grünendahl, M., E. Minnemann and M. Stosberg (1997). Soziale Kontakte und soziales Netzwerk und außerfamiliäre soziale Kontakte der Geburtsjahrgänge 1930/32 im Ost-West-Vergleich. Zeitschrift für Gerontopsychologie und -psychiatrie 10(4): 237-244.

Gustafsson, S. (2001). Optimal age at motherhood. Theoretical and empirical considerations on postponement of maternity in Europe. Journal of population economics. 14(2): 225-247.

Hakim, C. (1999). Models of the family, women's role and social policy: a new perspective from preference theory. European societies 1(1): 33-58.

Hakim, C. (2003). A New Approach to Explaining Fertility Patterns: Preference Theory. Population and Development Review 29(3): 349-374.

Hammel, E. A. (1990). A Theory of Culture for Demography. Population and Development Review 16: 455-485.

Heckhausen, J. (1999). Developmental regulation in adulthood, Agenormative and sociostructural constraints as adaptive challenges. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Helfferich, C. (2001). Frauen leben - Eine Studie zu Lebensläufen und Familienplanung. Köln: Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung.

Helfferich, C., H. Klindworth, Kruse, J. (2006). Männer leben. Eine Studie zu Lebensläufen und Familienplanung. Vertiefungsbericht. Köln: Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung.

Helle, H. J. (2001). Theorie der Symbolischen Interaktion Ein Beitrag zum verstehenden Ansatz in Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie, 3. Auflage Wiesbaden, VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Henwood, K. and J. Procter (2003). The 'good father' Reading men's accounts of paternal involvement during the transition to first-time fatherhood. British Journal of Social Psychology. 42: 337-355.

Henwood, K., F. Shirani, and J. Kellet (2011). On Delayed Fatherhood: The Social and Subjective Logics" at Work in Men's Lives. In: G. Beets, J. Schippers and E. R. Velde. The Future of Motherhood in Western Societies. Late Fertility and its Consequences. Dordrecht: Springer.

Hildenbrand, B. (2004). Gemeinsame Ziele, verschiedene Wege: Grounded Theory und Objektive Hermeneutik im Vergleich. Sozialersinn 2: 177-194.

Hitzler, R. and A. Honer (1997). Einleitung: Hermeneutik in der deutschsprachigen Soziologie heute. In: R. Hitzler and A. E. Honer. Sozialwissenschaftliche Hermeneutik. Eine Einführung. Opladen, Leske + Budrich: 7-27.

Hofmann B. and K. Hohmeyer (2013) Perceived economic uncertainty and fertility: evidence from, a labor market reform, Journal of marriage and family. 75: 503-521.

Höpflinger, F. (2012) Bevölkerungssoziologie. Einführung in demographische Prozesse und bevölkerungssoziologische Ansätze, Weinheim: Beltz.

Hogan D. P. and Astone N. M (1986). The transition to adulthood. Annual Review Sociological. 12: 109-130.

Hollstein, B. (2001). Grenzen sozialer Interaktion: Zur Konzeption informeller Beziehungen und Netzwerke. Opladen, Leske+Budrich.

Horne, C. (2001). Sociological perspective on the emergence of social norms. In: M. Hechter and K.-D. Opp, (Eds.) Social Norms. New York, Russell Sage Foundation.

Horne, C. (2003). The Internal Enforcement of Norms. European Sociological Review 19(4): 335-343.

Hotz, V. J., J. A. Klerman, R. J. Willis (1997). The economics of fertility in developed countries. In: M. R. Rosenzweig and O. E. Stark. Handbook of Population and Family Economics, Vol. 1A. Amsterdam, Elsevier: 275–347.

Huinink, J. (1990). Familie und Geburtenentwicklung. In: Karl Ulrich Mayer (Hrsg.), Lebensverläufe und sozialer Wandel (Sonderheft 31 der Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie), Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, S. 239-271.

Huinink, J. (2000). Soziologische Ansätze zur Bevölkerungsentwicklung. In: U. Mueller, B. Nauck and A. Diekmann. Handbuch der Demographie, Band 1. Berlin, Springer Verlag.

Huinink, J. (2001). Entscheidungs- und Vereinbarkeitsprobleme bei der Wahl familialer Lebensformen. In: J. Huinink, K.-P. Strohmeier and M. E. Wagner. Solidarität in Partnerschaft und Familie. Würzburg, Ergon: 145-165.

Huinink, J. and M. Kohli (2010). A life-course approach to fertility. Meeting of the BBAW and Leopoldina on Theoretical foundations for the analysis of fertility. Lausanne.

Huinink, J. and K. U. Mayer (1995). Gender, Social Inequality, and Family Formation. In: K. O. Mason and A.-M. Jensen, (Eds.), Gender and Family Change in Industrialized Countries. Oxford, IUSSP/Oxford University Press: 168-199.

Huinink, J., T. Schröder, and Boehnke, M. (2008). Kinderwunsch und Familiengründung: Die Bedeutung von Voraussetzungen und Entscheidungsgrundsätzen. In: M. Feldhaus and J. Huinink. Neuere Entwicklungen in der Beziehungs- und Familienforschung. Vorstudien zum Beziehungs- und Familienentwicklungspanel. Würzburg, Ergon Verlag: 321-

Huinink, J. and M. Feldhaus (2009) Family Research from the Life Course Perspective, International Sociology 24:3, 299-324.

Hurrelmann, K. (2001). Einführung in die Sozialisationstheorie, Über den Zusammenhang von Sozialstruktur und Persönlichkeit. Weinheim und Basel, Beltz Verlag.

Hutteman, R., W. Bleidorn, L. Penke and J. Denissen (2013) It takes two: a longitudinal dyadic study on predictors of fertility outcome, European Journal of Personality.

Jackson, P. B. and A. Berkowitz (2005). The Structure of the Life Course: Gender and Racioethnic Variation in the Occurrence and Order/Sequencing of Role Transitions. Advances in Life Course Research 9: 55-90.

Jansen, D. (2003). Einführung in die Netzwerkanalyse. 2. Auflage. Opladen, Leske und Budrich.

Johnson-Hanks, J. (2007). What Kind of Theory for Demographic Anthropology? Demographic Research. 16(1): 1-26.

Johnson-Hanks, J. and T. Walchuk, Sarah (2005). Reproductive Construal: Fertility Theory after Rational Choice. Workshop on the Anthropological Demography of Europe. Rostock.

Joshi, H. and P. David (2006). The social and economic context of fertility. In: G. Caselli, V. Jacques and G. Wunsch. Demography, Analysis and Synthesis, A Treatise in Population Studies, Volume 1. Oxford, Elsevier Academic Press.

Kahn, R., L., and T. C. Antonucci (1980). Convoys over the life course: Attachment, roles, and social support. In: P. Baltes, B. and E. Brim Orville. Life-span development and behavior (Vol. 3). New York, Academic Press.

Kapella, O. and C. Rille-Pfeiffer (2004). Über den Wunsch, ein Kind zu bekommen. Kinderwunsch hetero- und homosexueller Paare, ÖIF-Working paper Nr. 35

Kapella, O. and C. Rille-Pfeiffer (2007). Einstellungen und Werthaltungen zu Themen der Vereinbarkeit von Familie und Erwerb W. p. 66/2007. Vienna, Österreichisches Institut für Familienforschung.

Keim, S., A. Klärner and L. Bernardi (2009a). Fertility-relevant social networks: composition, structure, and meaning of personal relationships for fertility intentions. . Current Sociology, 57(6): 1-20.

Keim, S., A. Klärner and L. Bernardi (2009b). Who is relevant? Exploring fertility relevant social networks. M. W. P. WP-2009-001. Rostock, Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research.

Kirchler, E., C. Rodler, E. Holzl, and K. Meier (2001). Conflict and decision-making in close relationships. Love, money and daily routines. Hove, Psychology Press.

Klasen, S. and A. Launov (2006). Analysis of the determinants of fertility decline in the Czech Republic. Journal of Population Economics, Springer, 19(1): 25-54.

Klepp, D. (2004). Lebenssituation und subjektive Lebensqualität von Frauen mit Kindern im Alter von 0 bis 6 Jahren: Eine empirische psychologische Studie zur Mutterschaft. Familienforschung in Österreich: Markierungen – Ergebnisse – Perspektiven. B. C. (Eds.). Wien.

Klobas, J. (2010). Social psychological influences on fertility intentions: A study of eight countries in different social, economic and policy contexts. from <http://www.oeaw.ac.at/vid/repro/assets/docs/TPB-model-fertility-intentions.pdf>.

Knoblauch, H. (1996). Einleitung: Kommunikative Lebenswelten und die Ethnographie einer geschwätzigen Gesellschaft. In: H. Knoblauch. Kommunikative Lebenswelten: zur Ethnographie einer geschwätzigen Gesellschaft. Konstanz, Univ.-Verl. Konstanz: 7-27.

Knoblauch, H. (2003). Qualitative Religionsforschung. Religionsethnographie in der eigenen Gesellschaft. Paderborn, Ferdinand Schöningh, UTB.

Kohler, H.-P. (2001). Fertility and Social Interaction: An Economic Perspective. Oxford Oxford University Press.

Kohler, H.-P., F. C. Billari, and Ortega, J.A. (2002). The emergence of lowest-low fertility in Europe during the 1990s Population and Development Review, 28(4): 641-680.

Kohler, H.-P. and I. Kohler (2002). Fertility decline in Russia in the early and mid 1990s: The role of economic uncertainty and labour market crises. European Journal of Population 18(3): 233-262.

Kohli, M. (1985). Die Institutionalisierung des Lebenslaufs. Historische Befunde und theoretische Argumente. Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialisationsforschung 37: 1-29.

Kohli, M. (2003). Der institutionalisierte Lebenslauf: ein Blick zurück und nach vorn; . Entstaatlichung und soziale Sicherheit. Verhandlungen des 31. Kongresses der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie in Leipzig 2002. J. E. Allmendinger. Opladen, Leske und Budrich: 525-545;.

