Family life trajectories and religiosity in Austria

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1 Introduction

Recent European studies have shown that religion is an important factor in union and fertility behaviour. Religious people have a larger number of children (Europe: Philipov and Berghammer, 2007; Frejka and Westoff, 2008; Austria: Heineck, 2006; France: Régnier-Loilier and Prioux, 2008; Spain: Adsera, 2006; West Germany: Brose, 2006) and are less likely to give birth outside marriage than their non-religious peers (France: Régnier-Loilier and Prioux, 2008). They tend to prefer marriage over cohabitation (Europe: Kiernan, 2000; Netherlands: Manting, 1996; Norway: Wiik, 2009) and have lower divorce rates (Germany: Böttcher, 2006; Netherlands: de Graaf and Kalmijn, 2006).

The reason underlying this well-established correlation are the more traditional values religious people hold in accordance with church teachings. These are sustained through pastoral advice and church-based social networks. Members of church communities also exchange support, for instance, with childcare. Moreover, religion helps people to cope with life uncertainty and stress that may, for example, be caused by partnership problems (e.g. Chatters and Taylor, 2005).

The above references to empirical findings document that previous studies investigated only such specific aspects of family behaviour as the effect of religion on the transition to cohabitation versus marriage or on the divorce rate. This contribution expands current knowledge by taking an integrated perspective and analysing entire union and fertility biographies. The reason for considering whole trajectories is the close linkage between these two aspects of the family domain. Such an approach is both theoretically plausible and intuitively appealing since it is closer to the decision-making process of the actors who consider union and reproduction in a comprehensive way. This study specifically investigates the role religiosity plays with respect to choosing a certain life trajectory. Religious people are expected to prefer life paths which are characterised by entering marriage without prior cohabitation, a higher number of children, marital childbearing and no divorce.

The life course approach provides a tool to theoretically grasp the interrelation between various areas of life. Union, fertility, education and work histories are examples of different 'careers' which are simultaneously present in a person's life. Each of them consists of a number of transitions, i.e. a change of state, and durations between these transitions (Elder, 1985: 31-32; Elder et al., 2003: 7-8). Events in one career can hinder, enable, delay or enhance events in others, a phenomenon known as 'interdependencies of parallel careers' (Dykstra and van Wissen, 1999: 9). The risk of experiencing a particular event also depends on the current status and on the number of events that have already occurred (Willekens, 1999: 38). The life course approach emphasises the salience of the historical and social contexts for the interaction of related careers (Mayer, 2004). Hence, it might be helpful to take a closer look at the linkages between union and children across Europe.

Being single—i.e. not living in a co-residential partnership—is generally regarded an inappropriate environment for having a child (Heuveline et al., 2003; Kiernan, 2004).[1] In Europe, cohabitation is perceived very differently. While, for instance, more than half of all first children were born in cohabitation in Sweden, marriage remained unchallenged for cohorts surveyed during the 1990s in other countries, e.g. in Italy, Spain and Switzerland (<10%) (Kiernan, 2004). Marriage rates tend to rise in the years after the birth of the first child, which explains why a markedly lower share of second and higher order births are realised in cohabitation. Regarding union dissolution, studies agree that cohabiting partners run the highest risk of breaking up, followed by marriages preceded by cohabitation. Direct marriage proves to be the most stable living arrangement (Liefbroer and Dourleijn, 2006). Interdependencies between the presence of children and the likelihood of union dissolution were confirmed insofar as childless couples face higher dissolution risks than their peers with children (Andersson, 1997; Hoem, 1997; Liefbroer and Dourleijn, 2006). Research on higher order unions concludes that the odds of giving birth are heightened in new unions (Prskawetz et al., 2003).

The present analysis is based on data from the first wave of the Austrian Generations and Gender Survey (GGS), which was conducted in 2008/09 and comprises 5,000 respondents (3,001 women and 1,999 men) aged 18-45. The GGS is part of a larger programme of representative surveys in more than 20 countries. All of them contain partnership and fertility histories. The Austrian dataset not only includes the items on religious affiliation and church attendance contained in the standardised master questionnaire, but in addition also information on self-assessed religiosity and religious socialisation, permitting more extensive analyses. My study only includes women and men aged 40-45 years at the time of the interviews, i.e. those who have (almost) completed their reproductive career (n=1,249). Each of them exhibits a particular union and fertility pattern. As a first step, I used sequence analysis to determine the distances between them and to cluster them according to several templates. I then used multinomial logit regression to ascertain which determinants are responsible for their selecting one rather than another trajectory, paying special attention to the role of religiosity.

The paper starts with a concise review of union formation, fertility and religion in Austria, which is followed by a discussion of the theoretical background and main research hypotheses. The next two chapters are dedicated to data and methods, empirical findings and their interpretation. The results are summarised in the last chapter.

2 Austria in the European context

2.1 Union formation and fertility

A plurality of family pathways has replaced the 'normal' family life cycle prevalent around the 1960s. This period was marked by direct, early and universal marriage, early parenthood, higher fertility and a low divorce risk. Family paths featuring such characteristics will henceforth be called 'traditional'. Ever since the beginning of the 1970s, most western countries have seen major transformations of family behaviour. These include the spread of unmarried cohabitation, postponement of marriage, living apart together, lower fertility, voluntary childlessness and elevated divorce rates (Glick, 1989; Mayer, 2004: 171).

In Austria, entering cohabitation rather than marrying straight away has become increasingly popular throughout the past decades. 70% of all women born in 1966/67 who had entered a union by the age of 28 had first settled for cohabitation. This development went along with an increase in the years spent in this living arrangement (Prskawetz et al., 2008: 320-321). In a European perspective, cohabitation was relatively common in Austria, which ranked after the Nordic countries and France, in the 1990s (Andersson and Philipov, 2002; Heuveline and Timberlake, 2004). As a consequence, a comparatively high share of first children, namely about 40%, was born out of wedlock in this period, most of them to cohabiting mothers (Prskawetz et al., 2008: 329-330). In parallel with these developments, marriage rates have declined ever since the late 1960s and marriages have been postponed. The median age at first marriage has risen by more than seven years since the mid-1970s and reached 29 years for women in 2009 (Statistics Austria, 2010). Compared to other European countries, divorce rates are high in Austria. Provided the rates remain unchanged, around 25% of all couples who married in 1980 are expected to divorce during their life time. The corresponding figure for all those who married in 1995 is more than 35% (Prskawetz et al., 2008: 323-324).

