European Sociological Review, 2025, **00**, 1–20
https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcaf059
Advance access publication 13 January 2026
Original Article

Educational hypogamy and gender equality within couples: a review of competing hypotheses and evidence from the Generations and Gender Survey

Nadia Steiber[1,2,*] **and Christina Siegert**[1,3]

[1]Department of Sociology, University of Vienna, Rooseveltplatz 2, A-1090 Vienna, Austria
[2]Institute for Advanced Studies, Josefstädter Str. 39, A-1080 Vienna, Austria
[3]Department of Sociology, University of Bamberg, D-96047 Bamberg, Germany
[*]Corresponding author. Email: nadia.steiber@univie.ac.at

This study examines the implications for gender equality of the increasing prevalence of heterosexual couples in which the woman is more highly educated than the man ('educational hypogamy'). It provides a structured overview of competing theoretical predictions regarding the association of hypogamy with gender equality within couples and formulates specific hypotheses that address selection into hypogamous unions. Using data from the Generations and Gender Survey and employing diagonal reference models, the study investigates how hypogamy relates to gender attitudes and the gender division of labour within couples, net of partners' educational attainment levels. Results indicate that hypogamy is associated with a more egalitarian division of paid work, particularly among parents, and with fathers expressing more supportive attitudes towards maternal employment. However, although hypogamous women are more strongly engaged in the labour market after becoming mothers than their counterparts in homogamous unions, their partners' contributions to household chores do not increase proportionately, reflecting a pattern consistent with the 'stalled gender revolution' theory. Thus, hypogamy is associated with more gender equality in labour market participation but not with a more equitable sharing of household tasks.

Introduction

The reversal of the gender gap in education, meaning that young women now tend to surpass young men in educational attainment (Grow and Van Bavel, 2015; Esteve *et al.*, 2016), has profound implications for the structure of mate markets and union formation (Van Bavel *et al.*, 2018). Given that women and men tend to prefer partners who are similar to themselves (Schwartz, 2013; Jonason and Antoon, 2019), the reversed gender gap in education has created an education-specific mating squeeze, with highly educated young women facing a shortage of similarly educated young men to choose as partners (Van Bavel, 2013; De Hauw *et al.*, 2017).

This mate market imbalance is linked to a rise in the share of educationally hypogamous heterosexual couples (Corti and Scherer, 2021; Erát, 2021). In most European countries, the prevalence of educationally hypogamous couples now exceeds that of hypergamous couples, in which the man has the educational advantage (Esteve *et al.*, 2016; De Hauw *et al.*, 2017).

Three stories of educational hypogamy

This study is concerned with the consequences of rising educational hypogamy in couples on gender equality, with a focus on two key dimensions of gender equality *within* couples: the gendered division of labour and gender-role attitudes. Different narratives about the link between educational hypogamy in couples and gender equality can be found in the literature: an optimistic one, a pessimistic one, and one that focuses on processes of selection into hypogamous unions.

The 'optimistic narrative' suggests that the reversed gender gap in education can lead to a genuine gender revolution (Graf and Schwartz, 2011; Goldscheider *et al.*, 2015) through normative change, paving the way for greater gender equality first in the public and then also in the private sphere. The rationale is based on bargaining theories that assume hypogamous women to have more relative power in the couple, which they can use to negotiate a more equal division of labour with their partners (Agarwal, 1997). The optimistic

Received: April 2024; revised: October 2025; accepted: December 2025

narrative relies on the assumption that education as a social status dimension translates into bargaining power in the couple (Shelton and John, 1996) and therefore predicts an increase in gender equality as a result of rising educational hypogamy (Evertsson and Nermo, 2007).

The 'pessimistic narrative' considers the gender revolution as stalled (England, 2010; Ridgeway, 2011). Despite progress towards gender equality in the public realms of education and employment, in the private sphere traditional gender roles persist, even for women in hypogamous unions. As a consequence of persistent norms that discourage men from fully engaging in reproductive work, a woman's higher education relative to her partner often fails to translate into higher relative earnings, and thus greater bargaining power, within the couple (Tichenor, 2005; England, 2010; Chudnovskaya and Kashyap, 2020). Even in couples where the woman earns more than her partner, there is evidence that, in order to conform to dominant gender norms, a traditional division of labour is often maintained (Bittman *et al.*, 2003; Grunow *et al.*, 2012; Kühhirt, 2012; Jurczyk *et al.*, 2019). Hypogamous couples are held to engage in 'gender-deviance neutralizing behaviours'—compensatory strategies that restore traditional gender status dynamics by increasing the woman's share of housework and caregiving and reducing her paid work involvement (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Bittman *et al.*, 2003; Syrda, 2023), which runs counter to the predictions of bargaining theories (Gupta, 2007).

The pessimistic view of hypogamy in couples also highlights societal and interpersonal pressures that may arise in hypogamous relationships. Partners from different social backgrounds may experience low-value congruence, and to the extent that hypogamous unions conflict with entrenched gender norms, they can threaten men's perceived masculinity (Tichenor, 2005; Gonalons-Pons and Gangl, 2021). Such dynamics have been linked to lower relationship satisfaction (Eeckhaut *et al.*, 2013), female depression (Potarca and Rossier, 2022), higher union dissolution rates (Schwartz and Han, 2014; Bertrand *et al.*, 2015), greater risk of domestic violence (Atkinson *et al.*, 2005), and lower fertility (Osiewalska, 2017).

In contrast to the optimistic and pessimistic narratives—which focus on power and gender dynamics in couples and offer differing views on the consequences of hypogamy—the 'selection narrative' shifts attention to how and why hypogamous couples are formed. Based on the assumption that nowadays, individuals seek to mate with someone who is similar to themselves (McPherson *et al.*, 2001), it can be argued that hypogamous unions formed under conditions of constrained choice (i.e., education-specific mating squeeze, cf. Van Bavel, 2013) are less likely to be love matches. If such unions represent a compromise—a 'second best' option in the absence of a partner with the desired level of education—this would imply that individuals who form hypogamous unions are more likely to have characteristics that make them less competitive in the mate market, such as lower income prospects, poorer health, or less attractive personality traits (cf. social exchange theory, e.g., Homans, 1958).

The selection narrative can hold predictions about the association between hypogamy and gender equality within couples that mirror those of the other two narratives—but based on fundamentally different assumptions. While the optimistic and pessimistic narratives are concerned with causal interpretations of the effects of hypogamy—suggesting that hypogamy *itself* produces certain outcomes—the selection narrative posits that individuals with certain pre-existing characteristics are more likely to enter hypogamous unions, without such unions having an effect *per se*. For example, if individuals predisposed to unsuccessful relationships (Jørgensen *et al.*, 2025) are more likely to form hypogamous unions, any observed link between hypogamy and break-up rates can be attributed to these pre-existing traits rather than to the act of living in a hypogamous relationship. Empirically, this would result in an association of hypogamy with higher union dissolution risks (consistent with the pessimistic narrative), but this observed association does not imply an effect of hypogamy itself. Instead, this association is driven by a selection process (Schwartz and Han, 2014). Another example is selection based on value orientations. It could be argued that less career-oriented men or those who value egalitarian relationships are more inclined to enter hypogamous unions (Trimarchi, 2022). These pre-existing characteristics can independently influence the gender division of labour. This would lead to an association of hypogamy with more gender equality—consistent with the optimistic narrative. However, the observed association does not imply a causal effect of hypogamy itself, as it is confounded by factors that predispose individuals to both the selection into such unions and the outcomes being measured.

In conclusion, the existing literature offers diverse and conflicting narratives on the associations of educational hypogamy with gender equality within couples. A central aim of this study is to synthesize these divergent theoretical perspectives and formulate a set of hypotheses that account for the selection into hypogamous relationships when examining their association with gender equality. This conceptual framework aids in interpreting the empirical associations of educational hypogamy with behaviours observed in the present study (i.e., division of paid and unpaid labour within couples) and may offer a useful foundation for future research in this area.

Methodological challenges in the literature

Empirical research examining the association of educational hypogamy in couples with family-related outcomes—such as couple decision-making, fertility, gender division of labour, relationship quality, and divorce—has been steadily expanding (Eeckhaut *et al.*, 2013; Mäenpää and Jalovaara, 2014; Schwartz and Han, 2014; Bertrand *et al.*, 2015; Garcia *et al.*, 2015; Buschner *et al.*, 2018; Nitsche *et al.*, 2018; Klesment and Van Bavel, 2022; García-Román, 2023). Most of the available evidence remains *descriptive*, with studies estimating differences in outcomes across different educational pairings or, more broadly, comparing heterogamous with homogamous couples. Advancing beyond comparative description requires overcoming two methodological challenges—the first of which is addressed in this study.

First, to assess the potential role played by educational hypogamy, researchers need to isolate the association of the educational pairing itself from the partners' levels of education (Eeckhaut *et al.*, 2014, p. 69). The methodological challenge in this endeavour stems from the linear dependency of educational heterogamy measures on the educational levels of the partners. Since controlling for *both* partners' education in linear models renders the heterogamy term mathematically redundant, researchers can control for only one partner's education when using linear models to estimate 'heterogamy effects'. To avoid perfect collinearity, one partner's education must be dropped from the models; yet this can incur omitted variables bias. The methodological challenge is analogous to the quest of separating the effects of social mobility from those of individual and parental social status (Sobel, 1981; Zang *et al.*, 2023; Breen and Ermisch, 2024). A number of studies addressed this issue, employing diagonal reference models (DRM) that use a nonlinear specification to isolate the part of the observed association of educational hypogamy with the outcome of interest that is independent of the partners' educational levels (Eeckhaut *et al.*, 2013, 2014; Chan and Ermisch, 2015; Steiber *et al.*, 2024; Wang, 2025). This can be considered a step forward in understanding how heterogamy shapes family-related outcomes. Yet, it is important to note that 'heterogamy effects' estimated using DRM are to be interpreted as *partial associations* between heterogamy and the outcome of interest—net of educational levels—rather than as causal effects (Breen and Ermisch, 2024).

Second, although selection into hypogamous couples is recognized as a potential mechanism underlying observed associations between hypogamy and family-related outcomes in a number of studies (e.g., Schwartz and Han, 2014; Van Bavel and Klesment, 2017; Potarca and Rossier, 2022; Steiber *et al.*, 2024), existing research has not yet systematically accounted for such selection—either theoretically or empirically (for an exception, see Rauscher, 2020).