Koob, D. (2007). Lorient als Symbolischer Interaktionist. Oder: Warum man selbst in der Badewanne gelegentlich soziale Ordnung aushandeln muss. Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung, 8(1).

Kreyenfeld, M. (2004). Fertility decisions in the FRG and GDR: An analysis with data from the German fertility and family survey. MPIDR Working Paper.

Rostock, Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research.

Kreyenfeld, M. (2005) Economic uncertainty and fertility postponement: evidence from German panel data. MPIDR Working Paper WP-2005-034.

Kreyenfeld, M. (2010). Uncertainties in female employment careers and the postponement of parenthood in Germany. European Sociological Review 26: 351-366.

Kroismayr, S. (2003). Zwischen Beruf und Familie - Berufstätige Mütter von Kleinstkindern und der Stellenwert der Erwerbsarbeit SWS - Rundschau 43(2): 277-294.

Kurz, K., N. Steinhage, and K. Golsch (2005). Case Study Germany: Global Competition, Uncertainty and the Transition to Adulthood. In: H.-P. Blossfeld, E. Klijzing, M. Mills and K. E. Kurz. Globalization, Uncertainty and Youth in Society. London / New York, Routledge: 51-82.

Lamnek, S. (1995). Qualitative Sozialforschung Band 2: Methoden und Techniken. Weinheim, Beltz.

Lamnek, S. (2008). Theorien abweichenden Verhaltens II - Moderne Ansätze Eine Einführung für Soziologen, Psychologen, Juristen, Journalisten und Sozialarbeiter. Paderborn, Wilhelm Fink

LaRossa, R. (2005). Grounded theory methods and qualitative family research. Journal of marriage and family. 67: 837-857.

Lesthaeghe, R. (1983). A century of demographic and cultural change in Western Europe: An exploration of underlying dimensions. Population and Development Review, 3: 411-435.

Lesthaeghe, R. (2001). Postponement and recuperation: Recent fertility trends and forecasts in six West European countries. I.-W. P. 2001-1., Brussels: Vrije

University.

Lesthaeghe, R. (2003). The second demographic transition in western countries; an interpretation. In: K. Oppenheim Mason and A.-M. Jensen. Gender and family changes in industrialized countries. Oxforde, Carendon Press, 17-62.

Liefbroer, A. and M. Corijn (1999). Who, what and when? Specifying the impact of education attainment and labour force participation on family formation. European Journal of Population 15(1): 45-75.

Liefbroer, A. (2005). Transition to adulthood in the Netherlands. In: H.-P. Blossfeld, E. Klijzing, M. Mills and K. E. Kurz. Globalization, Uncertainty and Youth in Society. London / New York, Routledge.

Liefbroer, A.C. (2005). The Impact of Perceived Costs and Rewards of Childbearing on Entry into Parenthood: Evidence from a Panel Study. European Journal of Population 21: 367-391.

Liefbroer, A. C. and F. C. Billari (2009). Bringing norms back in: A theoretical and empirical discussion of their importance for understanding demographic behaviour. Population, Space and Place. 16 (4): 287-305.

Liu, S., and Hynes, K., (2012). Are difficulties balancing work and family associated with subsequent fertility? Family Relations, 61: 16-30.

Loftus, J., Andriot, A. L. (2012) That's What Makes a Woman: Infertility and Coping with a Failed Life Course Transition. Sociological Spectrum: Mid-South Sociological Association 32(3): 226-243.

Lueger, M. (2000). Grundlagen qualitativer Feldforschung. Methodologie - Organisation - Materialanalyse Wien, WUV-Universitätsverlag.

Lutz, W. (2005). Life expectancy still rising and Italians have fewer 'bambini'

Framtider 2: 19-24.

Mahringer, H. (2005). Child Care Costs and Mothers' Employment Rates in Austria. 4. Österreichisches Arbeitsmarktworkshop. Vienna.

Marianski, J. (1994). Familie und Vermittlung moralischer Werte. In: R. Richter and L. Dyczewski, (Eds.). Familie in der Alltagskultur. Wien, Schriftenreihe des Instituts für Soziologie, 32: 45-54.

Marini, M. M. (1984.). Women's Educational Attainment and the Timing of Entry into Parenthood. American Sociological Review, 49: 491-511.

Matthews, S. H. (2005). Crafting Qualitative Research Articles on Marriages and Families. Journal of Marriage and Family, 67: 799–808.

Maul, K., Huinink, J., Schröder, T. (2010): Elternschaftsentscheidungen im Spannungsfeld beruflicher und familiärer Planungen. In: Sabine Walper, Eva-Verena Wendt (Hrsg.). Partnerschaften und die Beziehungen zu Kindern. Befunde zur Beziehungs- und Familienentwicklung in Deutschland. Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, S.215-239.

Mayer, K., U., (2004). Whose Lives? How History, Societies, and Institutions Define and Shape Life Courses. Research in human development 1(3): 161–187.

Mayer, K., U., (2009). New directions in life course research. Annual Review of Sociology 35: 413-433.

McDonald, P. (2000a). Gender equity, social institutions and the future of fertility . Journal of Population Research, 17(1): 1-16.

McDonald, P. (2002). Sustaining fertility through public policy: the range of options. Population 57(3): 417-446.

McDonnell, L. (2011).Me, you and us: Intimate relationships and the question of

children Journal of Sociology 48: 132-148

McNicoll, G. (1980). Institutional determinants of fertility change. Population and Development Review 6(3): 441-462.

McQuillan, J., A. L. Greil, Shreffler, K.M. (2010). Pregnancy Intentions Among Women Who Do Not Try: Focusing on Women Who Are Okay Either Way. Maternal and Child Health Journal.

McRae, S. (2003). Constraints and Choices in Mothers' Employment Careers: A Consideration of Hakim's Preference Theory. British Journal of Sociology 54(3): 317-338.

Mead, G. H. (1973). Geist, Identität und Gesellschaft: Aus der Sicht des Sozialbehaviorismus. Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp.

Mesner, M. (2006). Mütter-Familien, Familienmütter. Politiken ums Kinderhaben in Österreich. In: G. Wolfgruber, H. Niederkofer, M. Niederhuber and M. Mesner. Kinder kriegen – Kinder haben: Analysen im Spannungsfeld zwischen staatlichen Politiken und privaten Lebensentwürfen. Innsbruck, Studienverlag: 215-234.

Meyers, D. T. (2001). The Rush to Motherhood: Pronatalist Discourse and Women's Autonomy. Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 26(3): 735-773.

Micheli, G. A. and L. Bernardi (2003). Two theoretical interpretations of the dissonance between fertility intentions and behavior. MPIDR Working Paper WP 2003-009.

Miljkovic, D. (2005). Rational Choice and Irrational Individuals or Simply an Irrational Theory: A Critical Review of the Hypothesis of Perfect Rationality. Journal of Socio-Economics 34(5): 623-636.

Miller, W. B. (1995). Childbearing motivation and its measurement. Journal of Biosocial Science 27: 473–487.

Miller, W. B. and D. J. Pasta (1994). The Psychology of Child Timing: A Measurement. Instrument and a Model. Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 24(3): 218-250.

Miller, W. B. and D. J. Pasta (1995). Behavioral Intentions: Which Ones Predict Fertility Behavior in Married Couples? Journal of Applied Social Psychology 25(6): 530-555.

Miller, W. B., L. J. Severy and Pasta, D.J. (2004). A framework for modelling fertility motivation in couples. Population Studies 58(2): 193-205.

Mills, M. and H.-P. Blossfeld (2005). Globalization, uncertainty and the early life course. In: H.-P. Blossfeld, E. Klijzing, M. Mills and K. Kurz, (Eds.). Globalization, Uncertainty and Youth in Society. London/New York, Routledge.

Mitchell, D. and E. Gray (2007). Declining fertility: Intentions, attitudes and aspirations. Journal of Sociology 43(1): 23-44.

Mortimer, J. T., J. Staff, Lee, J. C. (2005). Agency and Structure in Educational Attainment and the Transition to Adulthood. In: Rene Levy, P. Ghisletta, J.-M. Le Goff, D. Spini and E. Widmer, (eds.). Towards an Interdisciplinary Perspective on the Life Course. Advances in Life Course Research. New York, Elsevier. 10: 131-154.

Mynarska, M. (2009). Individual fertility choices in Poland. Warsaw, Uniwersytety Kardynata Stefana Wyszyńskiego.

Namboodiri, K. (1983). Sequential fertility decision making and the life course. In: R. A. Bulatao and R. D. E. Lee. Determinants of fertility in developing countries (Vol. 2). New York., Academic Press.

Nauck, B. (2007). Value of Children and the Framing of Fertility: Results from a Cross-cultural Comparative Survey in 10 Societies. European Sociological Review 23, 615-629.

Neal, A. G. and T. H. Groat (1980). Fertility decision making, unintended births, and the social drift hypothesis: A longitudinal study. Population and Environment 3(3+4): 221-236.

Newcombe, H. B. and O. G. Tavendale (1964). Effects of Father's Age on the Risk of Child Handicap or Death. American Journal of Human Genetics 17(2): 163-178.

Neyer, G. H. (1998). Karenzurlaub. Forschungsbericht des Instituts für Demographie, Wien, Institut für Demographie, der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.

Neyer, G. R. (2003). Family policies and low fertility in Western Europe Rostock, MPIDR Working Paper WP. 2003-021.

Neyer, G. R. and D. Rieck (2009). Moving towards gender equality, How generations and gender shape demographic change: towards policies based on better knowledge. U. N. E. C. f. E. (UNECE). New York, United Nations.

Ni Bhrolcháin, M. and L. Toulemon. (2005). Does postponement explain the trend to later childbearing in France? Vienna Yearbook of population research. pp.83-107.