Austria is regarded as a country with moderately low fertility. The period Total Fertility Rate has been rather stable around a value of 1.4 since the mid-1980s, which is somewhat below the current European average of 1.6 (Prskawetz et al., 2008). The cohort fertility rate of women who recently completed childbearing—i.e. those born in the mid-1960s—amounts to about 1.6 children. In line with the European trend, two has become the modal number of children in Austria. 40% of all women born between 1960 and 1965 opted for this parity (Frejka, 2008; Prskawetz et al., 2008). Changes in the level of fertility went along with shifts in the timing of childbearing. The age at childbearing has continuously increased. In 1990, the mean age at first birth of Austrian women was 25 and in 2006, it was 27.5 years, which was close to the European average in this year (European Demographic Datasheet, 2008; Prskawetz et al., 2008: 311).

2.2 Religion

Compared to its European peers, Austria's population is just above averagely religious (Voas 2009). Even though religious diversity has increased, Austria is still comparatively homogeneous with 66% of the population adhering to Catholicism (Österreichische Bischofskonferenz, 2009). In the censuses of 1951 and 1961, as many as 90% of the Austrian population stated to be Catholic (Statistics Austria, 2010). While religious

projections for a medium scenario assume that less than every other inhabitant in Austria will be Catholic by 2051 (Goujon et al., 2007), this situation could be observed in Vienna as early as 2001 (49% Catholics) (Statistics Austria, 2010). Though one might expect the shrinking group of Catholics to be more committed, in actual fact, church attendance has dropped among them. In 1950, one third of all Catholics attended church on Sundays; in 2008, this share had dropped to 13% (Österreichische Bischofskonferenz, 2002 and 2009). Besides, it should be noted that the decrease has not yet slowed down.

The religious landscape of Austria has definitely become more pluralistic during the second half of the 20th century. The percentage of non-Catholics increased from about 10% in 1951/1961 to 26% in 2001. Protestants—mainly Lutherans—hold a stable share of around 5%. The groups with the highest growth rates were the non-affiliated whose numbers went up from 4% to 12% (Vienna: 26%) and the Muslims whose share rose from almost 0% to 4% (Vienna: 8%) during this period.

The fading of church-related religiosity went along with a weakening of individual beliefs such as the faith in God or self-assessed religiosity, while baptism, a religious wedding and especially a religious funeral continue to be widely practiced (Zulehner and Polak, 2009).

3 Conceptual background and research hypotheses

Despite the developments outlined above—i.e. an increase in non-marital cohabitation and childbearing, voluntary childlessness, divorce and declining numbers of children, postponement of childbearing and marriage—the Christian churches still strongly propagate marriage, durable relationships and larger numbers of children. However, their influence has diminished. Lesthaeghe and Surkyn pointed out the interrelation between secularisation and the approval of 'new' forms of family behaviour: "Without institutional assertion, more latitude is given to individual morality, and diversifications of the moral code are at the heart of pluralist societies. Secularization, in its institutional sense, is therefore a *conditio sine qua non* for pluralism and tolerance." (Lesthaeghe and Surkyn, 1988: 13)

The Catholic Church has particularly clear-cut regulations on issues relating to partnership and procreation. Before getting married, a couple is advised to live in chastity. Cohabitation implies a sexual relationship. The marriage bond lasts until one spouse dies and cannot be severed (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1993: 1603 and 2350). It is considered natural for a married couple to have children: "Marriage and conjugal love are by their nature ordained toward the begetting and educating of children." (Paul VI., 1965: 50) The use of contraceptive methods other than natural ones is prohibited as is abortion (Paul VI., 1965: 51; Code of Canon Law, 1983: 1398; Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1993: 2370). Whereas most adherents do not observe all regulations, they tend to agree with the general religious worldviews (McQuillan, 2004). Being religious is positively correlated with holding more family-oriented values (Lesthaeghe and Surkyn, 1988; Dobbelaere et al., 1999; Austria: Bichlbauer and Tazi-Preve, 2003). Due to the small number of cases in the other categories (n<180) the data set at hand regrettably only permits a comparison between Catholics and non-affiliated.

Since the majority of the Austrian population states to be Roman Catholic without regularly engaging in church-related practices, mass attendance should be a more distinctive feature. Besides the influence of religious ethics, mechanisms rooted in

regular church attendees' social networks might be at work. Being embedded in a church community implies that religious norms and values are sustained through communication with co-religionists, in shared rituals and pastoral indoctrination and thus remain plausible (Berger, 1969). Observing such accordant behaviours of church friends as refraining from entering non-marital cohabitation might gear imitation. Social regulation and control further promote compliance in cases of non-conformity. Additionally, members of church networks exchange emotional, tangible, informational and spiritual support (Taylor and Chatters, 1988; Ellison and George, 1994; Krause et al., 2001; Chatters et al., 2002). Help is, for example, granted to couples with relationship problems and based on the principle that dissolution is the very last option. Besides religious teaching and social networks, the function of religion in coping with uncertainty and stress is potentially of value for explaining the linkage between religiosity and family behaviour. Religious coping can take a wide range of possibilities such as redefining a stressful situation as potentially beneficial, being reassured through God's love or giving up control to God (Pargament et al., 2000). Thus, religious people might be better able to handle such exhausting situations as problems with their partner or children. Some religious rites are deliberately built around key family events—baptism, confirmation, wedding, funeral—to reassure the believer of God's support in potentially uncertain times of change.

However, the effect between religiosity and family events could work in both directions. Studies conducted in the US investigated whether family events trigger changes in a person's religiosity. They find that cohabitation prompts a decrease in religiosity while marriage and having children foster an increase (Thornton et al., 1992; Stolzenberg et al., 1995; Argue et al., 1999). A caveat of this study is that the information on respondents' religiosity refers to the time of the survey, when they were 40-45 years old, but is related to their family trajectories between ages 15 and 39. Potential problems caused by this fact will be discussed in the subsequent section, which describes the data in more detail.