Overall, we conclude that due to methodological challenges, our understanding of the relationship between educational hypogamy and gender equality within couples remains limited. It is unclear to what extent observed outcomes for hypogamous couples reflect the man's lower education (relative to homogamous couples at the woman's education level), the woman's higher education (relative to homogamous couples at the man's education level), or the educational *heterogamy* itself. Given this ambiguity—and the limited research addressing selection into hypogamous unions—how educational hypogamy affects power dynamics and decision-making in intimate relationships and how it shapes family-related outcomes remain open empirical questions.

Research objectives

This study pursues three aims. First, it provides a structured overview of competing theoretical perspectives on how educational hypogamy affects gender equality within couples. Second, it formulates a set of specific hypotheses. Third, using data from the Generations and Gender Survey, it tests a subset of these hypotheses, examining as outcomes the gendered division of labour within couples and partners' attitudes towards female economic power and maternal employment. By employing DRM, the study contributes to the limited but expanding literature that aims to quantify the association of educational hypogamy with gender equality within couples, net of the two partners' education levels.

As noted, associations between hypogamy and gender equality outcomes can reflect causal effects of relationship dynamics but also selection processes. Although we distinguish between these mechanisms conceptually, our empirical study is based on the cross-sectional data and does not aim to identify causal effects. Instead, observed associations between hypogamy and the outcomes of interest are interpreted as providing greater support for certain theoretical perspectives than others, and as a possible result of selection. The following overview of theoretical mechanisms guides our empirical analysis and may serve as a reference for future empirical research on the implications of hypogamy.

Theoretical mechanisms and hypotheses

Are educationally hypogamous couples more 'gender egalitarian' than other couple types? To address this question, we distinguish between *attitudes* and *behaviours* as indicators of gender equality within couples.

Table 1 Hypotheses about the association of educational hypogamy with outcomes

Hypotheses	Theoretical perspectives/mechanisms
Behavioural outcomes	
H1a: More gender-equal division of labour among hypogamous couples	1. Structural/causal: Bargaining for greater gender equality 2. Selection into hypogamous unions among… a. women with higher earning potential/stronger career orientation b. men preferring gender-egalitarian relationships c. men with lower earning potential/weaker career-orientation
H1b: Less gender-equal division of labour among hypogamous couples	1. Ideological/causal: Gender-deviance neutralization, gender display 2. Selection into hypogamous unions among… a. women preferring a traditional gender-role specialization b. women with lower earning potential/weaker career-orientation
H1c: 'Null effect' of hypogamy	Rationale: If higher relative education is not a source of bargaining power, nor a threat to masculinity, hypogamy has minimal influence.
H2: Stronger association of hypogamy with outcomes in parental couples (moderation)	Rationale: Division of labour becomes more traditional post-childbirth—intensifying bargaining dynamics (H1a) or gender display (H1b).
H3: Stronger association of hypogamy with outcomes in older cohorts (moderation)	Rationale: Less prevalence of hypogamy in older cohorts, thus stronger selection (H1a or H1b) and more normative pressure (H1b).
Attitudinal outcomes	
H4a: More 'gender modern'	1. Selection: Individuals with more modern gender attitudes, particularly men (Trimarchi, 2022) select into hypogamous unions. 2. Adaptation: If H1a holds, hypogamous couples become increasingly modern over time (alignment with gender-equal behaviours)
H4b: Less 'gender modern'	1. Selection: Women with traditional gender views self-select into hypogamous unions (preference for men with traditional views) 2. Adaptation: If H1b holds, hypogamous couples become increasingly traditional over time (alignment with gender-typed behaviours)
H5: Stronger adaptation in older and parental couples (moderation)	Rationale: Adaptation (in either direction) intensifies with longer relationship durations (gender attitudes align with behaviours)

Drawing on competing theoretical perspectives, we develop a set of alternative hypotheses concerning gender-role modernity in hypogamous couples, compared to the most prevalent union type—homogamous couples (Table 1).

Behavioural outcomes

The above question can be approached from two competing theoretical perspectives, which either emphasize the role of relative resources and intra-couple bargaining that can play in favour of a more equal division of labour in hypogamous couples (Coltrane, 2000; Sullivan and Gershuny, 2016), or point to persistent gender norms that prevent women in hypogamous unions from leveraging their greater relative resources to reduce their share of domestic chores (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Bittman *et al.*, 2003; England, 2010). Theories of bargaining and specialization within couples (Becker, 1973) along with theories of economic dependency (Brines, 1994) predict that women in hypogamous unions perform a larger share of paid work and a smaller share of housework (H1a); conversely, theories of gender display and gender-deviance neutralization (Greenstein, 2000) predict that women in hypogamous relationships compensate for their higher status by taking on a larger share of the housework than equally qualified women in homogamous unions (H1b). To date, there is no clear consensus on the relative explanatory power of these two theoretical perspectives (Gupta, 2007; Syrda, 2023).

Building on prior research suggesting that progress towards gender equality has been more substantial in the labour market than in the domestic sphere (England, 2010), we anticipate that support for H1a may emerge primarily in relation to paid work.

Turning to the selection perspective, hypotheses H1a and H1b can be reframed to yield similar predictions—though premised on a different logic: If career-oriented women with high earning potential select into hypogamous unions, these unions may exhibit a more equal division of labour compared to homogamous unions (H1a) even in the absence of any direct effect of living in a hypogamous union. A similar expectation (H1a) arises if men who value gender equality select into hypogamous unions (Trimarchi, 2022). Conversely, if women who prefer a traditional role specialization

select into hypogamous unions with less educated—typically less gender-egalitarian—men, such selection would result in a less—rather than a more—gender-equal division of labour in hypogamous unions (H1b).

If mate market constraints, rather than preferences, drive selection into hypogamous unions (De Hauw *et al.*, 2017; Stauder and Kossow, 2021), the assumptions behind H1a can be reframed as follows: if men with lower mate market value (e.g., lower earning potential or weaker career orientation relative to similarly educated peers) are more likely to enter hypogamous unions, such unions may display a more gender-equal division of labour (consistent with H1a) independent of any direct effect of hypogamy *itself*.[1] Conversely, if hypogamous unions are selectively formed by women with lower mate market value in terms of economic status than similarly educated women, such unions may instead show a less gender-equal division of labour (consistent with H1b).

In summary, selection processes can work in both directions and result in either more or less gender equality among hypogamous couples. It remains unclear which of the potential selection mechanisms are empirically relevant for hypogamous union formation. Selection into hypogamy may be preference-based (Skopek *et al.*, 2011) or driven mainly by mate market constraints that limit partner options and increase the likelihood of hypogamy for individuals with lower market value (Corti and Scherer, 2021). Identifying the relative importance of different selection mechanisms is an important avenue for future research.

In terms of moderating factors, we expect the influence of power relations and gender dynamics in hypogamous unions (underlying H1a or H1b) to be more pronounced among parental couples than among childless couples (H2). In the early stages of a relationship, the division of paid work and domestic chores may be relatively balanced in most couples, but differences between couple types are likely to emerge following the transition to parenthood, when roles and responsibilities are typically renegotiated (Grunow *et al.*, 2012). At this stage, women in hypogamous unions may either leverage their higher educational status to bargain for a more egalitarian division of labour (consistent with H1a), or they may increasingly 'do gender' in ways that reaffirm traditional gender roles, despite their higher educational status (consistent with H1b). Moreover, we expect selection effects to be more pronounced in older cohorts (H3), who formed their unions at a time when hypogamy was still less common. Therefore, hypogamous unions in older cohorts are likely to be more selective (in line with either H1a or H1b, cf. selection mechanisms). Moreover, hypogamous couples in older cohorts were plausibly more strongly exposed to normative pressures, which may amplify the salience of the causal mechanism described in H1b (Schwartz and Han, 2014; Theunis *et al.*, 2018). The moderation hypotheses H2 and H3 therefore predict that the association between hypogamy and gender (in)equality will be stronger among parental couples and in older cohorts.

The final behavioural hypothesis predicts a null effect of educational hypogamy (H1c): Although women in hypogamous couples are more likely to be main breadwinners (Klesment and Van Bavel, 2017), they often do not hold better jobs or earn higher incomes than their partners (Bertrand *et al.*, 2015). As educational hypogamy does not necessarily translate into status advantages more generally (Chudnovskaya and Kashyap, 2020), it may not be a relevant source of bargaining power that can be used to equalize the division of labour (as in H1a), nor a threat to masculinity triggering gender deviation neutralization behaviours (as in H1b).

Attitudinal outcomes

For attitudinal outcomes of hypogamy, empirical evidence remains especially scarce and difficult to obtain due to the bidirectional relationships between attitudes and behaviours (Steiber and Haas, 2009). A distinction needs to be made between attitude-based selection and attitudinal adaptation. For instance, gender-modern behaviours and attitudes observed in hypogamous unions may either reflect *self-selection*, whereby individuals who already hold progressive views on gender roles are more likely to enter such unions, or *adaptation*, where hypogamous couples engaged in non-traditional gender-role specialization—whether driven by personal preference or economic necessity (Steiber *et al.*, 2016)—develop more egalitarian attitudes over time to align their attitudes with their behaviours (Vandecasteele *et al.*, 2022).

First, regarding *self-selection*, one might expect individuals with more gender-modern attitudes to be more likely to form a hypogamous relationship (H4a). Empirical evidence, though limited, offers some support for this expectation: using longitudinal microdata, Trimarchi (2022) found that men—but not women—with egalitarian gender attitudes were more likely to enter hypogamous relationships. Alternatively, under the assumption of attitude-based assortative mating, one could expect hypogamous unions to be more prevalent among *less* gender-modern women (H4b). This expectation is grounded in the observation that less-educated men tend to hold more traditional gender attitudes, potentially making them attractive partners to women who share similar views.

Second, the *adaptation* perspective offers an alternative lens for hypotheses H4a and H4b: Gender-role attitudes evolve over time to align with the division of labour practiced by couples (Vandecasteele *et al.*, 2022). Accordingly, if hypogamous couples display a

more—or less—egalitarian division of labour than homogamous couples (consistent with H1a or H1b), they may develop correspondingly more—or less—gender-modern attitudes over time. Thus, if attitudinal adaptation, rather than attitude-based selection, is the dominant mechanism, we would expect stronger associations between hypogamy and gender attitudes among couples who have been together for longer (H5), as they have had more time to align their attitudes with established behavioural patterns.

