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**FAMILY FORMATION IN
FRANCE: BETWEEN
PREFERENCES AND
SOCIAL CONSTRAINTS**

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Research questions:

1. Are the factors explaining the fertility intentions of childless people the same of those explaining their actual childbearing behaviour?
 - Which are the determinants of the intentions to form a family?
 - Are the same determinants relevant for the actual behaviour?
 - Which are the determinants of family formation, once intentions are controlled for?
2. Which kind of relationship does exist between intentions and subsequent actual behaviour in the childless people?




Backgrounds:

- Mediating role of intentions: The same factors that predict fertility behaviour predict fertility intentions (Rindfuss, Morgan, and Swicegood 1988)
- Fertility intentions do not simply mediate the effects of other variables, but do contribute additional predictive power (Schoen, Astone, Kim, Nathanson, 1999)
- For the predictive power of intentions is relevant to specify:
 - A time framework of the intentions (McClelland, 1985; Miller & Pasta 1985; Ajzen 1985)
 - The certainty of the intentions (Thomson and Brandreth 1995; Schoen et al. 1999)
- The perceived probability to have a baby as alternative predictor of fertility behaviour (BHPS; EPCV)



Data (1/2):

- A sample of 2 624 men and women aged 20 to 45, representative of French population in 1998
 - 1 699 accepted the follow-up study (65%)
 - 783 still present in 2003 (46%)
 - Followed-up sub-sample: 30% (783/2624)
- Only 363 people childless in 1998 are followed up to 2003
- Continuation rate lower for
 - Respondents older than 35 (especially those who did not want any more children)
 - Less educated respondents



Data (2/2):

- Fertility intentions questions in 1998:
 - Do you want to have a(nother) child?
 - (if yes) In how much time?
 - Could you change your mind?
 - Did you discuss with your partner? Does she / he want to have a child? Will you agree at the end?
- Perceived probability to have a child in the next 2 and 5 years, in 1998
- Actual behaviour in 2003
 - Actual fertility
 - Fertility intentions



Methods (1/2):

- Determinants of fertility intentions
 - Logistic regressions on “**wanting** a first child in the next five years”, controlling for demographic and social covariates
- Determinants of fertility behaviour
 - Logistic regressions on “**having** a first child in the next five years”, controlling for demographic and social covariates, as well as for *fertility intentions*



Methods (2/2):

- Exogenous variables collected in 1998
 - Socio-demographic variables
 - Sex, age, marital and de facto conjugal status
 - Professional status, education, income
 - Religiousness, fertility impairments
 - Fertility intentions
 - Yes, want a child within 5 years
 - Yes, want a child but later, or don't know
 - No, do not want a child at all
 - Perceived probability to have a child in 2 and in 5 years
 - Yes surely I will have a baby in 5 years
 - Yes, probably I will have a baby in 5 years
 - Maybe 50/50
 - No, probably I will not have a baby in 5 years
 - No, surely I will not have a baby in 5 years

Wanting a child versus having a child

WANT A CHILD	Distribution in 1998 (%)	Proportion with a baby in 2003	Proportion want a child in 2003*
Yes, immediately	8.4	61.0	56.8
Yes, in the next 5 years	32.2	42.2	76.3
<i>I may <u>change</u> my mind</i>	9,0	38.4	56.3
<i>I will <u>not change</u> my mind</i>	23,2	43.7	94.5
Yes, but later than 5 years	54.9	11.6	81.8
No	4.5	(0.0)	(13.6)
<i>I may <u>change</u> my mind</i>	3,4	(0.0)	(12.6)
<i>I will <u>not change</u> my mind</i>	1,1	(0.0)	(19.1)
Total (N=363)	100	25.1	75.3

* Among those who did not have a baby

Perceived likelihood to have a child versus having a child
















LIKELIHOOD TO HAVE A CHILD IN THE NEXT <u>2 TO 5 YEARS</u>	Distribution in 1998 (%)	Proportion with a baby in 2003
Yes, surely	28.4	53.5
Yes, probably	13.8	36.3
Maybe, 50/50	29.9	14.9
No, probably not	11.4	2.0
No, surely not	16.5	1.2
Total (N=363)	100	25.1

