

Table 1 The four central tenets of Preference Theory.

1. Five separate historical changes in society and in the labour market which started in the late twentieth century are producing a qualitatively different and new scenario of options and opportunities for women. The five changes do not necessarily occur in all modern societies, and do not always occur together. Their effects are cumulative. The five causes of a new scenario are:

- * the contraceptive revolution which, from about 1965 onwards, gave sexually active women reliable control over their own fertility for the first time in history;
- * the equal opportunities revolution, which ensured that for the first time in history women had equal access to all positions, occupations and careers in the labour market. In some countries, legislation prohibiting sex discrimination went further, to give women equal access to housing, financial services, public services, and public posts;
- * the expansion of white-collar occupations, which are far more attractive to women than most blue-collar occupations;
- * the creation of jobs for secondary earners, people who do not want to give priority to paid work at the expense of other life interests; and
- * the increasing importance of attitudes, values and personal preferences in the lifestyle choices of affluent modern societies.

2. Women are heterogeneous in their preferences and priorities on the conflict between family and employment. In the new scenario they are therefore heterogeneous also in their employment patterns and work histories. These preferences are set out, as ideal types, in Table 2. The size of the three groups varies in rich modern societies because public policies usually favour one or another group, as shown in Table 3.

3. The heterogeneity of women's preferences and priorities creates conflicting interests between groups of women: sometimes between home-centred women and work-centred women, sometimes between the middle group of adaptive women and women who have one firm priority (whether for family work or employment). The conflicting interests of women have given a great advantage to men, whose interests are comparatively homogeneous; this is one cause of patriarchy and its disproportionate success.

4. Women's heterogeneity is the main cause of women's variable responses to social engineering policies in the new scenario of modern societies. This variability of response has been less evident in the past, but it has still impeded attempts to predict women's fertility and employment patterns. Policy research and future predictions of women's choices will be more successful in future if they adopt the Preference Theory perspective and first establish the distribution of preferences between family work and employment in each society.

Table 2 Classification of women's work-lifestyle preferences in the 21st century

| Home-centred | Adaptive | Work-centred |
|--|--|---|
| 20% of women varies 10%-30% | 60% of women varies 40%-80% | 20% of women varies 10%-30% |
| Family life and children are the main priorities throughout life. | This group is most diverse and includes women who want to combine work and family, plus drifters and unplanned careers | Childless women are concentrated here. Main priority in life is employment or equivalent activities in the public arena: politics, sport, art, etc. |
| Prefer <i>not</i> to work. | Want to work, but <i>not</i> totally committed to work career. | Committed to work or equivalent activities. |
| Qualifications obtained as cultural capital | Qualifications obtained with the intention of working. | Large investment in qualifications/training for employment/other activities. |
| Number of children is affected by government social policy, family wealth, etc. Not responsive to employment policy | This group is <i>very responsive</i> to government social policy, employment policy, equal opportunities policy/propaganda, economic cycle/recession/growth, etc. Including: income tax and social welfare benefits educational policies school timetables child care services public attitude towards working women legislation promoting female employment trade union attitudes to working women availability of part-time work and similar work flexibility economic growth and prosperity and institutional factors generally. | Responsive to economic opportunity political opportunity artistic opportunity etc. Not responsive to social/family policy |
| Family values: caring, sharing non-competitive communal, focus on cohesion | Compromise between two conflicting sets of values | Marketplace values: competitive rivalry achievement orientation individualism excellence |

Source: Hakim, *Work-Lifestyle Choices in the 21st Century*, Oxford University Press 2000, Table 6.1 updated.

Table 3 National distributions of lifestyle preferences among women and men

| | Family centred | Adaptive | Work centred | |
|---|-------------------|----------|-----------------|----|
| <i>Britain</i> | | | | |
| all women aged 16+ | 17 | 69 | 14 | |
| women in full-time work | 14 | 62 | 24 | |
| women in part-time work | 8 | 84 | 8 | |
| all men aged 16+ | ? | <48 | 52 | |
| men in full-time work | ? | <50 | 50 | |
| men in part-time work | ? | <66 | 34 | |
| <i>Spain</i> | | | | |
| all women aged 18+ | 17 | 70 | 13 | |
| women in full-time work | 4 | 63 | 33 | |
| women in part-time work | 7 | 79 | 14 | |
| all men aged 18+ | ? | <60 | 40 | |
| men in full-time work | ? | <56 | 44 | |
| <i>Belgium-Flanders</i> | | | | |
| all women | 10 | 75 | 15 | |
| women with partners | 12 | 75 | 13 | |
| all men | 2 | 23 | 75 | |
| men with partners | 1 | 22 | 77 | |
| <i>Germany</i> | | | | |
| women | 14 | 65 | 21 | |
| men | ? | 33 | 67 | |
| <i>Czech Republic</i> | | | | |
| all women aged 20-40 | 17 | 70 | 13 | |
| women in employment | 14 | 69 | 17 | |
| wives aged 20-40 | 14 | 75 | 11 | |
| <i>Sweden</i> | | | | |
| women in 1955 birth cohort: actual lifestyle choices by age 43 (1998) | 4 | 64 | 32 | |
| <i>Japan</i> | | | | |
| Ideal lifecourse of unmarried women | 1987 | 37 | 55 | 8 |
| | 2002 | 21 | 69 | 10 |
| | 2005 | 20 | 70 | 10 |

Source: Data for Britain and Spain, 1999, extracted from Tables 3.14 and 3.15 in C.Hakim (2003: 85, 87). *Models of the Family in Modern Societies: Ideals and Realities*, Ashgate. Data for other countries from a variety of sources, reported in C Hakim (2007) 'Dancing with the Devil?', *British Journal of Sociology*, 58: 123-132..