THE EFFECT OF COUPLE DISAGREEMENT ABOUT CHILD-TIMING INTENTIONS: A PARITY-SPECIFIC APPROACH

Abstract

Most of the international studies on fertility are based on a female perspective. A major difficulty in couple-level research is the need for high-quality data that includes information on both partners. Using couple data from a longitudinal study conducted in Italy [2003-2007], a country with persistently low fertility levels, we examined the effect of partners' discrepant fertility intentions on childbearing behaviour. The data revealed that the effect of couple disagreement is not signed, i.e., does not depend on which of the partners intend to have a(nother) child, and is parity-specific. At parities zero and one, the disagreement produced an intermediate childbearing outcome; while at parity two, a symmetric double veto power model was observed. Gender equality in reproductive decision-making was not driven by partners' equal bargaining power, gender equal division of housework and childcare tasks, or partners' equal access to economic resources. The findings suggest that the predictive power of short-term fertility intentions strongly improves if both partners' views are considered in fertility models, and thus support the adoption of couple analysis in fertility research.

1. Introduction

There is a widespread agreement in the international literature about the importance of men in reproductive decision-making (Ryder 1973), and a number of authors have adopted a couple-oriented approach in their fertility research (Fried and Udry 1979; Beckman et al. 1983; Morgan 1985; Thomson 1997; Thomson and Hoem 1998; Jansen and Liefbroer 2006; Miller and Pasta 1996; Miller et al. 2004; Testa 2012a). Some of these studies have shown that models based on both partners' fertility intentions are superior to those based on only one partner's intentions (Fried and Udry 1979; Fried et al. 1980; Morgan 1985), and that models exclusively based on women's intentions are likely to be miss-specified (Corijn et al. 1996). However, research on fertility continues to be primarily based on the female perspective. This choice is usually justified by the high degree of homogamy within the couple, and the fact that women are the main actors and the most reliable reporters of childbearing events.

A major difficulty in couple-level research lies in the need to have high-quality survey data that include information on both partners, possibly in repeated waves. These data are indispensable for researchers who want to ascertain the differences between partners' reproductive goals, and to identify the contribution of each member of the couple to the final childbearing outcome. While this is true in general, a lack of adequate data is an even greater problem in European countries, where longitudinal household surveys have only rarely been conducted in recent decades.

In this paper, we address the issue of fertility decision-making using longitudinal data on couples that spans a three-year period (from the end of 2003 to the beginning of 2007). The data are derived from the "Family and Social Survey," conducted by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT), and provide a unique opportunity to investigate the reproductive behavior of couples. We address the following research questions: In a context of high fertility control, is one partner's intention to not have a child sufficient to prevent (additional) births? What are the conditions under which one or the other partner might prevail or persuade? Does gender equality in childrearing responsibilities, bargaining power, and access to economic resource correspond to gender equality in fertility decision-making?

Italy is an interesting case study for this research for several reasons. First, the two-child norm is still predominant among women and men of reproductive ages, but actual fertility has long been well below this norm (Rosina 2004; Testa 2006 and 2012b). The desired number of children among Italians is, on average, two children per woman, but the

completed fertility of Italian women born in 1960 is 1.4.[1] Our analysis aims to understand whether the large pervasiveness of a two-child norm strengthens the decision power of the partner who supports the achievement of this target. Second, in Italy working women face larger gaps between their desired and their actual family size than women who do not participate in the labor market (Cavalli 2010; Testa 2012b); this is in part explained by the high gender equity within the institutions which is coupled with low gender equity within the family (McDonald 2000). Our analysis is important to clarify whether couples in which men and women are equally involved in childbearing tasks as well as in work outside the family do also contribute more equally to the decision to have a(nother) child. Third, in contrast with other European countries (for example, the Nordic and the Center European countries) in Italy withdrawal contraceptive methods have declined only very recently (with the cohorts born in the seventies), the diffusion of birth control pill has taken place only very gradually, and sterilization is still practically non-existent for legal reasons, personal preferences and prejudices which see it as a potential threat for the men's sexual activity (De Rose and Dalla Zuanna 2013). Our analysis contributes to shed light on whether the widespread of modern contraception among Italian couples has made one partner's intention to not have a child sufficient to prevent a birth.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. First, we review the existing literature on fertility intentions and behavior among couples. We then present our hypotheses, data, and methodology. This is followed by a description of the main statistical findings. In the final section, we discuss alternative interpretations of the results, as well as possible caveats inherent to the analysis.

2. Theoretical framework and literature review

The partner's fertility intentions are not explicitly considered in the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen 1991) which sees intentions as being formulated under the influence of three groups of factors: (a) personal positive and negative attitudes towards the behavior; (b) subjective norms, i.e., perceived social pressure to engage or not to engage in the behavior; and (c) perceived behavioral control, i.e., the ability to perform the behavior, which may depend, for example, on the availability of housing, income, or other resources. The TPB is a relevant and suitable framework for the study of fertility decision-making (Billari et al.2009;

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[1] These women were 43 years old at the time of the 2003 survey. Hence, they are the youngest cohorts for whom it is possible to compare completed and desired family size with a reasonably good approximation. We believe that cohort fertility is a better indicator than Total Fertility Rate (TFR) when one needs to compare behaviours, like the intended and actual reproductive behaviour.

Dommermuth et al.2011), and it implicitly assumes that the perception of a disagreement with the partner about having a(nother) child influence an individual's normative beliefs. An individual who intends to have a(nother) child, and who perceives that his/her partner does not share this wish, is likely to form the belief that the partner does not want her/him to have a(nother) child. This perception may influence the individual's own fertility intentions. If the minimum level of two children has already been achieved and the individual intends to have an additional child, he may be more responsive to partner's disagreement because of the perceived social pressure not to engage in the intended behavior (i.e., having a third child) dictated by the two-child norm. In a recent conference on reproductive decision-making, Ajzen clarified that the close link between intentions and subsequent behavior holds true only if the behavior is specified in all of its four components: namely, the target, the action, the context, and the time (Ajzen 2010). In the field of fertility, the target is a child, the action is giving birth, the context is the couple, and the time could be a short-term horizon. Both the short-term horizon and the partner's context of intentions may make them more realistic. Indeed, consistent empirical evidence has been collected on the crucial importance of the partner's context for the construction of pregnancy intentions (Barret and Wellings 2002; Zabin et al. 2000).