The religious influence on the family domain closely interacts with related areas, particularly education and employment. If, for instance, a religious woman envisions dividing family work and gainful employment with her partner in a traditional way, she may scale down her educational aspirations and thus employment prospects. Marriage as a more stable living arrangement suits her interests better than cohabitation, and a divorce involves high costs. Lower employment ambitions entail fewer complications in reconciling work and family and may result in a higher number of children. It is, however, not the aim of this study to disentangle these complex interactions.

Summing up, we may expect that, compared to their non-affiliated peers, Roman Catholics are more likely to choose more traditional family life paths characterised by direct marriage, a higher number of children, marital childbearing and no divorce. The correlation with the frequency of church attendance is assumed to be higher than for affiliation (Hypothesis 1).

Religiosity is not necessarily bound to the institution of the church. Individual forms have been denoted, for instance, as 'implicit religion', 'spirituality' or 'believing without belonging' (Davie, 1990). The substantive content could range from genuine Christian creeds held outside the church to New Age beliefs. Whether views on family-related issues are relevant and which behaviour they support cannot be determined for this kind of religiosity. Gatherings are not as institutionalised as in the Christian churches, which implies that social network effects are not strong. Merely the aspect that religiosity

reduces uncertainty might play some role. *Overall, the family behaviour of people who are religious in a non-organised form is expected not to differ from that of the non-religious (Hypothesis 2).*

Studies find that people who were exposed to religious socialisation show a delayed entry into union, prefer marriage over cohabitation (Lehrer, 2004) and have a higher number of children (Janssen and Hauser, 1981; Berghammer, 2009). Two complementary explanations for the impact of religious upbringing can be found in the literature. One claims that children are formed by their parents' values, which they internalise in their younger years. Similarities between parents' and children's socio-economic status facilitate the intergenerational transmission of values and behaviour. The other explanation is that children who are embedded in a church community become familiar with the rituals, form friendships and potentially find a marriage partner there (Kalmijn et al., 2006). Evidently, a large fraction of those who were brought up in a faith abandon it later in life. As a consequence, those who stay religious constitute a rather select group. Differently from affiliation, attendance and self-assessed religiosity, religious socialisation is not potentially endogenous to family events and is thus given preference in some studies (Lehrer, 1998; Lehrer, 2004). As a retrospective measure, it may suffer from recollection bias (Adsera, 2007). De Vries (2006) found, however, that correcting or not correcting for measurement error in reports on father's past church attendance did not lead to different conclusions.
Respondents who were socialised in a religious family show a more traditional family behaviour. Due to selection effects, however, this link is not as strong as the correlation with current religiosity (Hypothesis 3).

Religious people may not only differ from their non-religious peers in the kind of family trajectory they follow, but also with respect to the age at which they experience certain events and regarding the duration of a given status. Recent research documents an impact of religiosity on the timing of first marriage (Lehrer, 2004; Xu et al., 2005; Eggebeen and Dew, 2009) and first birth (Gutiérrez-Domènech, 2008; Schmidt, 2008; Rijken and Liefbroer, 2009). Rather than studying the overall religious differences at average ages, our interest is on analysing them within certain types of family trajectories. As argued in the literature, a stronger family orientation fosters early family formation, especially in combination with lower education and lower employment orientation (Lehrer, 2004). Conversely, due to the concept of a lifelong marriage and rejection of divorce, particularly in the Roman Catholic Church, religious people may be more cautious and responsible when looking for a partner, which implies later union formation (Lehrer, 2004). Furthermore, the partnership market may be tight for religious people who live in a secularised society but want a religious partner. These mechanisms work in different directions and do not allow clear predictions on the age of entering into union and parenthood. *We can, however, expect that religious people who experience cohabitation despite the Catholic Church's disapproval transit to marriage sooner than their non-religious peers (Hypothesis 4).*

4 Data and method

4.1 Austrian Generations and Gender Survey

The Austrian Generations and Gender Survey (GGS) is part of the Generations and Gender Programme, which is co-ordinated by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. Within this framework, large-scale representative surveys have been conducted in 19 European countries as well as in Australia, Canada and Japan since 2001. The GGS is designed as a panel survey comprising three waves carried out at intervals of three years. In Austria, the first wave was conducted in 2008/2009. 5,000 respondents— 3,001 women and 1,999 men—in the age bracket 18-45 were interviewed via Computed Assisted Personal Interviews. The overall response rate was 61%.

The data contain complete family and fertility histories and a rich set of socio-economic variables. The Austrian GGS also includes four questions on religiosity, namely on religious affiliation, frequency of attending religious services, self-assessed religiosity and the importance of issues related to church and religion in the parental home when the respondent was 15 years old.

The question on religious affiliation is: *Do you belong to a religious denomination, if so, which one?* The answering options are Roman-Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, other Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, other religion, no affiliation. Due to the low number of cases in the other religious groups, I limited my study to differences between Roman Catholics and the non-affiliated group.

Information on church attendance was obtained by the following question: *How often do you attend religious services apart from weddings, funerals, baptisms and the like?* The respondents could indicate the exact number of times, hence this variable is continuous. However, the multivariate models distinguish between two different categories: never/yearly and monthly/weekly. The lower frequency group attends church 0-8 times a year, the regular attendees go to masses 10 times and more often per year.

The level of self-assessed religiosity was rated on an eleven-point scale: *Regardless of whether you belong to a particular religion, how religious would you say you are? Please answer this question with a scale. Zero means 'Not at all religious', ten means 'Very religious'.* Non-church related religiosity comprises those who rate themselves religious (5-10) but attend church never or only a few times per year.

The last question serves as a proxy for religious socialisation in the parental home: *How strongly do you agree with the following statement? When I was 15 years old, issues linked with religion and the church were considered to be very important in our home. Strongly agree, agree, neither—nor, disagree, strongly disagree.* In the models, the variable was dichotomised in that the first two answering options (strongly agree and agree) were combined as were the remaining three.

