How many children to have? Case study of Germany, Japan, UAE, Ukraine and Russia: female employment, family labour division and childbirth

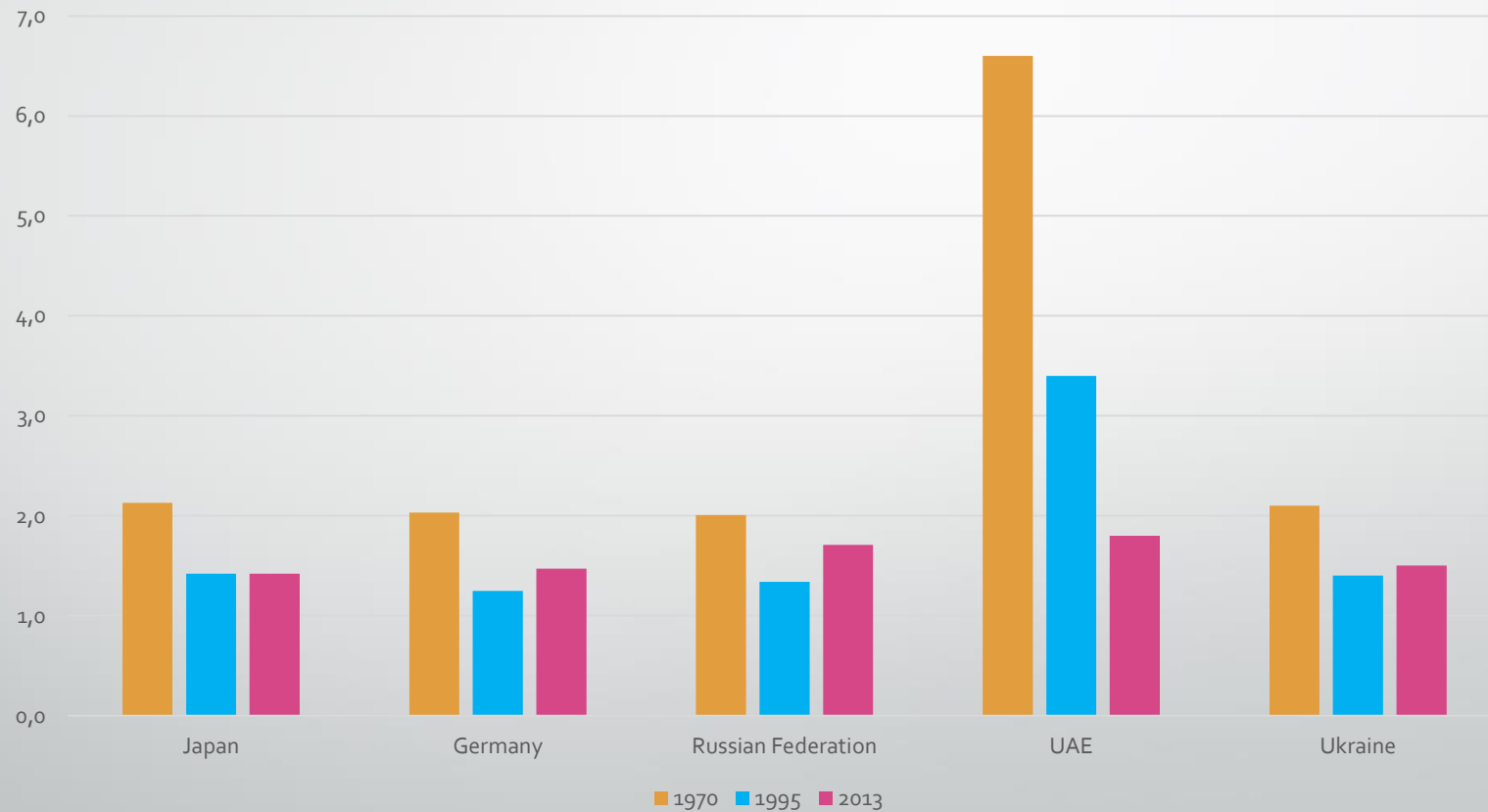Tatiana Karabchuk (UAE University)

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Motivation and research problem

- There is significant gap between the number of children that Europeans would like to have (2.3) and the number they actually have (1.5) (*Philipov et al. 2009; Sobotka, Lutz 2010*)

- The difference is understood as a result of negative obstacles, which prevent people from fulfilling their fertility preferences.

