

**EXTRAMARITAL PREGNANCY AND TRANSITION TO MARRIAGE:  
EXAMINATION OF INTERGENERATIONAL EFFECTS IN SELECTED GGS  
COUNTRIES.**

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***ABSTRACT***

Paper aims at explanation of incidence of so-called bridal pregnancies (premarital conception and marital birth) in the context of intergenerational relations (impact of parents on the process of decision-making). The paper strives for estimation of parental influence on the decision-making process while controlling for the effect of internal factors such as declared norms and values towards family formation and childbearing. The motivation for the analysis arises from observation that in some European countries bridal pregnancy still constitutes an important path of family formation. At this same time, observed changes in the share of extramarital births result the fact that increasing proportion of couples decides not to marry during pregnancy. Therefore, we find important to address the issue of factors responsible for decision concerning marriage during pregnancy. We aim at reaching this research goal by measuring parental impact while controlling for internalized norms and values. Parental effect (external factor) is operationalized as an impact of older generation via normative and economic pressure, whereas internal factors are defined as impact of norms and values internalized by decision makers. The study uses data from the GGS survey for countries with high (Poland, Spain, Italy) and low (Netherlands, France, Norway) incidence of bridal pregnancies in order to account for relative importance of external and internal factors. In the model (probit regression) we estimate the effect of both internal and external factors (controlling for other variables) on the outcome variable (bridal pregnancy). Preliminary results for Poland, suggest that there is a significant parental impact on the likelihood of entering marriage during pregnancy however significance of this effect seems to diminish over time. The effect of internal factors (as measured by declared norms and values) seems to be significant across analysed period with slight increase for those couples who have conceived a child after the year 2000.

## ***EXTENDED ABSTRACT***

### ***Motivation and research objectives***

Second demographic transition and advances in techniques of birth control changed the attitude towards marriage, which no longer pertains as a prerequisite for procreation. During the second demographic transition, norms and attitudes towards traditional forms of family formation has changed drastically (Lesthaeghe 1995, Van de Kaa 1987). This includes interrelation between procreation and family formation process. Lesthaeghe points out a temporal increase in “shotgun weddings” at the initial stage of the second demographic transition which resulted in increased premarital sexual activity (Lesthaeghe, 1995). The later phases of the second demographic transition are marked by spread of premarital cohabitation, procreation in consensual unions, transformation of consensual unions from courtship to “paperless marriages” and finally an increase in extramarital birth rates. These changes were accompanied and enhanced by growing access and popularity of efficient forms of contraception, which not only detached sexual activity from procreation but also allowed women and couples to plan their lives with respect to other domains such as professional career and education. The changes in the sphere of norms and values related to the process of family formation and childbearing should at least diminish both external (via friends and relatives) as well as internalized normative pressure on couples to marry as soon as they realize that the baby is on the way. However, in many countries such as Poland, Japan, Italy or Spain we still observe quite high rates of bridal pregnancies and so-called “shotgun weddings”. In these countries change in the norms and values related to family formation patterns still does not seem to manifest itself in observed behaviour.

Therefore, the main research objective of this paper is answer question why marital conformism and pursue to legitimization of premarital pregnancy is still quite widespread in the absence or diminished importance of social stigma concerning out-of-wedlock births, single motherhood or consensual unions. This question seems to be particularly relevant in the countries where traditional model of family formation characterized by low proportion of extramarital births and consensual unions, is still predominant.

In countries like Italy, Poland or Spain despite recent increase in premarital cohabitation and non-marital childbearing, we still find strong and significant effect of pregnancy on decision concerning marriage (Baizan, Aassve, and Billari, 2003, Hoem and Gabrielli 2010, Matysiak 2009, Mills and Trovato 2000, 2001). In some countries like for

instance Japan there is even and increasing occurrence of shotgun marriages in recent years (Raymo and Iwasawa, 2008).

According to data from registration of births in Poland, in the year 2010 for the first time in history percentage of extramarital births (27%) was higher than percentage of births conceived pre-maritally but delivered within marriage (25,5%). This situation results from steady decline in proportion of bridal pregnancies (marital deliveries and premarital conceptions) in Poland over time. In 1985, almost 50% of first births were conceived prior to marriage and delivered within marriage whereas only around 9% were delivered outside of marriage. Along the societal and economic transformation the relation between these figures reversed, yet Poland enjoys one of the highest share of bridal pregnancies in Europe.