A limitation of this study is that with the exception of the last one, all questions measuring religiosity refer to the time of the interview, when the respondents were 40 to 45 years old, while the analysed union and fertility biographies relate to the period when they were 15 to 39. Such an approach is based on the assumption that the effect of religiosity remains stable over the life course. The problem of connecting current religiosity to past family events was addressed in previous research (e.g. Marcum, 1988; Lehrer, 2004). Studies from the US found that entering a cohabitation, marrying or having a child may entail a change in a person's religiosity (Thornton et al., 1992;

Stolzenberg et al., 1995; Argue et al., 1999). Different dimensions of religiosity are affected by family events to a varying degree (Marcum, 1988). Empirical evidence for Europe suggests, however, that the largest diminution of religiosity occurs in early adulthood and that shifts are relatively rare later in life (Lesthaeghe and Surkyn, 1988; Netherlands: Need and de Graaf, 1996; Te Grotenhuis and Scheepers, 2001). Changes in religiosity take place along cohort lines rather than being driven by age (Tilley, 2003; United Kingdom: Voas and Crockett, 2005; Crockett and Voas, 2006). This implies that a potential bias would be relatively harmless. Nevertheless, there is no conclusive evidence on this issue and causal inference is not fully warranted in this study. If shifts in religiosity during life are documented, the average trend seems to follow a downward slope (Te Grotenhuis et al., 1997). What does this imply for the direction of error? Arguably, respondents who reduce their religiosity would initially have behaved more like their religious peers. Yet, they are captured in a low religiosity category at the interview. Therefore, assuming that their religiosity was stable would probably underestimate religious differentials in family trajectories.

4.2 Sequence analysis and multinomial logit regression

This analysis is restricted to women and men who were born between 1963 and 1969 and are 40 to 45 years old at the time of the survey. This selection permits us to study almost their entire fertility history. While only a negligible number of births occurs beyond the age of 40, changes in union status are certainly likely. However, the focus of this study is on the relation between fertility and union status. The following cases were not included in the analyses: (1) cases without information on the year of the birth of a child,[2] (2) cases with missing values on the year of the start of a union, the start of the marriage, the end of a union or the time of divorce and (3) cases where one of the events of interest occurred before or in the month of the respondent's 15th birthday. Altogether 4.6% of all cases were dropped and the final sample size in the analysis was 1,249, of which 751 were women and 498 men.

In each of the 300 months between age 15 and 39 each respondent has a specific combination of union and fertility status. There are three union states, i.e. single (S), cohabiting (C) and married (M), and each of them can be combined with either zero, one, two or three and more children. Unions above order three were disregarded. This yields twelve states.

Theoretically, a respondent might have passed through any number of states. In the data set, the observation with the highest count features twelve states. The following example illustrates the data format:

89/0S 28/0C 27/0M 40/1M 116/2M

After the age of 15, this woman lived without a partner for 89 months until she was 22, when she entered into unmarried cohabitation in month 90 and spent 28 months in this living arrangement without having a child. Then she married and spent 27 months in a childless marriage. She gave birth to her first child at the age of 27 and had her second

child 40 months—around three years—later. She remained married with two children until she reached age 40.

The union and fertility biography of each respondent is transformed into such a sequence. Disregarding duration, there are 245 different sequences. The aim is to cluster them into a few main paths. Prior to this division, sequence analysis is used to assess the distances between the strings. I apply a method recently proposed by Elzinga (2005), which is based on counting the number of matching subsequences. The programme assesses how often a certain subsequence (for example, 0M-1M) is observed in each pair of sequences weighted by the frequency of incidence. The distance is calculated as a combination of this measure and the number of non-common subsequences in both strings is weighted by the frequency of their occurrence. By this method, it is possible to include the time spent in each state, which was done in the second part of the analysis when studying timing (Elzinga and Liefbroer, 2007). Having calculating the distances between the sequences, they are grouped by comparing each of them to eight template sequences (Table 1) and assigning them to the closest one. The template sequences correspond to those defined by Elzinga and Liefbroer (2007),[3] but were extended by the number of children. The sequence analysis was conducted using the statistical software package CHESA 2.11 (Elzinga, 2007).

Table 1: Template sequences

1: Modern parenthood, 2 children	0S	0C	0M	1M	2M	
2: Modern parenthood, 3+ children	0S	0C	0M	1M	2M	3M
3: Traditional parenthood, 2 children	0S		0M	1M	2M	
4: Traditional parenthood, 3+ children	0S		0M	1M	2M	3M
5: Alternative parenthood, 2 children	0S	0C	1C	1M	2M	
6: Sequential cohabitation, childless	0S	0C	00	0C		
7: Parenthood dissolution, 1 child	0S	0C	0M	1M	1S	
8: Singlehood, childless	0S					

Multinomial logit regression is used to estimate which factors are conducive to the choice of one life path versus another (Agresti, 2007; for a recent application on types of school-work careers see McVicar and Anyadike-Danes 2002). The model equation is:

$$\frac{\pi_j}{\pi_J} = e^{\alpha_j + \beta_j x}$$

The first category, modern parenthood with two children, constitutes the baseline (J = 1). As will be documented below, this life path is empirically the one that occurs most frequently. Each of the other paths j is paired with J. The model therefore consists of j equations, which are modelled simultaneously. The predictor in the example is x. For each unit change in x the change in the odds of choosing path j over path J is β_j.

The control variables are:[4] gender, number of siblings (0-10+; continuous), highest level of education (5 levels; continuous), parental divorce (no/yes) and agrarian rate at current place of living, i.e. share of population employed in agriculture (0%-14+%; 14 levels;

continuous). Women and men are joined together in the analyses on the structure of the life paths since additional analyses have shown that the conclusions remain the same.

5 Results

5.1 Religiosity and the structure of family life paths

While the vast majority of more than 80% of all Austrians belongs to a religion, only about 30% take part in church services at least monthly. Yet, a markedly larger share of 47% claims to be religious. A similar number declares that religion was (very) important in their parental home (Table 2).