Empirical approach

Data and sample

We used data from the Generations and Gender Survey (GGS Round 1, Version 4.4, cf. Gauthier *et al.*, 2025) that offers nationally representative information on partnerships, employment, fertility, and attitudes, based on the probability samples of individuals aged 18–79 living in private households (Vikat *et al.*, 2007; Gauthier *et al.*, 2018). Due to country-specific restrictions on the availability of relevant variables and differences in survey modes, the main analysis used a pooled sample of four European countries: Austria, Germany, Belgium, and France.[2] In these countries, data were collected via computer-assisted personal interviews (CAPI) between 2005 and 2010, with some variation in fieldwork timing and duration (Gauthier *et al.*, 2018). As a robustness check, we conducted a supplementary analysis including data from Sweden and Norway. However, due to the absence of robust attitudinal measures in the two countries, this analysis was restricted to behavioural outcomes.

We selected a subsample of partnered individuals aged 25–45 to focus on respondents in their prime working years who have typically completed their educational careers. Starting with an initial sample of 10,069 individuals living with a partner of a different sex in the same household, we excluded individuals in higher-order unions (501 observations) and those in couples with at least one partner still enrolled in education (198 observations). Differentiating between childless couples and parental couples, regarding the latter, we focused on those with dependent children, thus excluding parents whose youngest child was older than 15 years in the survey year (689 observations). Additionally, we restricted the analysis to couples whose current relationship began in or before the birth year of the respondent's oldest biological child, resulting in the exclusion of 796 observations with children from previous relationships. After removing 958 observations with missing values on independent or dependent variables, our final analytical sample included 6,927 partnered individuals (Table 2).

Variables

Paid work

To assess the division of paid work, we measured (i) the woman's share of the sum of both partners' weekly working hours, using a scale ranging from 0 to 1 (representing 0–100 per cent). The variable was constructed using information on the activity status and the number of hours worked by each partner (using proxy information provided by the respondent for the partner). In terms of activity status, we distinguished between being 'at work' (i.e., employed, self-employed, or contributing family member) and being 'not at work' (i.e., out of the labour force, unemployed or on parental leave). In cases where both partners worked, the value was calculated by dividing the woman's hours by the couple's total hours. For couples, where only the man (or only the woman) worked, the woman's share of the couple's working hours was set to zero (one). When both partners were 'not at work', the value was set to 0.5.

Housework

We used couple's self-reported division of two routine household tasks: the GGS uses a five-point Likert scale to assess which partner is always or mostly responsible for (i) preparing the daily meals and (ii) doing the dishes. Couples who outsourced most of the housework (i.e., indicating that these tasks are typically performed by other people, $N = 219$) were excluded from the analysis. The scale we used reflects the role of the female partner, ranging from 1 (*always her*) to 5 (*never her*), with higher values indicating a more egalitarian arrangement.[3] A limitation of these measures is that they capture only two specific routine household tasks that may not fully reflect the broader division of domestic labour. While representative of traditionally female-typed chores, typically perceived as less desirable (Sullivan, 2013), they do not account for other important dimensions such as childcare, laundry, cleaning, or the mental load associated with household management.

Attitudes

We used two survey items to assess attitudes towards maternal employment and female economic power, measuring (dis)agreement with the following statements on a Likert scale from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*): 'A preschool child is likely to suffer if his/her mother works' and 'If a woman earns more than her partner, it is not good for the relationship'. Higher scores indicate more egalitarian attitudes. Given that egalitarian and non-egalitarian attitudes may coexist in different dimensions of gender ideology (Knight and Brinton, 2017; Grunow *et al.*, 2018), we use the two items as separate dependent variables.[4]

Table 2 Sample characteristics: partnered individuals, 25–45 years

	Total	By age group		Relationship duration		By the presence and age of children		
		25–35 years	36–45 years	0–10 years	11–30 years	No child	0–5 years	6–15 years
Educational pairings (%)								
Both low	5.0	4.6	5.3	4.2	5.8	3.8	5.4	5.2
F-low, M-medium	5.2	5.5	4.9	4.8	5.5	4.4	5.1	5.7
F-low, M-High	3.0	2.3	3.7	2.2	3.8	1.5	3.0	4.0
F-medium, -M-low	3.5	3.7	3.4	3.4	3.6	3.4	3.4	3.8
Both medium	29.1	31.0	27.5	29.2	29.1	30.5	27.6	30.4
F-medium, M-high	12.4	11.2	13.4	12.8	12.0	11.7	12.7	12.3
F-high, M-low	3.3	3.2	3.4	3.2	3.4	3.4	3.5	3.0
F-high, M-medium	8.4	9.2	7.6	9.6	7.3	11.0	8.2	7.0
Both high	30.1	29.3	30.9	30.8	29.5	30.3	31.1	28.7
Educational difference (%)								
All homogamous	64.3	64.9	63.7	64.1	64.4	64.6	64.2	64.2
All hypogamous	15.2	16.1	14.4	16.2	14.3	17.8	15.0	13.8
All hypergamous	20.6	19.0	22.0	19.7	21.3	17.6	20.8	22.0
Respondent's gender (%)								
Male	42.8	37.4	47.7	44.3	41.5	47.0	42.3	40.9
Female	57.2	62.6	52.3	55.7	58.5	53.0	57.7	59.1
Respondent's age (M/SD)	35.6/5.5	30.7/3.0	40.2/2.8	32.0/4.8	38.9/3.9	33.0/6.1	33.9/4.8	39.6/3.8
Relationship duration (M/SD)	11.4/6.1	7.4/4.1	15.0/5.4	5.9/2.8	16.2/3.7	6.5/5.6	9.6/4.6	16.7/4.0
Presence and age of children (%)								
No child	20.6	29.0	12.8	35.2	7.5	100.0	0.00	0.00
Youngest child 0–5 years	45.9	60.9	32.1	60.3	33.1	0.00	100.0	0.00
Youngest child 6–15 years	33.5	10.1	55.0	4.4	59.4	0.00	0.00	100.0
Country (%)								
Austria	28.8	29.5	28.1	29.2	28.4	34.0	26.9	28.1
Germany	23.5	21.1	25.6	22.3	24.5	22.8	23.0	24.6
France	28.4	20.2	26.7	28.2	28.5	25.1	30.3	27.7
Belgium	19.4	19.1	19.6	20.3	18.6	18.1	19.8	19.6
N	6,927	3,312	3,615	3,261	3,666	1,424	3,180	2,323

Source: GGS Round 1, own calculations. Unweighted summary statistics.

Predictors

The main independent variables are the highest level of education attained by the respondents and their partners and the educational difference between the partners. Based on the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 1997), we distinguish between low (ISCED 0–2), medium (ISCED 3–4), and high (ISCED 5–6) education. Combining information from both partners, we create a compound measure that captures all possible constellations (i.e., nine *educational pairings* based on three education levels, see Table 2 for the distribution of the sample) and a categorical *difference measure* indicating the presence and direction of an educational gap between partners: *homogamy* (both partners have the same level of education), *hypergamy* (the man has more education than the woman), or *hypogamy* (the woman has more education than the man). In our sample, homogamous couples constitute the largest group (63.9 per cent), followed by hypergamous (20.5 per cent) and hypogamous couples

Table 3 Description of outcome variables

	Homogamy	Hypergamy	Hypogamy	All couples
Paid work				
Her share of working hours (M/SD)	34.3/24.2	28.7/25.1	38.3/24.9	33.8/24.7
Housework				
Preparing daily meals (M/SD)	2.1/0.9	2.0/0.9	2.2/1.0	2.1/0.9
Doing the dishes (M/SD)	2.5/0.9	2.3/0.9	2.5/1.0	2.5/0.9
Attitudes				
Her economic power (M/SD)	3.9/1.0	3.8/1.1	4.0/1.0	3.9/1.0
Maternal employment (M/SD)	3.1/1.2	2.9/1.3	3.2/1.2	3.1/1.2
N	4,452	1,424	1,051	6,927

Source: GGS Round 1, own calculations, sampling weights applied. Notes on how the variables are measured/constructed: Paid work: The woman's share of the sum of both partners' weekly working hours, using a scale ranging from 0–1 (representing 0 per cent–100 per cent). Housework: Main responsibility for both tasks from 1-her sole responsibility to 5-his sole responsibility. Attitudes towards gender roles from 1-non-egalitarian to 5-egalitarian.

(15.6 per cent), with some variation across countries (Supplementary Table B1). Table 3 presents an overview of the behavioural and attitudinal outcome variables separately for these three couple types.

Control variables

We control for respondents' gender and age, couples' relationship duration (in years) and parental status (distinguishing between childless couples, those with their youngest child aged under 6, and those with a youngest child aged between 6 and 15). Due to the relatively small sizes of the national subsamples, it was not possible to analyse countries separately. Instead, we included the country of residence as a control variable.[5]

Analytical strategy

To test our hypotheses, we examined the influence of partners' education on the division of labour and related gender attitudes, using two methodological approaches: First, we estimated linear regression models (OLS) using the nine educational pairings—the compound measure of education—as the main predictor. The results are presented visually using heat maps of the predicted values for each pairing. This approach allows us to reflect on the role of the level of education of each of the partners and, to some extent, to assess the relevance of educational differences between partners (heterogamy). The underlying regression models, which control for gender, age, relationship duration, parental status, and country of residence, are available in the Supplementary Tables B2–B6). Although the educational pairing variable combines education levels and educational differences within couples into one categorical variable, a limitation of this approach is that it conflates the roles played by the different components. Hence, 'it is impossible to determine what proportion of the total variance explained by the compound variable is due to educational differences' (Eeckhaut *et al.*, 2013, p. 63).

A classification into hyper-, homo-, and hypogamous couples as the main predictor in a linear regression model does also not allow us to disentangle heterogamy 'effects' from the 'effects' of the man's and the woman's educational levels. This is because educational *difference measures* cannot vary once we hold the two educational levels constant (linear dependency of variables). Consequently, linear models cannot control for both partners' education levels.