O'Rand A., M. and M. L. Krecker (1990). Concepts of the Life Cycle: Their History, Meanings and Uses in the Social Sciences. Annual Review of Sociology 16: 241–262.

Oakley, A. (1993). Essays on Women, Medicine and Health. Edinburgh, University Press.

Oevermann, U. (2001a). Zur Analyse der Struktur von sozialen Deutungsmustern. Sozialer Sinn, 1: 3-33.

Oevermann, U. (2001b). Die Struktur sozialer Deutungsmuster - Versuch einer Aktualisierung. Sozialer Sinn, 1: 35-81.

Oevermann, U. (2002). Klinische Soziologie auf der Basis der Methodologie der objektiven Hermeneutik – Manifest der objektiv hermeneutischen Sozialforschung.

Oppenheimer, V. K. (1988). A Theory of Marriage Timing. American Journal of Sociology, 94(3): 563-591.

Oppenheimer, V. K., M. Kalmijn, and N. Lim (1997). Men's Career Development and Marriage Timing During a Period of Rising Inequality. Demography, 34(3): 311-330.

Pandit, N. R. (1996). The Creation of Theory: A Recent Application of the Grounded Theory Method. The qualitative Report 2(4).

Perugini, M. and R. Bagozzi, P. (2001). The Role of Desires and Anticipated Emotions in Goal-directed Behaviors: Broadening and Deepening the Theory of Planned Behavior. British Journal of Social Psychology, 40: 79-98.

Philipov, D., Z. Speder, F.C. Billari (2006). Soon, later, or ever? The impact of anomie and social capital on fertility intentions in Bulgaria (2002) and Hungary (2001). Population Studies 60(3): 289-308.

Pidgeon, N. and K. Henwood (2004). Grounded Theory. In: M. Hardy and A. E. Bryman. Handbook of data analysis. London, Sage Publications.

Plantenger, J. and C. Remery (2009). The provision of childcare services - A comparative review of 30 European countries. Luxemborg, European Commission Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunity.

Pohl, K. (2000). Fatherhood in East and West Germany: results of the German family and fertility survey. In: C. Bledsoe, S. Lerner and J. I. E. Guyer. Fertility and the male life-cycle in the era of fertility decline. Oxford, University Press: 257-274.

Presser, H. B. (1997). Demography, Feminism, and the Science-Policy Nexus. Population and Development Review 23(2): 295-331.

Prskawetz, A., I. Buber, T. Sobotka, and H. Engelhardt (2006). Recent changes in family policies in Austria and Germany – A response to very low fertility. Entre Nous. The European Magazine for Sexual and Reproductive Health. 63: 27-29.

Prskawetz, A., T. Sobotka, I. Buber, H. Engelhardt, R. Gisser (2008). Austria: Persistent low fertility since the mid-1980s. Demographic Research, Special Collection 7, 19(12): 293-360.

Quesnel-Vallée, A. and P. Morgan (2003). Missing the target”: Correspondence of fertility intentions and behavior in the U.S. Population Research and Policy Review. 22: 497–525.

Quesnel-Vallée, A. and S. Morgan. Philip (2003). Missing the target? Correspondence of Fertility Intentions and Behavior in the U.S. Population Research and Policy Review. Special Issue on Very Low Fertility 22(5-6): 497-525.

Ranjan, P. (1999). Fertility Behaviour under Income Uncertainty. European Journal of Population 15: 25-43.

Reichertz, J. (1995a). Objektive Hermeneutik. In: U. Flick, E. v. Kardorff, H. Keupp, L. v. Rosenstiel and S. E. Wolff. Handbuch Qualitative Sozialforschung. München, Psychologie Verlags Union.

Reichertz, J. (1995b). Die objektive Hermeneutik - Darstellung und Kritik. In: E. König and P. E. Zedler. Bilanz qualitativer Forschung. Weinheim, Deutscher

Studien Verlag.

Reichertz, J. (2007). Abduction: The Logic of Discovery of Grounded Theory. In: Bryant, A. & Charmaz, K. The Sage handbook of grounded theory. Los Angeles: SAGE.

Richter, R. (1995). Familie als kreativer Faktor der Alltagskultur. In: R. Richter and L. Dyczewski, (Eds.) Familie in der Alltagskultur. Wien Schriftenreihe des Instituts für Soziologie. 32: 5-11.

Richter, R. (2001). Soziologische Paradigmen, Eine Einführung in klassische und moderne Konzepte. Wien, Facultas.

Richter, R. (2002). Verstehende Soziologie. Wien, Facultas Verlag.

Richter, R. (2006). Österreichische Lebensstile. Wien, Lit Verlag.

Riesenfelder, A., C. Sorger, P. Wetzel and B. Willsberger (2006). Evaluierung der Einführung des Kinderbetreuungsgeldes. Kurzfassung zum Forschungsbericht L. R. S. AK Wien.

Rijken, A. J. (2009). Happy families, high fertility? Childbearing choices in the context of family and partner relationships. Utrecht, University of Utrecht.

Rille-Pfeiffer, C. (2009). Kinder – jetzt, später oder nie? Generatives Verhalten und Kinderwunsch in Österreich, Schweden und Spanien auf Basis der Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA). Sociology. Vienna, University of Vienna.

Rindfuss, R. R., M. K. Choe, L.L. Bumpass, and N.O. Tsuya (2004). Social Networks and Family Change in Japan. . American Sociological Review, 69: 838-861.

Rindfuss, R. R., S. P. Morgan, K. Offutt (1996). Education and the Changing Age Pattern of American Fertility: 1963-1989. Demography, 33(3): 277-290.

Ruckdeschel, K. (2009). Rabenmutter contra Mère Poule: Kinderwunsch und Mutterbild im deutsch-französischen Vergleich Zeitschrift für Bevölkerungswissenschaft, 34(1-2): 105-134.

Rupp, M. (2005). Kinderlosigkeit in stabilen Ehen. Zeitschrift für Familienforschung, 17(1): 21-40.

Santow, G. and M. Bracher (2001). Deferment of the First Birth and Fluctuating Fertility in Sweden. European Journal of Population, 17: 343–363.

Sardadvar, K. (2005). Resetting the biological clock? Late mothers in self-perception and public discourse. EUSOC Seminar. Telc, Czech Republic.

Sardadvar, K. (2010). Wir lassen es jetzt drauf ankommen” – Deutungen von Empfängnisverhütung am Beispiel späten Kinderwunsches. SWS-Rundschau, 50(2): 228-248.

Sardadvar, K. (2011). Späte Mutterschaft. Eine wissenssoziologische Deutungsmusteranalyse. Soziologie. Vienna, University of Vienna. Dissertation: 425.

Sassler, S., A. Miller, S.M. Favinger (2009). Planned Parenthood? Fertility Intentions and Experiences among Cohabiting Couples. Journal of Family Issues 30: 206-232.

Scambor, E. and M. Fasshauer (2006). Strukturelle Rahmenbedingungen aktiver Vaterschaft. Fokus – Karenzregelungen und Teilzeit in Österreich Working paper within the Equal-partnership Karenz und Karriere.

Schäfers, B. and J. Kopp (2006) Grundbegriffe der Soziologie. Wiesbaden, VS Verlag.

Schimank, U. (2000). Handeln und Strukturen. Einführung in die Akteurtheoretische Soziologie. Grundlagentexte Soziologie. Weinheim, Juventa.

Schneewind, K., L. Vaskovics, Kim YJ, Nathanson CA, Fields J. (1996).
Optionen der Lebensgestaltung junger Ehen und Kinderwunsch. Endbericht.
Stuttgart, Kohlhammer.

Schoen, R., Kim, Y. J., Nathanson C. A., Fields J., and Astone N.M. (1997).
Why Do Americans Want Children? Population and Development Review
23(2):333-358.

Schoen, R., N. M. Astone, Y. J., Kim, C. A., Nathanson and J.M. Fields (1999).
Do fertility intentions affect fertility behavior? Population and Development
Review 23: 333-358.

Schröder, T. (2007). Geplante Kinderlosigkeit? Ein lebensverlaufstheoretisches
Entscheidungsmodell, In: D. Konietzka and M. E. Kreyenfeld. Ein Leben ohne
Kinder. Kinderlosigkeit in Deutschland. Wiesbaden, VS. Verlag für
Sozialwissenschaften.

Schwiter, K. (2011), Anticipating the transition to parenthood: the contribution of
Foucaultian Discourse analysis to understanding life-course pattern, Area, 43:
397–404.

Settersten R.A., Jr. (2011). Becoming adult: Meanings and markers for young
Americans. In M.C. Waters, P.J. Carr, M.J. Kefalas & J. Holdaway (Eds.),
Coming of age in America. The transition to adulthood in the twenty-first
century. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Settersten, R., A., (2003). Age Structuring and the Rhythm of the Life Course.
In: M. Jeylan and M. J. Shanahan (Eds) Handbook of the Life Course. New
York, Kluwer Academic/ Plenum Publishers.

Settersten, R. A. and K. U. Mayer (1997). The Measurement of Age, Age
Structuring, and the Life Course. Annual Review of Sociology 23: 233-261.

Sevón, E. (2005). Timing Motherhood: Experiencing and Narrating the Choice to Become a Mother. Feminism and Psychology 15: 461-482.

Seward, R. and R. Richter (2008). International Research on Fathering: An Expanding Horizon. Fathering. A Journal of Theory, Research, and Practice about Men as Fathers. 6(2): 87-92.

Smock, P. and F.R. Greenland (2010). Diversity in Pathways to Parenthood: Patterns, Implications, and Emerging Research Directions. Journal of Marriage and Family, 72(3): 576-593.

Smolka, A. (2005). Vom Paar zum Kind – oder doch nicht? Anmerkungen zur Frage des Kinderwunsches und seiner Realisierung. Zeitschrift für Familienforschung, 17(1): 41-45.

