Fertility dynamics in France and Italy
Who are the couples that do not give birth to the intended child?

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1. Objective and Data
Average number of children per woman (2005):

→ France: 2 children
→ Italy: 1,4 child

Why?

→ Previous findings showed that desired fertility is very similar in France and Italy (Régnier-Loilier and Vignoli, 2008; Vignoli and Régnier-Loilier, 2009).

→ Research questions:
  • Do Italian people intend to have less children?
  • Do Italian people realize less often their intended fertility projects?
Fertility behaviours depend on:

→ individual characteristics

→ **fertility intentions** ("positive" or "negative")

**Previous studies** (e.g., Westoff et Ryder, 1977; Monnier, 1989; Schoen et al, 1999; Symeonidou, 2000; Noack et Østby, 2002; Toulemon et Testa, 2005; Meggiolaro, 2007; Rinesi, 2009) **have shown that**:

→ "negative" intentions are a good predictor of subsequent fertility behaviours

→ "positive" intentions tend to overestimate fertility
Many factors have been found in the literature to influence the gap between positive fertility intentions and their subsequent realizations:

→ **Demographic factors**, in particular **women’s age and parity** (e.g., Noack and Østby, 2002; Quesnel-Vallée and Morgan, 2003; Testa and Toulemon, 2006; Rinesi, 2009).

→ **Type of union**: positive effect (Schoen et al, 1999; Quesnel-Vallée and Morgan, 2003) / no effect (Toulemon and Testa, 2005).

→ The effect of **gender roles** also seems to vary in different contexts (e.g., Thomson, 1997 for Sweden, and Symeonidou, 2000 for Greece).

→ **Education**: positive (Toulemon and Testa, 2005; Rinesi, 2009) / negative (Quesnel-Vallée and Morgan, 2003).

→ Economic factors: **unemployment** significantly widens the gap between fertility intentions and realizations (Toulemon and Testa, 2005; Rinesi, 2009).
*In France:* « Étude des relations familiales et intergénérationnelles » survey, Ined-Insee, 2005-2008:

→ 10,000 (2005) men and women aged 18-79

*In Italy:* « Famiglia e soggetti sociali » survey, Istat, 2003-2006/2007:

→ 24,000 households (2003) and almost 50,000 individuals of all ages

Follow-up surveys 3/3.5 years after the first wave

Third wave planned in France, BUT not in Italy
Question at the first wave:

Do you intend to have a(another) child during the next three years?

definitely not
probably not
probably yes
definitely yes

+ respondent’s characteristics (number of children, age, couple situation, education and employment status of R and partner, and so on)

With the follow-up, we know if R have had a child during the inter-wave period.
2. Observed fertility and fertility intentions in France and Italy
Cumulative % of women having a child according to the age (45-64 years old)
1. Objective and data
2. Observed fertility and intention
3. « 3 years later… »: realizations vs intentions
4. Conclusions

**Cumulative % of women having a child according to the age (35-44 years old)**
Observed fertility

Cumulative % of women having a first child according to the age (25-34 y. o.)

1. Objective and data
2. Observed fertility and intention
3. «3 years later…»: realizations vs intentions
4. Conclusions
Intention to have a/another child during the next three years according to the number of child (%)
3. « Three years later… » : realizations vs. intentions
Proportion of people who have had at least one child, according to their initial intentions (France - Italy)

Which are the factors who can be associated to the non-realization of positive fertility intentions?
... according to the age and partnership status (%)
Unrealized fertility intentions...

... according to the number of children at the first wave (%)
... « other things being equal » (situation at the first round):

**Demographic variables:**
- Number of children
- Age of the woman
- Partnership status

**Couples’ socio-economic status:**
- Men and women’s employment status
- Men and women’s education
- Housing tenure

**Other relevant variables from the literature:**
- Housing proximity with respondent’s mother
- Religiosity
Unrealized fertility intention...

Predicted probability (%), logistic regression - FRANCE

1. Objective and data
2. Observed fertility and intention
3. « 3 years later... »: realizations vs intentions
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1. Objective and data
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Non realized fertility intention...

Predicted probability (%), logistic regression - ITALY

Opposite effect than in France
Smaller effect than in France
Only in Italy
(1) We found that negative fertility intentions are potent predictor of subsequent fertility behaviors, while positive fertility intentions tend to overestimate fertility realizations.

This result corroborates earlier findings (Westoff and Ryder, 1977; Monnier, 1989; Schoen et al., 1999; Symeonidou, 2000; Noack and Østby, 2002; Toulemon and Testa, 2005; Testa and Toulemon, 2006; Meggiolaro, 2009; Rinesi, 2009).
We found that the relationship between intended positive fertility and subsequent behaviors varies remarkably among different population profiles.

- **Demographic factors** indicate that the compression of the reproductive lifespan may indeed affect the possibility for women to fulfill their intended level of fertility.

- **Economic factors** are also remarkably important: overall, individuals who are economically better off seem to be in a stronger position to achieve their fertility plans.

- All in all, we found that some of the considered factors are differently related to fertility realizations in France and Italy, suggesting that the search for possible constraints to fertility realizations should be placed in space and time.
(3) An important country-specific difference between France and Italy does emerge.

- In **France** there seems to be a more pronounced “wait-and-see” attitude which leaves the future open, even when people reported that they probably do not intend to have children.

- In **Italy**, by contrast, people appear more realistic about their future (negative) fertility expectations.

→ The French institutional setting is much more favorable for childbearing and childrearing than the Italian one. In Italy the domestic institutions have not adjusted to the ongoing societal change (*Livi Bacci and Salvini 2000; McDonald, 2000*). Such a situation may lead Italian people to be quite “realistic” about their future negative (!) fertility intentions.
Contacts

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Érfi survey (french GGS):
www-erfi.ined.fr

Famiglia e soggetti sociali survey (italian GGS):
http://www.istat.it/strumenti/wispondenti/indagini/famiglia_societa/famigliesoggettitisociali

Generations and Gender Surveys:
http://www.unece.org/pau/ggp/Welcome.html