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Preferences, Partners, and Parenthood: Linking Early Fertility Desires, Marriage Timing, and Achieved Fertility

P. 1975-2001

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Abstract

In the United States, underachieving fertility desires is more common among women with higher levels of education and those who delay first marriage beyond their mid-20s. However, the relationship between these patterns, and particularly the degree to which marriage postponement *explains* lower fertility among the highly educated, is not well understood. We use data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 cohort to analyze differences in parenthood and achieved parity for men and women, focusing on the role of marriage timing in achieving fertility goals over the life course. We expand on previous research by distinguishing between entry into parenthood and average parity among parents as pathways to underachieving, by considering variation in the impact of marriage timing by education and by stage of the life course, and by comparing results for men and women. We find that women with a bachelor's degree who desired three or more children are less likely to become mothers relative to women with the same desired family size who did not attend college. Conditional on becoming mothers, however, women with at least a bachelor's degree do not have lower completed family size. No comparable fatherhood difference by desired family size is present. Postponing marriage beyond age 30 is associated with lower proportions of parenthood but not with lower parity among parents. Age patterns are similar for women and men, pointing at social rather than biological factors driving the underachievement of fertility goals.

The Dynamics of Intimate Relationships and Contraceptive Use During Early Emerging Adulthood

P. 2003-2034

Yasamin Kusunoki & Jennifer S. Barber

Abstract

The U.S. period total fertility rate has declined steadily since the Great Recession, reaching 1.73 children in 2018, the lowest level since the 1970s. This pattern could mean that current childbearing cohorts will end up with fewer children than previous cohorts, or this same pattern could be an artifact of a tempo distortion if individuals are simply postponing births they plan to eventually have. In this research note, we use data on current parity and future intended births from the 2006–2017 National Survey of Family Growth to shed light on this issue. We find that total intended parity declined (from 2.26 in 2006–2010 to 2.16 children in 2013–2017), and the proportion intending to remain childless increased slightly. Decomposition indicates that the decline was not due to changes in population composition but rather changes in the subgroups' rates themselves. The decline in intended parity is particularly notable at young ages and among those who are Hispanic. These results indicate that although tempo distortion is likely an important contributor to the decline in TFR, it is not the sole explanation: U.S. individuals are intending to have fewer children than their immediate predecessors, which may translate into a decline in cohort completed parity. However, the change in intended parity is modest, and average intended parity remains above two children.

Recent Trends in U.S. Childbearing Intentions

P.2035-2045

Caroline Sten Hartnett & Alison Gemmill

Abstract

The U.S. period total fertility rate has declined steadily since the Great Recession, reaching 1.73 children in 2018, the lowest level since the 1970s. This pattern could mean that current childbearing cohorts will end up with fewer children than previous cohorts, or this same pattern could be an artifact of a tempo distortion if individuals are simply postponing births they plan to eventually have. In this research note, we use data on current parity and future intended births from the 2006–2017 National Survey of Family Growth to shed light on this issue. We find that total intended parity declined (from 2.26 in 2006–2010 to 2.16 children in 2013–2017), and the proportion intending to remain childless increased slightly. Decomposition indicates that the decline was not due to changes in population composition but rather changes in the subgroups' rates themselves. The decline in intended parity is particularly notable at young ages and among those who are Hispanic. These results indicate that although tempo distortion is likely an important contributor to the decline in TFR, it is not the sole explanation: U.S. individuals are intending to have fewer children than their immediate predecessors, which may translate into a decline in cohort completed parity. However, the change in intended parity is modest, and average intended parity remains above two children.

