

## **Why not having a(nother) child? An analysis of Italian couples' reproductive intentions.**

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### **Abstract:**

Over the past decades the process of family formation has dramatically changed in Europe. Even though similar trends have been observed across Europe there are still important differences between countries.

In comparison to Western European countries Italy, in particular, shows the latest-late transition to adulthood and persistent low levels of fertility. Moreover, this country is characterized by the predominance of traditional gender roles and a very limited social welfare system that favours an overcautious attitude towards risk taking and family responsibilities.

This study aims to analyse the process of family formation in Italy, with a specific focus on couples' reproductive intentions for a first and a second child. Our main hypothesis (see also Rosina and Testa 2007) is that in Italy the couples' intentions to have a child are particularly exposed to a partners' conflict if the woman works (actually, a job is increasingly seen as a necessity not only for economic reasons, but also for the independence and the personal realization of the woman) and if she has the highest level of educational attainment within the couple. Moreover, it is supposed that some levels of conflict emerge when women are unsatisfied of the gender division of child caring responsibilities and other family chores.

In our analysis we use household level data provided by the International Generation and Gender Program study, adopting a bargaining approach within the couple.

Our findings are coherent with the assumption that a higher consistency between desired and actual reproductive behaviour may be achieved if the increasing female labour force participation is counterbalanced by more symmetric gender roles within the couples and by adequate policy measures aimed at facilitating the reconciliation between family and working life.

### **Key-Words:**

Fertility intentions, Couple's reproductive decisions, Bargaining Approach, Partners' disagreement in childbearing, Fertility decision-making process.

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## **1. Introduction**

The empirical literature on fertility indicates that a couple's preferred family size is strongly related to a variety of socio-economic factors like income, education, assets, employment, religion, and age at marriage. The majority of the studies of household fertility decisions are based on Becker's model (1981) which states that all members in a family act to maximize one single household utility function. Using this model indirectly means that we are assuming that either the members of a couple prefer the same number of children or the woman follows her partner's preferences on family size. Because of this assumption, the empirical literature on fertility – with the exception of a few studies – ignores the potential importance of men and women having different preferences regarding the number of children.

Recently, the importance of the partner's reproductive intentions has been recognized in literature, even if few studies have provided in-depth analyses of the fertility plans of both partners (Thomson 1997; Hoem and Thomson 1998; Neyer 2000) and fertility research has continued to be primarily based on the views of women. Obviously and as it is for the majority of the cases in research, this has to do with the lack of adequate data that have been often collected on female respondents, or on men and women separately, but not on both members of a couple. Nevertheless, even if in some surveys individuals have been asked to report their partner's childbearing intentions, such responses have proved to be not accurate, because they strongly reflect the respondents' point of view (Testa and Toulemon 2006) and tend to underestimate the level of disagreement (Thomson and Hoem 1998). This data employment has been justified thanks to the assumption that partners select each other if they share the same values, so the intimate characteristics of one partner usually coincide with the ones of the other partner. Even if this approach has been taken as granted for years, in 1996 Corijn, Aart Liefbroer and de Jong Gierveld and more recently Crippen and Brew (2007) highlighted that sometimes the overlapping of the characteristics of the members of one couple is not precise and complete, so in order to obtain non-misleading results is better considering separately the features of both components.

In order to analyse in an accurate way this topic, the present paper by exploiting the household level data obtained thanks to the International Generation and Gender Program studies the determinants of the partners' conflicting fertility intentions for the first and the second child. A parity-specific approach is required because the influence of wives and husbands in the reproductive decision-making process is strongly affected by the number of previously born children (Beckman 1983), and dissimilar intentions of the partners may have a different impact on couples at different parities (Miller and Pasta 1995).

Italy represents a very interesting case of study in the analysis of couples' childbearing intentions. The total fertility rate has remained below 1.4 children per woman. According to the Eurostat Yearbook 2006–2007, Italy is the European country with the lowest completed fertility by generation of the mother (1.5 for the birth cohort 1965). Moreover, in Italy there is a higher positive discrepancy between desired and actual fertility (ISTAT 2006) than in other European countries (Testa 2006). Finally, this country is characterised by the rigidity of sequencing of events (both because of social norms and because the society does not consider as feasible choices as getting married or becoming parents while studying), by the predominance of very traditional gender roles and by a lack of adequate policy measures aimed at facilitating the reconciliation between family and working life (Saraceno 1994; Pinnelli 1995; Del Boca et al. 2004).

This paper is organised as follows. In Section 2 we review the main literature on couples' childbearing intentions. Section 3 is devoted to the presentation of the data. The methodology and the results of the multivariate analysis are described in Section 4, while Section 5 contains a discussion of the main findings and some policy implications.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

Fertility decision-making is a complex process. Part of its complexity is due to the heterogeneous nature of reproductive behaviour, which includes biological, psychological and social dimensions. The dynamic resulting from couple interaction represents a relevant component in that process

(Beckman 1983). Considerable evidence indicates that men and women both make independent contributions to fertility decisions (Beckman 1983; Miller and Pasta 1995; Thomson et al. 1990; Thomson 1997).