The lower part of Table 2 shows that the proportion of Roman Catholics who attend church at least monthly is larger than the corresponding Protestant share. Orthodox Christians—mostly Serbian, Greek and Russian—are between the two categories. The monthly attendance rate is highest among Muslims. The share of regular church attendees rises with the level of self-assessed religiosity. Nevertheless, almost half of those who consider themselves religious attend church very rarely. The relevance of parental socialisation for later religiosity is indicated in the third column, although the parental transmission of religious values was not successful in many cases.

Table 2: Distribution of religious variables, Austrian women and men aged 40-45 (weighted)

Religious affiliation		Church attendance		Self-assessed religiosity (0-10)		Importance of religion in the parental home	
None	16	Never	37	Non-religious (0-4)	29	Very unimportant	16
Roman Catholic	70	Yearly	31	Middle (5)	23	Unimportant	19
Protestant	4	Monthly	23	Religious (6-10)	47	Neither – nor	16
Muslim	4	Weekly	9			Important	28
Orthodox	4					Very important	20
Other	2						
n (observed)	1,249		1,248		1,248		1,249

% attending church at least monthly by religious affiliation		% attending church at least monthly by self-assessed religiosity (0-10)		% attending church at least monthly by importance of religion in the parental home	
None	1	Non-religious (0-4)	7	Very unimportant	8
Roman Catholic	39	Middle (5)	25	Unimportant	19
Protestant	15	Religious (6-10)	52	Neither – nor	20
Muslim	45			Important	45
Orthodox	26			Very important	55
Others	41				
n (observed)	1,248		1,247		1,248

Figure 1 shows the seven most frequent union and fertility sequences, which are typical for 44% of the Austrian population in this age bracket. The length of each state represents the mean time respondents following this life path spent in this state. The most widespread trajectory contains premarital cohabitation, followed by marriage and having two children. As depicted in the second trajectory, around 8% of the population never enter a co-residential union between ages 15 and 39. The third trajectory exhibits the same structure as the first one but directly starts with marriage. The first birth occurs about two years earlier in the third than in the first setting. The fourth trajectory is marked by having one child, which is born after a comparatively long period of cohabitation, and marriage at the late age of approximately 31. The fifth and the last life paths are characterised by having three or more children. Respondents in these groups started living with their partner sooner than their peers in the other pathways and had their first child very soon. They differ insofar as premarital cohabitation is typical for the fifth group, while direct marriage is the preferred choice for the seventh group. Respondents following trajectory six bear two children, but have their first child in pre-marital cohabitation at the relatively early age of 25.

Figure 1 Most frequently followed family life paths, Austrian women and men aged 40-45 (weighted)
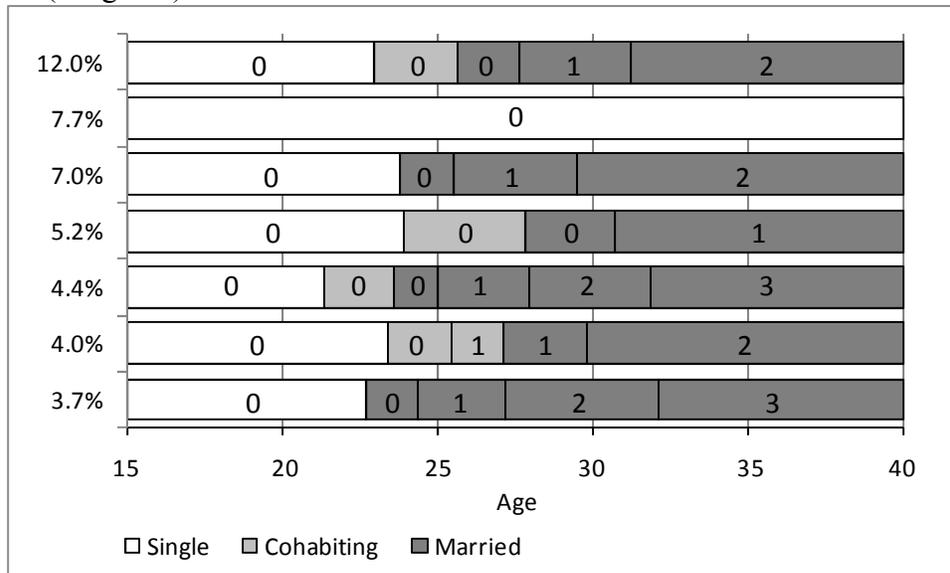
The categories of the dependent variable, however, are not these empirically observed trajectories but clusters of respondents who are closest to one of the template trajectories. Table 3 shows the results of the pertinent sequence analysis. The 'average similarity within cluster' indicates its homogeneity and the 'average similarity among all sequences' measures the distance of the sequence to the centroid, i.e. the centre of mass of all distances between points (Elzinga, 2007).

Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to life path clusters

	%	n	Average similarity within cluster	Average similarity among all sequences
1: Modern parenthood, 2 children	17.1	214	0.454	0.522
2: Modern parenthood, 3+ children	7.3	91	0.376	0.593
3: Traditional parenthood, 2 children	10.6	132	0.383	0.585
4: Traditional parenthood, 3+ children	6.0	75	0.319	0.629
5: Alternative parenthood, 2 children	17.5	219	0.336	0.623
6: Sequential cohabitation, childless	19.1	239	0.283	0.654
7: Parenthood dissolution, 1 child	10.7	134	0.318	0.640
8: Singlehood, childless	11.6	145	0.276	0.645
	100.0	1,249		

Table 4 unites the two variables of interest by showing the share of respondents in a certain template trajectory within each level of church attendance. Religious people's behaviour tends to be consistent insofar as they are not only more likely to choose a traditional union pattern but also tend to have large families. 28% of monthly/weekly church attendees marry directly and have at least two children, whereas such conduct is less common among non-attendees (12%). Life paths involving pre-marital cohabitation are relatively widespread among the religious, who prefer them over having a non-marital child, sequential cohabitation and divorce. Among the regular church attendees who enter a cohabiting union and have children, a larger share opts for three or more children than their peers in the lower church attendance category. Interestingly, the pattern of continuous singlehood without having a child is similarly prevalent among the two groups. This conclusion also holds for the observed life paths before clustering.