The Enduring Case for Fertility Desires

P. 2047-2056

Sara Yeatman, Jenny Trinitapoli & Sarah Garver

Abstract

Persistently high levels of unintended fertility, combined with evidence that over- and underachieved fertility are typical and not exceptional, have prompted researchers to question the utility of fertility desires writ large. In this study, we elaborate this paradox: widespread unintendedness and meaningful, highly predictive fertility desires can and do coexist. Using data from Malawi, we demonstrate the predictive validity of numeric fertility timing desires over both four-month and one-year periods. We find that fertility timing desires are highly predictive of pregnancy and that they follow a gradient wherein the likelihood of pregnancy decreases in correspondence with desired time to next birth. This finding holds despite the simultaneous observation of high levels of unintended pregnancy in our sample. Discordance between desires and behaviors reflects constraints to achieving one's fertility and the fluidity of desires but not their irrelevance. Fertility desires remain an essential—if sometimes blunt—tool in the demographers' toolkit.

Material Hardship and Contraceptive Use During the Transition to Adulthood

P. 2057-2084

Elly Field

Abstract

Decades of research have attempted to understand the paradox of stubbornly high unintended pregnancy rates despite widespread use of contraception. Much of this research has focused on socioeconomic disparities in rates of unintended pregnancy, finding that economically disadvantaged women tend to use less effective contraceptive methods and use them less consistently. Building on this research, this study examines how material hardship is associated with less consistent contraceptive use among women who do not desire to become pregnant. Using the Relationship Dynamics and Social Life (RDSL) Study, a weekly longitudinal survey, I find lower levels of contraceptive use and less consistent use of contraception among women experiencing material hardship, relative to those without hardship experiences. I also investigate the extent to which this association is explained by access barriers and lower contraceptive efficacy among women experiencing hardship. Using structural equation modeling, I find that these mediators significantly explain the relationship between hardship and risky contraceptive behaviors, suggesting that hardship creates mental and resource constraints that impede successful implementation of contraception. However, net of these mediators, material hardship remains associated with riskier contraceptive behaviors among young women, calling for further research on how hardship exposes women to greater risk of unintended pregnancies.

Parental Investment After the Birth of a Sibling: The Effect of Family Size in Low-Fertility China

P. 2085-2111

Shuang Chen

Abstract

A large body of research has examined the relationship between family size and child well-being in developing countries, but most of this literature has focused on the consequences of high fertility. The impact of family size in a low-fertility developing country context remains unknown, even though more developing countries are expected to reach below-replacement fertility levels. Set in China between 2010 and 2016, this study examines whether an increase in family size reduces parental investment received by the firstborn child. Using data from the China Family Panel Studies (CFPS), this study improves on previous research by using direct measures of parental investment, including monetary and nonmonetary investment, and distinguishing household-level from child-specific resources. It also exploits the longitudinal nature of the CFPS to mediate the bias arising from the joint determination of family size and parental investment. Results show that having a younger sibling significantly reduces the average household expenditure per capita. It also directly reduces parental investment received by the firstborn child, with two exceptions: (1) for firstborn boys, having a younger sister does not pose any competition; and (2) for firstborn children whose mothers have completed primary education or more, having a younger brother does not reduce parental educational aspirations for them. Findings from this study provide the first glimpse into how children fare as China transitions to a universal two-child policy regime but have wider implications beyond the Chinese context.

Exposure to Armed Conflict and Fertility in Sub-Saharan Africa

P. 2113–2141

Brian C. Thiede, Matthew Hancock, Ahmed Kodouda & James Piazza

Abstract

Changes in fertility patterns are hypothesized to be among the many second-order consequences of armed conflict, but expectations about the direction of such effects are theoretically ambiguous. Prior research, from a range of contexts, has also yielded inconsistent results. We contribute to this debate by using harmonized data and methods to examine the effects of exposure to conflict on preferred and observed fertility outcomes across a spatially and temporally extensive population. We use high-resolution georeferenced data from 25 sub-Saharan African countries, combining records of violent events from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) with data on fertility goals and outcomes from the Demographic and Health Surveys ($n = 368,765$ women aged 15–49 years). We estimate a series of linear and logistic regression models to assess the effects of exposure to conflict events on ideal family size and the probability of childbearing within the 12 months prior to the interview. We find that, on average, exposure to armed conflict leads to modest reductions in both respondents' preferred family size and their probability of recent childbearing. Many of these effects are heterogeneous between demographic groups and across contexts, which suggests systematic differences in women's vulnerability or preferred responses to armed conflict. Additional analyses suggest that conflict-related fertility declines may be driven by delays or reductions in marriage. These results contribute new evidence about the demographic effects of conflict and their underlying mechanisms, and broadly underline the importance of studying the second-order effects of organized violence on vulnerable populations.