Neoclassical models of female labour force participation (Becker, 1981; Cigno, 1991) apply economic theory to the most sensitive personal decisions, such as choosing a spouse or -notably for us- having children and hypothesize that women compare the costs and benefits of labour force participation when deciding whether to participate in the labour market or not. The costs of participation are both pecuniary and related to job search and the purchase of external childcare, and non-pecuniary, such as those related to the reduction in time devoted to child rearing or leisure. Precisely, Becker uses unitary models with the basic economic assumptions of maximizing behaviour, stable preferences, equilibria in explicit or implicit markets to analyze the allocation of time to child care as well as to careers, to marriage and divorce. In the economic literature, a couple's perspective was adopted as women started to achieve higher levels of education and income and gained also a stronger authority in decision-making within the household. As a consequence, in the late 1980s the unitary models were replaced by non-unitary models that rely on cooperative game theory, which assumes that players can make binding commitments and provide some help in identifying the determinants of the individuals' bargaining power (Lundberg and Pollak 2007).

The literature has shown that if the partners have conflicting fertility intentions, the resolution of the disagreement depends on the type of decision each partner wants to make, on the existing level of gender equity, both at the individual and societal level, and on the prevalent rule adopted by the couples in disagreement. Usually women prevail in positive fertility decisions and men predominate in negative childbearing plans. Townes et al. (1980), for example, argued that wives' opinions are more important than the husbands' in determining whether couples will seek pregnancy, if wives are in favour of a pregnancy. Similarly, Beckman (1983) pointed out that in case of disagreement, a male view prevails in anti-fertility decisions, while a female opinion is dominant in pro-fertility decisions. However, in a study on a sample of well-educated couples, Beckman (1984) found out that in couples with discordant opinions wives are less likely to desire another child in the short-run than husbands.

An important contribution on couples' attitude on the timing for the first child and in line with the resource-bargain theories (Blood and Wolfe, 1960) is the work of Jansen and Liefbroer (2006) that, focusing on Netherlands, highlight four different decision rules that may be adopted by partners that disagree on the intention of becoming parents in order to reach a final joint decision. A first rule that partners may use in dealing with diverging attitudes is based on the literature on power relationships within unions and suggests that the attitudes of the most powerful partner will be decisive in the decision-making processes; therefore, according to this rule, the more access a partner has to scarce resources such as education, occupational status and income, the more power he/she holds and the more likely it is that this spouse's attitudes will prevail in decision making. That's why it is called the "power rule". A second rule is the so called "golden mean" hypothesis and it is based on the assumption that spouses perceive each other as equals and that such notion of equality pervades all the spheres of family life. The corresponding decision rule is that partners view each other's attitudes as equally important and try to reach a compromise if they hold diverging opinions. The result will be that the decision will be midway between the preferences of both partners. Studies on intentions of couples toward childbearing as the ones already mentioned assert that if the member of a couple differ in the intended number of children or in child-timing intentions, couples often try to strike a compromise exactly in this direction (Thomson 1997; Thomson et al. 1990). The so called "sphere of interest rule" is based on traditional ideas about a gender-specific division of household and paid labour and precisely it is based on the New Home Economics Theory (Becker 1981) which provides a theoretical rationale for a gender-specific division of labour in which the wife focuses on family and children and the husband focuses on paid employment. Finally, it is not possible to rule out the possibility that two partners in disagreement are able to reach in any case a joint accord, so another rule comes out: the "social drift rule".

Partners with conflicting values that apply such rule end with the postponement of decisions or simply resolve their divergences by doing nothing, leading to the continuation of the existing status quo.

Following the same approach but with a special focus on fertility intentions and realizations and basing their findings on data from the European Social Survey 2004, Bühlmann, Elcheroth and Tettamanti (2009) show that while most of the European couples live in coherent egalitarian configurations of values and practices in their pre-parental phase, they shift to a situation of tension between egalitarian values and gendered practices following the births of their first children. The three authors follow the approach developed by Krüger and Levy (2001) that hypothesize that women and men are endowed with a specific 'master status' which, when activated by some kind of biographical events, leads to the privileged assignation of men to the occupational domain and of women to the familial domain. The dominance of the status does not exclude the eventual participation in the second field, but such possibilities are subsidiary to prerequisites introduced in the principal domain.

In Italy, there are very few studies focussed on the process of negotiating fertility choices within the couple. The most influential in the Italian literature is the article written by Bimbi (1996). According to the author, in Italian couples the translation of child desires into concrete intentions may be hindered by the fear of compromising the achieved standard of living and—especially amongst the female partners—by the doubts concerning the possibility/feasibility of reconciling work and family life. This phenomenon, which is common to other European countries as well, may be more pronounced in Italy, because of the scarce public financial support to families with children and the lack of adequate policy measures to facilitate the work–family balance such as parental leave, childcare provision and more flexible working time for women. Bimbi (1996) suggested that unequal gender roles are positively associated with increasing postponement of childbearing, because in couples with unequal division of family tasks the negotiation of fertility choices is more difficult.

As a consequence, amongst these couples the birth of a first child is postponed and only a few of them are able to make the transition to a second child (Bimbi 1996 ).

When selecting only childless couples, we focus our analysis only on couples' first child fertility intentions. These are particularly relevant because they represent the start of the childbearing decision-making process that may influence the whole reproductive career, for example, if there is a considerable postponement of the transition to the first child. Moreover we employ the same econometric strategy to study couples' intention for a second child. The decision of analysing the second childbirth intention is due to the importance of the second childbearing in the developed world as large proportions of women remain childless or bear only one child (Frejka and Ross 2001).

### **3. Data**

The data employed to conduct the analysis are from the Multipurpose Household Survey on "Family and Social Subjects", carried out in Italy by the Italian National Statistical Office (ISTAT) at the end of 2003 (November 2003).