Table 4: Distribution of life path clusters by frequency of church attendance, in percent (weighted)

	Never/yearly church attendance	Monthly/weekly church attendance	Odds
Modern parenthood, 2 children	15.4	17.2	1.1
Modern parenthood, 3+ children	5.0	7.8	1.6
Traditional parenthood, 2 children	8.7	17.0	2.0
Traditional parenthood, 3+ children	3.7	10.8	2.9
Alternative parenthood, 2 children	16.8	14.1	0.8
Sequential cohabitation, childless	23.4	11.2	0.5
Parenthood dissolution, 1 child	13.2	8.4	0.6
Singlehood, childless	13.8	13.6	1.0
Total	100.0	100.0	

5.2 Multivariate models

Initially, religious affiliation is included in the model (Table 5, Model 1). The coefficients are to be interpreted as follows: A relative risk above one implies that compared to modern parenthood and two children (baseline), a certain life path is more frequently chosen by the non-affiliated group than by Catholics. For example, the risk of following a path of alternative parenthood increases by 1.87 relative to the reference path, for a one unit change in the affiliation variable (from Roman Catholic to non-affiliated). This means that non-affiliated people run a 87% higher risk than Catholics to choose a path

involving non-marital childbearing relative to the baseline one. Compared to Catholics, non-affiliated respondents are also significantly more likely to choose a cluster marked by sequential cohabitation and divorce (clusters 6 and 7) than to continue along the most common pattern of pre-marital cohabitation and two children (cluster 1). No significant differences are observed for the remaining clusters, but the case numbers are too small to draw definite conclusions.

The results for the other covariates are relatively similar across models and are briefly reported here. When taking modern parenthood with two children as reference, women run a lower risk of living in continuous singlehood than men. The likelihood of entering marriage without prior cohabitation and having three or more children instead of following the reference path increases with the number of siblings. This may reflect the strong social component of religion: Children who grew up in a religious family surrounded by a large number of siblings tend to keep their religion and to show a traditional family behaviour themselves. Respondents following the most frequent trajectory, i.e. modern parenthood and two children, are, on average, higher educated than respondents having three or more children, non-marital children and permanent singles. This corresponds to findings from other studies (Prskawetz et al., 2008: 306; Perelli-Harris et al., 2010). Own parents' divorce significantly raises the risk of experiencing a divorce oneself. A large body of research has provided evidence for the transmission of divorce from parents to children (e.g. Wolfinger, 2005; Diekmann and Schmidheiny, 2008). The larger the agrarian share the higher the likelihood of having three or more children, independently of entering marriage directly or through prior cohabitation. Moreover, the risk to experience a non-marital birth appears to be higher in the countryside than in more urban areas. Official statistics substantiate that the Austrian capital Vienna is among the federal states with the lowest share of non-marital births (Statistics Austria, 2010).

Model 2 focuses on the frequency of church attendance (Table 5). Compared to respondents who attend church services at most several times a year, regular attendees are by far more disposed to prefer direct marriage over pre-marital cohabitation. As outlined above, only a select minority continues to enter marriage directly. Additional analyses revealed that in this group there are no significant religious differences between those having two and those having three children. Similarly, clusters 1 and 2 are both characterised by pre-marital cohabitation but differ by parity. Again, no religious differences account for the choice of having two versus three or more children. This permits the conclusion that religiously active people differ from non-active ones by the way they enter into union, but once they follow a variant, there is no difference between those having two and those having three and more children.

Non-attendees are significantly more likely than their practicing counterparts to follow a trajectory marked by sequential cohabitation and childlessness rather than modern parenthood with two children. Although the values are not statistically significant, when viewed relative to the baseline one, they also tend to choose trajectories of non-marital childbearing and divorce more frequently than people who regularly attend masses.

An interaction was constructed to shed light on the discriminating power of affiliation versus church attendance (Table 5, Model 3). The results show that the influence of affiliation is weak if attendance is low. Judging from the estimated coefficients, this category takes a middle position between the two more clear-cut ones in most clusters.

Catholic church-goers are more prone than nominal Catholics to follow clusters 3, 4 and 6 rather than cluster 1. To be or not to be Catholic, on the other hand, seems to be a more distinctive trait than the level of church attendance when it comes to trajectories featuring non-marital childbearing and divorce versus modern parenthood with two children.

The results partly support Hypothesis 1. Compared to their peers, church attendees stand a higher chance of choosing direct marriage instead of prior unmarried cohabitation. At the same time, relative to the non-practicing group, they prefer clusters involving cohabitation over such more 'adverse' living arrangements as non-marital cohabitation, sequential cohabitation and divorce. There seem to be no significant religion-based differences in the probability of remaining single without a child. Regarding the number of children, the results are not as lucid as anticipated. Among parents who cohabit before marrying and entering parenthood, there is no religious distinction between having two as compared to having three and more children. The same holds true among traditional parents. Contrary to assumptions, church attendance does not evince a stronger connection with family life paths than affiliation.

Table 5: Results from multinomial logit models of life path clusters on religious affiliation, church attendance and other characteristics, relative rates

Model 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Ref.: Modern parenthood, 2 children	Modern parenthood, 3+ children	Traditional parenthood, 2 children	Traditional parenthood, 3+ children	Alternative parenthood, 2 children	Sequential cohabitation, childless	Parenthood dissolution, 1 child	Singlehood, childless
Religious affiliation[1]							
No affiliation	(1.38)	(0.85)	-	1.87 *	2.42 **	2.10 *	(1.53)
Roman Catholic (ref.)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Gender							
Male (ref.)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Female	1.66 #	1.30	1.39	0.99	0.82	1.09	0.63 *
Number of siblings (incr.)	1.07	1.08	1.29 ***	1.07	0.97	0.97	1.03
Education (incr.)	0.76 **	0.90	0.80 #	0.76 ***	0.94	0.92	0.80 *
Parental divorce							
No (ref.)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Yes	(1.53)	(0.84)	-	1.61	1.52	1.87 *	(1.46)
Agrarian rate (incr.)	1.09 *	1.03	1.17 ***	1.08 *	0.97	0.98	1.02
Pseudo R²	0.04						
N	1243						
df	49						