According to the Traits-desires-intentions-behaviour theory (Miller 1986 and 1994), fertility intentions are desires constrained by reality, conscious commitment to act in a certain way or to achieve a certain goal at some future time. The eventual goal of reproductive behavior is to achieve (proceptive) or avoid (contraceptive) a pregnancy. According to the TDIB, intentions are assumed to incorporate the perception of the desires of significant others, above all the partner; as well as other situational factors that may prevent individuals from simply doing what they want to do. Unlike the TPB, the TDIB explicitly considers the dyadic nature of reproduction, the disagreement effects of a couple's decisional conflicts (Miller and Pasta 1996) and the interaction between the partners at each stage of the sequence (Miller et al. 2004). Miller and Pasta (1996) identified two main components of the disagreement between the partners: the signed difference or influence effect, which depends on which member of the couple has more or less influence on the behavior; and the absolute difference or conflict effect, which is independent of the desires of the male or the female partner. The conflict effects produce a delay in fertility decision-making due to inertia, which tends to favor the partner who does not intend to have a child in a context in which using contraception between births is standard practice (Davidson and Beach 1981; Beach et al. 1982). The influence effect may also produce a delay in fertility if a double veto-power model

is working within the couple (Thomson et al. 1990; Thomson 1997; Thomson and Hoem 1998; Voas 2003), which also requires that the two partners concur in their views before the action is taken (in this case, a proceptive behavior).

If the two partners differ in their fertility intentions, either child-number or child-timing, they try to reach a decision that could be mid-way between the preferences of the two (Thomson 1997; Thomson and Hoem 1998; Thomson et al. 1990; Jansen and Liefbroer 2006). In our analysis the focus is on the child-timing intentions, i.e., intentions to have a(nother) child in the next three years. Hence, a suitable compromise could be offered by having a(nother) child later than in the short-term future. A relevant question is on which decision rule is adopted by the conflicting couple and whether one the partner drives the decision process. Some decision rules are based on gender difference, some others on equality within the couple. The power rule, for instance, predicts that the partner who has greater access to socioeconomic resources prevails. As long as men have higher occupational and income levels than women, they will predominate in the couple's negotiation process. Male prevalence is also advocated under the "patriarchal" rule. By contrast, the sphere of interest rule envisages that the partner in whose sphere of interest a decision is located will have greater influence over subsequent behavior. As long as childbearing tends to lie in the female sphere of interest, women will be more influential in the couple's fertility decision-making. This is the most likely scenario in Italy, where the prevalence of a male bredwinner model is combined with a low level of gender equity, low rates of female labor force participation, and a major women's responsibility in childcaring and chilrearing activities. According to the European Union Labour Force Survey data, the inactivity rates of women aged 25-54 ranged in 2011 from less than 15% in Slovenia and Sweden to more than 35% in Italy. Family responsibilities are the main reason for inactivity (OECD 2006). Women who participate in the labor market face significant challenges in combining work and family (Pinnelli 1995; Del Boca et al. 2004).

Gender equality in fertility decision-making is envisaged in two decision rules: the golden mean and the social drift rule. According to the so-called golden mean rule partners view each other's intentions as equally important, and, since they each have equal power in the negotiations, they will try to strike an acceptable compromise which equally reflects their initial desires. In our case a compromise could be the birth of a child later than in the next three years. Jansen and Liefbroer (2006) found that this is the most frequent heuristics approach used by couples in the Netherlands. Studies by Thomson (1997) and Thomson and Hoem (1998) produced similar results for the USA and Sweden. This rule, which would

primarily result in a postponement of childbearing, could well be applied to the case of Italy, a country characterised by a late transition to adulthood (Tomassini et al. 2003; Morgan 2003; De Rose et al. 2008; Caltabiano et al. 2009). According to the social drift rule the maintenance of the status quo will prevail by favoring the partner who does not intend to have children if the use of contraception between births is routine. Neal and Groat (1980) demonstrated that women who perceive their broader environment as being unpredictable develop a lifestyle characterized by social drift, and they respond to events like pregnancy as they happen, rather than deliberately causing them to happen through an effort of their own. Jansen and Liefbroer (2006) argued that, in the Netherlands, this rule controls couples' reproductive choices if neither of the partners has a clear intent to impose her/his own point of view on the other. This could also happen in Italy, a country chatacterized by persistently low fertility levels (below 1.4 since the mid-1980s) (Tomassini et al. 2003; Morgan 2003; De Rose et al. 2008; Caltabiano et al. 2009).

Italian literature on the negotiation of fertility choices within couples is scarce. A recent analysis on the determinants of couple disagreement about childbearing intentions suggested that women in more egalitarian relationships—i.e., those who cohabit and those who are employed—are more likely to voice their disagreement if their partner intends a first or a second child (Rosina and Testa 2009; Cavalli 2010; Cavalli and Rosina 2011).

3. Research Hypotheses

In tradition-bound Italian society, which is characterized by a low degree of gender equity at the individual and societal levels, women are primarily responsible for childcare and childrearing activities (McDonald 2000). Thus, couples and society as a whole may consider it fair for the woman's view to predominate. We advanced a first working hypothesis as follows: *Women have more influence on childbearing behavior than men if there is a conflict with their partners about having a(nother) child in the next three years* (Hypothesis 1).

We may also expect that, when gender roles are more symmetric, the partners will tend to have an equal amount of power in the negotiation process. Hence, we suppose that: *Partners have the same degree of influence on childbearing decisions if they share housework and childcare duties equally* (Hypothesis 2).

In Italy, as in other contemporary societies, the intra-household distribution of bargaining power in dual-earner couples has become an important factor driving the fertility decisions of spouses with different interests (Jansen and Liefbroer 2006). Hence, we express our third

research hypothesis as follows: *Partners have the same degree of influence on childbearing decisions if they have the same level of bargaining power* (Hypotesis 3).

We might expect to find that the partner who has more access to socioeconomic resources drives the negotiation process in the event of a conflict. This may be the case especially at higher parities, as the decision about whether to have an additional child may be affected by financial considerations (Becker 1981, De Santis 2004). Thus, we expect that: *Men have more power than women in childbearing decisions if the male breadwinner model is adopted by the couple* (Hypothesis 4).

In Italy childbearing is seen as a potential threat to the achieved standard of living because of the low levels of financial support for families with children and a lack of adequate policy measures to facilitate the balancing of work and family life (such as access to parental leave, childcare, and part-time employment). In this context the partner who does not intend to have a(nother) child is favoured (veto power). Moreover, because the use of contraception between births is the prevalent regime, conceiving a child requires a change in the standard behavior of a couples, and automatically favors the partner who does not intend to have a child due to inertia (Davidson and Beach 1981). We advanced our fifth research hypothesis as follows: *Partners who disagree about having a(nother) child in the next three years are more likely to not have a child than to have a child in the subsequent three-year period* (Hypothesis 5).

In Italy the two-child norm is predominant, hence, the partner who aims to reach this target might have more decision power because supported by social norms. Our last research hypothesis is addressed as follows: *Partners who disagree about having a(nother) tend to solve their conflict in favor of a birth if they have zero or one child, and against a birth if they have two children.* This is consistent with the idea that disagreement has a major inhibiting effect on childbearing at "discretionary" parity progressions, that is after the normative minimum of two children has been reached (Ryder 1980) (Hypothesis 6).