The survey focuses on family structures and elements such as informal networks, help received during the child-care, life as a couple and marriage, life cycle and intentions to leave from the parental home, to get married or to have children are included. Moreover, attitude and opinion on some daily life aspects, job careers, and search for employment are covered as well.

The survey unit is the household, so that information on both members of the couple are available, but some building blocks of the questionnaire -in particular the ones referred to fertility intentions- are included into the self-administered part, in order to gain higher degree of independence between the answers of the partners in comparison to other different surveys in which both partners may be present at the interview. In any case, the same questions were asked to both partners; precisely the issue on fertility intentions are asked to people aged 18 to 49.

The investigation focuses only on men and women living in a union, since the aim of the paper is studying the factors of the partners' disagreement in the couples' childbearing intentions. For that reason, when analysing fertility intention for a first child we have 1.083 childless couples, while we have selected respondents who had at least one recorded biological child and one or more recorded unions when dealing with the intention for a second child. Note that we maintained divided the analysis to couples without child and with one child because having a second child is a particular event that needs to be considered separately from the first birth or from higher birth orders children (Testa and Toulemon 1996). This second sample size is of 1.330 couples and individuals are aged 25 to 49 years.

Referring to the fertility intention sphere, respondents were asked about fertility intentions in the following way: «Do you intend to have a child in the next three years?». The four different options presented in the survey were: “Surely not”, “Probably not”, “Probably yes” and “Surely yes”, but in order to conduct the present investigation we decided to group together the categories, two by two, precisely “Surely not” and “Probably not” on one side and “Probably yes” and “Surely yes” on the other side<sup>1</sup>. Other two questions on fertility intentions were included in the questionnaire, one more general without a precise time frame «In the future do you intend to have any child? » and one with the main focus of capturing the child number desires: «How many children would you like to have over your life course?». Given that the interest of the present investigation is in the individual and couple's intention for a first and a second child and given that in literature has been proved that the explicit reference to a precise temporal framework is able to drive individuals to give more faithful answers (Quesnel-Vallée and Morgan 2003), the analysis focuses only on the child-three years timing preference measure «Do you intend to have a child in the next three years?».

The degree of conflicting intentions is in general relatively low. The descriptive analysis (Table 1) shows that men's disagreement in first child intentions goes above 15% only at younger and advanced ages, whereas the women's disagreement is very low before 30 years of age. For what concern the intention for a second child, female and male disagreement is more than 15% at advanced ages, while when the male partner in the couple is young, both male and female disagreement is very low. This last evidence may find support in the literature regarding the attitudes toward having children. For instance, Beets et al. in 1999 found exactly that positive parenthood attitudes lead to having children at an earlier age.

**Table 1. Female and Male disagreement in the intention to have the first or the second child in the next three years (Childless couples and couples with one child, Weighed data -couples with one child in bold).**

		Male disagreement percentage of couples with female positive intention		Female disagreement percentage of couples with male positive intention
<i>Age (her)</i>				
<30	9.72	<b>12.67</b>	2.70	<b>11.25</b>
30 - 34	6.11	<b>10.01</b>	9.78	<b>12.89</b>
35 - 39	6.13	<b>10.73</b>	9.12	<b>13.07</b>
40 +	9.81	<b>28.57</b>	7.68	<b>31.03</b>
<i>Age (him)</i>				
<30	15.79	<b>8.00</b>	2.98	<b>8.00</b>
30 - 34	4.12	<b>13.30</b>	3.99	<b>8.25</b>
35 - 39	7.56	<b>9.64</b>	11.85	<b>17.22</b>
40 +	26.55	<b>7.45</b>	25.98	<b>17.30</b>

<sup>1</sup> This action was done for sake of simplicity, but the authors know that in the sphere of the intentions there are a lot of differences in interpretation between the terms “probably” and “surely”, especially when the intentions are treated as predictor for the behavior.

## 4. Analyses

### 4.1 Model and Variables

The analytic model includes five explanatory variables, namely female's employment status and strategy, female's education, male's employment status mass attendance and female's satisfaction with the division of domestic work.

Other control variables are also included in the model (Appendix 1). These control variables relate firstly to the individual characteristics of the respondent, precisely the age of the respondents, the kind of marriage (if it was religious or civil) and the area of residence in Italy. Moreover when dealing with the intention for a second child the age of the first child is added in order to understand if the temporal distance between the first and the (un)planned second one is important in shaping the fertility intention for a second child. Note that the variable related to the time distance from the first child has been considered as a control variable and not as an independent one in order to consider the selection effect: actually, the more that the distance from the first birth increases, the more the couples that have a second child exit from the sample under investigation while the ones that decided not to intend to have another son/daughter become overrepresented.

The econometric model adopted for a first analysis is a logistic regression model. The dependent variable of interest is made by four categories that represent the four different combinations of intentions between the two partners, that is "Both intend", "both do not intend", "she intends, he does not" and "he intends, she does not". Given the unordered nature of the categories the model adopted in the investigation is a multinomial logit model that aims at capturing different dimensions within the same framework and its dynamics within the couple; in this way it allows to study the different effects of female and male characteristics on the positive or dissonant intention to have a first and a second child.