Gender Discrimination and Excess Female Under-5 Mortality in India: A New Perspective Using Mixed-Sex Twin

P. 2143-2167

Ridhi Kashyap & Julia ' Behrman

Abstract

Son preference has been linked to excess female under-5 mortality in India, and considerable literature has explored whether parents invest more resources in sons relative to daughters—which we refer to as *explicit discrimination*—leading to girls' poorer health status and, consequently, higher mortality. However, this literature has not adequately controlled for the *implicit* discrimination processes that sort girls into different types of families (e.g., larger) and at earlier parities. To better address the endogeneity associated with implicit discrimination processes, we explore the association between child sex and postneonatal under-5 mortality using a sample of mixed-sex twins from four waves of the Indian National Family

Health Survey. Mixed-sex twins provide a natural experiment that exogenously assigns a boy and a girl to families at the same time, thus controlling for selectivity into having an unwanted female child. We document a sizable impact of explicit discrimination on girls' excess mortality in India, particularly compared with a placebo analysis in sub-Saharan Africa, where girls have a survival advantage. We also show that explicit discrimination weakened for birth cohorts after the mid-1990s, especially in northern India, but further weakening has stalled since the mid-2000s, thus contributing to understandings of how the micro-processes underlying the female mortality disadvantage have changed over time.

The Effects of Marital Status, Fertility, and Bereavement on Adult Mortality in Polygamous and Monogamous Households: Evidence From the Utah Population Database

P. 2169–2198

Kieron J. Barclay, Robyn Donrovich Thorén, Heidi A, Hanson & Ken R, Smith

Abstract

Although the associations among marital status, fertility, bereavement, and adult mortality have been widely studied, much less is known about these associations in polygamous households, which remain prevalent across much of the world. We use data from the Utah Population Database on 110,890 women and 106,979 men born up to 1900, with mortality follow-up into the twentieth century. We examine how the number of wife deaths affects male mortality in polygamous marriages, how sister wife deaths affect female mortality in polygamous marriages relative to the death of a husband, and how marriage order affects the mortality of women in polygamous marriages. We also examine how the number of children ever born and child deaths affect the mortality of men and women as well as variation across monogamous and polygamous unions. Our analyses of women show that the death of a husband and the death of a sister wife have similar effects on mortality. Marriage order does not play a role in the mortality of women in polygamous marriages. For men, the death of one wife in a polygamous marriage increases mortality to a lesser extent than it does for men in monogamous marriages. For polygamous men, losing additional wives has a dose-response effect. Both child deaths and lower fertility are associated with higher mortality. We consistently find that the presence of other kin in the household—whether a second wife, a sister wife, or children—mitigates the negative effects of bereavement.

Landfall After the Perfect Storm: Cohort Differences in the Relationship Between Debt and Risk of Heart Attack

P. 2199–2220

Angela M. O’Rand & Jenifer Hamil-Luker

Abstract

Analyses of the Health and Retirement Study (HRS) between 1992 and 2014 compare the relationship between different levels and forms of debt and heart attack risk trajectories across four cohorts. Although all cohorts experienced growing household debt, including the increase of both secured and unsecured debt, they nevertheless encountered different economic opportunity structures and crises at sensitive times in their life courses, with implications for heart attack risk trajectories. Results from frailty hazards models reveal that unsecured debt is associated with increased risk of heart attack across all cohorts. Higher levels of housing debt, however, predict higher rates of heart attack among only the earlier cohorts. Heart attack risk trajectories for Baby Boomers with high levels of housing debt are lower than those of same-aged peers with no housing debt. Thus, the relationship between debt and heart attack varies by level and form of debt across cohorts but distinguishes Baby Boomer cohorts based on their diverse exposures to volatile housing market conditions over the sensitive household formation period of the life course.