4. Data

We used data from the Multipurpose Household Survey on "Family and Social Subjects," which was carried out by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (Istat) in 2003 and 2007. As the survey unit is the household, information on both members of the couple is available. The follow-up wave includes 10,000 individuals who were randomly drawn from the initial sample of 50,000 respondents interviewed at the initial wave. Non-response was 16.5% for the first wave and 39% for the second wave.

The survey was addressed to people aged 18-64, but the questions on fertility intentions were only asked to respondents aged 18-49. Within this age group, we restricted the analytic sample to couples in which both partners provided answers to the fertility intentions questions at the initial survey (non-responses to the item were 4%), and at least one of the two provided information about the events experienced by the couple between the two waves (2003-2007). If only one of the partners was followed up (which affected 60% of the couples interviewed in 2003), we checked for the possibility that she/he experienced a partnership disruption in the inter-survey period. This was the case for 1% of the respondents re-interviewed in 2007 without their partners. These cases were taken out from the analysis, because if a birth occurred in the inter-survey period, we could not determine whether this happened in the framework of the old or a new relationship. Our final analytic sample included 2,098 couples for whom we could compare the fertility intentions as reported at the first wave with the subsequent reproductive outcome as measured at the second wave.

The people interviewed in 2003 had been required to indicate their short-term fertility intentions by answering the following question: "*Do you intend to have a child in the next three years?*" The response options were: "*definitely not*," "*probably not*," "*probably yes*," and "*definitely yes*." The people re-interviewed in 2007 were asked whether they had had a child in the inter-survey period. The survey questions were: "*From November 2003 up to now have you had a child?*" both biological and adopted children were considered. Information on the reproductive history, including the precise date of each birth as well as the sex of each newborn, were also asked in the questionnaire. Information on contraception was not available in the survey, thus, we cannot exclude that several sterilized couples - for whom the decision of whether having a(nother) child may not be relevant - are in the selected analytic sample. Since sterilization is almost never used in Italy, however, this is a very remote possibility. Moreover, we treated couples who had more than one child in the inter-survey period as the couples who had only one because the share of those with multiple births was very tiny (1%). Finally, we did not conduct separate analysis for cohabiting people who can follow quite different reproductive decision rules because cohabiting couples were only a minor proportion in the samples, 11% among childless, 4% among couples with one child, and 1% among couples with two children (Table 1).[2]

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[2] In Italy almost 20% of the unions among the generations born between the Sixties and the Eighties are between cohabiting partners (De Rose and Dalla Zuanna 2013). The low share of cohabiting couples in our samples is explained by the fact that cohabitation is still mainly a temporary experience among Italians couples, and this experience is mostly confined to the period before the start of a family.

Exactly the same questions were addressed to both partners, which allows us to conduct a fully comparative analysis of the responses. Moreover, all of the fertility intentions items were included in the self-administered questionnaires and this ensures a high degree of independence in the answers of the partners. We did not find any systematic difference in the distribution of the responses given by the male and female partner, with both the men and the women using the given response options in the same ways to express the strength of their childbearing plans.

We defined couple disagreement as any discrepancy between partners' answers irrespective of whether the answers go in the opposite direction or not; i.e.; to have a child or not to have a child in the next three years (Scheme 1).

SCHEME 1 DEFINITION OF COUPLE DISAGREEMENT

Man Woman	*Definitely not*	*Probably not*	*Probably yes*	*Definitely yes*
Definitely not	Both def not	M intends more than W		
Probably not		Both prob not		
Probably yes			Both prob yes	
Definitely yes	M intends less than W			Both def yes

Note. Responses to the answer: "*Do you intend to have a(nother) child in the next three years?*"

5. Models and variables

We estimated logistic regression models with a response variable equal to one if the couple had had at least one child in the inter-survey period, and zero otherwise. All of the models were stratified by parity, which is in line with a conditional-sequential fertility decision-making process (Namboodiri 1972; Bulatao 1981). Specifically, separate models were run on childless couples, couples with only one child, and couples with two children. The analysis of higher birth orders was hindered by the limited sample size.

The key explanatory variable in the models was the combined partners' intentions to have a(nother) child in the next three years. We computed the six categories: "both partners definitely do not intend"; "both partners probably do not intend" "man intends more than woman", "woman intends more than man , "both partners probably intend", and "both partners definitely intend". For the sake of simplicity, in Scheme 1 and in the tables showing

the empirical results, we labeled the above mentioned categories as follows: "both def not", "both prob not", "M more than W", "W more than M" "Both prob yes", and "Both def yes".

The covariates included in the models are: the 1 partner's agreement on the intended number of children; 2 the man's and the woman's age, 3 the type of union, 4 the man's and the woman's education, 5 the man's and the woman's employment status, 6 the man's and the woman's attendance at religious services, 7 the woman's satisfaction with her partner's involvement in housework and childcare duties, 8 the partners' bargaining power, 9 and the geographical area of residence. The distribution of the variables used in the multivariate analysis is reported in Table 1.

The partner's agreement on the intended number of children is a dichotomous variable equal to one if partners report an identical number of intended children. The variable was measured through the following question: *"How many children would you like to have over your life course?"* The inclusion of this variable enabled us to estimate the genuine effects of disagreement on child-timing intentions across different parities. By omitting it in the analysis, we would have mixed up the effects of disagreement on quantum with those of disagreement on timing intentions, given that at parity zero the decision, and thus the disagreement, is mostly on the timing to have a child, while at parity two the decision, and thus the disagreement, is on whether to have a child at all.

The woman's age is the only continuous variable. It is centered on the rounded mean value of 38 years. An additional three-category variable specifies whether the male partner is younger, older (up to three years), or significantly older (more than three years) than the female partner.

The type of union has two categories: married and cohabiting.

The women's level of education is a three-category variable with low, medium and high level of education which corresponds to the levels 0 - 2, 3 - 4, and 5 – 6, respectively, of the International standard qualification of education. Two additional dummy variables specify whether the male partner has a higher or lower level of education than the female one. A dummy variable indicating whether respondents (either the male or the female partner) are still enrolled in education is also included in the models.

The employment status has just the following four categories: the two partners work both, only the man works, only the woman or none of the partners work (that means, they are either unemployed or out of the labor force). Most of the respondents in the last category are students. A more refined breakdown of this variable was not supported by the data.

The attendance of religious service takes the following four categories: "Both partners attend a religious service at least once a month", "Only the woman attends", "Only the man attends", and "None of the partners attends a religious service or they both do it less frequently than once a month".