### 4.2 Hypotheses

Our main hypothesis is that partners' conflict in the child intentions is likely to occur more frequently in couples where the partners have equal power. In the traditional society as the Italian one, where the predisposition to have (at least) one child is very persistent, women may express fertility intentions in disagreement with their partners if they are more autonomous and more likely to achieve self-fulfilment outside the family.

#### *4.2.1 Cohabitation*

In Italy cohabitation is in most cases a temporary phase in the process of family formation. This phase is often characterised by high level of uncertainty concerning the dwelling and the employment conditions as well as the relationship with the partner (Di Giulio and Rosina 2007). On the other hand, people who choose to cohabit as an alternative to marrying do also tend to have less traditional family values and attitudes (Fraboni 2005) and consequently they are more likely to express dissimilar childbearing intentions. Note that the analysis on this variable is only performed on the intention to have a first child, given that in the sample the 99% of couples that already have one child are married.

#### *4.2.2 Female's education*

Given that women have the primary responsibility for the direct care for children even in a dual-earner family, they have to bear a disproportionately large share of the couple's fertility cost. This cost is even higher for highly educated women than for those with less education, therefore according to economic theory, the former group should have lower fertility intention, *ceteris paribus*. Nevertheless, recently the first signs of an opposite trend have been observed: couples with more human capital and economic resources do show, *ceteris paribus*, a higher propensity to have children (Rosina 2004; Dalla Zuanna and Tanturri 2007; Mills et al. 2008).

Various studies highlighted the presence of a positive effect of female educational level on first childbearing intentions (Mills et al. 2008), but we may also expect a positive effect of female education on partners' disagreement: Couples in which women are highly educated tend to be more egalitarian in terms of gender roles and are more exposed to a disagreement between partners when they do not share the same opinion.

#### 4.2.3 Female's employment status

The influence of labour market participation is a key issue for the fertility intention (and realization). In particular, considering the Italian context, considering the intention for the first child, we suppose that working women are more likely to have negative first child intentions and to express them even in opposition to the childbearing plans of their partner. Regarding the intention for the second child, we suppose that the relation between female childbearing intention for a second child and female's employment status is negative, in particular given the scarce presence of childcare service experienced in the majority of the cases with the first child (Brewster and Rinfuss 2000). Nevertheless, the association between fertility and the labour force participation is not necessarily negative: it is true that the fertility and the labour force participation of women are competing in terms of time and energies to allocate (Willekens 1991), but evidence of a positive effect of women's employment on birth risks has been founded for East Germany (Kreyenfeld 2004) and Hungary (Ròbert and Bukodi 2005).

Connected again with the labour force participation but considering the employment strategies of individuals, it is possible to rationally expect that women who go back to full-time work in the small-child years are likely to prefer smaller families while those who work reduced hours or are housewives may behave in such way in order to have more children.

#### 4.2.4 Satisfaction with the Gender Division of Domestic Work

In order to see how the dynamic of the decision of becoming parents for the second time within a couple works and in line with the bargaining process theory illustrated in the second Section, it is interesting considering the quality of the relationship. Actually, it seems reasonable supposing that the more solid is the relationship, the lower is the probability that a member of a couple opposes her/his partner in the fertility intention sphere. In order to capture these elements, a series of different topics on the frequency of the disagreement with the partner in the last 12 months have been taken into consideration. Moreover, in line with the bargaining process theory illustrated in the second Section, it is interesting considering women's level of satisfaction about the gender division of domestic duties that might be considered as well as a *proxi* for the quality of the relationship. Independently on the level of education and whether women do work or not, the gender division of the caring and family chores may alone influence the attitude to agree or disagree with the partner's positive or negative fertility intentions. Such dimension has been recognize of particular interest in the recent literature for different Countries; actually Mills at al. in 2008 found that unsatisfied women are more likely to contrast with their partners' desire of becoming father and Miller and Short in 2004 show that in the US the arrival of a child is facilitated by a more equal division of domestic tasks. Note that almost the 30.75% of the respondent in our sample are often in contrast with the partner and 19.85% have rarely different opinion on such topic. For both reasons, the satisfaction for the division of the domestic tasks and childcare work is considered in our analysis when shaping the quality of the relationship.

#### 4.2.5 Individual Values

The fact that being religious has a positive impact on individual's fertility level is well-know in literature; actually in 2004 Adsera found that in Spain in 1985 family size was similar among practicing and non-practicing Catholics, but a decade and a half later, practicing Catholics portrayed significantly higher fertility than others. Similar results are found by Frejka and Westoff (2006) that examined the importance of religiosity in the transatlantic fertility differences founding hat in southern Europe church attendance significantly determines progression to higher order births while the measure of the importance of religion is most relevant in Western Europe. More recently, Philipov and Berghammer (Philipov and Berghammer 2009) found that all measures of religiosity are in general related to a higher ideal number of children, higher odds to intend another child and higher expected and actual number of children.

In order to see which the specific effect of the religion on the couples' fertility intention is and more importantly in order to evaluate the effects of the other variables such as the level of education or the employment strategy net of the valour component, the variable mass attendance as a proxy of the religiousness is considered. For what concern couples' agreement or disagreement, it is expected

that the religiousness of only one of the two components may increase the probability of disagreement within the couple.

### 4.3 Results

#### 4.3.1 Intentions for the First Child<sup>2</sup>

Table 2 reports the estimates of the multinomial logit model. We should remind that the parameters show the effect of the covariates on a given category respect to the reference category, which is “both partners intend to have a first child”.