- Thus the gap is seen as a "**latent demand for family policies**" (*Chesnais* 2000).

- Governments introduced various family policies aiming to stimulate fertility directly and to support better parenthood and thus indirectly contribute to an increase in fertility levels.

- Ideals change very slowly and proved to be rather stable however the decreasing total fertility level stimulate decrease in ideal numbers of children (*Philipov, Bernardi 2012).*

Ideal general number of children, 2011, OECD (Distribution (%) of women (15-39) by general ideal number of children)

		No children	One child	Two children	Three or more children	No ideal number / don't know
Germany		4,03	6,74	59,01	17,05	13,17
France		0,45	4,37	61,61	27,80	5,77
OECD-22 average		1,65	7,70	54,25	27,43	8,97
EU average		1,53	7,79	55,57	26,75	8,36

Contribution of the study

- No contemporary research has addressed in detail the current ideal number of children for the young generations or the conditions which are stimulating intended fertility.

- Moreover, no research was done on the determination of ideal number of children in accordance with families' social and economic characteristics.

- Disentangling the different families' social and economic conditions for the ideal number of children and fertility intentions will help better understanding of the determinants of the intentions and can help in population projection, as well will serve as a better ground for policy recommendations.

- The difference of the countries (Japan, Germany, Russia, UAE and Ukrain) background will also help in mapping the institutional characteristics and the fertility attitudes among young generation.

Goal and research questions

The goal of this study:

to investigate and compare the effects of female employment and labor division between husbands and wives on the number of children they are having or planning to have

Research questions:

- What is the ideal number of children (current norm of the society), particularly for young women in the mentioned countries?

- What economic and social conditions are the most preferable to give birth to a/another child?

- What are the timeline for intentions to give birth to a/another child?

- How gender values and gender labour division in the household affect ideal number of children and probability to have a/another child?

Concept of ideal number of children

- In 1936 George Gallup included in a poll a question formulated as follows: "*What do you think is the ideal number of children for a family to have?*"

- Since 1936 the question, in various forms, was systematically included in an increasing number of surveys. A good review of the historical trend of ideal number and fertility intentions' studies was done by **Philipov, Bernardi (2012)**

Concept of ideal number of children

- The concept "ideal number of children" was designed to measure attitudes towards fertility and, particularly, towards population growth (*Girard, Roussel* 1982: 337).

The average ideal number of children is:

  - a measure of expected fertility that could be informative for the construction of population projections.

  - an expression of family-size norms

  - "societal norm"

