

**EUROPEAN POPULATION CONFERENCE 2012  
13-16 JUNE, STOCKHOLM, STOCKHOLM**

1 Fertility or 12 Life course

**ABSTRACT:**

Minding the downside of market flexibilization. Does precarious work affect short-term fertility intentions and their realization?

*Doris Hanappi (NCCR LIVES)*

*Valérie-Anne Ryser (FORS, University Lausanne)*

*Jean-Marie LeGoff (LINE S, University of Lausanne)*

*Laura Bernardi (NCCR LIVES and LINE S, University of Lausanne)*

This paper looks at the relation between precarious work and short-term fertility intentions as demographic responses to economic turbulence and market flexibilization. Rational choice explanations of low fertility in industrialized countries commonly state that low fertility is related to the high labor market uncertainty of the last decades. Although the empirical evidence that modern societies do face the downsides of market flexibilisation is strong, three relevant issues from a life course and fertility perspective have not received much attention so far. First, gender-specific differences in the realization of fertility intentions as a consequence of precarious work have been largely ignored. Second, while several studies have shown the impact of job instability, job insecurity, and income, empirical evidence on the effects of job quality is limited. Third, the relationship between objective and perceived precariousness in low-fertility societies remains unclear. This is particularly true for gender-differences in the experiences of and behavioral responses to precarious work. In this paper, we study precariousness being a marker for people that are neither inside nor outside of the economic system, rather they oscillate in an in-between space i.e. between the hope up moving up and the fear of moving down the social hierarchy. Even though precarious work is less dramatic than unemployment, it is an early signal averting people's rising social vulnerability, which is argued to substantially impact reproductive decision-making.

Building on Robert Castel's precarization thesis in which he states that work and employment have a strong integrative role in society, we are specifically interested in three aspects that indicate precarious work. First, actual and perceived job insecurity is one major factor. We focus on atypical contract types, perceived unemployment risk, job stability, and

job insecurity that often come with such non-standard employment arrangements. Second, we account for the quality of jobs in terms of self-rated participation at work i.e. decision-making, opinion participation, and supervising. We enhance this idea by examining prestige that is attributed (on the aggregate) to occupational positions using the Treiman scale. Third, we look at the relationship between individual and household income, and income dynamics. While it is a well-established fact that income plays an important role in reproductive decision-making, gender-specific effects of income have received only limited attention. Finally, we account for people's satisfaction with the financial situation.

We examine the effects of these indicators in the following steps. First, micro-realizations of fertility intentions are expected to depend on gender-specific effects of objective and perceived job insecurity and control over work. Second, a better, more stable and satisfying financial situation of households is expected to lead to a higher likelihood of positive fertility intentions and their realization. Building objective and subjective indicators of precarious work, we test these hypotheses with a representative sample of the Swiss population aged between 19-43, who took part in the waves 2002 and 2009 of the Swiss Household Panel. This sample contains information on individuals who participated in three consecutive waves starting from the first declared fertility intention.

We develop a set of logistic regressions in order to investigate child intentions as declared one given year and the outcome two years later. At the onset of each observation, we distinguish persons with a positive fertility intention, i.e. intend to have a child within the next 24 months, from persons with a negative intention. For those individuals who declared that they intended to have one child, three outcomes are possible: (a) that they have a child, (b) that they have yet the intentions to have a child, but to have postponed the birth, (c) to have given up intentions to have a child. For those who declared not to have a child initially, two outcomes two years later are possible: (a) to remain without intentions to have a child, or (b) to have now intentions to have a child (to have a child in this situation is very sparse, and we will not take into account this possibility).

Such a methodology is valuable in two respects: First, it allows us to isolate effects of precarious work and demographic control variables on fertility outcomes between those women and men who declare a positive intention to have a child and those who declare a negative one, from the onset of each observation. Second, such strategy allows us to have a

dynamic approach to the formation, change or stability of intentions and possible effects of precarious work on subsequent reproductive decision-making.

Preliminary findings show that perceived employment stability and occupational prestige predict a higher likelihood to maintain a positive intention toward childbearing for women. In contrast, high levels of work-related involvement make men more likely to change their fertility intentions from positive to negative ones. We also find significant effects of income levels, in terms of household and individual incomes, individual contribution to the household income, and the income dynamics in the last 24 months. The higher the household income the more likely both men and women are to have a positive intention or to have a child. However, if women contribute to a large extent to the household income or if their household income is unstable, they are less likely to intend or to have a child. Socio-demographic controls like age, education, and employment status have the commonly observed effects on fertility intentions

#### **Related references:**

Bernardi, L, A Klaerner, and H von der Lippe. 2008. "Job insecurity and the timing of parenthood: a comparison between Eastern and Western Germany." *European Journal of Population/Revue européenne de Démographie* 24:287-313.

Bernardi, L., Le Goff, J.-M., & Ryser, V.-A. (2012). Gender role-set, family orientations, and fertility intentions in Switzerland. LIVES Working Papers, Lausanne: NCCR LIVES.

Castel, R. 2003. *From Manual Workers to Wage Laborers. Transformation of the Social Question.* New Brunswick (U.S.A) and London (U.K.): Transaction Publishers.

Castel, R., and K. Dörre (Eds.). 2009. *Prekarität, Abstieg, Ausgrenzung.* Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag.

Hanappi, D. (2011). Economic Action, Fields, and Uncertainty. *Journal of Economic Issues*, 25, Dec 2011: pp. 785-803.

Hanappi, D., Bernardi, L. (2010). Gender, Work, and Vulnerability: a multilevel life course perspective. International Labour Process Conference, General Conference, 15-17 March 2010, Rutgers University, New Jersey.

Paugam, S. 1995. "The spiral of precariousness: a multidimensional approach to the process of social disqualification in France." Pp. 49-79 in *Beyond the threshold. The measurement and analysis of social exclusion*, edited by G Room. Bristol: Policy Press.