As expected, the estimates of the model show that the absence of desire for children is more likely among cohabiting couples, which usually have more modern values and life style as compared to married couples. We found a significant negative effect of cohabitation on couples’ concordant first child intentions. The positive effect on “both don’t intend” means that cohabiting couples are less likely to make childbearing plans as compared to married couples, other things being equal. Moreover, the positive and significant effect on “he intends, she doesn’t” means that cohabiting men with positive intention, in comparison with married men, tend to be contrasted more often by the female partner. These results are consistent with our hypothesis.

The effect of education on couples’ first child intentions is more complex than expected and does not go in only one direction. The couples where the female has a degree are less likely to have concordant negative fertility intentions, consistently with our assumptions. On the contrary, a male high education is associated with a more cautionary attitude toward the possibility to start to have children. But there is also an interesting interaction effects: if her education dominates the propensity for the couple not to want to have a first child is higher, while if the asymmetry is more traditional (his education dominates) the effect goes in the opposite direction<sup>3</sup>.

Consistently with our hypothesis working women tend to disagree more often with their partners’ first child intentions, as compared to women who are housewife. Moreover, the couples where the man is unemployed are less willing to have the first child, as shown in other recent studies for Italy as well as for other European countries (Sobotka and Testa, 2008).

Noteworthy is also the effect of the covariate “Satisfaction with the gender division of domestic work”. In particular, women less satisfied with the division of housework are more likely to oppose their partner if he wants a child. This result is coherent with the recent findings about the impact of the men’s involvement in domestic duties on the reproductive behaviour.

Finally, as expected, the “mass attendance” of the partners is positively associated with their short-term fertility intentions: religious partners are more likely to want to become parents. We found a strong negative effect of male religiousness on “both don’t intend”, but, mass attendance of only one of the two partners significantly increases the probability of a couple disagreement: if the woman is religious, the risk that she contrasts her partner’s desire to have a child is lower, and conversely, if the man is religious, the risk that the female partner contrasts his attitude is higher.

**Table 2. Multinomial logistic model on the intention to have a first child within the next three years (Couples aged 18–49)**

	<b>Both do not intend</b>	<b>She intends, he does not</b>	<b>He intends, she does not</b>
<b>Age (her)</b>			
<30	-1.018* (0.278)	0.377 (0.323)	-0.450 (0.419)
30 - 34	-0.167 (0.195)	0.094 (0.294)	0.826* (0.297)
40 +	0.965* (0.230)	-0.305 (0.462)	-0.633 (0.542)
<b>Age (him)</b>			
<30	-0.062 (0.310)	0.142 (0.349)	-1.027 (0.569)
30 - 34	-1.969* (0.284)	-1.073* (0.326)	-0.888* (0.350)
35-44	0.507* (0.217)	0.080 (0.386)	0.152 (0.382)
45 +	1.724* (0.299)	0.966 (0.557)	1.754* (0.652)

<sup>2</sup> The results presented in this Section are taken from Rosina, A. and Testa, M.R. (2007).

<sup>3</sup> However, the interaction effects should be considered with caution since by combining the different levels of his and her education with the dependent variable we obtain very few cases in some categories.

	<b>Both do not intend</b>	<b>She intends, he does not</b>	<b>He intends, she does not</b>
<b>Area of residence</b>			
South	0.4687* (0.1416)	0.0696 (0.1778)	0.1894 (0.2271)
<b>Type of Union</b>			
Cohabitation	0.53* (0.128)	0.285 (0.175)	0.506* (0.198)
<b>Education (her)</b>			
Low (Isced 0 - 2)	0.641* (0.200)	0.238 (0.268)	0.543 (0.293)
High (Isced 5 - 6)	-0.859* (0.242)	-0.381 (0.324)	-0.323 (0.342)
<b>Education (him)</b>			
Low (Isced 0 - 2)	-0.445* (0.189)	-0.276 (0.258)	0.074 (0.297)
High (Isced 5 - 6)	0.496* (0.239)	0.202 (0.343)	0.151 (0.369)
<b>Mass attendane (her)</b>			
At least once a month	-0.009 (0.178)	0.271 (0.223)	-0.806* (0.221)
<b>Mass attendane (him)</b>			
At least once a month	-0.390* (0.180)	-0.238 (0.225)	0.643* (0.223)
<b>Female employment status</b>			
Employed	-0.272 (0.149)	0.074 (0.211)	0.790* (0.351)
Other	0.321 (0.217)	-0.068 (0.307)	-0.981 (0.617)
<b>Male employment status</b>			
Unemployed	0.418* (0.203)	0.057 (0.319)	0.157 (0.387)
<b>Division of housework within the couple</b>			
She not satisfied	-0.117 (0.114)	0.073 (0.152)	0.236 (0.164)
<b>Interaction</b>			
She Highly Educated*			
He Poorly Educated	1.398* (0.335)	0.807 (0.468)	n.e.
He Highly Educated*			
She Poorly Educated	-0.283 (0.559)	0.672 (0.552)	n.e.
<b>Intercept</b>	0.845 (0.621)	-0.848 (0.689)	-9.499 (0.538)

\*\*Significant at  $p < 0.5$  Level; n.e. = not estimated (too few cases).

