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The institutionalization and pace of fertility in American stepfamilies

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Abstract

This paper compares nonparametric fertility rates for American women in stepfamilies and intact families using data from the June 1995 Current Population Survey. Results show that childbearing behaviors in stepfamilies resemble those in intact families. Regardless of stepfamily status, timings and levels of fertility for second and third marital births are identical for all women at the same lifetime parity. Fertility patterns are also similar for all first marital births, with the exception of a constant difference of three years in the pace of fertility. These findings are consistent with (1) the institutionalization hypothesis of stepfamily processes; (2) the hypothesis that lifetime parity is the primary determinant of female fertility; and (3) a speculation that women in stepfamilies attempt to catch up on lost fertility outside of marriage.

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