Sobotka, T. (2004). Postponement of childbearing and low fertility in Europe. Doctoral thesis. Amsterdam, University of Groningen. Dutch University Press.

Sobotka, T. (2005). Fertility in Austria: An overview. Vienna Yearbook of Population Research 243-259.

Sobotka, T. (2008). The diverse faces of the second demographic transition in Europe. Overview Chapter 6 In: T. Frejka, T. Sobotka, J. M. Hoem and L. Toulemon, Childbearing Trends and Policies in Europe. Demographic Research, Special Collection 7. Vol. 19, : 171-224.

Sobotka, T. (2009). Subreplacement fertility intentions in Austria. European Journal of Population 25(4): 387-412.

Sobotka, T., K. Zeman, M. Winkler-Dworak (2010). Geburtenbarometer: Monitoring of Fertility in Austria and Vienna.
www.oeaw.ac.at/vid/download/Geburtenbarometer_dataset.xls

Sobotka T. (2011). Fertility in Austria, Germany and Switzerland: Is there a

common pattern? Comparative Population Studies, 36 (2-3).

Spielauer, M., F. Schwarz, K. Städtner and K. Schmid (2003). Family and education: intergenerational educational transmission within families and the influence of education on partner choice and fertility. Österreichisches Institut für Familienforschung. Nr. 11.

Stanford, J. B., R. Hobbs, P. Jameson, MJ. DeWitt, RD. Fischer (2000). Defining Dimensions of Pregnancy Intendedness. Maternal and Child Health Journal, 4(3): 183-189.

Stauber, B. (2009). Transitions into Parenthood. Family platform, Expert report 1, Institute for Educational Sciences. Tübingen University.

Stier, H., N. Lewin-Epstein, Braun M (2001). Welfare Regime, Family-Supportive Policy, and Women's Employment Along the Life Course. American Journal of Sociology, 106(6): 1731-1760.

Stöbel-Richter, Y., Beutel, ME., Finck, C, Brähler, E (2005). The 'wish to have a child', childlessness and infertility in Germany. Human Reproduction, 20(10): 2850-2857.

Stöbel-Richter, Y. and Brähler, E. (2008). Kinderwunschaspekte und Familiengründung in einem entscheidungstheoretischen Handlungsmodell. In: Diekmann, A., Eichner, K., Schmidt, P., Voss, T. / (Hg.), Rational Choice: Theoretische Analysen und empirische Resultate. Festschrift für Karl-Dieter Opp zum 70. Geburtstag. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften. S. 171-192.

Strauss, A. (1991). Qualitative Sozialforschung: Datenanalys und Theoriebildung in der empirischen und soziologischen Forschung. München, Fink.

Strauss, A. and J. Corbin (1996). Grounded Theory: Grundlagen qualitativer Sozialforschung. Weinheim, Beltz, Psychologie Verlags Union.

Testa, M. R. and L. Toulemon (2006). Family Formation in France: Individual Preferences and Subsequent Outcomes, Vienna Yearbook of Population Research 41-75.

Tomer, J. (2008). Beyond the rationality of economic man, toward the true rationality of human man. The Journal of Socio-Economics 37(5): 1703-1712.

Thomson E., M. Winkler-Dworak and S. Kennedy (2013) The standard family life course: an assessment of variability in life course pathways. In: Negotiating the life course, stability and change in life pathways. New York: Springer

Truschkat, I., M. Kaiser and V. Reinartz (2005). Anregungen zum praktischen Umgang mit der Grounded Theory in Qualifikationsarbeiten. Forum Qualitative Social Research 6(2).

Tsuya, N. O. and K. Oppenheim Mason (1995). Changing Gender Roles and Below-Replacement Fertility in Japan. In: K. Oppenheim Mason and A. M. e. Jensen. Gender and Family Change in Industrialized Countries. Oxford, Clarendon Press: 139-167.

Uhlenberg, P. and M. Mueller (2003). Family Context and Individual Well-Being: Patterns and Mechanisms in Life Course Perspective. In: J. T. Mortimer and M. Shanahan, (Eds.) Handbook of the Life Course. New York, Plenum Publishers.: 123-148.

Van de Kaa, D., J. (1987). Europe's Second Demographic Transition. Population Bulletin 42(1).

Van de Kaa, D., J., (1996). Anchored narratives: The story and findings of half a century of research into the determinants of fertility. Population Studies, 50: 389-432.

Van de Kaa, D. J. (1997). Verankerte Geschichten: Ein halbes Jahrhundert Forschung über die Determinanten der Fertilität – die Geschichte und

Ergebnisse. Zeitschrift für Bevölkerungswissenschaft, 22(1): 3-57.

Van de Kaa, D. J. (2004). Is the Second Demographic Transition a Useful Research Concept: Questions and Answers. Vienna Yearbook of Population Research, 4-10.

Velde, E. R. t. (2011). Is women's emancipation still compatible with motherhood on Western societies? In: J.J. Siegers, J. de Jong Gierveld and E. van Imhoff (Eds). Female labor market behavior and fertility. A rational-choice approach. Berlin, Springer

Vester, H.-G. (2009). Kompodium der Soziologie I: Grundbegriffe. Wiesbaden, VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Von Rosenstiel, L., F. W. Nerdinger, G., Oppitz, E. Spiess, and M. Stengel (1986). Einführung in die Bevölkerungspsychologie. Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.

Wernhart, G. and N. Neuwirth (2007). Haushaltseinkommen und Einkommenselastizität der Erwerbsbeteiligung von Müttern. Ergebnisse aus dem EU-SILC 2004. W. Paper, Österreichisches Institut für Familienforschung. 63.

White, N., R., (2003). Changing Conceptions, Young People's Views of Partnering and Parenting. Journal of Sociology 39(2): 149-164.

Widmer, E. D. and G. Ritschard (2009). The de-standardization of the life course: Are men and women equal? Advances in Life course Research, 14(1-2): 28-39.

Willekens, F., J. (1991). Understanding parallel processes. In: J.J. Siegers, J. de Jong Gierveld and E. van Imhoff (Eds). Female labor market behavior and fertility. A rational-choice approach. Berlin, Springer

Willis, R. J. (1973). A new approach to the economic theory of fertility behavior. Journal of Political Economy 81: 14-64.

Witzel, A. (2000). Problem-centered interview. Forum qualitative social research. 1(1).

Woollett, A. and M. Boyle (2000). Reproduction, Women's Lives and Subjectivities. Feminism and Psychology 10(3): 307-311.

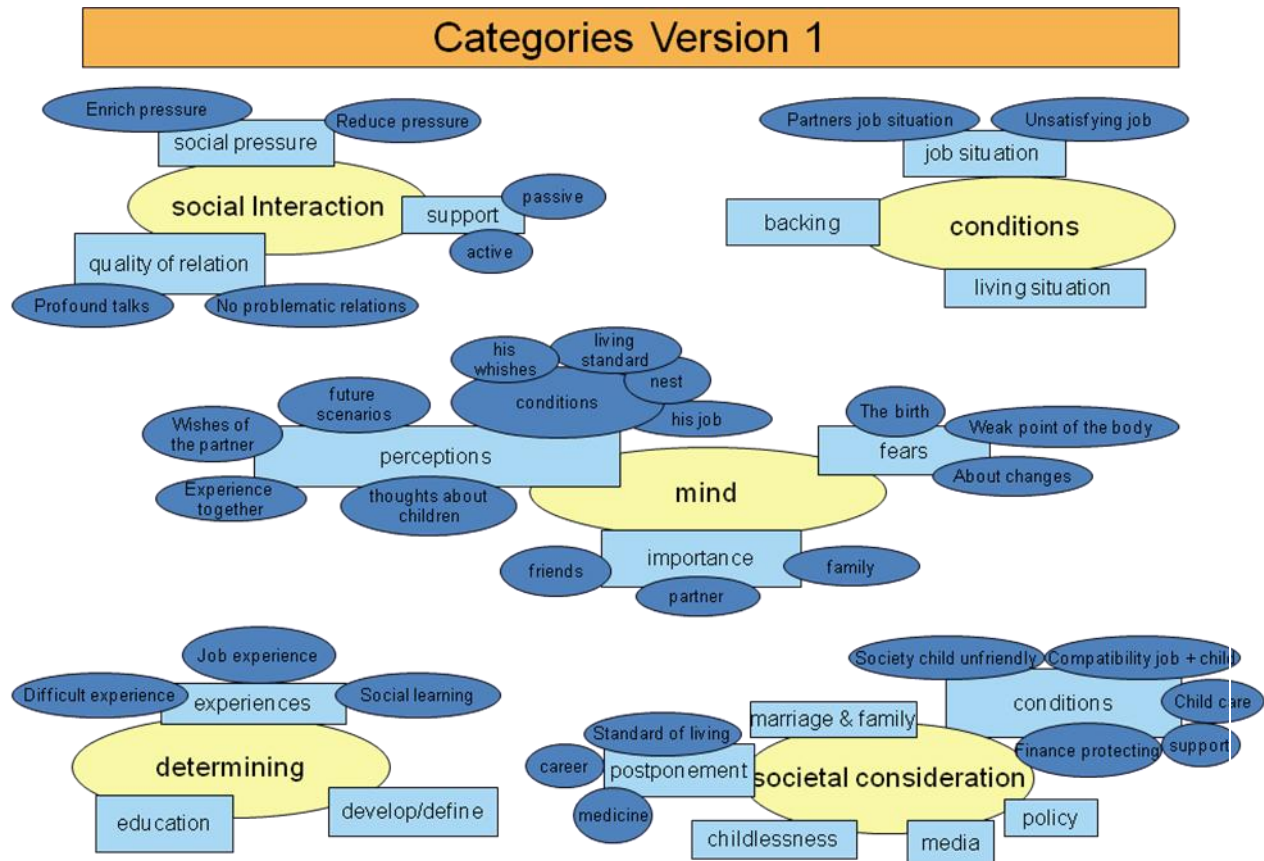
Zeman, K., T. Sobotka, R. Gisser, M. Winkler-Dworak, and W. Lutz (2010). Geburtenbarometer Vienna: An overview report:
http://www.oeaw.ac.at/vid/download/Geburtenbarometer_Vienna_Report_EN.pdf

Zimmermann, P. (2000). Grundwissen Sozialisation. Opladen, , Leske + Budrich.

