

1 Introduction

1.1 Subject focus and the principle research questions

Academic interest in religion has re-escalated during recent years. The topic has again taken a front seat on the European agenda. On the one hand this is associated with immigration processes creating multi-religious societies. Immigrants are not longer willing to hide their religiosity and request their own places of prayer where they can express their religiosity. On the other hand, it is due to events and conflicts for which religion is held responsible. A third explanation are religious minorities whose higher fertility and – from a secular perspective – partly deviant behavior make them highly visible.

For some decades research on religion and religiosity almost ceased, which was also due to the “belief” in the victory of secularization over religion and religiosity. This premature conclusion had to be revised, also with respect to demographic behavior. Religiosity is a major cultural trait that shapes values. In the past however, fertility research in Europe generally focused on economic factors. Much less attention was paid to values-based variables. It seems worthwhile to neither neglect the first nor the latter but to combine economic and cultural factors to explain fertility. Furthermore, surrounding events, developments, and factors have to be taken into account.

This dissertation investigates the impact of religiosity of both women and men on completed fertility in comparative perspective. It is assumed that religious individuals do not only desire more children and have more positive attitudes towards family and children, but also that they realize a higher fertility. Furthermore, it is supposed that the effect can be demonstrated independently of the institutional context and policy-making, social norms, state-church-relations, and the national degree of religious vitality which is associated with the denominational cultural tradition. These factors, that vary across countries, build the frame for fertility decisions but also react to

changes in individual behavior. Furthermore, a variety of individual characteristics and resources are associated with fertility decisions and fertility behavior. The most important traits are labor supply and educational achievement as well as their related domains.

Fertility and religiosity levels not only vary across individuals within a country but also between countries. The national degree of religiosity sheds light on the size of the religiosity effect on aggregated fertility, which makes cross-country analyses promising. Second, while the common focus is mostly on women's fertility, it could be more interesting to compare demographic behavior of women and men by religiosity. Do they differ and if so, how? A third point is the time perspective. Has the influence of religiosity changed over the course of time? A fourth and final issue is to distinguish the micro (individual) and macro (national) level. Secularization can also be differentiated at these levels and so should the effect of religious institutions and religiosity on demographic behavior. Until now, there has been no detailed study with such a multi-dimensional approach.

The theoretical approach argues that individual religiosity promotes fertility both directly and indirectly. The direct effect makes recourse to denomination-specific norms and rules with respect to family behavior. The indirect effect is derived from the religious composition of a couple. Confidence in marital stability should have a positive impact on fertility while the anticipation of divorce discourages investments in the marriage. It is assumed that the religious composition of a couple and union stability are clearly linked to each other. Furthermore, the approach considers that fertility has decreased, also among the religiously affiliated. It therefore associates behavioral changes with changing environmental conditions. Indirect effects also arise from interactions of religiosity with other factors that affect fertility.

The following study compares five countries with different demographic and denominational patterns: France, Norway, West Germany, Hungary, and East Germany. (1) France has high fertility and strongly supportive policies. In addition, it can be referred to as a laicist state, i.e. state and church are strictly separated, with Catholic roots. (2) Norway is a universalistic welfare state geared to gender equality (in recent decades). Fertility is also high. The country has a Lutheran state church and hence a Protestant imprint. Family-related policies have been influenced by Protestant ideals. (3) West Germany (Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) before 1990) has had a persistently low level of fertility for almost 40 years. In terms of denominations, it is

mixed with balanced shares of Protestants (rather in the North) and Roman Catholics (rather in the South). The number of desired children was and is well below the replacement level. Christian churches and the state cooperate, and are hence not strictly separated. (4) Hungary experienced state socialism which included the promotion of fertility and the discrimination of religion. Fertility during that time period was stable and relatively high, but dramatically sank after the system transformation. The country has a pluralist religious structure with Roman and Greek Catholics, Reformed and Lutheran Protestants, and further Christian as well as non-Christian minorities. (5) East Germany was also a socialist state in the form of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). After the fall of the wall, the fertility level declined. Even if demographic developments around 1990 were similar, East Germany and Hungary differ in a variety of factors and characteristics. For example, the Protestant imprint in East Germany was already fading due to the religion-hostile ideology of the regime of the Socialist Unity Party (SED), while Hungary remained Christian though not highly religious. East and West Germany will – with one exception – be treated separately from each other due these far-reaching differences. Moreover, the selected countries have different historical and institutional contexts, cultures, social norms, and church-state-relations.

