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## Anticipatory analysis and its alternatives in life-course research

### Part 1: Education and first childbearing

Jan M. Hoem  
Michaela Kreyenfeld

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#### Abstract

Procedures that seek to explain current behavior by future outcomes (anticipatory analysis) constitute a widespread but problematic approach in life-course analysis because they disturb the role of time and the temporal order of events. Nevertheless the practice is often used, not least because it easily produces useful summary measures like the median age at first childbearing and the per cent permanently childless in various educational groups, defined by ultimate attainment. We use an empirical example to demonstrate the issues involved and to propose an alternative "non-anticipatory" research strategy, which, however, does not equally easily provide summary measures.

#### Author's affiliation

[Jan M. Hoem](#)

Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research, Germany

[Michaela Kreyenfeld](#)

Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research, Germany

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