- The ideal size as an image of a "standard of the desirable" helps families in their orientation towards their own family size without the imposition of normative restrictions *(Philipov, Bernardi 2012).*
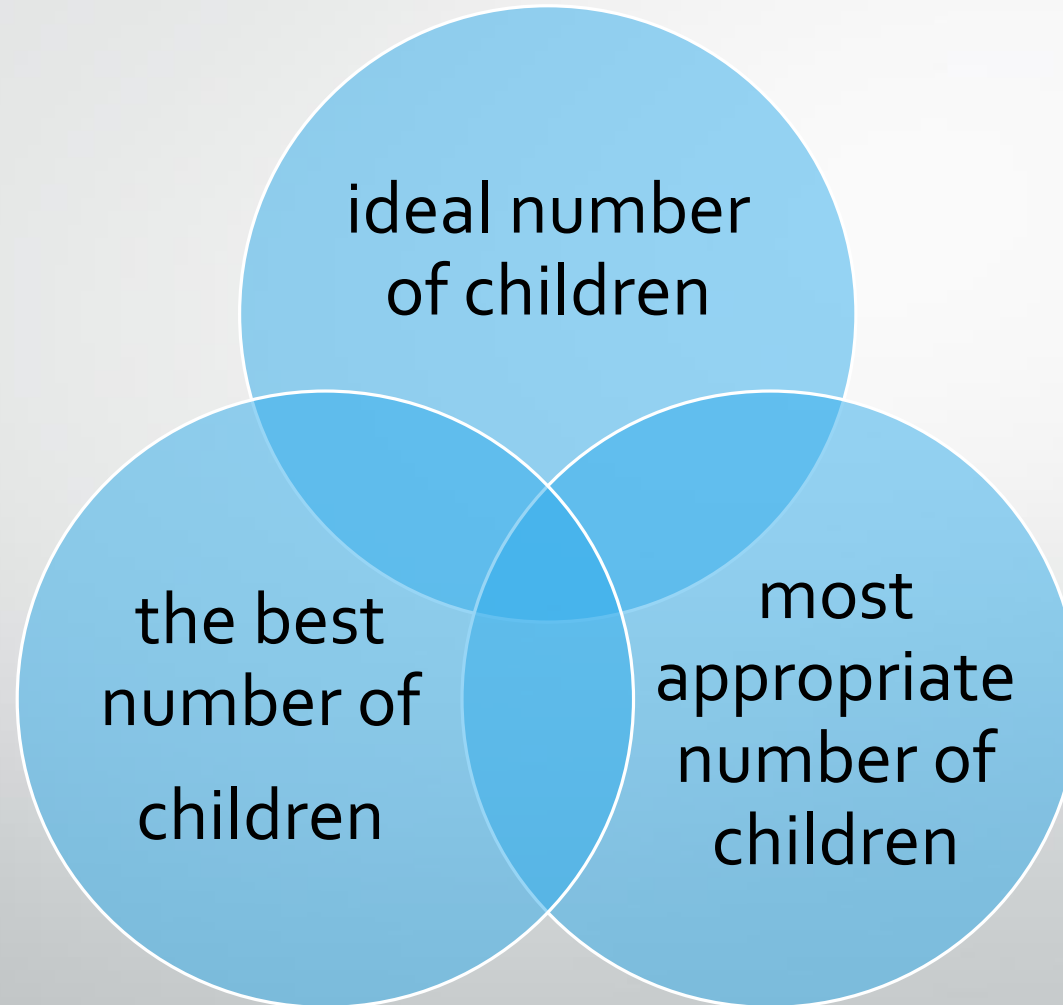
Concept of ideal number of children

Operationalization:

- "*People have different ideas about children and families. As things are now, what do you think is the ideal number of children for the average American family?*" (cited after *Freedman/Sharp* 1954: 35).

- "*Among persons in the same class as you and with the same material resources, what would be the ideal number of children in a family?*" (*Girard/Roussel* 1982).

- "*For you personally, what is the ideal number of children that you would like to have?*" (U.S. surveys since the 1960s (*Gustavus/Nam* 1970)).

- The Fertility and Family surveys (FFS) carried out during the 1990s included in the standard questionnaire the following question: "*How many children do you think is the ideal number of children for a family to have in this country?*"

- "*What do you think is the ideal number of children for a family in Austria?*" and "*And for you personally, what is the ideal number of children which you would like to have or would like to have had?*" (Generations and Gender Surveys (GGS) in Austria)

- "*Assuming ideal circumstances: How many children would you like to have altogether?*" (Panel Study on Relationship and Family Dynamics in Germany (PAIRFAM*)

- "*Generally speaking, what do you think is the ideal number of children for a family?*" and "*And for you personally, what would be the ideal number of children you would like to have or would have liked to have had?*" (*Eurobarometer* surveys 2001, 2006)

Concept of ideal number of children

ideal number of children

the best number of children

most appropriate number of children

? ? ?