Young Adults’ Migration to Cities in Sweden: Do Siblings Pave the Way?

P. 2221–2244

Clara H. Mulder, Emma Lundholm & Gunnar Malmberg

Abstract

Young adult internal migration forms a large share of the influx of people into large cities in the developed world. We investigate the role of the residential locations of siblings for young adults’ migration to large cities, using the case of

Sweden and its four largest cities: Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö/Lund, and Uppsala. We use register data for the full Swedish-born population of young adults aged 18–28 living in Sweden in the years 2007–2013 and multinomial logistic regression analyses of migrating to each of the four cities or migrating elsewhere versus not migrating. Our point of departure is the paving-the-way hypothesis, which posits that young adults who have a sibling living at a migration destination are particularly likely to move to that destination, more so than to other destinations. Additional hypotheses are related to having more than one sibling in the city and to the gender of siblings living at the destination. We find support for the paving-the-way hypothesis and an additional effect for having more than one sibling in the city. Having a sibling of the same gender in a city matters more for moving there than having a sibling of the opposite gender.

Evaluating the Role of Parental Education and Adolescent Health Problems in Educational Attainment

P. 2245–2267

Janne Mikkonen, Hanna Remes, Heta Moustgaard & Pekka Martikainen

Abstract

This article reconsiders the role of social origin in health selection by examining whether parental education moderates the association between early health and educational attainment and whether health problems mediate the intergenerational transmission of education. We used longitudinal register data on Finns born in 1986–1991 ($n = 352,899$). We measured the completion of secondary and tertiary education until age 27 and used data on hospital care and medication reimbursements to assess chronic somatic conditions, frequent infections, and mental disorders at ages 10–16. We employed linear probability models to estimate the associations between different types of health problems and educational outcomes and to examine moderation by parental education, both overall in the population and comparing siblings with and without health problems. Finally, we performed a mediation analysis with g-computation to simulate whether a hypothetical eradication of health problems would weaken the association between parental and offspring education. All types of health problems reduced the likelihood of secondary education, but mental disorders were associated with the largest reductions. Among those with secondary education, there was further evidence of selection to tertiary education. High parental education buffered against the negative impact of mental disorders on completing secondary education but exacerbated it in the case of tertiary education. The simulated eradication of health problems slightly reduced disparities by parental education in secondary education (up to 10%) but increased disparities in tertiary education (up to 2%). Adolescent health problems and parental education are strong but chiefly independent predictors of educational attainment.

Historical Trends in Children Living in Multigenerational Households in the United States: 1870–2018

P. 2269–2296

Natasha V. Pilkauskas, Mariana Amorim & Rachel E. Dunifon

Abstract

Over the last two decades, the share of U.S. children under age 18 who live in a multigenerational household (with a grandparent and parent) has increased dramatically. Yet we do not know whether this increase is a recent phenomenon or a return to earlier levels of coresidence. Using data from the decennial census from 1870 to 2010 and the 2018 American Community Survey, we examine historical trends in children's multigenerational living arrangements, differences by race/ethnicity and education, and factors that explain the observed trends. We find that in 2018, 10% of U.S. children lived in a multigenerational household, a return to levels last observed in 1950. The current increase in multigenerational households began in 1980, when only 5% of children lived in such a household. Few differences in the prevalence of multigenerational coresidence by race/ethnicity or education existed in the early part of the twentieth century; racial/ethnic and education differences in coresidence are a more recent phenomena. Decomposition analyses do little to explain the decline in coresidence between 1940 and 1980, suggesting that unmeasured factors explain the decrease. Declines in marriage and in the share of White children most strongly explained the increase in multigenerational coresidence between 1980 and 2018. For White children with highly educated parents, factors explaining the increase in coresidence differ from other groups. Our findings suggest that the links between race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status and multigenerational coresidence have changed over time, and today the link between parental education and coresidence varies within racial/ethnic groups.