We measured men's involvement in childcare tasks with a three-category variable. We contrasted women who were very satisfied with their partner's involvement in housework and family duties with women who were quite satisfied and women who were not at all satisfied. The question item, which was posed only to women, was worded as follows: "*How satisfied are you with the division of housework and family duties between you and your partner?*"

We measured the intra-household distribution of bargaining power by the difference in educational levels between the partners (Lundberg and Pollak 1996). In addition to the woman's educational levels two dummy variables indicate whether the man is more or less educated than the woman.

The geographical area of residence takes three categories: North, and Centre-South Italy. This last area includes also the two islands Sicily and Sardinia.

Besides age and geographical area, which are usually included as control variables, education, employment, and partnership status are the explanatory variables typically considered as relevant determinants of reproduction. These variable do also play an important role as moderating factors of intention-behaviour relationship. Having a high level of education and being employed have been found to be positively associated with the likelihood of realizing previously stated fertility intentions in France and Italy (Toulemon and Testa 2005; Rinesi 2009). The results may, however, vary across different countries. For example, Quesnel-Vallée and Morgan (2003) found that women who have a degree have fewer desired children than their less educated counterparts in the United States. Several studies have also shown that marital status significantly influence the probability to achieve the previously stated fertility goals (Noack and Østby, 2002; Quesnel-Vallée and Morgan 2003; Berrington 2004; Testa and Toulemon 2006). Cohabiting has been found to have a depressing effect on the likelihood of realising previously stated reproductive intentions in the U.S. (Schoen et al. 1999), but Toulemon and Testa (2005) found no statistically significant effect of cohabiting on the chance of realising the intention to have a first child in France. Because of their influence as moderating factors of fertility, education, employment, and partnership status will be estimated in their main effect as well as in their interaction effect with the partners' fertility intention variable. We have kept only statistically significant interactions in the full models reported in Table 4.

TABLE 1 DISTRIBUTION OF VARIABLES USED IN THE ANALYSIS

	Childless	One child	Two children
Fertility timing intentions			
Both def yes	33	10	1
Both prob yes	22	21	3
W intends more than M	13	12	11
M intends more than W	13	15	11
Both prob not	8	16	18
Both def not	11	27	57
Fertility quantum intentions			
Agreement	65	74	85
Disagreement	35	26	15
Age			
Woman's mean age	35	37	39
Man older than woman	42	39	42
Man more than 3 years older	32	38	39
Man younger then woman	26	23	19
Type of union			
Married	89	96	99
Cohabiting	11	4	1
Level of education			
Woman with low edu	25	32	42
Woman with medium edu	53	53	48
Woman with high edu	22	15	10
Employment status			
Both employed	43	43	34
Only man employed	21	27	33
Only woman employed	19	14	12
None employed	17	16	21
Attendance at religious services			
Both attend	69	64	57
Only woman attends	3	4	4
Only man attends	11	11	17
Neither of the partners attend	16	21	22
Gender division of tasks			
Woman very satisfied	28	22	18
Woman quite satisfied	56	57	60
Woman unsatisfied	16	21	22
Bargaining power			
Man more educated than woman	13	16	18
Man as educated as woman	56	58	61
Man less educated than woman	31	26	21
Geographical area			
Nord	58	58	41
Center & South	42	42	59
N. cases	291	677	1130

6. Results

6.1 Descriptive analysis

As shown in **Figure 1**, the share of disagreement did not substantially change across parities: it was 27% at parity zero, 28% at parity one and 21% at parity two. Moreover, disagreement was almost evenly divided between the cases in which the man intended more than the woman (13%, 15%, and 11% at parity zero, one, and two, respectively) and the cases in which the woman intended more than the man (14%, 13%, and 11% at parity zero, one, and two, respectively).

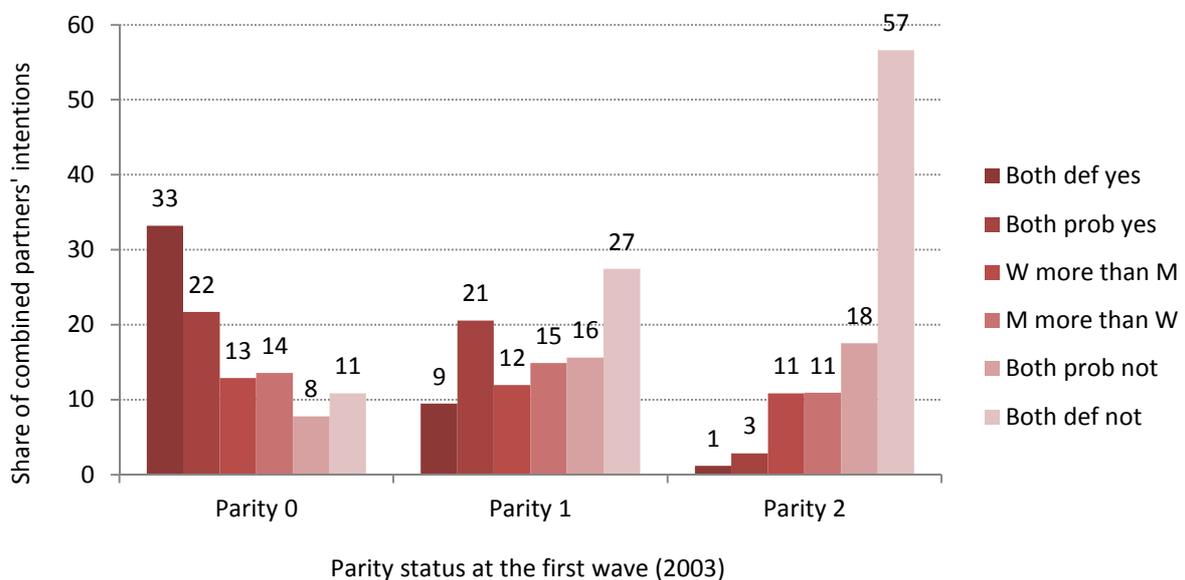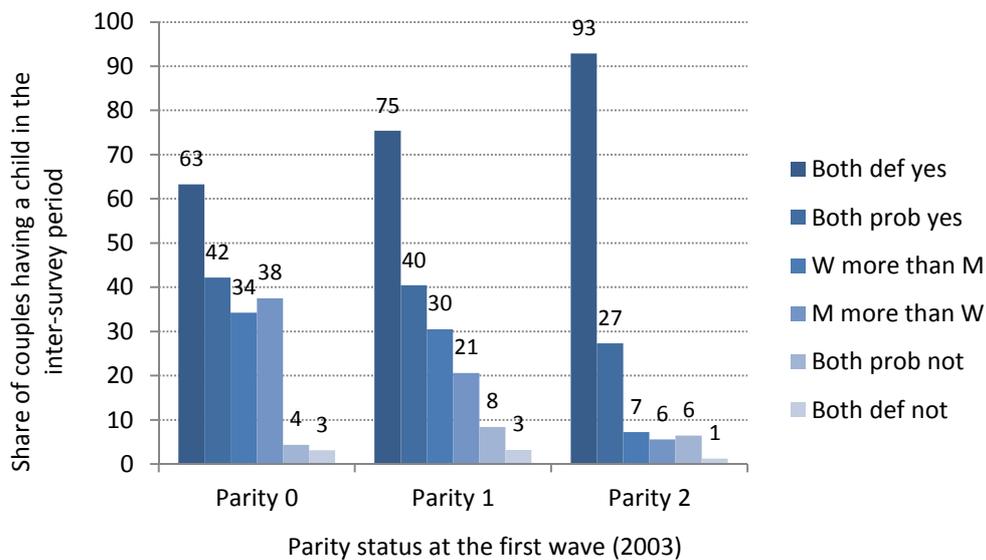## FIG. 1 COUPLES' SHORT-TERM FERTILITY INTENTIONS BY PARITY STATUS