To overcome this well-known problem (Zang *et al.*, 2023), in a second step, we used DRMs, which can assess the 'effect' of educational heterogamy while controlling for both partners' levels of education.[6] DRM were originally introduced by Sobel (1981) as diagonal mobility models for investigating the effects of social mobility, but have increasingly been used to study status inconsistency within couples in recent years (Eeckhaut *et al.*, 2013; Chan and Ermisch, 2015; De Graaf and Heath, 2023; Wang, 2025).[7]

As the use of the term 'effects' is widespread in studies using DRM, we use the term for ease of exposition in the description of the method but revert to non-causal language when interpreting the results. DRM in this area of research estimate *partial associations* of heterogamy with relevant outcomes, net of educational levels and controls.

Consistent with sociological theories of educational assortative mating, DRM treat homogamous couples—who constitute the majority of couples in all countries studied (cf. Supplementary Table B1)—as 'pure types' that serve as reference points for heterogamous couples (i.e., the educationally mixed). The outcomes of heterogamous couples are estimated

as a function of the outcomes of homogamous couples at the respective educational levels of each partner and two weight parameters reflecting heterogamous couples' resemblance to homogamous couples at *his* and *her* level of education. Thus, the attitudes and behaviours of heterogamous couples are estimated to lie between the averages of the two reference couple types. Formally, a DRM is estimated as follows (Sobel, 1981):

$$Y_{ijk} = p \times \mu_{ii} + (1-p) \times \mu_{jj} + \sum \beta x_{ijkl} + e_{ijk}$$

where Y_{ijk} is the outcome of couple k in cell ij in a contingency table of her education i by his education j. The outcome Y_{ijk} is estimated as the weighted sum of the estimated means in the homogamous group at her education level (μ_{ii}) and in the homogamous group at his education level (μ_{jj}). The weights are represented by the nonlinear product terms p (female education weight) and $1-p$ (male education weight), which are constrained to sum to one and to be non-negative. They indicate the *relative* strength of the influence of his and her education. The estimated *diagonal effects* (μ_{11} μ_{22} μ_{33}) refer to the educational gradient for homogamous couples. Accounting for his *and* her education through nonlinear terms allows for the additional estimation of 'heterogamy effects', by adding dummy variables indicating hypogamy and hypergamy as covariates x_{ijkl} to the model.

We used the *drm* Stata package (Kaiser, 2018) to fit two models: DRM-1 with standard controls, and DRM-2, which adds heterogamy dummies as covariates. To ensure a robust analytical approach, we determined the optimal weight structure by systematically varying the woman's education weight p from 0.01 to 1 across 100 iterations, selecting the best-fitting model and weight based on the Akaike information criterion (AIC). Subsequently, we used the AIC to compare model fit between DRM-1 and DRM-2, identifying the model that provides the most accurate representation of the data. We chose DRM-1 as the better model, unless the AIC value of DRM-2 was at least two points lower. When DRM-1 shows the better fit, the interpretation of results focuses on the weight parameters and thus on the question of whether his or her education weighs more in shaping the outcomes. When DRM-2 shows the better fit, the interpretation focuses on quantifying the 'effects of educational hypogamy', or better say, on assessing the strength of the partial association of hypogamy with the outcomes.[8]

Findings

Results from linear regression analysis

Based on linear regression models that use the nine educational pairings as the main predictor, Figure 1 presents heat maps of the predicted average levels of gender egalitarianism in different domains, as a function of his (columns) and her (rows) education. Colour intensity reflects the degree of egalitarianism. Diagonal cells correspond to homogamous couples; cells below (above) the diagonal represent hypogamous (hypergamous) couples.

Regarding paid work, Figure 1 shows that women, on average, contribute much less to the household income than their partners in all pairings (*her* share of hours ranges from 25.5 to 37.5 per cent). Among homogamous couples, *her* share of paid work hours tends to increase with the level of education (from 31.3 to 34.7 per cent along the diagonal). Moreover, compared to homogamous couples, *her* share of paid work hours tends to be lower in hypergamous couples (above the diagonal: 25.5–30.7 per cent) while it tends to be higher in hypogamous couples (below the diagonal: 33.4–37.5 per cent, cf. underlying OLS models in Supplementary Table B2).

While based on linear models, we can compare each cell in Figure 1 with any other cell, it is not possible to ascertain whether the difference between cells is driven more by the educational levels or educational differences between partners. For example, we do not know to what extent the higher value for hypogamous couples where she is highly educated and he is medium educated (37.5 per cent) compared to high-educated homogamous couples (34.7 per cent) stems from either men's lower educational attainment or from a hypogamy effect. The DRM estimated below (Table 5) offers a parsimonious model of the pattern shown in Figure 1 and partials out the association of hypogamy with the division of paid work.

Regarding routine housework, we find rather low mean values indicating that women tend to do most of these chores, with the distribution more skewed towards women for the preparation of daily meals (values between 1.9 and 2.2) than for doing the washing up (values between 2.0 and 2.6). For the latter, the variation in mean values between the pairings is much greater. It is also worth noting, that the mean values remain fairly stable in the rows (across columns), while they vary more in the columns (across rows), indicating a greater role for *her* education than for *his* in shaping the division of housework (confirmed by DRM, see below).

A similar picture emerges for gender attitudes. Both attitudes become more egalitarian as the level of education increases among homogamous couples. And again, variation across rows is greater than variation across columns, suggesting that women's education plays a more influential role than men's in shaping attitudes towards women's roles.

While average predicted values for the division of housework and gender attitudes suggest greater

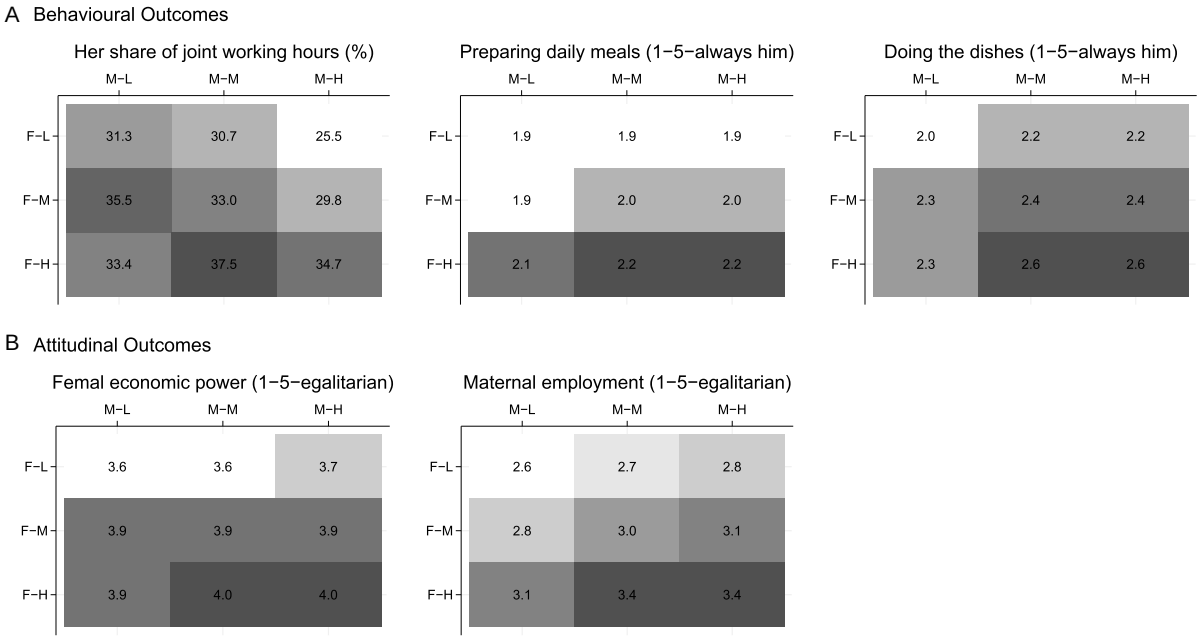

Figure 1 Heatmaps of predicted average values, by the woman's (F) and the man's (M) education. Notes: Underlying linear regression models in Supplementary Tables B2–B6. F = female partner, M = male partner with low (L), medium (M), and high (H) education. Attitudinal Items: 'If a woman earns more than her partner, it is not good for the relationship' and 'A preschool child is likely to suffer if the mother works'. Darker cells indicate more egalitarian couples

egalitarianism among hypogamous couples (below the diagonal) and less egalitarianism among hypergamous couples (above the diagonal), this pattern is less distinct than that observed for the division of paid work. In a next step, we employ DRM to assess if hypogamy remains significantly associated with gender egalitarianism, after accounting for both partners' education levels.

Results from diagonal reference models

Table 4 gives an overview of results from the DRM for the full sample of couples and also for subsamples stratified by age group (25–35 and 36–45 years), union duration (≤10 versus >10 years), and parental status (childless couples, those with youngest child under age 6, and with youngest child aged 6–15).[9] Full regression tables for all subsamples are provided in Table 5 (paid work) and Appendix Tables A1–A4 (other outcomes). These tables present results from either DRM-1 or DRM-2 depending on which of the two models showed the better fit (with DRM-1 favoured unless the AIC of DRM-2 is at least two points smaller). When DRM-1 shows the better fit, this indicates that heterogamy does not play a significant role.

Regarding behavioural outcomes, and focusing first on the overall sample, DRM-2 provides the better model fit for *paid work*, whereas DRM-1 fits the data better for *housework*. This suggests that the division of housework is best modelled as shaped by the two partners' educational levels, without an independent influence of the educational difference between them (in line with H1c). The weight estimates of 0.72 (washing up) and 0.99 (daily cooking) indicate that her education plays a more substantial role than his in determining the extent to which housework is shared. In contrast, for the division of paid work, we find significant 'heterogamy effects': Net of educational levels, hypergamous couples tend to exhibit a less equal arrangement than homogamous couples (a difference of −3 percentage points), whereas hypogamous couples show a more equal division (+2 pp, consistent with H1a). As discussed in more detail below, the data support H1a over H1b in terms of paid work, confirming an *association* of educational hypogamy with a more gender-egalitarian behaviour. As noted, based on our cross-sectional data and analysis, we cannot ascertain how much of this association is due to causal mechanisms and how much is the result of selection processes.

