The Impact of Contraception on Outcomes: Childbearing and Women’s Economic Status

Jason M. Lindo
Texas A&M University
National Bureau of Economic Research

Presentation for NIHCM Webinar: Strengthening Women’s Health Access - Medicaid and Family Planning
Economic Approaches


**Economic Approaches**

**Theory:** consider how incentives, costs, and constraints affect outcomes
**Economic Approaches**

**Theory:** consider how incentives, costs, and constraints affect outcomes

**Empirical Research:** obsession with estimating *causal* effects
Empirical Analyses of Causal Effects
Empirical Analyses of Causal Effects

Typically using methods associated with the 2021 Nobel Prize in economics and cutting-edge refinements to those methods
Empirical Analyses of Causal Effects

Typically using methods associated with the 2021 Nobel Prize in economics and cutting-edge refinements to those methods

Evaluate “natural experiments” in which institutions, policymakers, or other forces have generated an experiment of sorts that we can learn from
Empirical Analyses of Causal Effects

Typically using methods associated with the 2021 Nobel Prize in economics and cutting-edge refinements to those methods

Evaluate “natural experiments” in which institutions, policymakers, or other forces have generated an experiment of sorts that we can learn from

Methods focus on trying to identify a counterfactual. What would have happened if circumstances had been different?
Example: Colorado Family Planning Initiative

$23 million program aimed at expanding access to LARCs through Title X clinics beginning in 2009-2015

Funds used for:

- purchasing IUDs and implants
- training for LARC counseling, insertion, and removal
- technical assistance for coding and billing and other general assistance
Example: Colorado Family Planning Initiative
Example: Colorado Family Planning Initiative

This comparison indicates the CFPI reduced teen birth rates 6.4%

Source: Lindo and Packham (2017)
Evidence from Texas Cutting Family Planning Funding by Two-Thirds

Teen birth rates in affected TX counties vs rest of US

Source: Packham (2017)
Evidence from Texas Cutting Family Planning Funding by Two-Thirds

Also caused significant increases in births to older women (Lu and Slusky 2016)

Similar evidence from the initial rollout of federally funded family planning programs during the 1960s and 1970s (Bailey 2012)
Other Studies of Impacts on Childbearing

A huge body of evidence demonstrating that policies altering access to family planning affect the timing of childbearing and completed fertility.

In the interest of time, I’m going to move on to talk about effects on other outcomes.
Consider how costly pregnancy and childbearing can be...
But before getting into estimates of causal effects...

Consider how costly pregnancy and childbearing can be.

People forgo food and other basic necessities, take out payday and other loans, miss bills and rent, and pawn personal belongings in order to pay for abortions.
But before getting into estimates of causal effects...

Consider how costly pregnancy and childbearing can be.

People forgo food and other basic necessities, take out payday and other loans, miss bills and rent, and pawn personal belongings in order to pay for abortions.

Having a child is costly because it requires substantial monetary expenditures and because childcare responsibilities mean less time for school, work, etc.
Estimation: Policy Evaluations

Typically compare how outcomes change—over time or across successive cohorts—in places where a policy was changed relative to how outcomes change in places where a policy didn’t change.

Fine-tune estimates by adjusting for pre-existing trends, demographics, other relevant policies, etc.

Several studies examining impacts of 1960s and 1970s policies that improved women’s ability to regulate their childbearing.
Estimation: Policy Evaluations

Typically compare how outcomes change—over time or across successive cohorts—in places where a policy was changed relative to how outcomes change in places where a policy didn’t change.
Estimation: Policy Evaluations

Typically compare how outcomes change—over time or across successive cohorts—in places where a policy was changed relative to how outcomes change in places where a policy didn’t change.

Fine-tune estimates by adjusting for pre-existing trends, demographics, other relevant policies, etc.
Estimation: Policy Evaluations

Typically compare how outcomes change—over time or across successive cohorts—in places where a policy was changed relative to how outcomes change in places where a policy didn’t change.

Fine-tune estimates by adjusting for pre-existing trends, demographics, other relevant policies, etc.

Several studies examining impacts of 1960s and 1970s policies that improved women’s ability to regulate their childbearing.
Estimation: Effects of quasi-random shocks to pregnancy

Imperfect approaches to learning about how childbearing affects outcomes

Miscarriages: delays childbearing and, for some women, reduces completed childbearing; “avoiding childbearing”

Slight differences in timing
Estimation: Effects of quasi-random shocks to pregnancy

Imperfect approaches to learning about how childbearing affects outcomes
Imperfect approaches to learning about how childbearing affects outcomes

Miscarriages: delays childbearing and, for some women, reduces completed childbearing; “avoiding childbearing”
Imperfect approaches to learning about how childbearing affects outcomes

Miscarriages: delays childbearing and, for some women, reduces completed childbearing; “avoiding childbearing”

Slight differences in timing
Effects on education

Early legal access to contraception is associated with increases in education, especially for women from disadvantaged backgrounds