#### 4.3.2 Intentions for the Second Child

Following the same structure of Table 2, Table 3 reports the estimates of all our three models for the intention for a second child. First of all, considering the level of education, we find quite sophisticated but interesting results. Actually, we are able to conclude that, net of the effects of the other independent variables, both the educational attainment for female and for male is not significant and the effect is unclear: however, we can draw the attention on some interesting features. Taking into consideration the sign of the coefficients, when within a couple the female partner is highly educated the couple is more likely to have a concordant negative intention for a second child. This is in line with the assumption previously mentioned about the trade off faced by a higher educated women and it can be also considered the result of a societal gender structure in Italy that has not successfully reduced fertility costs for more educated women. For what concern the male educational attainment, the couples where is the man that holds a University degree are less likely to agree with the partner on not having a second child (at 10% level). In order to see if the differences in the reached educational level impacts on the couple's agreement-disagreement on fertility intentions, interactions terms have been included in the analysis: when there is a more traditionally asymmetry, precisely when the male partner has a higher educational attainment compared with the one of the female partner, the propensity for the couple not to intend to have another child is higher (positive and significant coefficient). On the other side, the opposite direction of the effect is obtained when her education dominates. Referring to the labour market sphere couples with working women are less likely to make plan for a second child compared with couples

where the female partner is an housewife<sup>4</sup>. If we change perspective and consider the partners' disagreement, we note -again in line with the effect previously assumed- that working women tend to disagree more often with their husbands' intentions for a second child (the variable is significant at 10% level). On the other side, the fact that the female partner is unemployed does not have any significant effect on the partners' disagreement. On the contrary, the disagreement increases when is the male in the couple that intends to have a second son, while the female employed full-time does not intend. If we concentrate on females' employment strategy it is interesting highlight that part-time employed women that would like to become mother again are less likely to disagree with the partner on the second child compared to a housewife when is the man that does not intend to become parent again. Moreover, the negative and significant effect on "she intends, he does not" means that part-time working woman with a positive intention for a second child tend to be contrasted less often by the male partner. Again this may reflect the intrinsic attitude of Italians to a traditional idea about a gender-specific division of domestic tasks and paid job and of women's role as the primary care-giver.

Differently, male employment status itself has an important and clear effect on partners' disagreement: actually, even if in the sample only the 3% of the male do not have a job, couples with one child where the man does not work tend to record higher level of contrast if compared with couples with an employed male partner.

Moving to what can be defined as "home management" we see that, net of other covariates, the satisfaction/non satisfaction with the gender division of domestic work does not have any significant effect on the partners' agreement or disagreement. Even if this contrasts with the findings of Mills et al. (Mills et al 2008), it is in line with Krüger and Levy (2001) that argue that is with the born of the first child that an unequal division of work within the couple is established, as we found in the previous analysis. Moreover, referring to the couple's quality, two different results have been founded dependently on the kind of disagreement a couple faced in the 12 month before the interview. Of particular interest is the result when the main topic of divergence is the frequency of the disagreements on the fact that the woman has to work or not, where the result suggests that compared to couples that agree on that topic, conflicting couple are more likely to make plan for another kid.

Finally, the mass attendance of the partners is positive but not significantly associated with their fertility intentions; males' mass attendance plays the most important role in explaining our variable of interest. Essentially, the fact that the male partner attends frequently services has a significant and positive influence on the couple's agreement of intending to have another child. Interestingly, if only one of the partners practice his/her religion, the probability that the couple disagrees on the short term fertility intention is not significantly affected<sup>5</sup>.

**Table 3. Multinomial logistic model on the intention to have a second child within the next three years (Couples aged 18–49).**

	<b>Both do not intend</b>	<b>She intends, he does not</b>	<b>He intends, she does not</b>
<b>Age (her)</b>			
<30	-0.772*** (0.278)	0.012 (0.471)	0.685* (0.423)
30 - 34	-0.967*** (0.220)	-0.133 (0.407)	0.499 (0.343)
40 +	1.579*** (0.299)	0.947* (0.571)	0.588 (0.550)
<b>Age (him)</b>			
<30	0.073 (0.385)	0.371 (0.652)	-0.829 (0.610)
30 - 34	0.034 (0.232)	0.808** (0.370)	-0.857*** (0.338)
40 +	0.455** (0.216)	0.150 (0.439)	-0.352 (0.386)

<sup>4</sup> This may be due to a selection effect, for being a full-time housewife has become rather rare over time, and those who follow this strategy are likely to be more family-oriented and wish to have larger families than other women.

<sup>5</sup> Note that the estimated interaction effect between the mass attendances of both partners is not significant, so the results are valid irrespective of the individual levels of religiosity.