FIG. 2 COUPLES HAVING A CHILD IN THE INTER-SURVEY PERIOD (2003-2007) BY SHORT-TERM FERTILITY INTENTIONS AND PARITY IN 2003

In Figure 2, the percentages of couples who had a child between 2003 and 2007 by partners' intentions, as reported in 2003, are given separately for childless couples, couples with only one child, and couples with two children. At parity zero, the share of couples who had a child between the two waves gradually decreased from 65% if the partners definitely agreed on having a child, to 5% if the partners agreed on defintely not having a child. Meanwhile, the couples who disagreed took an intermediate position: 35% and 38% had a child if the female or the male, respectively, intended to have a child more than the other partner. Interestingly, couples in disagreement were closer in terms of reproductive behavior to those who agreed on definitely having a child than to those who agreed on defintely not having a child. At parity one, the percentage of couples who had a child between 2003 and 2007 declined from 77% if the partners had agreed on definitely having a child three years previously, to 3% if the partners had agreed on definitley not having a second child in 2003. The share of childbearing among disagreeing couples was 30% if the female partner intended more the male one, and 21% if the male partner intended more than the female one. Unlike for childless, couples in disagreement who had already one child were closer in terms of reproductive behavior to those who agreed on definitely not having a child than to those who agreed on definitely having a child but these results are reversed if the agreement on probably instead of definitely having or not having a child is considered. At parity two, 93% of couples had another child if the partners agreed on definitely having the child, and just 1% of couples had another child if the partners agreed on definitely not having the child. The share of childbearing among

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disagreeing couples was clearly closer to agreement on definitely not than to agreement on definitely yes: 7% if the woman intended more than the man, and 4% if the man intended more than the woman (Figure 2). Unlike for parity one, this result was confirmed when the agreement on yes or not was made by the categories 'Both partners probably yes' and 'Both partners probably not', respectively.

6.2 Multivariate analysis

Before moving on the description of the estimates related to the full logistic regression models, we will comment on the procedure through which we came up with the most suitable specification (i.e., the one that more closely reflects the data) of the disagreement variable in the logistic regression models. This will help us to verify whether women prevail in reproductive decision-making, as expected in our research hypothesis 1, and whether the veto exerted by one of the partner suffices to not have a child, as expected in our research hypothesis 5. In the meantime, the analysis stratified by parity will enable us to test whether disagreement is likely to have an inhibiting effect primarily at parity two, rather than before couples reach the normative minimum of two children (hypothesis 6).

6.3 Directional differences of disagreement

In order to determine whether one of the partners prevailed in the final decision, we checked whether the effect of disagreement was absolute or signed (i.e. directional differences of disagreement). With this aim in mind, we estimated a model in which the categories "W intends more than M" and "M intends more than W" were considered separately (Table 2, Model I for signed disagreement), and compared it with a model in which only one disagreement category was included (Table 2, Model II for absolute disagreement) by using the AIC (Akaike information criterion) and BIC' (Bayesian information criterion) for comparing non-nested models.[3] It is worth noticing that all the Models reported in Table 2 control also for the effects of the socio-demographic variables shown in Table 4, and hence, also for the partners' agreement on the intended number of children, which implies that the disagreement effects are here referring exclusively to the timing of the next intended child. Model I suggests that the probability of having a child was higher if the woman intended to have a child more than the man at parity one and two, which would indicate that the woman prevailed in fertility decisions at these parities. By contrast, a prevalence of man intentions was observed at parity zero. However, the differences between the two signed coefficients

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[3] See Long and Freese (2001) for more details on the AIC and BIC' measures.

were quite small in terms of magnitude, and were not statistically significant, according to the findings of the tests on the homogeneity between the two signed-disagreement coefficients (bottom of Table 2). Hence, the empirical evidence suggests that the disagreement effect was absolute; i.e., it did not depend on whether the female or the male partner intended more than the other partner to have a(nother) child. Interestingly, at parity two the coefficients of the two signed disagreement variables, or the absolute disagreement variable, were not statistically significant different from the agreement on no, which means that the likelihood of having a third child, so-called discretionary child (Ryder 1980) was strongly precluded if the woman or the man vetoed this decision.

6.4 Positioning of disagreement

In order to evaluate whether disagreement was shifted more towards agreement on having a(nother) child than towards agreement on not having a(nother) child (i.e., positioning of disagreement), we compared the fit of a model with a linear specification of both partners' fertility intentions in which disagreement had a score midway between agreement on yes and agreement on no, with that of a model in which a categorical variable (N-1 dummies) reflected the possible combinations of partners' short-term childbearing intentions. Since the previous round of analysis showed that the effect of disagreement was absolute rather than signed, we took the Model II, with absolute disagreement variable, as a reference model in this comparison. The linear variable for the partners' intentions took the value zero for agreement on definitely no, one for agreement on probably no, two for disagreement, three for agreement on probably yes, and four for agreement of definitely yes. We found strong empirical evidence for a linearity effect of partners' combined short-term fertility intentions at parity zero, weak support for linearity at parity one, and strong evidence against linearity at parity two (see AIC and BIC' of Model II and Model III in Table 2). These results were robust to a different specification of the linear variable, such as: zero for agreement on no (either probably or definitely), one for disagreement, two for agreement on yes (either probably or definitely). At parity two, the disagreement had an effect similar to the agreement on probably not, as shown by the results of the test on the equality of the related coefficients shown at the bottom of Table 2. At parity zero and one, the AIC and BIC' criterion suggest a better fitting of the models with a linear specification of partners' combined short-term fertility intentions, which would mean that disagreement was equidistant from agreement on yes and agreement on no. However, the Wald tests on the equality of the coefficients

'disagreement' and 'agreement on probably yes' revealed that the effect of disagreement was equal to the effect of agreement on probably yes.

