Reproductive Decision-Making in Transitional Contexts

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Reproductive Decision-Making
Understanding the Reproductive Puzzle

Women

Men

Kin
Demographic Transition

- **Stage 1**: High stationary
- **Stage 2**: Early expanding
- **Stage 3**: Late expanding
- **Stage 4**: Low stationary
- **Stage 5**: Declining?

- Birth rate
- Death rate
- Natural increase
- Natural decrease

Birth and death rates (per 1000 people per year)

Total population

Time

http://www.coolgeography.co.uk/A-level/AQA/Year%2012/Population/DTM/DTM%20new.htm
Research Questions

1) How do women decide how many children to have?

2) How does exposure to kin influence fertility decisions?

3) What role do men have in reproductive decision making?
Fertility regulation in natural-fertility contexts

- Workload
- Food consumption
- Breastfeeding

Energy balance

- Ovarian function
- Coital frequency

Fertility

Fertility Transition

Conflict between number of children produced and amount parents wish to invest in children.
Hypotheses of Fertility Transition

**ECONOMIC**
Individual-level decision based on the economic costs and benefits of children.

**CULTURAL**
Social interactions and the adoption of ideas from others.

**FALSE DICHOTOMY**
Women’s Education

Why does education influence fertility?
Is its effect economic or cultural?
Model of Reproductive Decision-Making

- Embodied Capital Theory
- Female Labor Force Participation
- Cultural Transmission
- Fertility
- Education

Field site: San Borja
Bolivia is undergoing a fertility transition

Total Fertility Rate of Bolivia

Industry
Women’s Work

- Housewife: 7%
- Work at home: 15%
- Work outside of home, compatible with childcare: 41%
- Work outside of home, non-compatible: 37%
Wealth Inequality
Interviews
Model of Reproductive Decision-Making

- Embodied Capital Theory

Education → Female Labor Force Participation

Female Labor Force Participation → Adapting the Ideas & Behaviors of Others

Adapting the Ideas & Behaviors of Others → Fertility
Expected educational achievement of children predicts fertility

Includes controls for: women’s education, ethnic group, household floor type, age, and friend’s average fertility

When work is incompatible with childcare, first birth is delayed

Controls for age, age squared, birth cohort, education, ethnicity, sisters’ average age at first birth.

Fertility of one’s social network predicts own fertility

Includes controls for: women’s education, ethnic group, household floor type, age, and expected education of children


Dotted lines represent 95% CIs
Model of Reproductive Decision-Making

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001
Model of Reproductive Decision-Making

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Model of Reproductive Decision-Making

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Model of Reproductive Decision-Making

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Implications for our understanding of reproductive decision-making

• Evidence suggests that fertility decline is multi-causal
• Education is mediated through both cultural & economic pathways.
• Women’s labor force participation only affects fertility through its effect on age at first birth.
Understanding the Reproductive Puzzle
How do kin influence reproductive decision-making?

Cooperative Breeding

Grandmother Hypothesis
How do kin influence reproductive decision-making?

Conflicts of interests

Resource competition
Datasets

Thailand Demographic and Health Survey
- Cross-sectional - 1987
- 6,775 ever-married women aged 15-49

Indonesia Family Life Survey
- Panel – ’93, ‘97, ‘00, ‘07
- Data on 9,134 ever-married women
Help from Kin

Snopkowski & Sear (2015) Social Science & Medicine
Patrilocal post-marital residence is associated with higher fertility

Effect is surprisingly consistent

Model controls for: region, religion, urban/rural residence, age, age squared, education, wealth, and age at marriage.
Hypothesized Causal Model

Snopkowski & Sear (in revision) *Demographic Research*
Help from mothers-in-law is predictive of birth

Mothers:

Mothers-in-law:

ns  p > 0.10,  ^ p < 0.10, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Snopkowski & Sear (in revision) Demographic Research
Implications of kin help on reproductive decision-making

• Even though maternal kin provide more help, paternal kin’s help influences birth outcomes.
• Evidence suggests that most of the effect of kin on fertility outcomes can be explained by helping behavior.
Understanding the Reproductive Puzzle

- Women
- Men
- Kin
Do men and women have conflicts over family size?

1. Differences in costs
   - Not the right comparison

2. Kin selection
   - One does better by producing own offspring

3. Unlimited Females
   - Humans are male-biased in the fertile ages

Moya, Snopkowski & Sear (under review) Philosophical Transactions
Do men and women have conflicts over family size?

- Moya, Snopkowski & Sear (under review) Philosophical Transactions
Empirical Evidence for Family Size Preference

Three studies comparing desired family size for men and women:

1. No differences in desired fertility of men and women (Mason & Taj 1987).

2. Couples tend to agree on whether to have another child. If they disagree, men are more likely to want additional children (Mason & Smith 2000).

3. Men tend to want more children than their wives and want the next child sooner (Bankole & Singh 1996).
Huatasani, Peru

- Located in the Peruvian Altiplano
- Approximately 3,000 people in the entire district
- Majority of people work as farmers (potatoes) or herders (sheep)
Preliminary Results

Of the 22 couples that responded about their most recent child:

- Both wanted another child: 32%
- Neither wanted another child: 59%
- Woman wanted another child: 9%

Of the 25 couples that reported whether or not they wanted more children:

- Both want 1 more child: 24%
- Both do not want more children: 64%
- Husband wants more: 12%
- Both want 1 more child: 24%
Implications of Family Size Preference

1. Theoretically, we may not expect men to desire larger family sizes than women for a given couple

2. Empirically, men may report wanting larger families, but it may be because they are imagining their total number of children across multiple women.
Conclusion

Economic effects influence reproductive decisions

BUT...

Ultimately fertility takes place in a social world, and these social interactions, whether they be social information, help received, sexual dynamics, also drive fertility decisions.
Thank you

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