	<b>Both do not intend</b>	<b>She intends, he does not</b>	<b>He intends, she does not</b>
<b>Area of residence</b>			
Centre	0.091 (0.217)	0.369 (0.368)	0.326 (0.322)
South	-0.834*** (0.188)	-0.394 (0.325)	-0.639** (0.309)
<b>Age group of children</b>			
0 – 5	-0.992** (0.527)	-0.209 (1.107)	-0.107 (1.120)
6 – 13	0.195 (0.534)	0.142 (1.128)	0.487 (1.142)
> 13	2.742*** (0.892)	1.488 (1.516)	2.99** (1.416)
<b>Education (her)</b>			
Low (Isced 0 - 2)	0.117 (0.194)	-0.099 (0.350)	-0.067 (0.316)
High (Isced 5 - 6)	0.219 (0.670)	0.897 (1.099)	-1.759 (1.169)
<b>Education (him)</b>			
Low (Isced 0 - 2)	0.200 (0.187)	-0.429 (0.335)	0.264 (0.303)
High (Isced 5 - 6)	-0.946 (0.714)	-0.945 (1.173)	1.934* (1.120)
<b>Mass attendane (her)</b>			
At least once a month	-0.292 (0.223)	-0.225 (0.389)	-0.466 (0.370)
<b>Mass attendane (him)</b>			
At least once a month	-0.731** (0.384)	-0.649 (0.668)	-0.324 (0.546)
<b>Female employment status</b>			
Employed			
Part-time	-0.184 (0.240)	-1.046** (0.502)	0.411 (0.388)
Full-time	0.289 (0.194)	0.107 (0.321)	0.538* (0.330)
Unemployed	-0.491 (0.458)	-0.206 (0.681)	0.707 (0.543)
Other	0.517 (0.633)	-0.413 (1.117)	0.914 (0.871)
<b>Male employment status</b>			
Unemployed	0.366 (0.494)	1.758*** (0.578)	1.147* (0.654)
<b>Quality of the relation (her)</b>			
She not satisfied			
housework division	0.004 (0.202)	0.278 (0.321)	0.378 (0.304)
Disagreement on her job	-0.744** (0.259)	-0.821* (0.450)	-0.414 (0.395)
Disagreement on child education	0.004 (0.182)	0.578* (0.313)	0.268 (0.284)
<b>Interaction</b>			
She Highly Educated*			
He Poorly Educated	-0.708 (0.770)	-1.799 (1.328)	2.033 (1.282)
He Highly Educated*			
She Poorly Educated	0.943 (0.793)	0.740 (1.328)	-1.666 (1.246)
<b>Intercept</b>	0.890 (0.584)	-1.930 (1.197)	-2.332** (1.211)

\*\*\*=Significant at  $p < 0.01$  Level, \*\*=Significant at  $p < 0.5$  Level, \*=Significant at  $p < 0.1$  Level.

## 5. Concluding Remarks and Policy Implications

The Importance of the partner's reproductive intentions has been well recognized in the demographic and economic literature, but few studies have provided in-depth analyses of further fertility plans of both partners. In this paper we tried to fill this gap carrying out a study of the fertility intentions for a first and a second child, providing a unitary picture of concordant or discordant partners' intentions using a bargaining approach within couple.

Thanks to the use of a sub-sample of data drawn out from the "Family and Social Subjects" survey carried out by the Italian National Statistical Office in 2003, looking at the impact of educational attainment and labour-force strategies on the couples' agreement or disagreement on a second childbearing intention we found that it is almost in line from what one would expect from the economic and social theory.

Our results support the assumption that a higher consistency between desired and actual reproductive behaviour may be achieved if the increasing female labour force participation is counterbalanced by the diffusion of more symmetric gender roles within the couples.

Specifically, referring to the labour force strategy, the findings support the initial hypothesis that is that in Italy the couples' intentions to have a child are more exposed to a partners' conflict if the woman works because the working women have the double role of both contributing to the financial situation of the household and of being the main responsible persons in the childcare (Rosina, Testa 2007). In order to diminish the opportunity costs of women's decision, paying higher female wages when they take maternity leave may be a measure in order to promote higher fertility. A distinguishing feature of this policy is that women with high wages receive greater payment than those receiving lower wages. Moreover there are two elements that create important effect: first the maximum eligibility period for each child, second the percentage of mothers' wage while on maternity leave. Nevertheless paying wages does not fully compensate a mother for taking maternity leave, because job market experience acquired before giving birth depreciates over the time spent out of the labour force. Consequently, females who decide to have a child because of the paid maternity leave may simply exit the labour force permanently if their market capital has depleted sufficiently quickly. This scenario certainly arises when, in the absence or with low paid leave policy, women essentially choose between having a career and having a family. Moreover, given that we are dealing with the opportunity cost of working mother, given that mothers lose human capital from temporarily withdrawing from the labour force, another regime may offers partial compensation by putting women returning to work from maternity leave on an equal footing with those who chose not to have children. Precisely, this policy would allow women to come back to the wage trajectory they would have been on if they not withdrawn from the workforce to have children.

Related to the parental leave and at the same time with the cultural difficulties that the Italian society is facing confirmed also by the results obtained when dealing with the frequency of the disagreements on the fact that the woman has to work or not, another measure that could lighten the predominance of very traditional gender roles could be the introduction of a compulsory paternity leave paid 100% of the wage in proximity of the partner's delivery. Two are the main components that we want highlight: first of all the compulsory nature of the leave that may accelerate the process of the acceptance of men's role; second the duration of the leave that might be 3 days, both for the fact that this short length permits to accept in an easiest way the compulsory nature of the policy and for the economic costs that the employers have to effort when these situations come.

Finally, another public policy for subsidizing fertility is to expand the availability of child care services for the mothers of infants and preschool age children, by financially supporting centres, or reimbursing mothers who place their children in them. This increases the amount of time mothers of young children have for leisure and work. In an economic model of fertility and labour supply, fertility increase in response to a reduction in one of its factor inputs, maternal time. Furthermore, the time freed up from looking after children is distributed between extra leisure, and working for more goods and services over and above those used up by the additional children. Consequently, one predicts that both fertility and labour supply would increase the latter less than the amount of time released from child care. Note that this policy may be particularly adapted to the Southern part of Italy: actually, focusing on the geographical dimensions, we see that couples that live in the Southern part of Italy are more likely to make plans for another child compared to partners that live in the Northern Regions, but they are recording lower level of TFR compared to the women living in the North and this could be also the result of an inadequate provision of childcare services.

