

Anticipated parenthood and employment:

The interplay of family and professional life of young adults

As recent studies show impressively, the occupational trajectories of a large majority of young adults in Switzerland lead to gender-typical professions. The horizontal gender segregation of labour is much more pronounced in Switzerland than in other countries. This fact is responsible for the continued existence of many gender inequalities. On the one hand, occupations with high proportions of women are characterized by comparatively lower wages, fewer opportunities for (financial) advancement and poorer working conditions. On the other hand, professions with high proportions of men penalise part-time work and career breaks. By focussing on professions that conform with existing gender stereotypes, women and men fall short of realising their abilities and talents. In consequence, Switzerland loses a great share of their potential skills and abilities. Furthermore, the marked segregation of the professional world also aggravates the shortage of skilled workers in a number of technical and social professions.

The gendering of occupational pathways is maintained by a complex interplay of numerous mechanisms: **gendered institutions, persisting traditional gender norms (particularly with regards to family and professional life) and subjective considerations all intertwine and mutually reinforce each other.**

The results of our own recently finished research project within the National Research Programme 60 show that family plans are key to understanding the gendering of occupational trajectories - both for young women and men. Family plans influence the career trajectories of young adults already at a time when starting a family in practice is not yet on the agenda for many of them. At the same time, family plans themselves are intertwined with and shaped by career plans. In Switzerland, there is so far no detailed research on how this interplay of anticipated family and professional lives of young men and women works in different occupational fields. We expect that this interrelation is key for understanding the persistence of occupational gender segregation. The proposed project therefore analyses, **how the anticipation of future family duties and professional life influence one another.**

We conduct 60 problem-centred interviews with women and men aged about 30 who are working in gender-typical, -neutral or -untypical occupations. The sample is drawn from the longitudinal TREE-study (see tree.ch.ch). This sampling has already proved to be very productive in our last research project. In our analysis, we want to reconstruct the self-conceptions of the young adults after they have been working in their respective professional fields for a few years. We want to examine the specific requirements concerning working hours, salary and spatial and temporal flexibility which they encounter in their employment fields. What meanings do they ascribe to their professions and in which ways do family plans interplay with that? How do they anticipate their future families? How do they perceive the current conditions for families with respect to parental leave, child care infrastructure and school organization? What responsibilities do they anticipate to have as a father or as a mother? And what opportunities and difficulties do they expect to follow from these responsibilities with regards to their professional lives?

The purpose of the study is to get a better understanding of the marked occupational gender segregation in Switzerland. Our aim is to identify measures which help men and women to remain in gender-untypical professions and thereby create more gender diversity in all occupational fields. Given the acute shortage of skilled workers in highly gendered occupations such as care and engineering, the project will contribute to addressing an increasingly urgent societal problem.