Extended Abstract

Family Change and Development Idealism:
Results from 2005 Albania survey of individual data about ideas, perceptions and attitudes

This paper examines the ways in which development and developmental thinking are related to fertility and marriage change in Albania. The past 50 years have seen radical transformations in many aspects of Albanian society, with other aspects of society remaining fairly constant. While fertility came down dramatically the marriage pattern did not change much. Previous work has argued that the set of factors affecting fertility and family formation worked in different paths, with the investments in social agenda bringing fertility down in a traditional and patriarchal society, which tried to maintain marriage pattern unchanged (Gjonca et al, 2006, 2007, 2001). This interplay between new and old norms and behaviour together with the fact that Albania was for decades sealed off from the West, make it a unique site for studying the effects of development ideas on family formation and fertility patterns. This paper uses recently collected data on fertility, family formation, values and attitudes as well as data on development thinking and beliefs to address this issue.

By the end of the Second World War, Albania had the highest fertility in Europe, with a TFR of about six births per woman. High fertility was reinforced by traditional patriarchal norms. The total fertility rate rose during the 1950s, reaching a peak of almost seven children per woman by 1960. This was followed in the 1970s by a steady decline, with a TFR of less than four in 1980, and just over three children per woman in 1990 (Figure 1). The 1990s saw a continuous reduction in fertility with a TFR at about 1.85 by 2005. While the total fertility rate steadily declined during the 1950-2005 period, the mean age of childbearing (MACB) did not follow the expected pattern (Figure 1). The MACB fell from 31.4 years to 27.5 years in 2005. This decrease is not unduly sharp and coincides with the high levels of fertility in Albania during the period under consideration. In many European countries the postponement of or reduction in fertility is very much associated with changes in the MACB. In the case of Albania, this relationship is not so straightforward. The distinctive feature of fertility reduction in Albania is that when fertility decreased during the 1960-2005 period, it decreased for women of all ages (Figures 2a and 2b), thus the changes in the MACB were not dramatic.

While the TFR came down dramatically from 7.0 (1960) to 1.85 (2005) births per woman, marriage patterns have not changed much. Marriage continues to be universal. 92% of women married by age of 35 (2001). Mean age of first marriage of women changed from 22 to 23 years from 1950 to 2000. The same applies for men, with a MAFM of 27.7 and 28.1 years respectively. While mean age of first marriage did not change at all, mean age at marriage changed very little comparing the rapid reduction in fertility during the second half of the 20th century (table 1). For women the mean age at marriage changed from 20.8 to 23.4, while for men from 26.4 to 28.5 years. Most importantly childbearing still occurs within marriage, with out-of-wedlock fertility being at 0.03% in 2002.

Thus, while fertility came down in Albania, mean age of childbearing and mean age of marriage did not change much. It was also found that first birth was universal in Albania in the 1990s even among the younger cohorts (Gjonca et al, 2007). This shows that the set of factors that brought fertility down did not have the same effect in changing the marriage pattern. It has been argued that investment of communist government in the social agenda, with particular focus on female education and employment had a dramatic effect on fertility

reduction in Albania, despite a pro-natalist environment and in the absence of contraception and abortion. However, the question raised here is how come that these policies did not affect the family formation, in particular the marriage pattern. While education seems to be the main factor in bringing fertility down, the norms that maintained fertility within marriage seem to persist in determining the family structures.

This interplay between new and old norms and behaviour together make it a unique site for studying the effects of development ideas on family formation and fertility patterns. The initial results show clearly that people in Albania have considerable knowledge of development and see a strong association between socio-economic development and family formation (Table 2). They also perceive development as influential in determining the future pattern of their fertility and marriage behaviour (Table 2c). In addition, Albanians see low fertility but not an older age at marriage as being an important causal force in producing economic growth (Table 2.c). if one looks at table 2.c it is clear difference in the way question 1 and 2 are asked. People believe that having fewer children will make a country richer, but marrying at a young age. We hypothesize that the beliefs about low fertility being a causal influence on economic growth could help explain the decline in fertility, while the lack of belief in a high age at marriage being a factor in economic growth could help explain the relative stability in age at marriage.

Table 1. Mean age at marriage for males and females, 1955-2000

	1955	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	2000
Female	20.8	21.2	21.1	21.5	21.6	22.6	22.8	23.0	23.6
Male	26.4	26.6	26.7	27.1	26.8	27.1	27.1	27.4	28.1

Table 2. People's view on development and family formation
Table 2a

	are more common in:		
	poor	rich	about the same
Families having fewer children	13.79	69.81	16.40
People marrying at younger ages	59.69	11.99	28.32
Young people choosing their own spouse	9.31	47.81	42.88
Women having low status	76.62	9.90	13.48
Young married children living away from their older parents	10.88	71.65	17.48

Table 2b

	If a poor country becomes richer:		
	are more common	are less common	about the same
People marrying at older ages	41.94	25.54	32.52
Families having more children	13.72	62.23	24.04
women having higher status	63.41	14.73	21.86
Young married children living with their old parents	14.45	62.68	22.86
Young people choosing their own spouse	47.67	13.41	38.92

Table 2c

	would that help make poor countries:		
	poorer	richer	about the same
If families in poor countries have fewer children	12.20	52.33	35.48
If people in poor countries married at young age	24.18	27.14	48.68
If women in poor countries had higher status	7.26	62.13	30.61
If more young children in poor countries lived with their older parents	24.50	24.25	51.25
If more young children in poor countries chose their own spouse	5.59	33.88	60.53

Figure 1. Total period and cohort fertility rates, 1950-2005