## Appendix 1

A. Couples' intention to have the first child in the next three years and explanatory variables used in the multivariate models (Childless couples, weighted data).

<b>Respondent's distribution by independent variable</b>					
	<b>Both intend</b>	<b>She intends, he does not</b>	<b>He intends, she does not</b>	<b>Both do not intend</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Age (her)</b>					
<30	81.79	8.81	2.27	7.12	372
30 - 34	76.35	4.97	8.28	10.39	318
35 - 39	65.49	4.28	6.57	23.66	215
40 +	33.08	3.60	2.75	60.56	178
<b>Age (him)</b>					
<30	71.02	13.32	2.18	13.48	179
30 - 34	89.31	3.84	3.71	3.14	383
35 - 39	67.35	5.51	9.05	18.09	250
40-44	52.82	4.37	5.45	37.36	172
45 +	19.00	4.43	3.79	72.78	100
<b>Area of residence</b>					
North	66.82	5.83	5.27	22.08	847
South	76.70	6.28	3.89	13.13	236
<b>Education (her)</b>					
Low (Isced 0 - 2)	61.05	6.46	7.39	25.10	314
Medium (Isced 3 - 4)	71.12	6.06	3.75	19.07	556
High (Isced 5 - 6)	75.01	4.80	4.59	15.60	214
<b>Education (him)</b>					
Low (Isced 0 - 2)	67.98	5.74	6.03	20.25	425
Medium (Isced 3 - 4)	70.71	5.97	4.07	19.26	506
High (Isced 5 - 6)	65.93	6.31	5.03	22.73	152
<b>Type of Union</b>					
Cohabitation	54.74	8.85	7.58	28.83	163
Marriage	71.49	5.41	4.51	18.59	920
<b>Mass Attendance (her)</b>					
At least once a month	72.59	7.24	3.09	17.08	490
Less than once a month	71.97	5.21	5.00	17.81	407
<b>Mass Attendance (him)</b>					
At least once a month	73.36	5.25	6.25	15.14	391
Less than once a month	71.47	5.12	4.40	19.01	457
<b>Female employment status</b>					
Employed	62.66	6.01	4.08	27.26	175
Housewife	69.95	5.89	5.76	18.41	786
Other	71.74	6.09	1.18	20.99	122
<b>Division of housework within the couple</b>					
She satisfied	69.37	5.63	4.40	20.60	797
She not satisfied	67.85	6.75	6.57	18.83	287

B. Couples' intention to have a second child in the next three years and explanatory variables used in the multivariate models (Couples with one child, Weighted data).

**Respondent's distribution by independent variable**

	<b>Both intend</b>	<b>She intends, he does not</b>	<b>He intends, she does not</b>	<b>Both do not intend</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Age (her)</b>					
<30	63.39	8.04	8.04	20.53	224
30 - 34	63.17	7.08	9.35	20.40	353
35 - 39	37.35	4.50	5.62	52.53	356
40 +	5.04	2.02	2.26	90.68	397
<b>Age (him)</b>					
<30	66.67	5.80	5.80	21.73	69
30 - 34	64.29	9.86	5.78	20.07	294
35 - 39	48.64	4.63	10.21	36.52	405
40 +	15.30	2.67	3.20	78.83	562
<b>Area of residence</b>					
North	32.23	4.27	6.00	57.50	633
Centre	31.67	5.83	7.92	54.58	240
South	52.08	5.69	5.03	37.20	457
<b>Education (her)</b>					
Low (Isced 0 - 2)	34.83	4.31	5.28	55.58	511
Medium (Isced 3 - 4)	41.17	5.39	6.29	47.15	668
High (Isced 5 - 6)	43.05	5.96	7.28	43.71	151
<b>Education (him)</b>					
Low (Isced 0 - 2)	35.22	4.04	5.98	54.76	619
Medium (Isced 3 - 4)	42.71	5.80	5.62	45.87	569
High (Isced 5 - 6)	40.14	6.33	7.75	45.78	142
<b>Mass Attendance (her)</b>					
At least once a month	42.28	4.73	5.42	47.57	719
Less than once a month	35.02	5.41	6.71	52.86	611
<b>Mass Attendance (him)</b>					
At least once a month	44.04	4.77	5.87	45.32	545
Less than once a month	35.41	5.22	6.11	53.26	785
<b>Female employment status</b>					
<b>Employed</b>					
Part-time	43.95	2.69	7.62	45.74	223
Full-time	32.35	5.36	6.18	56.11	581
<b>Unemployed</b>					
Housewife	43.36	5.75	4.20	46.69	452
Other	37.29	4.15	8.26	50.30	24
<b>Quality of the relation (her)</b>					
She satisfied division of housework	41.05	4.77	5.84	48.34	1028
She not satisfied division of housework	31.79	5.96	6.62	55.63	302
Disagreement on her job	51.10	4.83	5.52	32.62	145
Agreement on her job	36.95	5.24	5.95	51.87	1126
Disagreement on child education	34.15	5.89	6.71	53.25	492
Agreement on child education	43.77	4.56	5.55	48.58	811
<b>Age group of children</b>					
0 - 5	60.95	7.25	7.69	24.11	676
6 - 13	24.37	3.81	5.33	66.49	394
>13	0.86	0.86	2.58	95.70	233

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