When dividing the full sample into subgroups to test our moderation hypotheses, we find that the association between hypogamy and a more equal division of paid work is stronger than on average among older couples (+4 pp) and parents of school-age children (+7 pp),

Table 4 Overview of results from DRM, by group (row) and domain (column)

	Paid work	Housework		Attitudes	
	Her share of working hours	Preparing daily meals	Doing the dishes	Her economic power	Maternal employment
All partnered individuals	DRM-2 Hypergamy: −0.03 Hypogamy: +0.02	DRM-1 Weight of her education: 0.99	DRM-1 Weight of her education: 0.72	DRM-1 Weight of her education: 0.77	DRM-1 Weight of her education: 0.73
Age: 25–35	DRM-2 Hypergamy: −0.03 Hypogamy: +0.02	DRM-1 Weight of her education: 0.90	DRM-1 Weight of her education: 0.86	DRM-1 Weight of her education: 0.87	DRM-1 Weight of her education: 0.82
Age: 36–45	DRM-2 Hypergamy: −0.05 Hypogamy: +0.04	DRM-1 Weight of her education: 1.00	DRM-1 Weight of her education: 0.61	DRM-1 Weight of her education: 0.67	DRM-2 Hypergamy: −0.22 Hypogamy: +0.36 (only men) (a)
Shorter union	DRM-2 Hypergamy: −0.04 Hypogamy: ns	DRM-1 Weight of her education: 0.91	DRM-1 Weight of her education: 0.75	DRM-1 Weight of her education: 0.82	DRM-1 Weight of her education: 0.73
Longer union	DRM-2 Hypergamy: −0.04 Hypogamy: +0.05	DRM-1 Weight of her education: 1.00	DRM-1 Weight of her education: 0.67	DRM-1 Weight of her education: 0.73	DRM-1 Weight of her education: 0.71 DRM-2 for men (a)
Childless	DRM-2 Hypergamy: −0.05 Hypogamy: ns	DRM-1 Weight of her education: 0.65	DRM-2 Hypergamy: −0.27 Hypogamy: ns	DRM-1 Weight of her education: 0.79	DRM-1 Weight of her education: 0.80
Child: 0–5	DRM-2 Hypergamy: −0.03 Hypogamy: ns	DRM-1 Weight of her education: 1.00	DRM-1 Weight of her education: 0.76	DRM-1 Weight of her education: 0.76	DRM-1 Weight of her education: 0.72
Child: 6–15	DRM-2 Hypergamy: −0.04 Hypogamy: +0.07	DRM-1 Weight of her education: 1.00	DRM-1 Weight of her education: 0.78	DRM-1 Weight of her education: 0.75	DRM-2 Hypergamy (−0.29) Hypogamy (+0.47) (only fathers) (a)

Source: The table shows the better-fitting model (DRM-1 or DRM-2) for each outcome and subsample. For DRM-1, the table reports the weight estimate; for DRM-2, the magnitude of 'heterogamy effects'. Shaded cells indicate significant hypogamy effects. In all DRM-2 shown, the AIC is at least 4 points lower than in DRM-1. Underlying DRM in Table 4 and Appendix Tables A1–A4. (a) Models for gender-stratified samples are in the Supplementary material.

consistent with H2 and H3. Regarding housework, DRM-1 provides the better fit across all subsamples, except for childless couples, for whom DRM-2 shows the better fit, indicating that childless women in hypergamous unions tend to shoulder a greater share of housework than their homogamous counterparts. For all other groups, DRM-1 remains the preferred model and suggests that the women's education carries greater relative weight than the men's in shaping the division of housework (weights ranging from 0.61 to 1.00, with larger weights of her education for daily cooking than washing up). Regarding attitudes, DRM-1 has a better fit for modelling respondents' views on female economic power, whereas DRM-2 has a better fit for modelling attitudes towards maternal employment, particularly among two groups: older couples and those with school-age children. In these groups, hypogamy is associated with more favourable views on maternal employment, lending support to H4a over H4b.

Since attitudes—unlike the division of labour—are not couple-level outcomes,[10] we conducted sensitivity analyses on samples stratified by gender (Supplementary Tables B11–B14). These analyses reveal that the findings on attitudes towards maternal employment hold for men but not for women. While women's attitudes are predominantly shaped by their own level of education—with weights for her education in DRM-1 ranging from 0.73 to 0.82—for men who have been in the hypogamous union for more than 10 years (and are thus more likely to be older and to have older children), DRM-2 shows the better fit, suggesting that they tend to express greater support for maternal employment than their counterparts in homogamous unions (confirming H5 on the adaptation of attitudes, see Supplementary Table B14).

Table 5 The woman's share of the couple's joint working hours (in per cent), DRM

	Total	By age group		By relationship duration		By the presence and age of children		
		25–35 years	36–45 years	0–10 years	11–30 years	No child	0–5 years	6–15 years
Education level (Ref = Medium)								
Low education	−0.01 (0.01)	−0.02 (0.01)	−0.03* (0.01)	−0.02 (0.01)	−0.04** (0.01)	−0.03 (0.02)	−0.01 (0.01)	−0.05** (0.02)
High education	0.02** (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	−0.02 (0.01)	0.03** (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Weights								
Her education (p)	1.00	1.00	0.01	1.00	0.01	1.00	1.00	0.01
His education ($1 - p$)	0.00	0.00	0.99	0.00	0.99	0.00	0.00	0.99
Educational difference (Ref = Homog.)								
Hypergamy	−0.03*** (0.01)	−0.03** (0.01)	−0.05*** (0.01)	−0.04*** (0.01)	−0.04*** (0.01)	−0.05** (0.02)	−0.03* (0.01)	−0.04*** (0.01)
Hypogamy	0.02* (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)	0.04** (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.01 (0.02)	0.02 (0.01)	0.07*** (0.02)
Age of youngest child (Ref = no child)								
0–5 years	−0.20*** (0.01)	−0.20*** (0.01)	−0.18*** (0.01)	−0.20*** (0.01)	−0.18*** (0.02)			
6–15 years	−0.12*** (0.01)	−0.09*** (0.02)	−0.12*** (0.01)	−0.11*** (0.02)	−0.11*** (0.01)			
Female respondent (Ref = male)	0.00 (0.01)	−0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	−0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Country (Ref = Austria)								
Germany	−0.02* (0.01)	−0.00 (0.01)	−0.03** (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	−0.03** (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	−0.07*** (0.01)
France	0.08*** (0.01)	0.09*** (0.01)	0.08*** (0.01)	0.10*** (0.01)	0.08*** (0.01)	0.01 (0.02)	0.14*** (0.01)	0.04** (0.01)
Belgium	0.11*** (0.01)	0.13*** (0.01)	0.09*** (0.01)	0.14*** (0.01)	0.08*** (0.01)	0.01 (0.02)	0.21*** (0.01)	0.04* (0.01)
Constant	0.39*** (0.02)	0.39*** (0.02)	0.41*** (0.02)	0.37*** (0.03)	0.44*** (0.05)	0.41*** (0.04)	0.12** (0.04)	0.33*** (0.08)
Model	DRM-2	DRM-2	DRM-2	DRM-2	DRM-2	DRM-2	DRM-2	DRM-2
AIC	−821.93	−359.64	−463.32	−340.65	−482.34	−439.34	−141.15	−467.84
AIC Δ	−16.42	−9.32	−4.62	−9.98	−5.76	−6.23	−4.06	−9.80
N	6,927	3,312	3,615	3,261	3,666	1,424	3,180	2,323

Source: GGS Round 1. * $P < 0.05$, ** $P < 0.01$, *** $P < 0.001$. Controls for respondents' age in years, union duration in years and squared. The table presents the better-fitting model (DRM-1 or DRM-2) for each outcome. DRM-2 is preferred if it is AIC is at least two points lower than DRM-1, as indicated by AIC Δ (=$AIC_{DRM-2} - AIC_{DRM-1}$).

Discussion

Three narratives dominate the literature on how the reversal of the gender gap in education may affect gender equality within couples: The *optimistic one*, based on the assumption that women's relative educational gains translate into normative change and greater bargaining power in couple decision-making, posits that women's educational advantage could lead to greater gender equality, fostering a more equitable division of labour within couples. In contrast, the *pessimistic narrative* emphasizes that women's higher education does not necessarily translate into higher relative earnings, social status, or bargaining power. Even when women earn more than their partners, many couples maintain a traditional gender-role specialization, as societal and interpersonal pressures undermine progress towards gender equality in couples. The *selection narrative* adds that selection into hypogamous unions based on pre-existing characteristics is a key element in explaining observed differences in outcomes between hypogamous couples and other couple types. From a *constraint* perspective, union formation is shaped by a shortage of highly educated men relative to women, implying that those who form (non-preferred) hypogamous unions have characteristics associated with a low value in the mate market (e.g., a low earning potential). From a *preference* perspective, individuals with certain characteristics, such as specific gender attitudes, prefer to form hypogamous unions. As selection into hypogamous unions is severely under-researched, how exactly the selection of various sorts shapes the association of educational hypogamy with gender equality in couples is unknown. Selection based on pre-existing characteristics of women and men can predict *associations* of hypogamy with outcomes consistent with either the optimistic or the pessimistic narrative.

Against this backdrop, this study aimed to contribute to this strand of research by providing a structured overview of competing theoretical perspectives and a set of hypotheses on the association of hypogamy with gender equality in couples that reflect different causal mechanisms as well as potential selection mechanisms. Moreover, the study contributes to the emerging literature that uses DRM to partial out the association of hypogamy with relevant outcomes, net of both partner's educational attainment.

Overall, our findings suggest that the relevance of educational heterogamy for shaping gender equality varies across domains: Consistent with the optimistic narrative, hypogamy was found to be associated with a more equal division of *paid work* and more favourable attitudes towards maternal employment, whereas, consistent with the notion of a stalled gender revolution that does not extend to the private sphere, hypogamy was not found to be associated with a more equitable division of housework. The pattern of findings across age and parental status groups revealed that hypogamy is most strongly associated with a more equal division of paid work among older couples with school-age children. This is in line with our moderation hypotheses, and with research showing that in the early stages of childrearing, most couples practice a traditional gender division of labour with small education-based gaps in maternal employment, whereas in later child rearing stages, more variance in maternal employment behaviour across educational levels is observed (Steiber *et al.*, 2024). In summary, our findings indicate that women in hypogamous unions are more invested in paid work than their counterparts in homogamous unions—also when they have dependent children—and their partners are less likely to think that maternal employment harms the well-being of their children. However, as emphasized in the theoretical framework for this study, the potential mechanisms that underlie the observed association of hypogamy with gender-egalitarian outcomes include selection effects. Based on the cross-sectional data, we cannot determine the extent to which this association reflects causal mechanisms, such as intra-couple bargaining, versus selection processes. It is an important avenue for future research to employ quasi-experimental methods to identify the causal impact of hypogamy on family-related outcomes. Moreover, further research is needed to better understand the characteristics of women and men associated with the formation of hypogamous unions. As noted, more gender equality observed in such unions may reflect the selection of career-oriented women or men with egalitarian attitudes into such unions. However, it may as well reflect the selection of individuals with limited employment opportunities into such unions.

