

# All about the money?

## Parents' rationales behind their parental leave arrangements

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## Outline

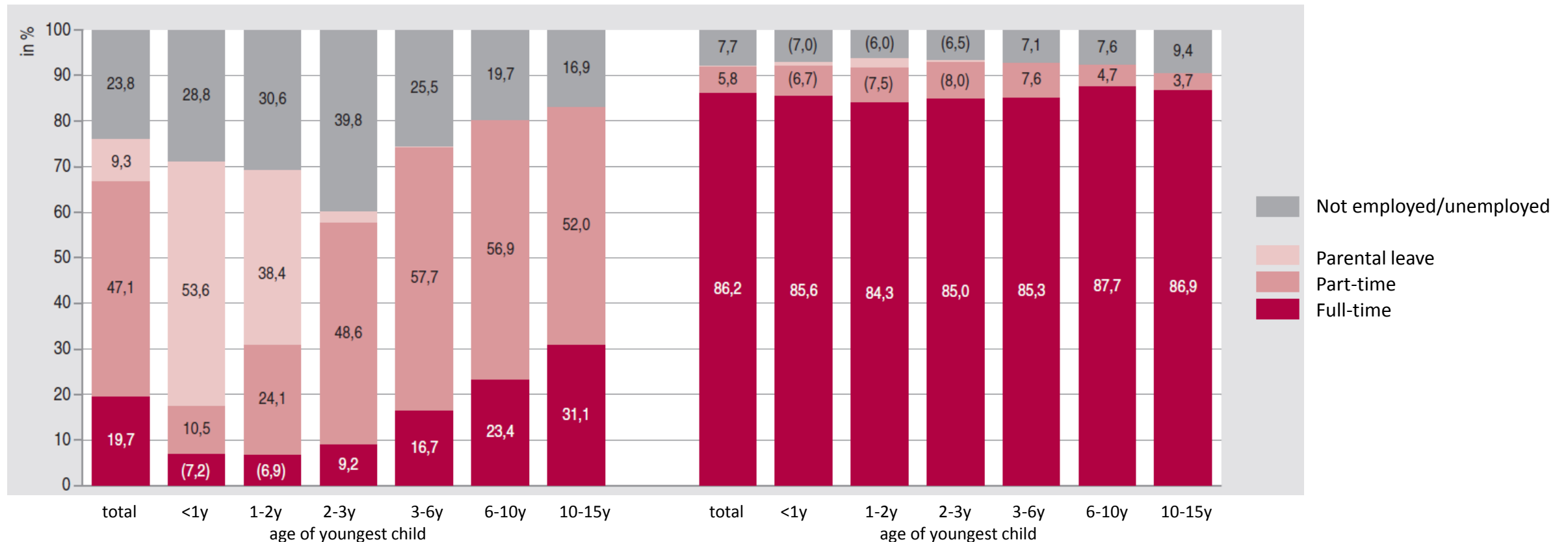
1. Research problem
2. Research questions
3. Theoretical background
4. Data and methods
5. Insights and Results
6. Conclusions

What is the problem?

“Gender revolution” with two halves  
(Goldscheider et al 2015)

But: still gendered and unequal division of  
breadwinning and care giving after the transition  
to parenthood (Berghammer 2014, Kuehhirt  
2012)

# Labor participation of mothers and fathers with children < 15 years



Mothers with children under 15 years

Fathers with children under 15 years

Source: Statistics Austria, Microcensus 2013

## State of Research

- Research on gendered division of labour (Craig & Mullan 2010, Dribe & Stanfors 2009, Fox 2009, Schober 2013)
- Research on gender equality (Doucet 2013, 2015)
- Research on parental leave (Brandth & Kvande 2009, 2013, 2016, Dearing 2016, Geisler & Kreyenfeld 2011, 2012)
- Research on couples' negotiations (Rose et al 2015, Jentsch 2016)



## What is the gap?

Focus on one single perspective when examining distribution on parental leave arrangements

Focus on experiences or motivation

Studies for Austria are rare

What is the background?

“The Gendered Transition to Parenthood” in Austria

1. Parenting practices are interrelated
2. Parental involvement changes at turning points
3. Key practices of equality
4. Parental constructions of masculinity
5. Breadwinning as parental involvement and care



What is the question?

How do first-time parents negotiate, rationalize and justify their arrangement of parental leave and their subsequent division of employment and care work?



## Austria's parental leave system

For all parents in Austria: Childcare allowance (in months)				For employed parents in Austria: Right for job-protected parental leave
only one parent	both parents	monthly rate (in €)	max. sum (in €)	
12	+2=14	1,000	14,000	up to 24 months
15	+3=18	800	14,400	
20	+4=24	624	14,976	
30	+6=36	436	15,696	
12 (income-related)	+2=14	1,000-2,000	28,000	

What is the background?

Individualization (Beck/Beck-Gernsheim)

Free or forced to choose?

“discursive justification” (Giddens)

What approach is used?