Model 2	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Church attendance							
Never/yearly	0.73	0.55 **	0.42 **	1.40	2.22 ***	1.49	1.12
Monthly/weekly (ref.)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Pseudo R²	0.04						
N	1242						
df	42						

Model 3	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Religious affiliation + church attendance							
No affiliation	(1.49)	(1.10)	-	1.68 #	1.94 *	1.87 #	(1.47)
Roman Catholic, never/yearly attendance (ref.)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Roman Catholic, monthly/weekly attendance[3]	1.23	1.77 *	2.27 *	0.72	0.46 **	0.71	0.88
Pseudo R^2	0.05						
N	1242						
df	56						

[1] The category 'other religions' is not shown but was controlled for.

Controlled for gender, number of siblings, education, parental divorce and agrarian rate.

Significance levels: *** p<0.001 ** p<0.01 * p<0.05 # p<0.10

Brackets indicate that n<25, - indicates that n<10.

The data support Hypothesis 2, which predicted that the family behaviour of people who are religious but do not frequently take part in church services does not differ from that of the non-religious group (Table 6, Model 4). It, however, differs from that of the observant religious in clusters 3, 4 and 6.

Table 6: Results from a multinomial logit model of life path clusters on self-assessed religiosity, church attendance and other characteristics, relative rates

Model 4	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Ref.: Modern parenthood, 2 children	**Modern parenthood, 3+ children**	**Traditional parenthood, 2 children**	**Traditional parenthood, 3+ children**	**Alternative parenthood, 2 children**	**Sequential cohabitation, childless**	**Parenthood dissolution, 1 child**	**Singlehood, childless**
Religiosity + church attendance							
Non-religious	(1.54)	(0.78)	-	1.07	1.38	1.15	1.52
Religious, never/yearly attendance (ref.)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Religious, monthly/weekly attendance	1.59	1.70 *	2.01 *	0.73	0.51 **	0.70	1.05
Pseudo R^2	0.04						
N	1242						
df	49						

Controlled for gender, number of siblings, education, parental divorce and agrarian rate.

Significance levels: *** p<0.001 ** p<0.01 * p<0.05 # p<0.10

Brackets indicate that n<25.

In the next step, the impact of the importance of religion in the parental home at age 15 was studied (Table 7, Model 5). If respondents grew up in a religious family, they are more prone than others who were not raised in a religious home to be traditional parents with three children and less inclined to occasionally cohabit or divorce than to opt for premarital cohabitation and have two children. The coefficients are only marginally

significant. As assumed in Hypothesis 3, this implies that indicators of current religiosity exercise a stronger influence.

Table 7: Results from a multinomial logit model of life path clusters on religious socialisation and other characteristics, relative rates

Model 5	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Ref.: Modern parenthood, 2 children	Modern parenthood, 3+ children	Traditional parenthood, 2 children	Traditional parenthood, 3+ children	Alternative parenthood, 2 children	Sequential cohabitation, childless	Parenthood dissolution, 1 child	Singlehood, childless
Importance of religion in parental home							
Low importance	1.05	0.71	(0.50 *)	1.10	1.45 #	1.53 #	0.78
High importance (ref.)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Pseudo R^2	0.04						
N	1243						
df	42						

Controlled for gender, number of siblings, education, parental divorce and agrarian rate.

Significance levels: *** $p<0.001$ ** $p<0.01$ * $p<0.05$ # $p<0.10$.

Brackets indicate that n<25.

5.3 Religiosity and the timing of family life paths

Shifting our attention from the succession of states to the timing of family events, the analysis is enlarged by durations. Since the differences between men and women are eminent, only women were selected (n=751). The focus is on the timing of entry into cohabitation, marriage and parenthood, while the number of children is disregarded. The sample size only permits to consider religious differences within the two most numerous life paths, namely modern motherhood (0S-0C-0M-1M; 23.1% of all respondents) and traditional motherhood (0S-0M-1M; 13.0% of all respondents). Figure 2 shows the variations in the observed trajectories by frequency of church attendance. Among the women opting for modern motherhood, regular church attendees live without a partner for a longer period and spend around nine months less in cohabitation than infrequent attendees. Since the more religious group lives in a childless marriage for a slightly longer period, the two groups experience transition to the first child at approximately the same age.

As depicted in the two lower panels, the family schedule of those who practice religion markedly shifts to higher ages among traditional mothers. They postpone marriage for more than two years, on average, and enter parenthood about two and a half years later, but still earlier than 'modern mothers'.

The different extent of the religious variations in timing between the two trajectories mirrors the distribution of respondents. Roughly equal shares of more and less religious respondents choose modern motherhood, while traditional motherhood is the preferred option for a large part of church attendees and a minority of non-attendees. One of the reasons for the latter may be unintended pregnancy.