Our study is not without limitations. Our cross-sectional analysis tested the proposed hypotheses about the direction of *associations* of hypogamy with the gender division of labour and related gender-role attitudes, but it did not allow us to disentangle potential impact of living in hypogamous unions from selection effects. Moreover, the available data did not allow for a direct test of attitude adaptation; instead, we had to rely on indirect evidence of stronger attitude adaptation in longer-standing unions. Notwithstanding these important limitations, the study offers new insights using the best available data and aims to encourage a deeper exploration of the implications of rising hypogamy for gender equality in future research.

The findings presented in this study refer to a specific time when the survey data were collected (2005–2010). Since then, the association of hypogamy with gender equality may have evolved. For instance, Schwartz and Han (2014) report that in the United States, the previously observed association of educational hypogamy with higher divorce risks has diminished as hypogamy became more prevalent. Likewise, Potarca and

Rossier (2022) show a weakening of the association of hypogamy in couples with poor mental health among women over time. In light of these findings, future research is called to re-examine the association between hypogamy and gender equality in couples using more recent data, to assess whether the association of hypogamy with a more equal division of paid work found in this study has attenuated in contexts of expanding proportions of hypogamous couples in many countries (Klesment and Van Bavel, 2017).

In this context, future research using larger samples than those available for this study is necessary to examine differences across countries in how hypogamy relates to gender equality within couples. Wang (2025), for instance, shows that the association of hypogamy with life satisfaction varies by gender and across country clusters. These findings underscore the importance of investigating contextual moderators—like normative climates of assortative mating (Theunis *et al.*, 2018; Wang, 2025) that change over time and vary across contexts and that may shape the relationship between hypogamy and family-related outcomes.

Future research is also needed to explore the mechanisms underlying the formation of hypogamous unions —to examine the role of mate market constraints, on the one hand, and the relevance of trait-based selection into hypogamous unions, on the other hand, on the basis of which future studies will be in a better position to examine the *causal* impact of hypogamy on the gender division of paid work in couples and on other family-related outcomes.

Notes

1. Albeit, causal effects may unfold after hypogamous union formation: if such unions are selective on lower income men, this may spur women's stronger economic activity due to economic necessity, compensating men's lower income and higher risk of unemployment (Steiber *et al.*, 2016).
2. The remaining countries were excluded from the study either because of the absence of relevant variables (Italy, Netherlands) or the use of different survey modes (Australia, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Russia). Norway and Sweden were excluded because 27 and 33 per cent of responses to the attitudinal variables were (non-randomly) missing. However, the two countries were included in supplementary analyses on paid work and housework, where the results remained largely unchanged (see Supplementary Tables B15–B21).
3. In view of research showing the impact of the presence of the partner during the interview on survey responses related to the division of household labour (Schröder and Schmiedeberg, 2023), it is regrettable that the data do not permit us to control for partner presence during the face-to-face interview.
4. For example, in our sample, some 63 per cent of respondents with non-egalitarian attitudes towards maternal employment (and non-maternal childcare) were not worried that female economic power (i.e., the woman earning more than the man in the relationship) could be harmful to the relationship.
5. As a robustness check, we ran the models dropping one country at a time.
6. Duncan (1966) proposed the square additive model (SAM) to tackle the methodological challenge of linear dependency, but due to the lack of a clear interpretation of interactions terms in the SAM (Eeckhaut *et al.*, 2013, p. 63), the DRM has become an established model for the analysis of mobility effects, and by extension, of heterogamy effects in couples. For a comparison of the DRM with the SAM, we would like to refer readers to Sobel (1981) and recently Breen and Ermisch (2024).
7. DRM use individual-level data and not grouped data like a log-linear model.
8. Replication files, including all code necessary to replicate the analysis presented in this article based on GGS data, are provided in the Supplementary Material.
9. The thresholds for defining older couples and couples in longer-term relationships were defined pragmatically to ensure balanced and sufficient samples in all subsamples.
10. The measures of the gender division of labour combine his and her (proxy) information and thus allow for a couple-level analysis. In contrast, no couple-level analysis can be carried out for the attitudinal items, as we cannot have proxy information on partners' attitudes.

Author contributions

Nadia Steiber (Conceptualization [lead], Funding acquisition [lead], Methodology [equal], Writing—original draft [lead], Writing—review & editing [lead]), and Christina Siegert (Data curation [lead], Formal analysis [lead], Visualization [lead], Writing—original draft [supporting], Writing—review & editing [supporting])

Supplementary data

Supplementary data are available at *ESR* online.

Funding

This work was supported by the Austrian Science Fund (project number: P 35136, DOI: 10.55776/P35136).

Open access funding agency statement

This research was supported by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) [DOI: 10.55776/P35136].

Data availability

This paper uses cross-sectional data from the Generations and Gender Programme (Generations and Gender Survey Round 1, V4.4, see Gauthier *et al.*, 2025 for methodological details at https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcaf005). Replication files can be found at https://osf.io/gehsq.

Appendix

Table A1 Main responsibility for preparing daily meals from 1-her sole responsibility to 5-his sole responsibility, DRM

	Total	By age group		By relationship duration		By the presence and age of children		
		25–35 years	36–45 years	0–10 years	11–30 years	No child	0–5 years	6–15 years
Education level (Ref = Medium)								
Low education	−0.11** (0.03)	−0.12* (0.06)	−0.11** (0.05)	−0.16** (0.06)	−0.08 (0.04)	−0.15 (0.11)	−0.12* (0.05)	−0.12** (0.06)
High education	0.18*** (0.03)	0.20*** (0.04)	0.17*** (0.04)	0.20*** (0.04)	0.17*** (0.04)	0.29*** (0.07)	0.15*** (0.04)	0.16** (0.05)
Weights								
Her education (p)	0.99	0.90	1.00	0.91	1.00	0.65	1.00	1.00
His education ($1-p$)	0.01	0.10	0.00	0.09	0.00	0.35	0.00	0.00
Educational difference (Ref = Homog.)								
Hypergamy								
Hypogamy								
Age of youngest child (Ref = no child)								
0–5 years	−0.33*** (0.03)	−0.36*** (0.04)	−0.28*** (0.05)	−0.40*** (0.03)	−0.28*** (0.06)			
6–15 years	−0.31*** (0.04)	−0.30*** (0.07)	−0.28*** (0.05)	−0.42*** (0.08)	−0.30*** (0.06)			
Female respondent (Ref = male)	−0.27*** (0.02)	−0.26*** (0.03)	−0.28*** (0.03)	−0.26*** (0.03)	−0.29*** (0.03)	−0.27*** (0.05)	−0.29*** (0.03)	−0.25*** (0.04)
Country (Ref = Austria)								
Germany	0.42*** (0.03)	0.41*** (0.05)	0.43*** (0.04)	0.40*** (0.05)	0.43*** (0.04)	0.25*** (0.07)	0.49*** (0.04)	0.45*** (0.05)
France	0.03 (0.03)	0.04 (0.05)	0.01 (0.04)	0.01 (0.05)	0.04 (0.04)	−0.08 (0.07)	0.12* (0.05)	0.04 (0.05)
Belgium	0.20*** (0.03)	0.21*** (0.05)	0.20*** (0.04)	0.23*** (0.05)	0.18*** (0.04)	0.07 (0.08)	0.36*** (0.05)	0.13* (0.06)
Constant	2.53*** (0.10)	2.53*** (0.06)	2.49*** (0.08)	2.52*** (0.12)	2.39*** (0.17)	2.49*** (0.18)	2.15*** (0.15)	2.22*** (0.30)
Model	DRM-1	DRM-1	DRM-1	DRM-1	DRM-1	DRM-1	DRM-1	DRM-1
AIC	18,075.18	8,790.73	9,295.73	8,688.92	9,406.06	3,862.62	8,273.94	5,916.89
AIC Δ	3.09	3.08	3.82	3.73	3.19	2.49	2.33	3.70
N	6,927	3,312	3,615	3,261	3,666	1,424	3,180	2,323

Source: GGS Round 1. * $P < 0.05$, ** $P < 0.01$, *** $P < 0.001$. Controls for age of respondents in years, union duration in years and squared. The table presents the better-fitting model (DRM-1 or DRM-2) for each outcome. DRM-2 is preferred if it is AIC is at least two points lower than DRM-1, as indicated by AIC Δ ($=AIC_{DRM\text{-}2} - AIC_{DRM\text{-}1}$).

Table A2 Main responsibility for doing the dishes from 1-her sole responsibility to 5-his sole responsibility, DRM

	Total	By age group		By relationship duration		By the presence and age of children		
		25–35 years	36–45 years	0–10 years	11–30 years	No child	0–5 years	6–15 years
Education level (Ref = Medium)								
Low education	−0.36*** (0.04)	−0.26*** (0.06)	−0.46*** (0.06)	−0.29*** (0.06)	−0.43*** (0.06)	−0.39*** (0.08)	−0.45*** (0.06)	−0.26*** (0.07)
High education	0.23*** (0.03)	0.28*** (0.04)	0.18*** (0.04)	0.25*** (0.04)	0.21*** (0.04)	0.17** (0.06)	0.23*** (0.05)	0.18** (0.05)
Weights								
Her education (p)	0.72	0.86	0.61	0.75	0.67	0.01	0.76	0.78
His education ($1 - p$)	0.28	0.14	0.39	0.25	0.33	0.99	0.24	0.22
Educational difference (Ref = Homog.)								
Hypergamy						−0.27** (0.06)		
Hypogamy						0.11 (0.06)		
Age of youngest child (Ref = no child)								
0–5 years	−0.26*** (0.03)	−0.30*** (0.04)	−0.19*** (0.05)	−0.31*** (0.03)	−0.18** (0.06)			
6–15 years	−0.24*** (0.04)	−0.25*** (0.07)	−0.20*** (0.05)	−0.28*** (0.08)	−0.20*** (0.06)			
Female respondent (Ref = male)	−0.27*** (0.02)	−0.25*** (0.03)	−0.30*** (0.03)	−0.26*** (0.03)	−0.30*** (0.03)	−0.21*** (0.05)	−0.30*** (0.03)	−0.27*** (0.04)
Country (Ref = Austria)								
Germany	0.11*** (0.03)	0.14** (0.04)	0.10* (0.04)	0.10* (0.04)	0.13** (0.04)	0.06 (0.06)	0.14** (0.04)	0.14** (0.05)
France	0.09** (0.03)	0.05 (0.05)	0.12** (0.05)	0.05 (0.05)	0.12** (0.05)	0.03 (0.07)	0.13** (0.05)	0.10 (0.06)
Belgium	0.19*** (0.03)	0.12* (0.05)	0.26*** (0.05)	0.14** (0.05)	0.24*** (0.05)	−0.00 (0.07)	0.26*** (0.05)	0.25*** (0.06)
Constant	2.48*** (0.10)	2.74*** (0.06)	2.64*** (0.08)	2.54*** (0.12)	2.39*** (0.18)	2.67*** (0.16)	2.13*** (0.15)	1.98*** (0.31)
Model	DRM-1	DRM-1	DRM-1	DRM-1	DRM-1	DRM-2	DRM-1	DRM-1
AIC	18,003.57	8,628.89	9,377.40	8,476.18	9,543.25	3,616.20	8,302.05	6,078.28
AIC Δ	−0.87	0.06	2.18	0.56	0.71	−7.25	3.25	0.12
N	6,927	3,312	3,615	3,261	3,666	1,424	3,180	2,323