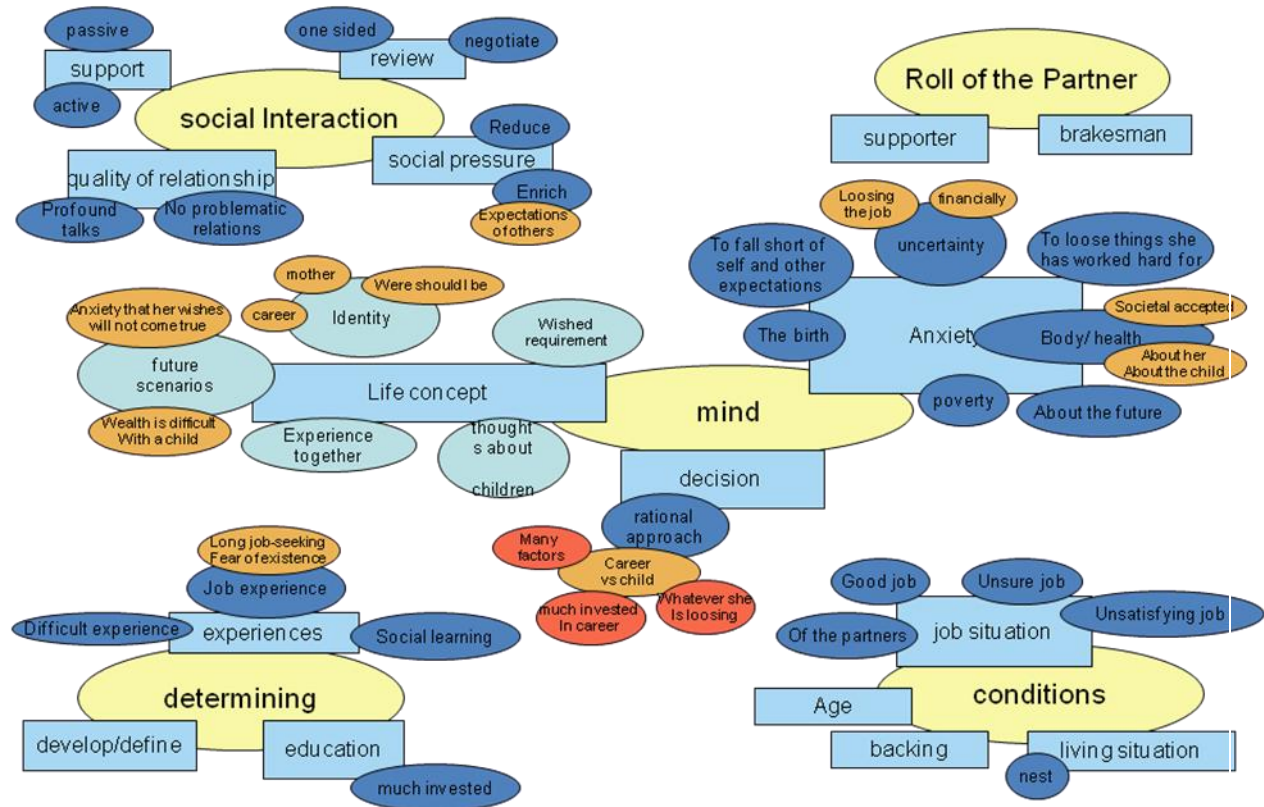
Zintl, R. (1989). Der Homo oeconomicus: Ausnahmeerscheinung in jeder Situation oder Jedermann in Ausnahmesituationen,. Analyse und Kritik 1(1): 52 - 69.

Appendix:

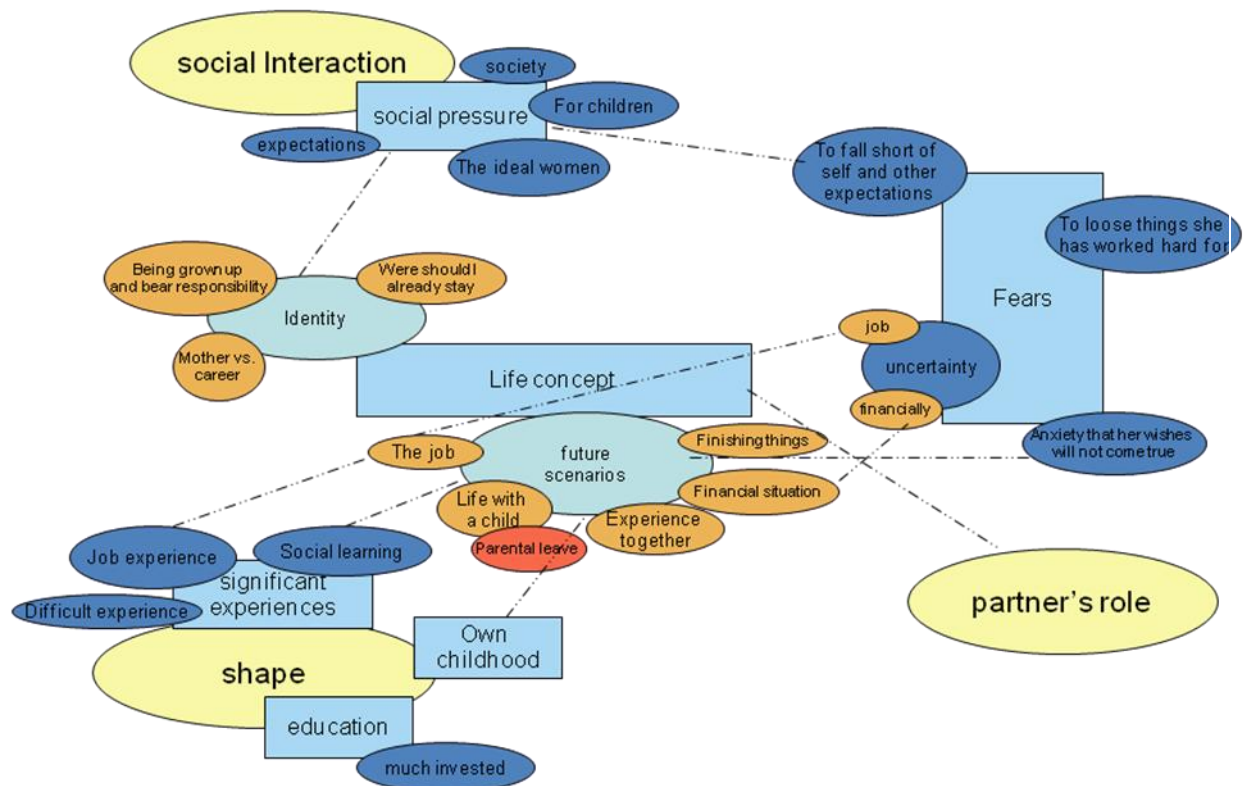
Example of how the category system has developed