Employment's Role in Enabling and Constraining Marriage in the Middle East and North Africa

P. 2297-2325

Caroline Krafft & Ragui Assaad

Abstract

We investigate the role of employment in enabling and constraining marriage for young men and women in Egypt, Jordan, and Tunisia. Survival analysis methods for age at marriage are applied to comparable labor market panel surveys from Egypt (2012), Jordan (2010), and Tunisia (2014), which include detailed labor market histories. For men, employment and especially high-quality employment are associated with more rapid transitions to marriage. For women, past—but not contemporaneous—employment statuses are associated with more rapid transitions to marriage. After addressing endogeneity using residual-inclusion methods for the case of public sector employment (a type of high-quality employment), we find that such employment significantly accelerates marriage for men in Egypt and women in Egypt and Tunisia. The potential of high-quality employment to accelerate marriage may make queuing in unemployment while seeking high-quality employment a worthwhile strategy.

The Association Between Legal Status and Poverty Among Immigrants: A Methodological Caution

P. 2327-2335

Cody Spence, James D. Bachmeier, Claire E. Altman & Christal Hamilton

Abstract

Using nationally representative survey data, this research note examines the association between immigrant legal status and poverty in the United States. Our objective is to test whether estimates of this association vary depending on the method used to infer legal status in survey data, focusing on two approaches in particular: (1) inferring legal status using a logical imputation method that ignores the existence of legal-status survey questions (logical approach); and (2) defining legal status based on survey questions about legal status (survey approach). We show that the two methods yield contrasting conclusions. In models using the logical approach, among noncitizens, being a legal permanent resident (LPR) is counterintuitively associated with a significantly *greater net probability* of being below the poverty line compared with their noncitizen peers without LPR status. Conversely, using the survey approach to measure legal status, LPR status is associated with a *lower net probability* of living in poverty, which is in line with a growing body of qualitative and small-sample evidence. Consistent with simulation experiments carried out by Van Hook et al. (2015), the findings call for a more cautious approach to interpreting research results based on legal status imputations and for greater attention to potential biases introduced by various methodological approaches to inferring individuals' legal status in survey data. Consequently, the approach used for measuring legal status has important implications for future research on immigration and legal status.

The Levels and Trends in Deep and Extreme Poverty in the United States, 1993–2016

P. 2337–2360

David Brady & Zachary Parolin

Abstract

Recently, there has been tremendous interest in deep and extreme poverty in the United States. We advance beyond prior research by using higher-quality data, improving measurement, and following leading standards in international income research. We estimate deep (less than 20% of medians) and extreme (less than 10% of medians) poverty in the United States from 1993 to 2016. Using the Current Population Survey, we match the income definition of the Luxembourg Income Study and adjust for underreporting using the Urban Institute's TRIM3 model. In 2016, we estimate that 5.2 to 7.2 million Americans (1.6% to 2.2%) were deeply poor and 2.6 to 3.7 million (0.8% to 1.2%) were extremely poor. Although deep and extreme poverty fluctuated over time, including declines from 1993 to 1995 and 2007 to 2010, we find significant increases from lows in 1995 to peaks in 2016 in both deep (increases of 48% to 93%) and extreme poverty (increases of 54% to 111%). We even find significant increases with thresholds anchored at 1993 medians. With homelessness added, deep poverty would be 7% to 8% higher and extreme poverty 19% to 23% higher in 2016, which suggests that our estimates are

probably lower bounds. The rise of deep/extreme poverty is concentrated among childless households. Among households with children, the expansion of SNAP benefits has led to declines in deep/extreme poverty. Ultimately, we demonstrate that estimates of deep/extreme poverty depend critically on the quality of income measurement.