Figure 2 Timing of selected family life paths by frequency of church attendance, Austrian women, aged 40-45 (weighted)
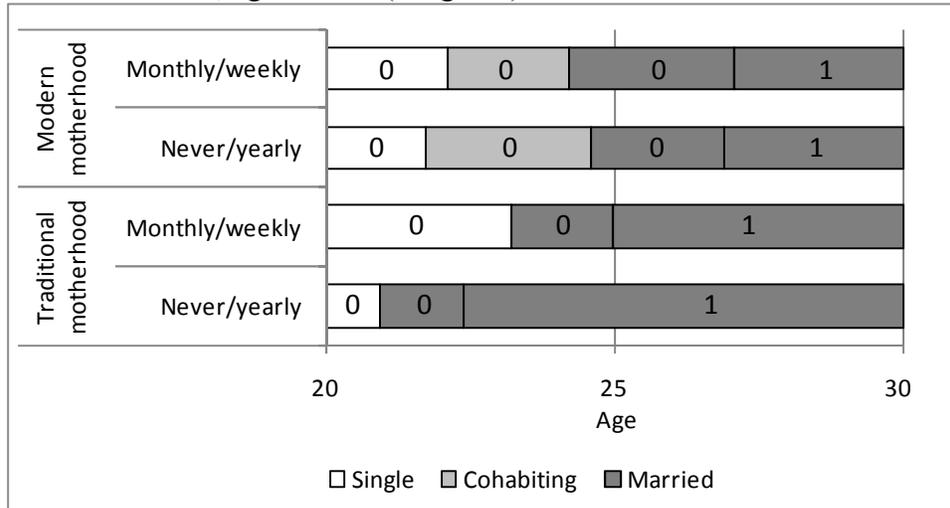
All observed trajectories are grouped around templates according to the procedure outlined above.[5] The results are as follows (listed in the order they appear in Figure 2): 'Modern motherhood, long singlehood, short cohabitation' is found among 12% of non-attendees and 17% of attendees; 'modern motherhood, short singlehood, long cohabitation' among 25% of each group; 5% of all non-attendees and 14% of all attendees report 'traditional late motherhood'; 10% versus 15% indicate 'traditional early motherhood'. The low case numbers preclude the use of a multivariate model. However, the descriptive analysis supports Hypothesis 4, which states that religious people spend a shorter time in cohabitation than their less religious counterparts.

6 Summary and conclusions

Ever since the beginning of 19th century, the Catholic Church has considered the family to be one of its major concerns. The life of Christian lay persons has increasingly been linked with family life, with the holy family serving as role model. Tyrell (1993) argues that this development is rooted in the withdrawal of such other social systems as politics, science and the market from the Catholic Church's normative prescriptions. The importance of religion for the family domain has persisted until our modern times. A large body of research in the US covering the past four decades documents the relevance of religiosity for union and reproductive behaviour. The considerably scarcer evidence from European countries mainly pertains to the past decade and corroborates US findings that religious people lean towards a more traditional behaviour. Taking previous evidence as a basis, this study expands the existing knowledge by studying entire union and fertility trajectories instead of focusing on single events as previous research did. When individuals take decisions on childbearing or union status, they do not abstract from their family context but consider both of them together. Therefore, the present approach is closer to their decision-making processes.

The empirical findings of this study lead us to conclude that the structure of family life paths is strongly influenced by the degree of religiosity. Compared to their non-attending

counterparts, Roman Catholics who partake in church services at least monthly and have two or more children are more likely to prefer direct marriage over prior cohabitation. Yet, they do not seem to perceive premarital cohabitation as deviant as other forms of family behaviour: similar shares among frequent and infrequent church attendees with two or more children opt for this way of entering into a union. Sequential cohabitation without having children, non-marital childbearing and divorce are, on the other hand, more frequently found among the non-affiliated or non-attending than among their religious counterparts. Interestingly, no significant religious differences could be found for the inclination of staying single without children.

The results for having children are not clear-cut. Once people have decided for a life path of premarital cohabitation, marriage and childbearing, there are no significant religious differences between those having two and those having three and more children when controlling for other factors. The same holds true for those deciding for traditional parenthood. In which way a person enters into a union is a more pronounced break-point than having two versus three or more children. Furthermore, people with low versus high levels of religiosity differ by their pathways to childlessness. While equal shares among attending and non-attending people remain single and childless throughout their lives, cohabiting on and off without having children is clearly less favoured by those who are religious.

Regular and infrequent church-goers who enter a premarital cohabitation before marrying and having a first child do not differ greatly with respect to the timing of these events. Nevertheless, religiously active people are single for a longer time and remain in cohabitation for a shorter time than their non-active peers. Choosing traditional motherhood is rather unlikely among non-attendees but common among people practising their religion. The two groups differ considerably regarding timing. Religion slows entry into marriage and parenthood.

Different measures of religiosity interact differently with the choice of life trajectories. While it was hypothesised that participation in church services is more strongly linked than affiliation, the results indicate that sometimes the cut-point is between Roman Catholics and non-affiliated and sometimes between religiously active and non-active respondents. Due to the small number of non-affiliated in Austria, however, no final conclusion is warranted. Moreover, religious people who do not regularly attend church services do not differ from the non-religious but from frequent attendees in their selection of life paths. Lastly, measures of present religiosity show a stronger correlation with the family path a person follows than those of the past. The importance of religion in the parental home was found to be a weak determinant in this respect.

[1] The focus is approximately on the 1990s, since the cohorts under study (1963-69) had reached young adulthood by that time.

[2] I imputed missing months of childbirth and start and end of union or marriage with a random variable in cases where the year was reported.

[3] The exception is the 'Parenthood dissolution' template, where state 0C was inserted before 0M because of its relevance for Austria, which was also noted by Elzinga and Liefbroer (2007).

[4] Analogous to measures of religiosity, control variables can only be included if their value at age 40-45 is relevant to the course of life between ages 15 and 39. This condition is either fulfilled if such variables reflect experiences during primary socialisation or, alternatively, if they can be considered to be relatively constant over time. Since the multinomial model requires a relatively large number of coefficients to be estimated due to the multiple nominal categories of the dependent variable, the number of additional controls was kept as parsimonious as possible. I also experimented with the inclusion of country of birth, partner's country of birth, employment status, partner's education, mother's and father's education but refrained from considering them in the final models since they did not improve them significantly.

[5] Template durations for the four trajectories presented match the descriptive findings, while the durations of the other templates comply with the ones advocated by Elzinga and Liefbroer (2007). The templates including durations are defined as follows: Modern late motherhood, short singlehood, long cohabitation: 0S/81 0C/34 0M/28 1M/157; modern late motherhood, long singlehood, short cohabitation: 0S/85 0C/26 0M/34 1M/155; traditional early motherhood: 0S/71 0M/18 1M/211; traditional late motherhood: 0S/98 0M/22 1M/180; alternative late motherhood: 0S/96 0C/60 1C/144; sequential cohabitation: 0S/84 0C/24 0S/12 0C/180; parenthood dissolution: 0S/84 0C/24 0M/24 1M/36 1S/132; singlehood: 0S/300.

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