

Intrafamily Exchange and Europe's Low Fertility

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Despite the widening transition to below replacement fertility in Europe and east Asia, the demography of lowest-low fertility remains poorly understood. There is growing consensus that the postponement of childbirth is one major factor in the persistence of lowest-low fertility in Europe. However, the decoupling of fertility from its historical relationships with marriage and participation in labor markets leaves numerous alternative explanations. These explanations emphasize changing marriage patterns and growing uncertainties in labor markets. However, just as the postponement of marriage drives the declines in marital fertility in many regions of Europe, so does the rise of non-marital fertility and the shortening duration of marriage complicate these relationships. Similarly, uncertainties in economic outlook and the persistence of inflexibility in workplace arrangements counter a growing number of policy interventions designed to lower the costs of child bearing. Given the regularity with which European countries have entered into below-replacement fertility and the ongoing ageing of Europe, distinguishing the factors driving lowest-low fertility in Europe remains a critical challenge.

We hypothesize that shifts in intra-family exchanges of both material and socio-emotional support play an important role in the continued increases in the postponement of childbirth in Europe. Family traditions across Europe have involved a wide array of intra-family exchanges. Material loans and gifts have played important roles for the formation and maintenance of newly formed independent households. Labor exchanges played important roles not only in agrarian

communities, but also in the inter-locked enterprises among urban families. Weak ties among family members with prospective employers have eased family members' entries into labor markets. Many of these exchanges involve additional attributes which may have played important roles in fertility decision-making. Hajnal (1965) described an East-West divide of family structure and marriage traditions which has often been tied to past trends in European fertility. Does this historical divide reflect differences in family structure which are tied to variations in intra-family exchanges which had a direct effect on fertility?

We analyze a new dataset of over 500 kinships collected from eight countries in Europe to investigate the relationship between intra-family exchanges and fertility. A household sample informed the collection of complete family kinships in nineteen rural and urban field sites across Italy, France, Germany, Austria, Poland, Croatia, Sweden and Russia. Respondents reported the demographic characteristics of family members and extensive information about exchanges of material resources, labor and job assistance among family members. We summarize the frequency and value of different types of intra-family exchanges with particular attention to various measures of kinship structure. The structure of kinship, the geographic distribution of kin members and particular patterns of co-residency among kin are related to different patterns of exchanges.

We continue to show how intra-family exchanges are related to age at first birth and cumulative fertility. Exchanges of material resources have important effects on the age at which individuals leave home, the age at marriage as well as the age at first birth. We also document the prevalence of exchanges of child care support among families and the relationship between child

care exchanges and age at first birth. Variations in child care exchanges across both urban and rural areas as well as different country settings are significantly related to variations in age at first birth and cumulative fertility. Multilevel analysis accounting for both nuclear family-level and kinship-level effects illustrates the independent effects of kinships and families on fertility outcomes. Comparing estimates of fertility outcomes controlling for fixed family-level, kinship-level and both family- and kinship-level effects further distinguishes the independent effects of kinship structure on fertility.