

# FERTILITY PLANS DISAGREEMENT AMONG COHABITING COUPLES AND ITS EFFECT ON RELATIONSHIP STABILITY AND TRANSITIONS

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# Research problem & theory

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- Cohabitation is rather fragile type of union
- Rising numbers of children born into cohabitation
- Birth of a child stabilizes marriage, does it also stabilize cohabitation?
- Fertility plan as a couple-based decision, fertility plan disagreement as a possible explanatory variable

# Hypotheses

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- *Agreement in short-term fertility plan favors the stability of the partnership*
- *Agreement in short-term fertility plan increases the chance for transition into marriage*
- *Birth of a child supports both the stability of cohabitation and entry into marriage*
- *The stability of cohabitation differs across cohorts*

# Data

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## □ PAIRFAM

(Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamics) German Family Panel

- 4 waves (2008 – 2011)
- 12 000 respondents /year
- Population of Germany
- Birth cohorts 1971-73, 1981-83, 1991-93

|                                      | %   | N   |
|--------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| <b>Change of union status</b>        |     |     |
| Continuation of cohabitation         | 53  | 490 |
| Marriage entry                       | 11  | 67  |
| Dissolution                          | 34  | 322 |
| <b>Fertility plan (dis)agreement</b> |     |     |
| Both partners positive plan          | 48  | 421 |
| Both partners negative plan          | 36  | 304 |
| Partners disagreed                   | 18  | 154 |
| <b>Childless (1st wave)</b>          | 75  | 661 |
| <b>Birth cohort</b>                  |     |     |
| 1981-83                              | 80  | 701 |
| 1971-73                              | 20  | 178 |
| <b>First cohabitation</b>            | 78  | 682 |
| <b>East Germany</b>                  | 28  | 246 |
| <b>Newly born children</b>           | 34  | 299 |
| <b>Unhappy relationship</b>          | 8   | 72  |
| <b>Woman not in workforce</b>        | 56  | 492 |
| <b>Man not in workforce</b>          | 39  | 349 |
| Total                                | 100 | 879 |

# Analysis

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- Multinomial logistic regression

Cohabiting couples subsample (never married, cohabiting in the 1st wave 2008, 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> wave)

- Dependent variable – union status change
- 3 categories: 1) cohabitation continuation
  - 2) marriage entry
  - 3) dissolution
- Independent variable : fertility plan disagreement

|  | <b>Marriage vs. cohabitation</b> | <b>Dissolution vs. cohabitation</b> |
|--|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Fertility plan disagreement</b><br>(positive plan ref.) |                                  |                                     |
| Negative plan  | 0.32                             | 1.58                                |
| Disagreement   | 0.33                             | 0.56                                |
| <b>Childlessness</b>                                       | 0.94                             | 1.46                                |
| <b>Birth of a child</b>                                    | 13                               | 14                                  |
| <b>Birth cohort (1981-83)</b>                              | 0.73                             | 0.78                                |
| <b>1st cohabitation</b>                                    | 0.70                             | 0.50                                |
| <b>Unhappy relationship</b>                                | 0.18                             | 2.78                                |
| <b>Woman not in workforce</b>                              | 2.40                             | 1.28                                |
| <b>Man not in workforce</b>                                | 0.29                             | 1.18                                |
| <b>Woman more educated</b>                                 | 0.79                             | 1.61                                |
| <b>Woman older than partner</b>                            | 0.84                             | 1.02                                |
| <b>East Germany</b>  | 0.45                             | 0.94                                |

# Interaction between fertility plan disagreement and birth of a child

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|   | <b>Marriage vs. cohabitation</b>                        | <b>Dissolution vs. cohabitation</b> |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| Interaction                                       |   |                                     |
| Fertility plan disagreement<br>* Birth of a child | 1,5   | 16                                  |
| Change  | Decrease of the positive effect of the birth of a child | Increase of the negative effect     |



# Results

- Fertility plan disagreement increases the chance to stay in the current cohabitation compared to both marriage entry & dissolution
- Agreement about not to become parents in the next two years favors the continuation of the current cohabitation compared to marriage & dissolution.
- Birth of an unwanted child increases the chance for dissolution & decreased the originally huge positive effect of the birth on entry into marriage



Thank you for your attention