TABLE 2 LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS ON HAVING A CHILD IN THE INTER-SURVEY PERIOD (2003-2007) [a] BETA COEFFICIENTS

	Childless		One child		Two children	
Model I						
Both def yes	3.28	***	2.91	***	6.05	***
	(0.87)		(0.43)		(1.14)	
Both prob yes	2.82	**	1.17	***	2.33	***
	(0.90)		(0.35)		(0.51)	
W intends more than M	2.15	*	1.34	**	0.73	
	(0.93)		(0.41)		(0.45)	
M intends more than W	2.80	**	0.80		0.45	
	(0.94)		(0.41)		(0.50)	
Both def or prob not (ref.)						
Constant	-3.58	***	-3.23	***	-3.27	***
	(0.96)		(0.50)		(0.87)	
Log-likelihood	*-131.28*		*-233.31*		*-150.43*	
AIC	*308.56*		*512.53*		*346.86*	
BIC'	*-6.33*		*-146.40*		*-1.91*	
Model II						
Both def yes	3.25	***	2.91	***	6.05	***
	(0.87)		(0.43)		(1.14)	
Both prob yes	2.77	**	1.17	***	2.33	
	(0.89)		(0.35)		(0.51)	
Absolute disagreement	2.45	**	1.07	**	0.60	
	(0.88)		(0.35)		(0.38)	
Both def or prob not (ref.)						
Constant	-3.52	***	-3.22	***	-3.30	***
	(0.95)		(0.50)		(0.66)	
Log-likelihood	*-131.90*		*-234.19*		*-150.56*	
AIC	*307.80*		*512.38*		*345.12*	
BIC'	*-10.76*		*-151.16*		*-8.69*	
Model III						
Linear specification of partners' fertility intentions	0.58	***	0.53	***	0.69	***
	(0.14)		(0.09)		(0.09)	
Constant	-3.16	***	-3.66	***	-4.27	***
	(0.77)		(0.50)		(0.50)	
Log-likelihood	*-133.35*		*-240.19*		*-160.91*	
AIC	*306.70*		*520.38*		*361.83*	
BIC'	*-19.21*		*-152.20*		*-2.04*	
N.cases	291		677		1130	
Wald test on the equality of the beta coefficients:						
'W intends more than M' = 'M intends more than W'	Not rejected		Not rejected		Not rejected	
'Absolute disagreement'= 'Both prob yes'	Not rejected		Not rejected		Rejected	
'Absolute disagreement'= 'Both prob not'	Rejected		Rejected		Not rejected	

($†p < .10$; $*p < .05$; $** p < .01$; $*** p < .001$).

[a] Models controlled for all the socio-demographic variables shown in Table 4.

Note. Absolute disagreement includes both 'W intends more than M' and 'M intends more than the W'.

6.5 Positioning of disagreement

The analysis conducted up to here revealed that disagreement effects are not signed and that neither of the partners prevails in the decision to have a(nother) child if a conflict rises within the couple. In the next step, we checked whether gender equality in reproductive decision-making was driven by gender equality either in the division of childcare tasks, or in the intra-household distribution of bargaining power, or in the access to the economic resources, as outlined in our second, third, and fourth research hypothesis. In order to test these hypotheses, we compared models with and without the interaction terms between the disagreement variable, on one side, and the following variables, on the other side: woman's dissatisfaction on partner's involvement in childcare tasks, inequality in partners' level of education, and partners' combined employment status. We looked at the significance level of the above mentioned interactions terms and compared the fitting of the models with (Models II, III, and IV) and without (Model I) the selected interaction term by using likelihood-ratio tests. Results are reported in Table 3.

We expected to find that woman's prevalence in reproductive decision-making would be turned into the prevalence of the male partner (or a better gender equality in decision power) if the woman were very satisfied with the gender division of household and childcare tasks. Since the additive model (Model I) could not be rejected (the interaction effect was not statistically significant, as shown in Model II of Table 3), we conclude that gender equality in childbearing decisions did not depend on whether the man was more or less engaged in household and childcare duties, in contrast to what envisaged in our research hypothesis 2.

We expected to find that woman's prevalence in reproductive decision-making could be reinforced if the woman had a stronger bargaining power than the man, or alternatively, weakened if the woman had a weaker bargaining power than the man. As shown in Table 3, the additive model (Model I) could not be rejected (the interaction effect was not statistically significant), which implies that the woman's or the man's influence in childbearing decision-making was not based on her or his bargaining power, in contrast to what predicted in our research hypothesis 3.

We expected to find that woman's prevalence in reproductive decision-making would be turned into the prevalence of the male partner if the male breadwinner model was adopted within the couple. As shown in Table 3, the additive model (Model I) could not be rejected (the interaction effect was not statistically significant), which suggests that the man's

influence on childbearing decisions did not increase in couples in which the man had more access to economic resources than the woman, in contrast to what stated in our research hypothesis 4. An important exception to this general finding was observed for childless couples (Table 3, panel a) among which the male breadwinner model ('only man works') significantly increased the fertility decision-power of the woman partner. This signals that the prevalent role in childbearing tasks rather than the greater access to economic resources empowered women in the reproductive decision-making.

TABLE 3 LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS ON HAVING A CHILD IN THE INTER-SURVEY PERIOD (2003-2007) [a] BETA COEFFICIENTS

Panel a) parity zero: 291 couples

	Model II		Model III		Model IV	
Both def yes	3.14 ***	3.13 ***	3.11 ***	3.12 ***		
Both prob yes	2.66 **	2.65 **	2.62 **	2.62 **		
W more than M	2.06 *	2.11	3.09 **	1.49		
M more than W	2.65 **	2.74 *	2.50 *	2.53 **		
GENDER DIVISION OF HOUSEHOLD TASKS						
W unsatisfied about gender roles	-0.74 *	-0.70				
Unsat*W more than M		-0.09				
Unsat*M more than W		-0.14				
PARTNERS' BARGAINING POWER						
M more educated than W	0.13		0.19			
M more edu*W more than M			-1.35			
M more edu*M more than W			-(b)			
W more educated than M	0.60		0.58			
W more edu*W more than M			-2.38 *			
W more edu*M more than W			0.50			
PARTNERS' ACCESS TO ECONOMIC RESOURCES						
Only M work	0.36			0.05		
Only M work*W more than M				2.36 *		
Only M work*M more than W				-(b)		
Constant	-3.38 ***	-3.39 ***	-3.56 ***	-3.36 ***		
Log-likelihood	-132.15	-132.14	-128.68	-130.04		
Likelihood-ratio test		0.02	6.23	4.22 *		

Panel b) Parity one: 677 couples

	Model I		Model II		Model III		Model IV	
Both def yes	2.92 ***	2.93 ***	2.94 ***	2.93 ***				
Both prob yes	1.18 ***	1.18 ***	1.17 **	1.19 ***				
W more than M	1.32 **	0.93	1.27 **	1.04 *				
M more than W	0.83 *	1.20	0.65	0.73				