Source: GGS Round 1. * $P < 0.05$, ** $P < 0.01$, *** $P < 0.001$. Controls for age of respondents in years, union duration in years and squared. The table presents the better-fitting model (DRM-1 or DRM-2) for each outcome. DRM-2 is preferred if it is AIC is at least two points lower than DRM-1, as indicated by AIC Δ (=$AIC_{DRM-2} - AIC_{DRM-1}$).

Table A3 Attitude towards female economic power from 1-non-egalitarian to 5-egalitarian, DRM

	Total	By age group		By relationship duration		By the presence and age of children		
		25–35 years	36–45 years	0–10 years	11–30 years	No child	0–5 years	6–15 years
Education level (Ref = Medium)								
Low education	−0.25*** (0.04)	−0.24*** (0.06)	−0.23*** (0.06)	−0.17** (0.06)	−0.30*** (0.06)	−0.20 (0.10)	−0.26*** (0.07)	−0.26*** (0.07)
High education	0.16*** (0.03)	0.14** (0.05)	0.19*** (0.05)	0.11** (0.05)	0.21*** (0.05)	0.14* (0.07)	0.15** (0.05)	0.20** (0.06)
Weights								
Her education (p)	0.77	0.87	0.67	0.82	0.73	0.79	0.76	0.75
His education ($1 - p$)	0.23	0.13	0.33	0.18	0.27	0.21	0.24	0.25
Educational difference (Ref = Homog.)								
Hypergamy								
Hypogamy								
Age of youngest child (Ref = no child)								
0–5 years	−0.09** (0.03)	−0.05 (0.04)	−0.16** (0.05)	−0.08* (0.04)	−0.14* (0.07)			
6–15 years	−0.08* (0.04)	−0.08 (0.07)	−0.13* (0.06)	0.12 (0.09)	−0.16* (0.06)			
Female respondent (Ref = male)	−0.10*** (0.02)	−0.10** (0.04)	−0.10** (0.03)	−0.07* (0.03)	−0.12*** (0.03)	−0.04 (0.05)	−0.09* (0.04)	−0.16*** (0.04)
Country (Ref = Austria)								
Germany	0.24*** (0.03)	0.20*** (0.05)	0.26*** (0.04)	0.25*** (0.05)	0.22*** (0.04)	0.36*** (0.07)	0.18*** (0.05)	0.25*** (0.05)
France	0.63*** (0.04)	0.62*** (0.05)	0.65*** (0.05)	0.68*** (0.05)	0.60*** (0.05)	0.63*** (0.07)	0.65*** (0.05)	0.60*** (0.06)
Belgium	0.21*** (0.04)	0.21*** (0.05)	0.20*** (0.05)	0.22*** (0.05)	0.21*** (0.05)	0.19* (0.08)	0.22*** (0.06)	0.20*** (0.06)
Constant	3.64*** (0.10)	3.61*** (0.06)	3.71*** (0.09)	3.69*** (0.13)	3.59*** (0.19)	3.53*** (0.18)	3.68*** (0.16)	4.09*** (0.33)
Model	DRM-1	DRM-1	DRM-1	DRM-1	DRM-1	DRM-1	DRM-1	DRM-1
AIC	19,176.55	9,212.72	9,972.67	8,983.59	10,193.06	3,900.27	8,924.66	6,363.96
AIC Δ	3.98	1.39	2.03	2.81	3.40	3.13	2.64	0.57
N	6,927	3,312	3,615	3,261	3,666	1,424	3,180	2,323

Source: GGS Round 1. * $P < 0.05$, ** $P < 0.01$, *** $P < 0.001$. Controls for age of respondents in years, union duration in years and squared. The table presents the better-fitting model (DRM-1 or DRM-2) for each outcome. DRM-2 is preferred if its AIC is at least two points lower than DRM-1, as indicated by AIC Δ ($=AIC_{DRM-2} - AIC_{DRM-1}$).

Table A4 Attitude towards maternal employment from 1-non-egalitarian to 5-egalitarian, DRM

	Total	By age group		By relationship duration		By the presence and age of children		
		25–35 years	36–45 years	0–10 years	11–30 years	No child	0–5 years	6–15 years
Education level (Ref = Medium)								
Low education	−0.40*** (0.06)	−0.39*** (0.08)	−0.37*** (0.08)	−0.40*** (0.08)	−0.42*** (0.07)	−0.21 (0.13)	−0.52*** (0.08)	−0.43*** (0.09)
High education	0.39*** (0.04)	0.29*** (0.06)	0.50*** (0.06)	0.32*** (0.06)	0.48*** (0.06)	0.41*** (0.08)	0.38*** (0.06)	0.39*** (0.07)
Weights								
Her education (p)	0.73	0.82	0.20	0.73	0.71	0.80	0.72	0.02
His education ($1 - p$)	0.27	0.18	0.80	0.27	0.29	0.20	0.28	0.98
Educational difference (Ref = Homog.)								
Hypergamy			−0.22*** (0.05)					−0.29*** (0.06)
Hypogamy			0.36*** (0.06)					0.47*** (0.08)
Age of youngest child (Ref = no child)								
0–5 years	−0.00 (0.04)	−0.01 (0.05)	−0.03 (0.07)	0.01 (0.04)	0.08 (0.08)			
6–15 years	0.10 (0.05)	−0.01 (0.09)	0.13 (0.07)	0.10 (0.11)	0.15 (0.08)			
Female respondent (Ref = male)	0.22*** (0.03)	0.20*** (0.04)	0.24*** (0.04)	0.18*** (0.04)	0.23*** (0.04)	0.25*** (0.06)	0.13** (0.05)	0.31*** (0.05)
Country (Ref = Austria)								
Germany	0.08* (0.04)	0.01 (0.06)	0.13* (0.05)	0.06 (0.06)	0.10 (0.06)	0.26** (0.08)	−0.03 (0.06)	0.12 (0.07)
France	0.01 (0.04)	0.05 (0.06)	−0.05 (0.06)	0.04 (0.06)	−0.03 (0.06)	−0.02 (0.09)	−0.01 (0.06)	0.02 (0.08)
Belgium	0.26*** (0.04)	0.23*** (0.07)	0.27*** (0.06)	0.24*** (0.06)	0.30*** (0.06)	0.30** (0.09)	0.22*** (0.07)	0.27*** (0.08)
Constant	2.96*** (0.13)	2.65*** (0.08)	2.57*** (0.11)	3.08*** (0.16)	3.26*** (0.24)	2.80*** (0.22)	3.34*** (0.20)	2.31*** (0.42)
Model	DRM-1	DRM-1	DRM-2	DRM-1	DRM-1	DRM-1	DRM-1	DRM-2
AIC	22,088.83	10,648.52	11,434.23	10,321.82	11,787.73	4,444.40	10,241.83	7,401.70
AIC Δ	3.08	1.98	−5.33	3.26	−1.21	3.30	2.84	−5.81
N	6,927	3,312	3,615	3,261	3,666	1,424	3,180	2,323

Source: GGS Round 1. * $P < 0.05$, ** $P < 0.01$, *** $P < 0.001$. Controls for age of respondents in years, union duration in years and squared. The table presents the better-fitting model (DRM-1 or DRM-2) for each outcome. DRM-2 is preferred if it's AIC is at least two points lower than DRM-1, as indicated by AIC Δ ($=AIC_{DRM\text{-}2} - AIC_{DRM\text{-}1}$).

References

Agarwal, B. (1997). 'Bargaining'" and gender relations: within and beyond the household. *Feminist Economics*, **3**, 1–51.

Atkinson, M. P., Greenstein, T. N. and Lang, M. M. (2005). For women, breadwinning can be dangerous: gendered resource theory and wife abuse. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, **67**, 1137–1148.

Becker, G. S. (1973). A theory of marriage: part I. *The Journal of Political Economy*, **81**, 813–846.

Bertrand, M., Kamenica, E. and Pan, J. (2015). Gender identity and relative income within households. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, **130**, 571–614.

Bittman, M. *et al.* (2003). When does gender trump money? Bargaining and time in household work. *The American Journal of Sociology*, **109**, 186–214.

Breen, R. and Ermisch, J. (2024). The effects of social mobility. *SocScience*, **11**, 467–488.

Brines, J. (1994). Economic dependency, gender, and the division of labor at home. *The American Journal of Sociology*, **100**, 652–688.

Buschner, A., Adam, U. and Schulz, F. (2018). Relative education, parenthood, and couples' division of paid work. Evidence from German census data. *Journal of Family Research*, **30**, 96–119.

Chan, T. W. and Ermisch, J. (2015). Proximity of couples to parents: influences of gender, labor market, and family. *Demography*, **52**, 379–399.

Chudnovskaya, M. and Kashyap, R. (2020). Is the end of educational hypergamy the end of status hypergamy? Evidence from Sweden. *European Sociological Review*, **36**, 351–365.

Coltrane, S. (2000). Research on household labor: modeling and measuring the social embeddedness of routine family work. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, **62**, 1208–1233.