Empirically, assumptions will be tested by estimating regression models on the basis of wave I of the *Generations and Gender Survey* (GGS). The advantage of the GGS is the opportunity to internationally compare completed fertility and fertility differences between several religious groups within diverging settings due to the availability of relevant indicators. In Germany, a supplemental survey was carried out to collect data from Turkish migrants. Information on migrant groups are generally scarce. Therefore, the additional survey offers a good opportunity to involve Muslims and their demographic behavior in this study. The respondents considered were born between 1930 and 1962. The youngest respondents were 45 years old at the time of data collection, the oldest were 74 years old.

In addition to the empirical analyses, a literature-based analysis is conducted to determine intermediate macrolevel effects of religious institutions on fertility. Taken together, the following study contributes to religion-related research by working multidimensionally. Firstly, the comparative perspective is the cross-country dimension. Secondly, considering both women and men gives information on gender-specific differences with respect to demographic behavior by religiosity. Thirdly, micro-macro

associations are considered. And fourthly, by regarding a broad time period (1950–2007), changes in the influence of religiosity over time can be taken account of.

1.2 Structure

The study proceeds as follows: chapter 2 outlines and compares demographic patterns – based on alternative fertility as well as divorce indicators – of France, Hungary, Norway, and Germany. Chapter 3 defines religion and religiosity and introduces the multi-dimensional concept of religiosity. Thereafter, it deals with historical-cultural patterns that explain diverging levels of religious vitality between the selected countries. Religious vitality is reflected by the degree of secularization, whose three-dimensional character will be clarified. The historical-cultural pattern will be described by modernization, state-church relations, and the denominational cultural tradition. The latter refers to denomination-specific characteristics that encourage or discourage religious activity. The chapter concludes with a review of some existing findings concerning the association between religiosity and fertility. Usually, they document a positive impact at the individual level.

Chapter 4 theorizes the impact of religious affiliation and religiosity on fertility. Some of the common explanations for the religiosity-fertility connection beyond a higher affinity for children are depicted. Additionally, denomination-specific norms, rules, and principles guiding family behavior of adherents are summarized for Catholics, Protestants, and Muslims. Most studies researching the effects of religiosity on fertility restrict themselves to these explanations and denomination-specific norms. However, indirect effects of religiosity on fertility, such as considering religious traits of both spouses, may play a decisive role and are therefore also included in the chapter. Since not only religiosity (of both partners) influences divorce probabilities and hence the union stability, the chapter discusses important characteristics that stabilize or de-stabilize unions.

In the first part of chapter 5 the frame for fertility decisions is described and compared both cross-nationally as well as inter-temporally. Prominent factors, mainly policies – including state-church-relations – are discussed. The second section considers some individual traits and factors associated with fertility. They are gender, education as well as closely related characteristics such as qualifications and labor force participation.

Chapter 6 presents and interprets the results of the empirical analyses and examines the hypotheses formulated in chapter 4 on the basis of the GGS data. The data and variables employed are introduced and the statistical method is explained. A descriptive overview of the relevant data is given and the correlations between religiosity and marital stability, predicted in chapter 4, are tested against reality. Furthermore, the results of several regression estimations are discussed. In this context, direct religiosity effects are tested and then a variety of controls are introduced – among them union stability – and their interactions with religiosity investigated. An additional section analyzes the effects of religiosity on fertility among Muslims based on the supplemental sample to explore whether Muslims' higher fertility can be attributed more to religiosity or to lower educational level due to their origin from a country with a lower level of modernization. A conclusion summarizes the dissertation.

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A Comparative Analysis of France, Hungary, Norway,
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Hubert, S.

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