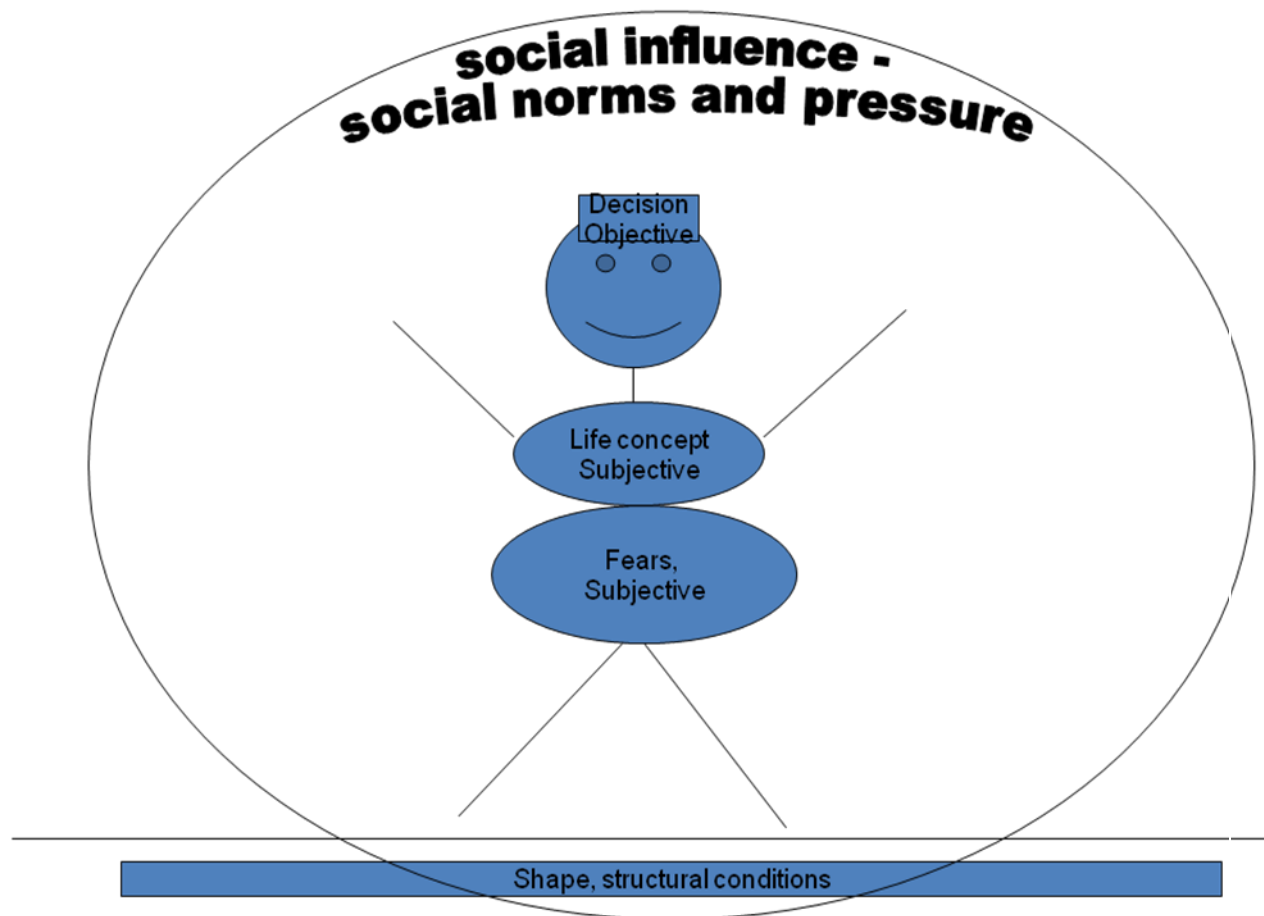


Categories Version 3

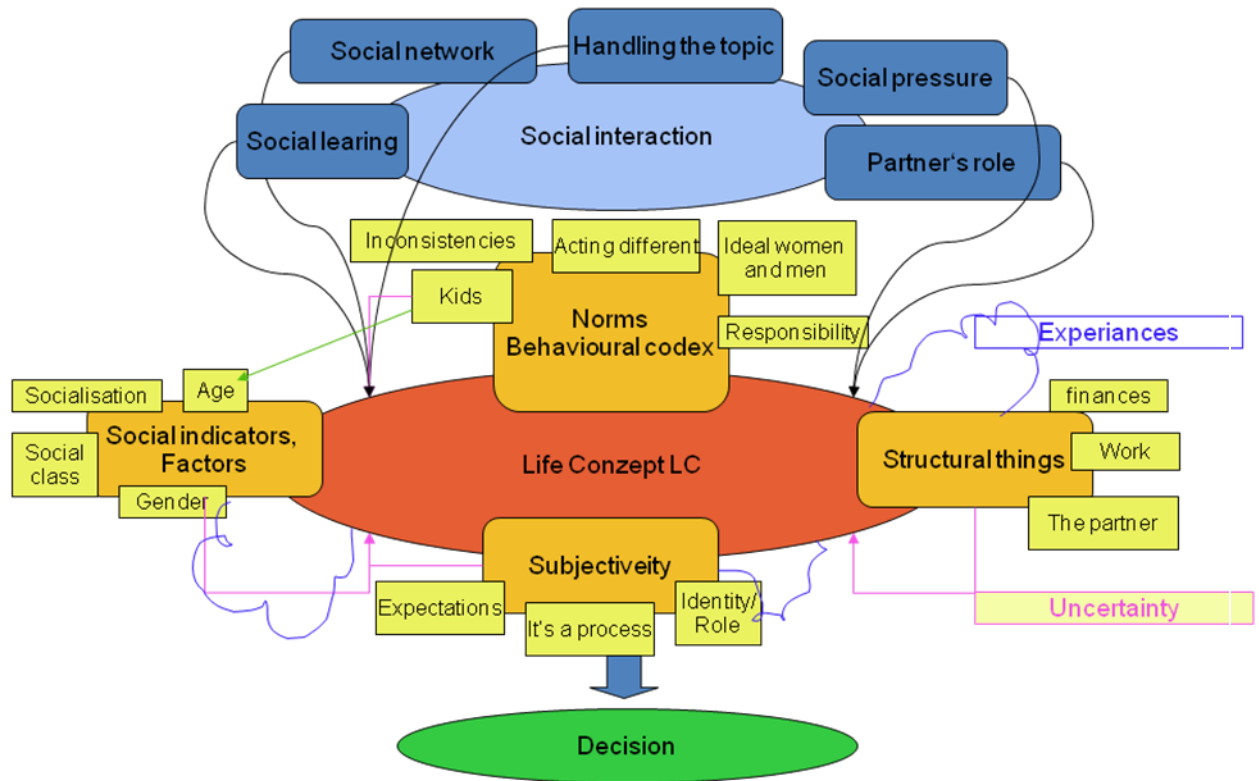


Categories Version 9



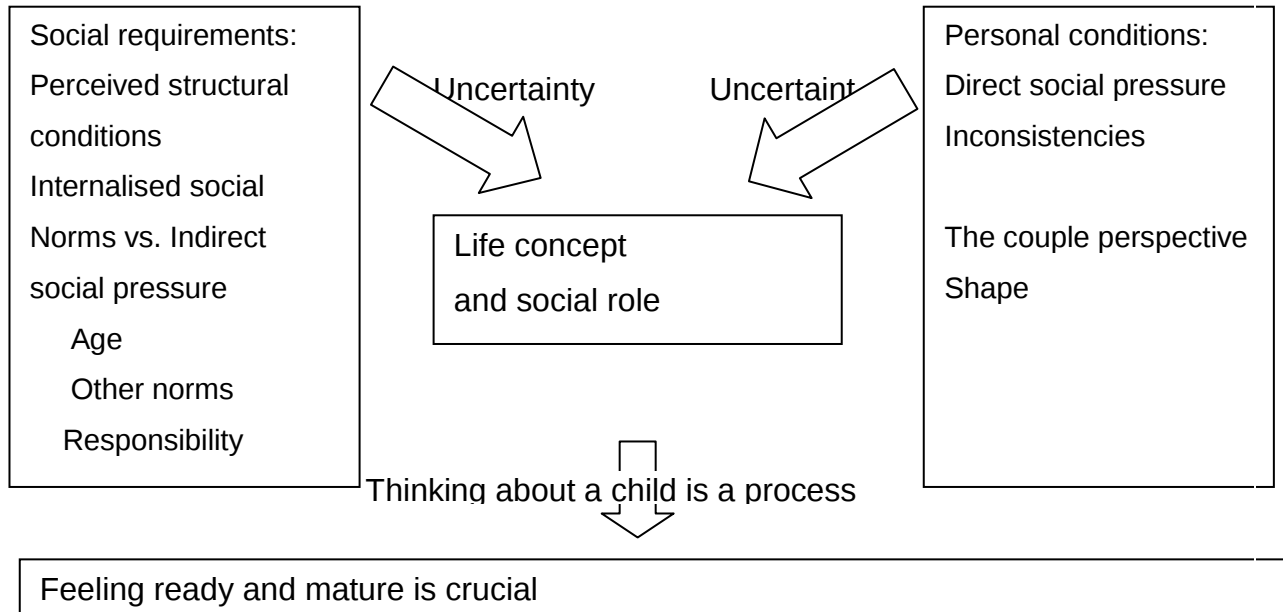


Categories Version 25

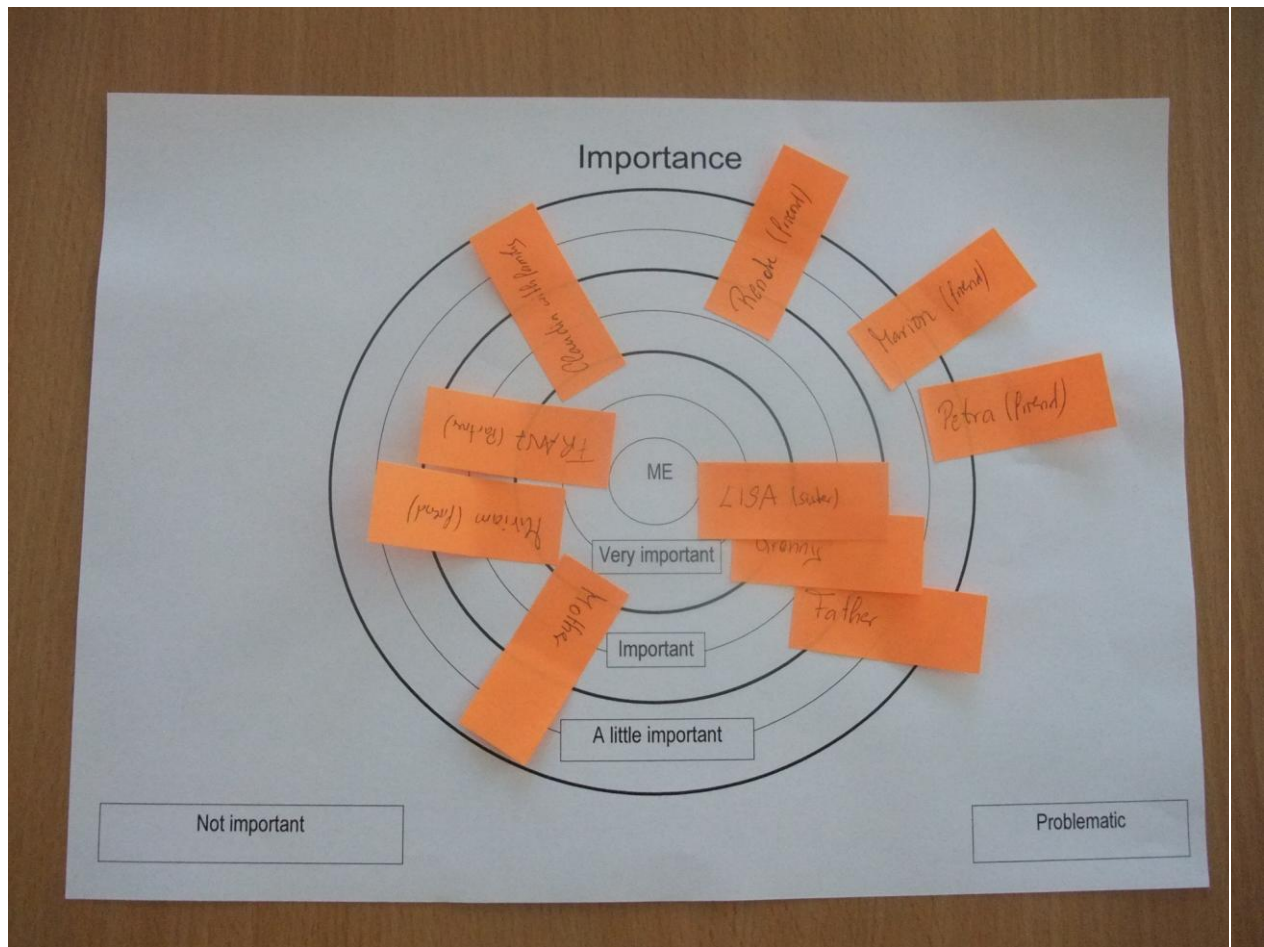


Behaviour and acting alternatives is socially shaped

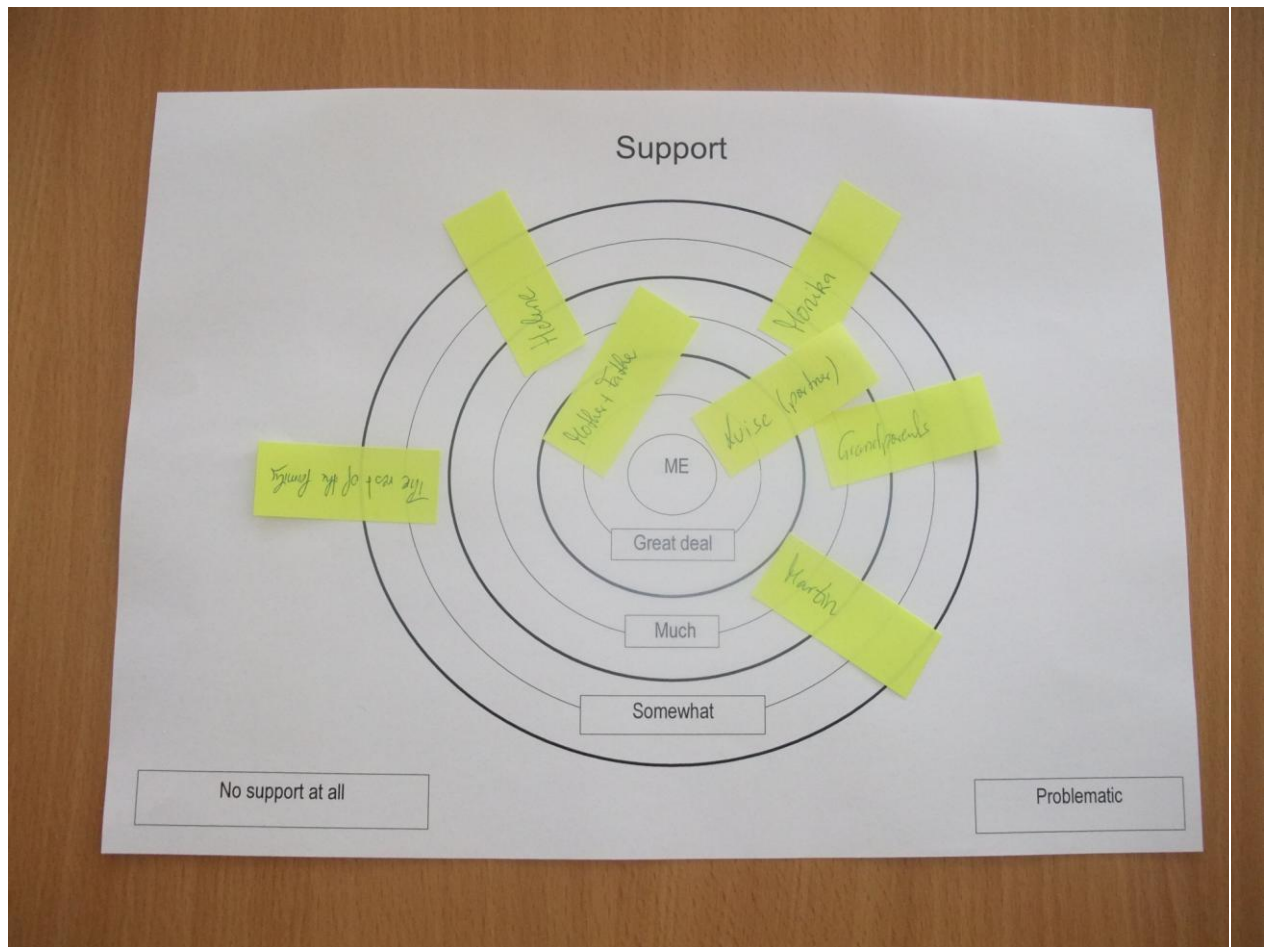
Version 37



Example of a possible network card of importance:



Example of a possible network card of support:



Abstract English:

Modern parenthood is a matter of decision and not the only way to lead an adult life (Burkart, 1994; Sevón, 2005). Although most young people value parenthood highly and want to have a family of their own (Henwood, Shirani & Kellett, 2011), fertility rates in many European countries – including Austria – are very low.

This dissertation wants to answer the question how major life course transitions are reflected and which mechanisms come into play. How do individuals consider big life course decisions in general and how does their individual approach become obvious with respect to fertility? The life concept theory, which is developed in this dissertation, gives answers to these questions and shows what guides individual behaviour in different social settings.

This study is embedded in the framework of the life course approach. The life course approach understands fertility behaviour as being connected to external and internal conditions (Huinink & Kohli, 2010). It also assumes that life is a process, in which experiences and previous decisions shape future actions (Elder, Johnson, Crosnoe, 2003; Huinink & Kohli, 2010; Mayer, 2004). Different life spheres interact and can be in conflict with each other (Huinink & Kohli, 2010). Norms are thought to play an important role in fertility decisions (Huinink, 2000; Mayer, 2004). According to this approach, people have mental maps which prepare them for future experiences (Settersten, 2003).

This dissertation is based on 21 qualitative interviews with 13 Austrian women and 8 of their partners regarding their fertility ideas. The data were initially analysed with the help of objective hermeneutic sequence analysis, and in particular rough analysis (Froschauer & Lueger, 1992), to develop hypotheses and ideas. In the second step, grounded theory, and in particular ‘open coding’, ‘axial coding’ and ‘selective coding’ (Strauss, 1991; Strauss & Corbin, 1996) were used to generate categories and their connections.