	Model I		Model II		Model III		Model IV	
GENDER DIVISION OF CHILCARE TASKS								
W dissatisfied about gender roles	0.05		0.07					
W dissatisfied*W more than M			0.49					
W dissatisfied*M more than W			-0.50					
PARTNERS' BARGAINING POWER								
M more educated than W	0.22				0.23			
M more edu*W more than M					-0.64			
M more edu*M more than W					0.55			
W more educated than M	-0.46				-0.61			
W more edu*W more than M					0.53			
W more edu*M more than W					0.29			
PARTNERS' ACCESS TO ECONOMIC RESOURCES								
Only M work	-0.04						-0.28	
Only M work*W more than M							0.94	
Only M work*M more than W							0.39	
Constant	-3.22	***	-3.27	***			-3.18	***
Log-likelihood	-234.51		-234.01		-233.52		-233.57	
Likelihood-ratio test			1.00		1.97		1.88	

Panel c) Parity 2: 1130 couples

	Model I		Model II		Model III		Model IV	
Both def yes	6.22	***	6.16	***	6.24	***	6.13	***
Both prob yes	2.24	***	2.22	***	2.25	***	2.25	***
W more than M	0.73		0.94		0.70		0.04	
M more than W	0.47		1.35		0.81		0.18	
GENDER DIVISION OF CHILCARE TASKS								
W unsatisfied about gender roles	-0.95	**	-0.68					
Unsat*W more than M			-0.32					
Unsat*M more than W			-1.41					
PARTNERS' BARGAINING POWER								
M more educated than W	1.13	**			1.08			
M more edu*W more than M					0.34			
M more edu*M more than W					-0.17			
W more educated than M	0.06				0.33			
W more edu*W more than M					-0.42			
W more edu*M more than W					-1.33			
PARTNERS' ACCESS TO ECONOMIC RESOURCES								
Only M work	0.83						0.43	
Only M work*W more than M							1.39	
Only M work*M more than W							0.78	
Constant	-3.45	***	-3.71	***	-3.47	***	-3.27	***
Log-likelihood	-149.38		-148.35		-148.63		-148.02	
Likelihood-ratio test			2.05		1.49		2.72	

($\dagger p < .10$; $*p < .05$; $** p < .01$; $*** p < .001$).

Note (a). Models controlled for all the socio-demographic variables shown in Table 4. (b) This interaction term could not be estimated because of too few cases. The interaction terms have been estimated one per one model, rather than all at the one time.

6.6 Effect of background variables on having a child

In Table 4, we report the estimates of the full logistic regression models on the probability of having a child in the three years after the first wave. In the previous sections, we elaborated on the best specification of the partners' fertility intentions variable. In this section, we comment on the effects of the other socio-demographic variables included in the models.

At parity zero, a positive effect of woman's education has been detected, all other things being equal. This result may be related to the prevalence of the income effect (high wages levels of highly educated women) over the substitution effect (foregone wages due to the time taken off from work to raise children). As expected, the progression to a first child was found to be less likely among cohabiting couples than among married ones, but afterwards, cohabitation did not have any statistical significant effect on the likelihood of having a child. Finally, a woman's low satisfaction about her partner's involvement in housework duties had a statistically significant negative effect on the likelihood to become a parent in the inter-survey period.

At parity one, couples in which only the woman attended a religious service at least once a month showed a higher likelihood to have a second child than couples in which none of the partners attended religious services, all other things being equal. Moreover, the positive effect of woman's low level of education on having a second child was strongly mediated by the partners' combined fertility timing intentions, as shown by the statistical significance level of the related interaction term.

At parity two, as expected, couples in which the woman was not very satisfied with the gender division of housework and childcare tasks (either little satisfied or not satisfied at all) experienced lower probability of having a third child than couples in which the woman reported a high level of satisfaction in gender division of family roles, all other things being equal. Moreover, couples in which the woman was older than the man and the man was more educated than the woman faced higher risks to have a third child than couples in which the man was older than the woman and the woman was more educated than the man. The former result can be due to the women's biological limits of reproduction. The latter can be related to the fact that at high parities (two or above) a gender traditional setting favors additional childbearing more than an equal gender one in Italy, in which there is not enough support which helps working mothers (who would be presumably more educated or as much educated as their male partners) to weaken the tensions between work and family life.

TABLE 4 LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS ON HAVING A CHILD IN THE INTER-SURVEY PERIOD (2003-2007) [a] FULL MODELS. BETA COEFFICIENTS

	Childless		One child		Two children	
Fertility timing intentions						
Linear spec. of partners' intentions	0.56	***	0.66	***	-	
	(0.14)		(0.11)			
Both partners defefinitely yes	-		-		6.14	***
					(1.16)	
Both partners probably yes	-		-		2.24	***
					(0.51)	
Absolute disagreement	-		-		0.62	
					(0.38)	
Fertility quantum intentions						
Agreement between partners	-0.01		0.22		-0.41	
	(0.34)		(0.26)		(0.42)	
Socio-demographic variables						
Woman's age	-0.23	***	-0.42	***	-0.27	***
	(0.06)		(0.07)		(0.07)	
Woman's age^2	0.00		-0.02	**	-0.02	*
	(0.01)		(0.01)		(0.01)	
Man 3 years older than woman	0.07		-0.24		-0.47	
	(0.38)		(0.27)		(0.39)	
Man younger than woman	0.58		0.41		0.87	*
	(0.42)		(0.33)		(0.42)	
Cohabiting	-1.11	*	0.12		1.56	
	(0.50)		(0.49)		(0.90)	
Woman with low edu	-0.51		0.69		0.17	
	(0.42)		(0.67)		(0.40)	
Woman with high edu	1.10	**	0.18		0.99	
	(0.41)		(0.34)		(0.55)	
Man more edu than woman	-0.35		0.32		1.14	**
	(0.52)		(0.33)		(0.41)	
Man less edu than woman	-0.23		-0.35		0.05	
	(0.37)		(0.29)		(0.50)	
Both partners work	0.16		-0.06		0.85	
	(0.43)		(0.30)		(0.45)	
Only man works	0.08		0.01		0.75	
	(0.43)		(0.35)		(0.56)	
Only woman works	0.53		0.13		0.41	
	(0.45)		(0.34)		(0.54)	
Only woman attends rel.services	0.61		1.36	*	-0.35	
	(0.94)		(0.66)		(1.12)	
Only man attends rel.services	-0.68		0.41		0.27	
	(0.50)		(0.38)		(0.48)	
None attends rel.services	0.28		-0.05		0.35	
	(0.43)		(0.30)		(0.39)	

TABLE 4 (Continued)

Low satisfaction in gender division of tasks	-0.73	*	0.11		-0.84	*
	(0.35)		(0.28)		(0.36)	
Dissatisfaction in gender division of tasks	-0.43		0.34		-1.32	*
	(0.52)		(0.35)		(0.56)	
Centre & South	0.18		0.06		-0.27	
	(0.34)		(0.24)		(0.34)	
Constant	-2.99	***	-0.40	*	-3.47	***
	(0.76)		(0.19)		(0.68)	
Woman low edu*linear specification intentions			-4.10	***		
			(0.57)			
N. cases	291		677.00		1130	

(†p < .10; *p < . 05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001).