Findings from previous studies
(mainly from Philipov, Bernardi 2012)

1. Only few respondents, usually less than 3 %, indicate a societal ideal of zero children

2. One child as an ideal is also rarely preferred, except for Germany during the turbulent years after the unification

3. Younger generations indicate lower ideal sizes. Since fertility declined during recent decades, younger generations form their ideals in a context of lower fertility (*Goldstein et al.* 2003; *Testa* and *Grilli* 2006; *Heiland et al*. 2008)

4. Both societal and personal ideals are considerably higher than observed fertility

Fertility intentions

Concepts to be used in surveys: "intended family size", or "life-time intentions" or "intended number of children or "wanted children"

Childbearing desires influence the formation of expectations and the latter influence the formation of intentions (*Miller/Pasta* 1993, 1994, 1995; *Philipov, Bernardi 2012*)

Fertility levels indicated by intentions deviate from actual fertility and hence forecasts based on intentions were inaccurate (*Westoff, Ryder* 1977; *Hendershot,Placek* 1980; *Morgan* 2001)

BUT research also indicated that fertility intentions, as antecedent of childbearing, are valuably informative about fertility behavior.

AND deviation of intentions from actual fertility was found to be useful in the search of explanations on why people fail to reach their fertility plans

Methodology

- Factorial survey (Gunst and Mason 1991; Jasso 2006; Dulmer 2007, 2013)

- 150-200 students in Japan, Germany, Russia, UAE and Ukraine

- Vignettes (different family situations for personal assessments on ideal number of children and fertility intentions) plus survey questions

Dependent variables

- **In your opinion, how favourable is the current situation to give birth to a/another child?**

Very unfavorable   Very Favorable

0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

- **Irrespective of the number of children they already have: what is, according to your opinion, the ideal number of children for this family?**

vignette (family situation)

On the following pages we will present you 22 similar situations on a UAE Muslim national family where spouses are married, both of them are in perfect health conditions. The relationships are very good between husband and wife and they are not going to divorce. The husband has high school degree and he works full-time.

The characteristics of wife and a few family parameters vary from situation to situation and we will ask you to judge how likely the family will have another child in a particular situation and what is the ideal/appropriate number of children for such family.

- The family parameters to vary across the situations are the level of **family income, number of children and their gender, labour division in the household, availability of childcare services**.

- The wife's characteristics differ in terms of her **age**, **education level and employment status.**

Factors to change in the vignette (family situation)

- **Age of wife :** 20; 30; 40

- **Age of husband (fixed always in accordance with wife's age) :** 25; 35; 45

- **Number and gender of children:** 0 children; 1 boy, 1 girl, 2 boys, 2 girls; 1boy and 1 girl

- **Total Family Income:** quartiles points of income distribution 25%, 50%, 75%

- **Financial situation in the next years:** same, better, worse

- **Female employment:** unemployed, part-time employed, full-time employed, non-employed

- **Female education:** Basic Secondary; University degree

- **Childcare services availability:** nothing; grandmother/grandfather or another relative helping with child; good public organized child care services/nanny

- **Labour division in the household:** most of housework is done by wife; most of work is done by husband; housework is equally shared.

Second level characteristics (respondents)

- Personal ideal number of children
- Personal fertility intentions
- Religiosity
- Region
- N siblings in the own family
- Gender
- Family/work values
- Gender equality attitudes
- Divorce approve
- Marital status
- Number of children
- Subjective health
- Subjective well-being

Advantages of the study

- Gender differences in ideal numbers and intended fertility (what is important for males and what is important for females)

- Focus on young generation

- Causality between ideal number of family members and socio-economic situation of the families

- Fertility intentions, ideal number in society and ideal number for the current youth

- Different country cases (religiosity, culture, institutions)

limitations of the study

- Almost no age differences on respondents' level

- No education level differences on respondents' level

- No variety of employment status on respondents' level

Thank you for your attention

Questions and comments are welcome!