The result is the 'life concept theory'. The core category, the life concept, needs to be understood as rough ideas about the future life. In line with many scholars it is argued that most people do not question parenthood and family because these are key elements in their life concepts (Borchardt & Stöbel-Richter, 2004; Schneewind, Vaskovics, Gotzler, et al. 1996, Goldberg et al. 2012). The social role is a very important category. In Austria, especially women who want to be modern mothers struggle with visualising their future role. The reasons might be that motherhood has a rather low status and value and is considered tiring, unacknowledged work (Mynarska, 2009; Borchardt & Stöbel-Richter, 2004; Schneewind, Vaskovics, Gotzler, et al. 1996, Crespi and Fontaine 2012). The men interviewed in this study narrate fewer difficulties with fatherhood because compared to the women none of them assumed he would be reduced to fatherhood.

The life concept is influenced by two major sources, namely social requirements and people's personal situations. Internalised social norms influence how social requirements are interpreted, like the issue of age and responsibility. It is assumed that these norms produce indirect social pressure especially when they contradict each other. Fertility is considered a couple decision. However also other factors shape the life concept, for instance, individual experiences. The interviewees described tackling the issue of fertility as a process and the feeling of being ready to have children as a crucial element in making the final decision.

Zusammenfassung Deutsch:

Elternschaft heute bedarf einer Entscheidung und ist nicht die einzige Möglichkeit ein Leben als Erwachsener zu führen (Burkart, 1994; Sevón, 2005). Obwohl eine eigene Familie für die meisten jungen Menschen einen hohen Wert hat (Henwood, Shirani & Kellett, 2011), sind Fertilitätsraten in vielen europäischen Ländern – darunter Österreich – sehr niedrig.

Mit dieser Dissertation soll der Frage nachgegangen werden wie junge Menschen wichtige Lebenslaufübergänge reflektieren und überdenken und welche Mechanismen hier einwirken. Wie denken Individuen über große Lebensveränderungen nach und wie kommen diese individuellen Überlegungen zum Tragen, im Besondern in Bezug auf die Fertilität? Die „life concept theory“, die in dieser Dissertation entwickelt wird, gibt Antworten auf diese Fragen und zeigt was individuelles Verhalten in verschiedenen sozialen Settings prägt.

Diese Forschung ist in den Lebenslaufansatz („life course approach“) eingebettet. Dieser Ansatz nimmt an, dass beim Fertilitätsverhalten der Austausch von äußeren und internen Umständen betrachtet werden muss (Huinink & Kohli, 2010). Das Leben wird prozesshaft verstanden und frühere Erfahrungen prägen zukünftige Entscheidungen (Elder, Johnson, Crosnoe, 2003; Huinink & Kohli, 2010; Mayer, 2004). Die unterschiedlichen Lebensbereiche können sich gegenseitig beeinflussen und in Konflikt treten (Huinink & Kohli, 2010). Es wird angenommen, dass Normen eine wesentliche Rolle bei Fertilitätsentscheidungen spielen (Huinink, 2000; Mayer, 2004). Zudem wird davon ausgegangen, dass Menschen mentale Fahrpläne haben um auf zukünftige Erfahrungen vorbereitet zu sein (Settersten, 2003).