Qualitative interviews (Witzel 2000) with first-time mothers and fathers in Austria (n=66)

Different use of Austria's parental leave system

3 waves

(a) during pregnancy

(b) 6 months after birth

(c) 2 years after birth

Interviewee pseudonyms	Family status	Employment			Parental leave
		(1) during pregnancy	(2) six months after birth	(3) two years after birth	in months
Tina	cohabiting	full-time	parental leave	full-time	12 full-time
Tom		full-time	full-time	full-time	6 full-time, 2 part-time
Rita	cohabiting	temporary full-time	parental leave	contractor of work and services (max. 20h)	20 full-time
Robert		full-time	full-time	full-time	0
Bianca	separated	full-time	parental leave	full-time	8 full-time
Bob		full-time	full-time	full-time	8 full-time
Anna	married	full-time	parental leave	part-time (30h)	20 full-time
Alex		full-time, graduating from high school	full-time	full-time	0 full-time
Olivia	married	full-time	parental leave	parental leave	22 full-time
Otto		full-time	full-time	full-time	2 full-time
Maria	married	self-employment (full-time)	marginally self-employed	vocational training	not entitled
Max		full-time	full-time	full-time	2 full-time
Dana	married	full-time	parental leave	part-time (20h)	12 full-time
David		full-time	full-time	full-time employment	6 full-time
Linda	married	unemployed	unemployed	part-time (18h)	not entitled
Lucas		unemployed	full-time	full-time employment	not entitled
Julia	married	full-time	parental leave	marginally employed (10h)	14 full-time
Jim		independent contractor, bachelor's program	full-time, master's program	full-time	0
Emma	cohabiting	full-time	parental leave, working ½ day/week	part-time (32h)	5 full-time, 7 part-time
Emil		full-time	full-time	full-time	2 full-time
Claudia	married	vocational training	vocational training	part-time (20h)	0
Chris		full-time	parental leave, working 1 day/weekends	full-time	18 full-time

What approach is used?

Thematic analysis and initial coding (Froschauer & Lueger 2003)

Cross-case coding analysis of typical mechanisms and patterns (Charmaz 2014)

What are our results?

### **Four main rationales**

1. Rational and economic justification
2. Employment-centred justification
3. Justification through gendered ascriptions
4. Justification through child's well-being



## Rational and economic justification

- Mentioned in the first place
- Calculating the financial output
- Compensating income loss
- Exhausting all entitlements
- Gaining profound knowledge
- Gendered justification with the partner's  
Gender Pay Gap



## Rational and economic justification

*„There are of course financial reasons because my husband simply earns more than me.“  
(Emma)*

*„Yes, we chose the income-dependent option. Because the total amount would just be the highest and because I will then start working. With the next [child] the income-dependent option will not be possible anyway, because my wife will not be earning enough.“ (Jim)*



## Employment-centred justification

- Childcare allowance entails parental leave from employment
- Gendered justification
  - » For leave uptake in general (e.g. father's workplace situation)
  - » For length of leave (e.g. mother's wish for employment)
  - » Come-back



## Employment-centered justification

*"And that's why I had to extend my leave twice then. It means, that finally I was, till she was 19 months old, yes, five months I was at home unpaid, because benefits stopped." (Linda)*

*„Because ehm my manager is rather negative about, especially women, who go on maternity leave. So, I see it like this, private is private, job is job, and therefore, I'm not hit by this, and that's better, yes. I mean, anyway, a father's leave is just so short, but ehm employers are very critical about it.“ (Robert)*



## Justification through child's well-being

- Subjective imagination of what is the best for the child
- Child needs the mother
- Transition to external childcare
- Evaluation of child's well-being
- Child's well-being may mask importance of parents' well-being



## Justification through child's well-being

*„Nobody knows, that's different for each and every child, yes. Some one-year-olds are continuously with their grandparents, others need their mum for three years.“ (Alex)*

*„These first three years, just what and how much children actually learn and do then. And then, perhaps I'm also too egoistic by saying this, I also want to experience this time somehow, what my daughter experiences in her first three years. So, personally, for me, I couldn't imagine to give her in the kindergarten before she turns two.“ (Olivia)*

## Justification through gendered ascriptions

- Strong wish for parental leave only relevant for fathers
- Legitimate, not to be *able* to go on leave, but not to say that he does not *want* to go
- Parental leave of fathers beneficial for themselves or supportive for their partners
- Parental leave and care naturally connected to mothers
- Parental leave of mothers important for the child



## Justification through gendered ascriptions

*"That I wanted to go on leave, this was fixed, yes, well, I wouldn't want to miss this opportunity and I was very pleased about it." (David)*

*"I was so happy being at home for a longer period, because, it reduced the stress a lot, I think, especially for the mother, because at the beginning it's most often the mother who is at home, I guess." (Lucas)*

What are our conclusions?

Combination of justifying practices → *patterns* of rationales

→ Most manifest rationales are underpinned by gendered differences

Flexible system → quasi-flexible parents



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Thank you...

Questions?  
Comments?

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