Corti, G. and Scherer, S. (2021). Mating market and dynamics of union formation. *European Journal of Population*, **37**, 851–876.

De Graaf, N. D. and Heath, A. (2023). From male dominance to sharing: partner's class and female political party identification 1964–2010. *European Societies*, **25**, 776–803.

De Hauw, Y., Grow, A. and Van Bavel, J. (2017). The reversed gender gap in education and assortative mating in Europe. *European Journal of Population*, **33**, 445–474.

Duncan, O. D. (1966). Methodological issues in the analysis of social mobility. In Smelser, N. J. and Lipset, S. M. (Eds.), *Social Structure and Mobility in Economic Development*. New York: Aldine, pp. 51–97.

Eeckhaut, M. C. W. *et al.* (2013). Analysing the effect of educational differences between partners: a methodological/theoretical comparison. *European Sociological Review*, **29**, 60–73.

Eeckhaut, M. C. W., Stanfors, M. A. and Van De Putte, B. (2014). Educational heterogamy and the division of paid labour in the family: a comparison of present-day Belgium and Sweden. *European Sociological Review*, **30**, 64–75.

England, P. (2010). The gender revolution: uneven and stalled. *Gender & Society*, **24**, 149–166.

Erát, D. (2021). Educational assortative mating and the decline of hypergamy in 27 European countries: an examination of trends through cohorts. *Demographic Research*, **44**, 157–188.

Esteve, A. *et al.* (2016). The end of hypergamy: global trends and implications: the end of hypergamy: global trends and implications. *Population and Development Review*, **42**, 615–625.

Evertsson, M. and Nermo, M. (2007). Changing resources and the division of housework: a longitudinal study of Swedish couples. *European Sociological Review*, **23**, 455–470.

García-Román, J. (2023). Does women's educational advantage mean a more egalitarian distribution of gender roles? Evidence from dual-earner couples in Spain. *Journal of Family Studies*, **29**, 285–305.

Garcia, A. J. *et al.* (2015). Modeling internal migration flows in sub-Saharan Africa using census microdata. *Migration Studies*, **3**, 89–110.

Gauthier, A. H. *et al.* (2025). The Generations and Gender Survey: a cross-national longitudinal resource. *European Sociological Review*, **41**, 983–1001.

Gauthier, A. H., Cabaço, S. L. F. and Emery, T. (2018). Generations and Gender Survey study profile. *Longitudinal and Life Course Studies*, **9**, 456–465.

Goldscheider, F., Bernhardt, E. and Lappegård, T. (2015). The gender revolution: a framework for understanding changing family and demographic behavior. *Population and Development Review*, **41**, 207–239.

Gonalons-Pons, P. and Gangl, M. (2021). Marriage and masculinity: male-breadwinner culture, unemployment, and separation risk in 29 countries. *American Sociological Review*, **86**, 465–502.

Graf, N. L. and Schwartz, C. R. (2011). The uneven pace of change in heterosexual romantic relationships: comment on England. *Gender & Society*, **25**, 101–107.

Greenstein, T. N. (2000). Economic dependence, gender, and the division of labor in the home: a replication and extension. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, **62**, 322–335.

Grow, A. and Van Bavel, J. (2015). Assortative mating and the reversal of gender inequality in education in Europe: an agent-based model. *PLoS One*, **10**, e0127806.

Grunow, D., Begall, K. and Buchler, S. (2018). Gender ideologies in Europe: a multidimensional framework. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, **80**, 42–60.

Grunow, D., Schulz, F. and Blossfeld, H.-P. (2012). What determines change in the division of housework over the course of marriage? *International Sociology: Journal of the International Sociological Association*, **27**, 289–307.

Gupta, S. (2007). Autonomy, dependence, or display? The relationship between married women's earnings and housework. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, **69**, 399–417.

Homans, G. C. (1958). Social behavior as exchange. *The American Journal of Sociology*, **63**, 597–606.

Jonason, P. K. and Antoon, C. N. (2019). Mate preferences for educated partners: similarities and differences in the sexes depend on mating context. *Personality and Individual Differences*, **148**, 57–61.

Jørgensen, R. *et al.* (2025). The genetics of partnership dissolution. *Sociological Science*, **12**, 76–96.

Jurczyk, K. *et al.* (2019). Female-breadwinner families in Germany: new gender roles? *Journal of Family Issues*, **40**, 1731–1754.

Kaiser, C. (2018). *DRM. Diagonal Reference Model Stata* (Vol. 10). Open Science Framework.

Klesment, M. and Van Bavel, J. (2017). The reversal of the gender gap in education, motherhood, and women as main earners in Europe. *European Sociological Review*, **33**, 465–481.

Klesment, M. and Van Bavel, J. (2022). Women's relative resources and couples' gender balance in financial decision-making. *European Sociological Review*, **38**, 739–753.

Knight, C. R. and Brinton, M. C. (2017). One egalitarianism or several? Two decades of gender-role attitude change in Europe. *The American Journal of Sociology*, **122**, 1485–1532.

Kühhirt, M. (2012). Childbirth and the long-term division of labour within couples: how do substitution, bargaining power, and norms affect parents' time allocation in West Germany? *European Sociological Review*, **28**, 565–582.

Mäenpää, E. and Jalovaara, M. (2014). Homogamy in socioeconomic background and education, and the dissolution of cohabiting unions. *Demographic Research*, **30**, 1769–1792.

McPherson, M., Smith-Lovin, L. and Cook, J. M. (2001). Birds of a feather: homophily in social networks. *Annual Review of Sociology*, **27**, 415–444.

Nitsche, N. *et al.* (2018). Partners' educational pairings and fertility across Europe. *Demography*, **55**, 1195–1232.

Osiewalska, B. (2017). Childlessness and fertility by couples' educational gender (in)equality in Austria, Bulgaria, and France. *Demographic Research*, **37**, 325–362.

Potarca, G. and Rossier, C. (2022). Are women in hypogamous unions more depressed? A cross-national comparison among the highly educated. *European Sociological Review*, **38**, 103–123.

Rauscher, E. (2020). Why who marries whom matters: effects of educational assortative mating on infant health in the United States 1969–1994. *Social Forces*, **98**, 1143–1173.

Ridgeway, C. L. (2011). *Framed by Gender: How Gender Inequality Persists in the Modern World*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Schröder, J. and Schmiedeberg, C. (2023). Effects of partner presence during the interview on survey responses: the example of questions concerning the division of household labor. *Sociological Methods & Research*, **52**, 933–955.

Schwartz, C. R. (2013). Trends and variation in assortative mating: causes and consequences. *Annual Review of Sociology*, **39**, 451–470.

Schwartz, C. R. and Han, H. (2014). The reversal of the gender gap in education and trends in marital dissolution. *American Sociological Review*, **79**, 605–629.

Shelton, B. A. and John, D. (1996). The division of household labor. *Annual Review of Sociology*, **22**, 299–322.

Skopek, J., Schulz, F. and Blossfeld, H.-P. (2011). Who contacts whom? Educational homophily in online mate selection. *European Sociological Review*, **27**, 180–195.

Sobel, M. E. (1981). Diagonal mobility models: a substantively motivated class of designs for the analysis of mobility effects. *American Sociological Review*, **46**, 893.

Stauder, J. and Kossow, T. (2021). Opportunities and constraints of the partner market and educational assortative mating. *Journal of Family Issues*, **42**, 2554–2588.

Steiber, N. *et al.* (2024). *Educational Hypogamy is Associated with a Smaller Child Penalty on Women's Earnings*. IZA Discussion Paper No. 17380.

Steiber, N., Berghammer, C. and Haas, B. (2016). Contextualizing the education effect on women's employment: a cross-national comparative analysis. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, **78**, 246–261.

Steiber, N. and Haas, B. (2009). Ideals or compromises? The attitude-behaviour relationship in mothers' employment. *Socio-Economic Review*, **7**, 639–668.

Sullivan, O. (2013). What do we learn about gender by analyzing housework separately from child care? Some considerations from time-use evidence: gender, housework, child care. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, **5**, 72–84.

Sullivan, O. and Gershuny, J. (2016). Change in spousal human capital and housework: a longitudinal analysis. *European Sociological Review*, **32**, 864–880.

Syrda, J. (2023). Gendered housework: spousal relative income, parenthood and traditional gender identity norms. *Work, Employment & Society*, **37**, 794–813.

Theunis, L. *et al.* (2018). His and her education and marital dissolution: adding a contextual dimension. *European Journal of Population*, **34**, 663–687.

Tichenor, V. J. (2005). *Earning More and Getting Less: Why Successful Wives Can't Buy Equality*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Trimarchi, A. (2022). Gender-egalitarian attitudes and assortative mating by age and education. *European Journal of Population*, **38**, 429–456.

Van Bavel, J. (2013). The reversal of gender inequality in education, union formation and fertility in Europe. *Vienna Yearbook of Population Research*, **10**, 127–154.

Van Bavel, J. and Klesment, M. (2017). Educational pairings, motherhood, and women's relative earnings in Europe. *Demography*, **54**, 2331–2349.

Van Bavel, J., Schwartz, C. R. and Esteve, A. (2018). The reversal of the gender gap in education and its consequences for family life. *Annual Review of Sociology*, **44**, 341–360.

Vandecasteele, L. *et al.* (2022). Changing attitudes about the impact of women's employment on families: the COVID-19 pandemic effect. *Gender, Work, and Organization*, **29**, 2012–2033.

Vikat, A. *et al.* (2007). Generations and Gender Survey (GGS): towards a better understanding of relationships and processes in the life course. *Demographic Research*, **17**, 389–440.

Wang, Y. (2025). Educational sorting in unions and subjective well-being in Europe: gender differences and contextual variations. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, **96**, 101020.

West, C. and Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender & Society*, **1**, 125–151.

Zang, E., Sobel, M. E. and Luo, L. (2023). The mobility effects hypothesis: methods and applications. *Social Science Research*, **110**, 102818.

Nadia Steiber is Professor of Social Stratification and Quantitative Methods at the Department of Sociology of the University of Vienna (since 2020) and Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS). Her main areas of research are at the intersection of employment and family research and encompass research on ageing and the implications of intergenerational social mobility.

Christina Siegert is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Bamberg, Department of Sociology. Her research explores the intersections of poverty, employment, and family dynamics, with a particular focus on gender inequality across the life course.