Therefore, decision concerning marriage during pregnancy constitutes one of the possible ways of entering legal unions. Explanation of the differences in the incidence of bridal pregnancies in various countries might contribute to better understanding of trends in non-marital childbearing. This is related to the fact that resignation from marriage during pregnancy would increase observed incidence of extramarital births. Thus, bridal pregnancies constitute an important intermediate step between marital and non-marital childbearing. In the countries with low percentage of extramarital births but high percentage of bridal pregnancies, there is still a room for growth in the number of extramarital births.

Taking into account importance of bridal pregnancies in the context of family formation patterns, we want to address main research objective of the study by analysing impact of external and internal factors affecting individual decision concerning marriage during pregnancy. We operationalize external factors as impact of intergenerational relations on transition to marriage during pregnancy and internal factors as a set of predispositions which manifest in declared norms and values.

### ***Empirical and theoretical background***

Analysis of bridal pregnancies as one of the paths leading to marriage formation is far from being straightforward. From studies of Blossfeld and colleagues we know that intensity of marriage over the course of pregnancy increases around 1-2 month of pregnancy and subsequently peaks between 4 and 6 month (Blossfeld, 1993, Blossfeld et al., 1999, Blossfeld and Mills, 2001). This observation provides some insight on process of individual decision-making. In case of those who marry around 1-2 month of pregnancy we are not able to establish causal relationship between marriage and pregnancy. Those individuals probably were planning marriage and were trying to conceive so in this case we are not able to claim that pregnancy prompted couple to marry. According to analyses based on registration of births, such case constitutes around 20% of all bridal pregnancies observed in Poland in 2012. However peak in incidence of bridal pregnancy between 4 and 6 months indicates that this might be related to causal relationship between pregnancy and decision concerning marriage. As soon as couple realizes that the child is on the way, there is a decision to legalize child via marriage. Again, as calculated from the registration of births around 45% of pregnant females marry between 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy. These observations will be used in our study by restricting analyses only to couples that contracted marriage after completing third month of pregnancy.

Individual decision concerning path of family formation might be determined by the fact whether marriage or cohabitation are perceived as preferred setting for childbearing (Musick, 2007). In demographic past, most of pre-marital pregnancies were not intended which along with strong normative pressure led to high incidence of shotgun weddings. Nowadays effective contraception and weaker normative pressure, leaves couples more space for individual decision whether to wait with marriage after births of the child or to allow the child to be born in the marriage. Cohabiting couples might be less tended to plan their reproduction that married couples since cohabitation might be perceived as a “trial period” and still marriage might be preferred setting for childbearing. These considerations were accurately captured in qualitative study of union formation intentions in Poland (Mynarska and Bernardi, 2007). On the basis of the analysis of qualitative interviews researchers claim that young Poles perceive cohabitation as a natural step towards marriage and marriage itself is perceived as a form of union with higher commitment. Respondents do not perceive cohabitation as an alternative towards marriage, but rather as an intermediate step which turns into marriage as a results of increasing commitment. It is also noteworthy that out-of-wedlock

births are perceived as deviant, problematic and surrounded with strong normative pressure. As respondents claim the social and normative pressure is not only related to external pressure from family, friends and neighbours but also from the side of Catholic Church or institutions which unable father to pick up children from the school since he is not a “real father” (Mynarska and Bernardi, 2007: 543). Respondents also emphasize that giving birth out-of-wedlock is not something normal and that children should be born within marriages.

This statement reflects an important social tension between autonomy of individual choice and internal and external social pressure, which might be responsible for modification of individual choices. Thus, present paper focuses on the important aspect of such tension that is impact of intergenerational relations (external factors) and internalized norms (internal factors) and values on decision concerning marriage during pregnancy.