Note. Standard errors are shown in parenthesis. All the possible interactions between partners' combined child timing intentions, on one side, and the socio-demographic variables, on the other side, were tested. For the sake of parsimony, only the statistically significant interactions were kept in the full models.

7. Summary and concluding remarks

In this analysis, we compared prospective short-term childbearing intentions with subsequent reproductive behavior by using couple-level longitudinal data in order to determine whether one of the partners has more decision-making power when the partners disagree. This topic is generating a growing amount of interest among academic researchers, but it is under-investigated because high-quality data on both partners are needed, and data of this kind are not easy to collect. Our study design was particularly suitable for this aim because it reflects a genuine couple approach in a longitudinal perspective. The novelty of our research lies not only in the data design but also in the use of both child-timing and child-number intentions, which enabled us to estimate the effect of disagreement on timing intentions net of the disagreement on quantum intentions. Comparing childbearing outcomes of partners with conflicting intentions with those of partners uncertain on whether having a(nother) child is also quite new in the literature.

We found that in a context of high fertility control, like Italy, one partner's intention to not have a child is not always sufficient to prevent a birth. At parity zero and one, the effect of disagreement lies between that of agreement on probably yes and that of agreement on probably not having a(nother) child. By contrast, at parity two, a symmetrical double veto-power model suggest that the birth is avoided as soon as one of the partners vetoes this decision, consistently with previous studies conducted in other countries, like Germany (Bauer and Kneip 2012), the Netherlands (Jansen and Liefbroer 2006), Sweden (Thomson and

Hoem 1998), and the U.S. (Thomson et al. 1990; Thomson 1997). Interestingly, the veto mechanism works only when the decision is to move beyond the widely accepted two-child family size norm, which supports the pervasiveness of such a norm in Italy and our hypothesis of a parity-specific effect of disagreement. Hence, especially at parity two, the failure to reach an agreement with the partner about having a child may constitute an important reason why the stated fertility intentions do not correspond to subsequent fertility outcomes.

In addition, we found that if a conflict arises within the couple about having a(nother) child, there is no gender prevalence in the final decision. The Italian GGS data did not support the hypotheses that gender equality in fertility decision-making is driven by the equal division of housework and childcare tasks, the equal distribution of bargaining power between partners, or the partners' equal access to economic resources. These results, which confirm earlier studies (Thomson and Hoem 1998), could be due to the very rough measures of gender equality used in our analysis: gender equality was measured by a woman's perception of her partner's contributions to the housework and childcare tasks, the distribution of bargaining power was based on the difference in the levels of completed education between the partners, the partners' access to economic resources was captured by the simple contrast 'employed' 'not employed'. It is, therefore, possible that more refined measures would produce different results. Recent research has shown that women's bargaining power, for instance, depends on a series of variables (Bertocchi et al. 2012).

The main hypothesis that women are dominant in fertility decision-making because childbearing mainly lies in their sphere of influence, verified in previous research studies (Townes et al. 1980; Fried et al. 1980; Beckman 1984; Rindfuss et al. 1988, Testa et al. 2011), could not be supported in the current analysis. Although the outcomes of couples in which the female partner intended a(nother) child more than the male one were, compared to the outcomes of couples in which the male partner intended a(nother) child more than the female one, closer to yes than to no, the two types of disagreement were not statistically different (i.e., the effect of disagreement was not signed). This suggests that women in Italy are not necessarily more influential than men in reproductive decision-making. This gender symmetry was found despite the lack of gender equality and the low level of public support for families in Italy, which means that women are primarily responsible for childrearing. Our interpretation of this result is that, because childbearing has long-term implications for both partners, neither of them is willing to have a child without the consent of the other partner. Interestingly, the empirical evidence points out that in Italy the male breadwinner model is coupled with a woman's stronger power in fertility decisions at parity zero, suggesting that

women's prevalence, if any, is based on a gender specialization of partners' roles rather than on equal gender division of tasks.

There are two additional results which are a bioproduct of our analysis and need to be recalled in this concluding section. First, the remarkably high share of couples realising their stated child-timing intentions among those agreeing on definitely having a(nother) child (65% among childless, 77% among couples with one child, and 93% among couples at parity two, as shown in Figure 2), which signals that intentions are closely predicting behaviour, if they are specified both in their time and context components (Ajzen 2010). Second, the stronger effect of disagreement compared to agreement on probably having a(nother) child: partners agreeing on 'probably yes' showed higher childbearing risks than disagreeing partners, among which also the combination of 'probaly yes' and 'definitely yes' are included. This latter constellation of couple's answers could, theoretically, have had stronger a predictive power than agreement on 'probably yes'.

An important caveat inherent to the data has to do with measurement issues: reported child-timing intentions might reflect the resolution of a negotiation process between partners, as the theory on fertility decision-making (Ajzen 1991; Miller 1994; Miller 2011b) and some empirical findings (Barret and Wellings 2002) would suggest. If this is the case, concurring responses from both partners would not rule out the presence of disagreement; or alternatively, an apparent disagreement between the partners might happen by chance, because only one of the man or the woman incorporated the partner's view in his or her answer. Although this is a general challenge in the analysis of couple data (Becker 1996), we believe intentions may not be the most important element in the dynamics of couple interactions. In order to gain a better understanding of the partners' negotiation process, we may want to also look at the desires and motivations expressed at earlier stages of the fertility decision-making sequence. Ideally, the information on contraceptive behavior would complement the data on partners' fertility motivations, desires, and intentions. Similarly, the information on the perception of the partner's fertility intentions should complement the data on the objective partner's fertility intentions. A comparison of these data would allow us to discern whether each of the partners is incorporating the partner context into his/her own intentions, and if so, the extent to which he/she does so (Testa 2010 and 2012a). This approach has already been used in an earlier study (Morgan 1985). In this analysis, we checked whether the partners' short-term fertility intentions were correlated each other, and we found a Pearson's correlation coefficient of 0.8 at parity zero and one and of 0.7 at parity two. These values seem to support the idea that the measure of the intention to have a(nother)

child is the result either of a spousal bargaining process (Fisher 2000) or of assortative mating on the partner market, in which individuals tend to choose partners who have similar fertility preferences. The extent to which these two phenomena may influence the findings on the equality between partners in their fertility decision-making cannot be investigated with the data at hand, but represents an interesting field of analsyis for future research.

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