- An additional 1/2 year on average for women from the bottom third of a socioeconomic status index (Bailey et al 2012)
- Also credited with increasing the enrollment of women in professional schools (Goldin and Katz 2002)
Avoiding childbearing before 18: \textit{(Ashcraft et al 2013)}

- increases the GED completion by 5 percentage points
- increases education levels by 0.15 years on average
Avoiding childbearing before 18: (Ashcraft et al 2013)
- increases the GED completion by 5 percentage points
- increases education levels by 0.15 years on average

Women giving birth shortly before expected high school graduation vs. a few months later: (Sandler and Schulkind 2017)
- 7% less likely to graduate high school
- 5% less likely to have attended college
Effects on education

Avoiding childbearing before 18: (Ashcraft et al 2013)

- increases the GED completion by 5 percentage points
- increases education levels by 0.15 years on average

Women giving birth shortly before expected high school graduation vs. a few months later: (Sandler and Schulkind 2017)

- 7% less likely to graduate high school
- 5% less likely to have attended college
Early legal access to contraception is associated with an 8% increase in women’s LFP between ages 26 to 30 (Bailey 2006)

Avoiding childbearing before age 18 increases subsequent LFP by 5 percentage points (Ashcraft et al 2013)

Unplanned births reduce LFP by 4 percentage points (Cáceres-Delpiano 2006)
Effects on Income/Wages

Early legal access to contraception is associated with an 8% higher hourly wages during women’s late forties (Bailey et al 2012)

- 2/3 explained by labor force experience
- 1/3 explained by education and occupational choice

Avoiding childbearing before 18 reduces the likelihood that women are near/below the poverty line (Ashcraft et al 2013)

Unplanned births reduce income, increase poverty, and increase welfare dependency (C´aceres-Delpiano and Simonsen 2012)
**Effects on Income/Wages**

Early legal access to contraception is associated with an 8% higher hourly wages during women’s late forties (Bailey et al 2012)

- 2/3 explained by labor force experience
- 1/3 explained by education and occupational choice

Avoiding childbearing before 18 reduces the likelihood that women are near/below the poverty line (Ashcraft et al 2013)
Early legal access to contraception is associated with an 8% higher hourly wages during women’s late forties (Bailey et al 2012)

- 2/3 explained by labor force experience
- 1/3 explained by education and occupational choice

Avoiding childbearing before 18 reduces the likelihood that women are near/below the poverty line (Ashcraft et al 2013)

Unplanned births reduce income, increase poverty, and increase welfare dependency (Cáceres-Delpiano and Simonsen 2012)
Effects on children and families

The impacts on women's economic outcomes have obvious implications for the resources available to their children. The initial rollout of federally funded family planning programs during the 1960s and 1970s reduced the share of children living in poverty by 7% (Bailey et al. 2017).

Unplanned births increase the likelihood of divorce and have negative impacts on the IQ of previously born children (C´aceres-Delpiano and Simonsen 2012, Black et al. 2010).
The impacts on women’s economic outcomes have obvious implications for the resources available to their children.
The impacts on women’s economic outcomes have obvious implications for the resources available to their children.

The initial rollout of federally funded family planning programs during the 1960s and 1970s reduced the share of children living in poverty by 7% (Bailey et al 2017).
Effects on children and families

The impacts on women’s economic outcomes have obvious implications for the resources available to their children.

The initial rollout of federally funded family planning programs during the 1960s and 1970s reduced the share of children living in poverty by 7% (Bailey et al. 2017).

Unplanned births increase the likelihood of divorce and have negative impacts on the IQ of previously born children (Cáceres-Delpiano and Simonsen 2012, Black et al. 2010).
Research on abortion → same general conclusions

Bans on abortion from 1960s reduced educational attainment, particularly for Black women (Angrist and Evans 2000, Lindo et al. 2020, and Jones 2021).

TRAP laws impairing access in more recent years reduced educational attainment, particularly for Black women (Jones and Pineda-Torres 2021).

Being denied an abortion due to a provider's gestational age cutoff increases financial distress for at least five years (Miller et al. 2021).
Bans on abortion from 1960s reduced educational attainment, particularly for Black women (Angrist and Evans 2000, Lindo et al. 2020, and Jones 2021)
Research on abortion → same general conclusions

Bans on abortion from 1960s reduced educational attainment, particularly for Black women (Angrist and Evans 2000, Lindo et al. 2020, and Jones 2021)

TRAP laws impairing access in more recent years reduced educational attainment, particularly for Black women (Jones and Pineda-Torres 2021)
Bans on abortion from 1960s reduced educational attainment, particularly for Black women (Angrist and Evans 2000, Lindo et al. 2020, and Jones 2021)

TRAP laws impairing access in more recent years reduced educational attainment, particularly for Black women (Jones and Pineda-Torres 2021)

Being denied an abortion due to a provider's gestational age cutoff increases financial distress for at least five years (Miller et al. 2021)
Pregnancy and childbearing have significant effects on educational and economic outcomes.

There is strong evidence that these outcomes are affected by policies altering women’s ability to control childbearing.