### ***Analytical framework and methodology***

In our work we apply slightly different approach than other researchers who focus on extramarital pregnancy as factor influencing transition to marriage (Baizan, Aassve et al. 2003, Matysiak 2009). One of the main shortcomings of this approach is related to the fact that in countries with predominant traditional pattern of family formation experience of extramarital pregnancy almost always leads to marriage. Thus, inclusion of extramarital pregnancy as an explanatory variable into statistical models always results in significant and positive effect on the likelihood of marriage. Taking that into account, we apply slightly different approach by using occurrence of bridal pregnancy as an outcome variable as opposed to conception and delivery outside of marriage. This approach is motivated by main focus of the paper that is analysis of factors affecting decision to convert consensual union into marriage as a result of pregnancy. Such approach allows characterizing main factors behind decision why couples decide to enter marriage during pregnancy.

Decision to enter marriage during pregnancy is often labelled as marital conformism since this path of entering marriage tries to mimic traditional pattern of family formation where conception and pregnancy follows wedding. As mentioned earlier, marital conformism decreases significantly observed share of extramarital births especially in the countries in which large proportion of couples decides to follow marital conformism. Conformism as applied to decision concerning marriage during pregnancy is ultimately related to matching behaviour to the expectations of social groups, relatives but also to perceived social control and expectations. Therefore, it seems that this particular path of family formation fits into Ajzen’s framework of planned behaviour (Ajzen 1998). Where behaviour is influenced by

intention, which in turn is affected by beliefs, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. An additional component affecting observed behaviour is related to actual behavioural control, which might enhance willingness to follow marital conformism. Therefore, we assume that decision to marry during pregnancy might be affected by internalized norms and values (internal factors) and actual behavioural control (external factors). In order to accurately operationalize the above theoretical framework the model includes both *external* and *internal* factors potentially affecting decision.

This approach is based on assumption that social norms and values seldom have impact on its own. They influence any behaviour through a set of predisposition we develop during our live (learned from parents and closest kin) as well as they are enhanced by behaviour and sanctions form significant others (parents, closest kin). Thus, both internal and external factors are related and mediated by other individuals such as parents and other family members. We claim that impact of older generation is crucial with respect to decision concerning marriage during pregnancy both from normative and economic reasons. In terms of normative factors parents usually come from generations in which we observe more traditional approach to family formation thus parents transmit norms related to family formation pattern present in their generation. However impact of norms might be effective only in case of existing authority of older generation and degree of social control. Moreover transfer of economic resources might enhance effective impact of older generations on behaviour of descendants. Fulfilment of norms postulated by older generation might be regarded as a precondition for transfer of economic resources. Thus, obeying social norm might be enforced on youth via economic pressure. Taking this into consideration we operationalize external factors (related to intergenerational effects) by inclusion of following set of independent variables:

- Presence of parents (both, only mother, only father, both absent) around studied event (bridal pregnancy)
- Measurement of social proximity: living in this same dwelling with parents, living in this same city/area as parents, frequency of interactions with parents, were parents alive during process of family formation
- Economic status of parents: possibility of transferring resources to the youth (index based on parental level of education, occupation and size of residence).
- Transfer of resources form parents (as declared by respondents)

Internal factors are operationalized as a set of predispositions, which manifest themselves in beliefs, subjective norms and believe on control (perceived behavioural control). These variables are based on the questions on norms and values from the GGS survey:

- Index of traditional approach to family formation and union: index based on following questions:
  - “It is important for people who marry in registry offices to have a religious wedding too”
  - “Marriage is an outdated institution”
  - “Marriage is a lifetime relationship and should never be ended”
  - “A woman has to have children in order to be fulfilled”
  - “If a woman earns more than her partner, it is not good for the relationship”
  - “When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women”
- Religiosity index based on following questions:
  - Importance of religion in respondent’s life,
  - Importance of religion in respondent’s family home
  - Church attendance

Apart of the two main set of variables, in the model we applied following control variables:

- Social status of family: parental level of education, size of residence (parental),
- Calendar year (at the moment of marriage),
- Age at conception,
- Economic status of respondents: how important are parental resources (level of economic independence of younger generation)
- Size of residence (measure of density of social interactions and external social pressure)

The main research hypotheses are related to separation between internal and external factors:

1. Presence of parents enhance likelihood of contracting marriage during pregnancy
2. More traditionally oriented respondents are more likely to contract marriage during pregnancy

Auxiliary hypotheses:

- Among lower social classes we would find less pressure to legitimize birth since there are no resources, which could be potentially transferred from generation of parents to

the generation of children. *[Thus, following social norms would generate benefit in terms of transfer of resources (wedding, allowances for dwelling, other forms of support obtained from parents).]*