Diese Dissertation basiert auf 21 qualitativen Interviews, 13 mit österreichischen Frauen und 8 ihrer männlichen Partner. Dabei ging es um deren Gedanken bezüglich zukünftiger Fertilität. Die Daten wurden mit hermeneutischer Sequenzanalyse im speziellen Grobanalyse analysiert (Froschauer & Lueger, 1992), um Hypothesen und Ideen zu entwickeln. Im Weiteren wurde Grounded

Theory und hier im speziellen „offenes“, „axiales“ und „selektives“ Kodieren verwendet (Strauss, 1991; Strauss & Corbin, 1996) um Kategorien und deren Verbindungen zu identifizieren.

Das Ergebnis ist die „life concept theory“. Die Kernkategorie ist das „life concept“. Dieses muss als grobe Idee über das zukünftige Leben verstanden werden. In Übereinstimmung mit bisheriger Forschung wird auch hier gezeigt, dass viele Menschen eine eigene Familie nicht in Frage stellen, da sie ein Schlüsselement in ihren Lebenskonzepten darstellt (Borchardt & Stöbel-Richter, 2004; Schneewind, Vaskovics, Gotzler, et al. 1996, Goldberg et al. 2012). Die soziale Rolle ist ein wesentliches Element. In diesem Sample beschreiben besonders Frauen, die moderne Mütter sein wollen, ihre Schwierigkeiten diese zukünftige Rolle zu visualisieren. Der Grund dafür könnte sein, dass Mutterschaft als ermüdend und wenig anerkannt beschrieben wird und die Frauen berichten, dass diese mit einem niedrigen sozialen Status assoziiert wird (Mynarska, 2009; Borchardt & Stöbel-Richter, 2004; Schneewind, Vaskovics, Gotzler, et al. 1996, Crespi and Fontaine 2012). Die Männer in dieser Studie nennen weniger Schwierigkeiten mit ihrer zukünftigen Vaterrolle, denn im Vergleich zu den Frauen wird nicht angenommen, dass sie bloß auf diese Rolle reduziert werden.

Das „life concept“ wird von zwei wesentlichen Quellen beeinflusst, den sozialen Gegebenheiten und den individuellen Situationen. Es wird angenommen, dass internalisierte soziale Normen bestimmen wie soziale Gegebenheiten interpretiert werden, wie etwa die Themen Alter oder Verantwortung. Diese Normen, so die Annahme, erzeugen indirekten Druck. Weiteres wird Fertilität als Paarentscheidung verstanden. Aber auch andere Faktoren wie individuelle Erfahrungen prägen das „life concept“. Die Entscheidung über die Fertilität wird in den Narrationen als Prozess beschrieben und das Gefühl bereit für diesen Lebensabschnitt zu sein wird als das grundlegendes Element verstanden um diese Entscheidung zu treffen.

Lebenslauf

Persönliche Daten

Name: Mag.^a Katrin Fliegenschnee
Geburtstag: 17. März 1975, Wien
E-Mail: Katrin.fliegenschnee@univie.ac.at
Familienstand: verheiratet, zwei Kinder
Staatsbürgerschaft: Österreich

Ausbildung

1989-1994 Bildungsanstalt für Kindergartenpädagogik, Abschluss mit
Berufsberechtigung und Matura
1994 – 2002 Studium der Soziologie/ Publizistik- und
Kommunikationswissenschaften an der Universität Wien
2002 Abschluss des Studiums
WS 2004/05 International Max Planck Research School for Demography
(IMPRSD)
Seit 2005 Dissertationsstudium an der Universität Wien

Berufliche Tätigkeiten

1999-2004 Pädagogische Mitarbeiterin des Vereins der Wiener
Jugendzentren, offene Kinder und Jugendarbeit
2003-2011 Wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin am Institut für Demographie
der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften
Seit WS 2008 Lehre an der Universität Wien am Institut für Soziologie
„Qualitative Methoden: Grounded Theory“ und „Qualitative
Interviews“
Seit 2011 Begutachterin für das „Vienna Yearbook of Population
Research“
2010 und 2011 Lehre an der Donau Uni Krems „Qualitativen Methoden“
2012 Wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin an der
Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien, Institut für Altersökonomie
Seit Dez. 2012 Leitung der Bundes Kost Bundesweite Koordinationsstelle

Übergang Schule - Beruf

Vorträge

„Children should be a part of my life, but I don't know how to manage it.“

European Population Conference, Liverpool, June 2006

„New Times, Old Beliefs: Projecting the Future Size of Religions in Austria.“

Political Demography: Ethnic, National and Religious Dimensions, London

School of Economics, September 2006

„There are simply always many good reasons against having a child! Fears and worries about motherhood among childless, highly educated Austrian women.“

33. Kongresses der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie, Kassel, Oktober 2006

„I can live my religion just as well at home“ Dimensions of religiosity of female Muslims: a qualitative analysis. Together with Caroline Berghammer.

European Population Conference. September 2010, Vienna,

„Are you ready for a child? A methodological triangulation on fertility intentions in Austria.“ Together with Isabella Buber. 1st User Conference of the

Generations and Gender Programme, May 2011, Budapest

"Mehr als basteln und tratschen" - Ausgewählte Befunde einer qualitativen Untersuchung zur Ergebnisqualität in Wiener Tageszentren. WiG -

Altersökonomische Vorträge, Wien, 28.11.2012

"Übergangsmanagement für ausgrenzungsgefährdete Jugendliche "

Veranstaltung: Wege ebnen an der Schnittstelle Schule – Beruf, Wie gelingt ein erfolgreicher Übergang? Wien, 18.09.2013

"Youth coathing" Planning the future with young people Strasbourg, European Parliament 22.11.2013

Posterpräsentationen

„Postponement of fertility in Austria. “, Workshop on “Anthropological Demography of Europe”, Max Planck Institute, Rostock, September 2005

„Postponement of first birth in Austria and the influence of social networks. A qualitative study in Austria. “ Postponement of fertility in Europe, Wien, Dezember 2005

„The future religious landscape of Austria and Switzerland. “ Together with Anne Goujon, Vegard Skirbekk. Population association of America annual meeting New York, March 2007,

„Foreign but at home: Migration and integration of Turkish and Bosnian women in Vienna.“ Together with Silvia Dallinger, Caroline Berghammer, Population association of America annual meeting New York, March 2007,

„Fertility as a multistate process and the role of rational vs. emotional arguments. “ Together with, Engelhardt-Wölfler, Henriette, Fürkranz-Prskawetz, Alexia. Conference of social exclusion and the new demographic portrait of Europe, Budapest, September 2007.

„Intention or no Intention: That is the question! Considerations about the Term "Intention" based on qualitative data about fertility behaviour. “ From Intentions to Behaviour: Reproductive Decision-Making in a Macro-Micro Perspective. Vienna, December 2010.

Publikationen

Goujon A., Skirbekk V., Fliegenschnee K., and Strzelecki P., (2007).

New times, old beliefs: Projecting the future size of religions in Austria.” Vienna Yearbook of Population Research, pp. 237 – 270.

Fliegenschnee, K. (2006) There are simply always enough good reasons against having a child! Fears and worries about motherhood among childless,

highly educated Austrian women. In: Rehberg, Karl Siegbert (Hg.): Die Natur der Gesellschaft. Verhandlungsband des 33. Kongresses der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie 2006 in Kassel. Frankfurt/M.: Campus. (CD-ROM).

Julia Czarnowski & Katrin Fliegenschnee. (2009). An Interdisciplinary Approach to Complexity: Migratory Decisions of Iranians in Vienna, Forum Qualitative Social Research, Volume 10, No. 3, Art. 9.

Flandorfer, P and Fliegenschnee K. (2010): Education and health. Theoretical considerations based on a qualitative Grounded Theory study. Vienna Yearbook of Population Research 2010, pp. 237-261.

Flandorfer, P. and Fliegenschnee K. (2010): The gender gap in life expectancy in Austria. Theoretical considerations based on a qualitative Grounded Theory study. Journal of Public Health.

Buber, I. and K. Fliegenschnee (2011) Are you Ready for a Child? A Methodological Triangulation on Fertility Intentions in Austria. VID Working Paper 3/2011.

Trukeschitz, B., Fliegenschnee, K. (2012). Ergebnisqualität in Wiener Tageszentren - eine qualitative Analyse. Kurzfassung. Forschungsbericht des WU Forschungsinstituts für Altersökonomie 3/2012. Wien: Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien, Forschungsinstitut für Altersökonomie.

Trukeschitz, B. und Fliegenschnee, K. (2012). Ergebnisqualität in Wiener Tageszentren - eine qualitative Analyse. Forschungsbericht des WU Forschungsinstituts für Altersökonomie 4/2012. Wien: Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien, Forschungsinstitut für Altersökonomie

Fliegenschnee K. und Berghammer, C. (2013). Developing a concept of Muslim religiosity: an analysis of everyday lived religion among female migrants in Austria. Journal of Contemporary Religion 28(3).

Buber I. und Fliegenschnee K. (2014). Being ready for a Child. Mixing Methods to understand Fertility Intentions. Family Science. 4 (1).

Mitgliedschaften

EAPS: European Association for Population Studies

PAA: Population Association of America

Wissenschaftliche Projekte

DIALOG-Project, Population Policy Acceptance Study, wurde im sechsten Rahmenprogramm der EU gefördert.

FEMAGE-Project, Needs for female immigrants and their integration in ageing societies, wurde im sechsten Rahmenprogramm der EU gefördert.

„The Gender Gap in Life Expectancy: a Methodological Triangulation for Europe with Special Emphasis on Austria“, gefördert durch den FWF

„Past, present and future religious prospects in Vienna 1950-2050“ gefördert durch den WWFT, seit Juni 2011

„Ergebnisqualität der Betreuung und Pflege, konzeptuelle Fundierung für Wiener Tageszentren, und Wiener Heimhilfedienstleistungen“ gefördert vom WU-Jubiläumsfonds der Stadt Wien

„Childbearing within Cohabitation“ Kooperationsprojekt mit der Universität Southampton, gefördert durch die EU - (ERC) Starting Grant.