Results (1/5): ODDS RATIO OF WANTING AND HAVING A CHILD

	Want a child	Have a child			
		I	II	III	IV
FERTILITY INTENTIONS					
Want a child in 5 years			2,55 **		
FIRM FERTILITY INTENTIONS					
Want a child in 5 years, firmly				2,67 *	
Want a child in 5 years, not firmly				2,21	
LIKELIHOOD TO HAVE A CHILD					
Likelihood to have a child in 5 years					3,42 ***
GENDER					
Male	0,81	0,54	0,56	0,56	0,63
AGE					
Age_30	1,78 *	0,66	0,59	0,62	0,67
Age_30^2	0,28 ***	0,18 ***	0,22 ***	0,23 ***	0,31 ***
MARITAL STATUS (ref.: married)					
Cohabiting	1,30	1,44	1,29	1,32	1,40
Single	0,12 **	0,09 ***	0,12 ***	0,12 ***	0,12 ***
UNION DURATION (Ref.: 0 to 2 years)					
Between 3 and 6 years	0,11 ***	0,34	0,49	0,50	0,40
7 years or more	0,16 **	0,17 *	0,22	0,22	0,17 *
EDUCATION (Ref.: low educated)					
Medium education	0,67	1,81	1,99	1,97	2,12
High education	0,71	1,55	1,72	1,71	1,91
EMPLOYMENT (Ref.: both employed)					
One of the partners unemployed	0,60	0,25 *	0,28 *	0,29 *	0,28 *
INCOME					
Income	0,33 **	0,99	1,19	1,86	1,11
Income^2	5,08	2,60	2,04	2,10	2,99
N	363	363	363	363	363
Log-likelihood	-172,08	-135,79	-132,27	-132,19	-130,35

Results (2/5):

EFFECTS OF COVARIATES ON WANTING AND HAVING A CHILD

	WANTING	HAVING
Wanting		
Age		
Single		
Union duration		
High education		
Unemployment		
Income		
Impairments		

Note.  positive;  negative. Significant results marked in red color



Results (3/5):

- Highly educated people and people with high income want less often, but they have more often if they want
- Age and marital status are the main predictors of wanting and having a first child
 - Cohabitants want more often and have more often than married but the effects are not significant controlling for union duration, even though more than half of the first children are born to unmarried couples



Results (4/5):

INTERACTION EFFECTS OF EDUCATION WITH WANTING A FIRST CHILD AND LIKELIHOOD TO HAVE A FIRST CHILD

	WANT TO HAVE A FIRST CHILD	LIKELIHOOD TO HAVE A FIRST CHILD
All respondents	2.55	3.42
Low education	1.70	1.31
High education	3.72	10.90

Note.

Controlled for all the sociodemographic covariates included in the models



Results (5/5)

- Likely is a better predictor than want
 - Desire and known constraints, changes
 - Ability to foresee is different among social groups
- Highly educated predict better
 - Want is twice more reliable for highly educated
 - Likely is eight times more reliable for highly educated
 - For highly educated, likely is much better, while for lower educated likely is a worse predictor



Concluding remarks:

1. Among the childless people the factors of wanting and having a child are the same. But for the intentions are more relevant the duration of the union and the economic conditions while for the actual fertility behaviour are more important the employment conditions
2. The relationship between fertility intentions and subsequent actual behaviour is not so weak:
 - **Wanting a child within the next five years** is still a significant factor of the actual fertility in the next 5 years, even after controlling for backgrounds and life course variables
 - **The perceived likelihood to have a first child in the next 5 years** is a better predictor of the subsequent actual childbearing behaviour than wanting a first child in the next 5 years
3. The main obstacles to the transition to a first child are related to the status of being *single* of the respondents and to the *unemployment* conditions of one of the two partners, the first factor inhibits also the desire to have a first child, the second is only working against the actual childbearing
4. Highly educated predict better



Caveats:

- Small sample size limits the possibility of a more stratified analysis
- The information on the respondents are available only in 1998 and 2003, and we do not know exactly whether the possible changes took place before the birth of a child;
- Relevant variables are not available, for instance, the number of siblings of the respondents



Next steps:

- Compare with parents (birth by order)
- Use of 2001 and 2003 data on changes in covariates and intentions
- Compare actual and perceived consistency over time
- Qualitative interviews



Thank you

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