- Higher social status of parents might be related to higher incentive to follow “norm” (conformism) since it has greater meaning with respect to maintenance of “social distinction”
- Impact of resources might be related to the size of residence, which approximates degree of social control. In smaller locations impact of resources might be weaker.
- Parental resources might have less significant effect on couples with stable economic situation and thus enjoying higher level of independence

In order to test above hypotheses we use data from Generation and Gender Survey. For ensuring comparative perspective, we will use data from countries with high incidence of bridal pregnancies (Poland, Italy, Spain) and low incidence of bridal pregnancies (France, Netherlands, Norway). Additionally model includes interaction between set of explanatory variables (both external and internal) with calendar year in which marriage during pregnancy took place.

### ***Preliminary results***

Results of the analyses for Poland suggest that there is a decreasing probability of bridal pregnancy over time. For respondents who experienced extramarital conception after 1990 we observe a constant decrease in likelihood of contracting marriage during pregnancy. This result is coherent with observations on the macro level where we find decrease in share of bridal pregnancies and increase in share of extramarital births.

Firstly, we have included into model external factors operationalized by presence of parents, social proximity, social position of parents and transfer of resources. We have found a strong and positive effect of parental presence on decision to marry during pregnancy. Interestingly, this positive effect is related to presence of father whereas in case when only mother is present the effect is significantly negative. These results might be related to the fact that fathers might be more concerned about social perception of extramarital pregnancy as opposed to traditional model of family formation.

Additionally, we have found positive gradient related to socio-economic status of parents. It seems that significant effect of parental presence on likelihood of bridal pregnancy is mostly



restricted to parents with high and medium socio-economic status (as measured by occupation and income). This might be related to the fact that parents from higher social strata might be more interested in maintenance of social norm of traditional family formation and additionally influence couple's decision by making the decision related to transfer of resources conditional on decision about marriage.

Surprisingly we have not found any effect related to explicit transfer of resources as measured by the GGS survey questions. That might be related to low response rate for this question and due to the fact that only a small fraction of couples indicates some form of transfer from parents (the questions in the GGS questionnaire do not capture transfers for the couples living in the household of parents). Results related to the measurement of social proximity yielded ambiguous results.

Secondly, we have investigated the effect of internal factors on the likelihood of bridal pregnancy. As predicted we have found that more traditionally inclined respondents are more likely to contract marriage during pregnancy. This finding holds for both indexes included into model (religiosity and traditional approach to unions).

Important finding of the analysis is related to the pattern of time related changes in the effect of studied covariates. In the model we have interacted main explanatory variables with calendar year in order to account for any time specific changes. These analyses reveal that the effect of external factors (as measured by parental presence and proximity of relations) declines over time. The effect of parental presence is significant among those couples that have conceived an extramarital child in 60thies, 70thies and 80thies but there is no significant effect of parental presence among those couples that conceived a child in 90thies or after the year 2000. On the contrary the effect of internal factors (normative predispositions) remains stable over time and even exhibiting slight increase in estimated probability of following marital conformism for those couples who have experienced extramarital pregnancy after the year 1990. This results suggest that decision concerning marriage during pregnancy would be rather determined by increasing individualism in the process of decision-making and less influenced by external factors such as parental presence or transfer of resources.

### ***Concluding remarks and further steps***

Preliminary statistical analyses reveal that there is a significant external and internal component in the process of decision-making concerning union formation. Attitudes, norms

as well as presence of parents have significant effect on couple's marital conformism once controlled for other background variables. The impact of internalized norms and values related to union formation and division of roles in the household seems to be constant over the whole analysed period. On the contrary, influence of parents on decision concerning marriage during pregnancy used to be more important in the decades preceding societal transformation in Poland, which occurred in 1989. This finding combined with observation of decrease in incidence of bridal pregnancies seems reinforce predictions of second demographic transition theory in which increased individualism and economic independence form older generation might play significant role in transition from traditional to post-transitional family formation pattern.

In a second round of analysis before the conference, we aim to:

- a) Reconstruct as close as possible reproductive strategies of social classes
- b) Build statistical models with social class as main predictor
- c) Addressing remaining research hypotheses
- d) Extend our analyses to other GGS countries: Hungary and France

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