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ABSTRACT

Utilizing data derived from a 24 year longitudinal study, the relationship between family of orientation and size of family of procreation was examined for a sample of 915 women who, having been sophomores in rural Pennsylvania schools in 1947, had married once and were living with their husbands at the time of the final interview in 1971. Examined were hypotheses stating size of family of orientation is: (1) positively related to size of family of procreation; (2) more strongly related to size of family of procreation among 1st born children than among later-born; (3) more strongly related to size of family of procreation among those not experiencing intergenerational change in lifestyle than among those experiencing such change; (4) more strongly related to size of family of procreation among those satisfied with the family orientation than among those dissatisfied. Employing regressive analysis, it was found that the number of siblings in the family of orientation influenced the size of the family of procreation and that this relationship was stronger among women who were: (1) first born; (2) not experiencing intergenerational change; (3) and were satisfied, at age 16, with their parental family. (Author/JC)

Family Size in Successive Generations: The Effects of Birth Order, Intergenerational Change in Lifestyle, and Familial Satisfaction

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Abstract

Studies of family size in successive generations have found a small but persistently positive effect of size of family of orientation. Recent work has suggested that this relationship may be influenced by birth order, intergenerational change in lifestyle, and familial satisfaction. Data from a 24-year longitudinal study of women in Pennsylvania indicate that number of siblings does influence size of family of procreation. More importantly, this relationship is stronger among women who were first-born than later-born, stronger for those not experiencing intergenerational change than for those who changed, and stronger among those who at age sixteen were satisfied with their parental family than for those who were dissatisfied.

Introduction

Among the many factors known to influence fertility, size of the family of orientation remains somewhat of an enigma. Laymen and experts alike hypothesize a relationship between family size in successive generations. Yet studies of this phenomenon have met with mixed results. Differences in methodology and particularly in the samples employed, have clouded interpretation of findings. Nonetheless, most research has found a small but persistently positive effect of the number of siblings on size of family of procreation.

This effect is hypothesized to operate at three levels (Bumpass and Westoff, 1970:89-90). First, hereditary factors may influence fecundity, but this effect is not considered very important among populations that are practicing contraception. Second, women from large families may have greater exposure to risk of pregnancy by virtue of earlier marriage and childbearing. Finally, individuals may attempt to recreate the role relationships in the family of orientation, and "...any tendency to recapitulate these relationships will induce a tendency to reproduce a family of similar size" (Duncan et al., 1965:515).

Of these three alternative hypotheses, only the latter is consistently supported. Duncan et al. (1965) report that while duration of marriage and education may account for part of the intergenerational association of family sizes, they are not sufficient. Our purpose in this paper is to examine the relationship between family size in successive generations under varying conditions hypothesized to affect this relation.

Background

As far back as the turn of the century researchers were interested in the intergenerational association of fertility patterns (Pearson and Lee, 1899). While these early studies emphasized hereditary causes, later work has focused on the social transmission of attitudes, values, and role relationships in the family of origin. In addition, the widespread diffusion of contraception has largely rendered whatever connection exists between family sizes in successive generations a voluntary action, susceptible to individual couples' desires.

Berent (1953) found positive correlations between the number of children born and size of family of origin for a sample of British subjects, all of whom had been married at least fifteen years. This relationship held for all social classes, for contraceptors and non-contraceptors alike, and for both husband's and wife's number of siblings. In addition, some support was given to the notion that the wife's family size bears a stronger relationship to fertility than the husband's.

The Indianapolis Study revealed a slight (but statistically insignificant) relationship between the sizes of family of origin and of procreation (Kantner and Potter, 1954). The failure to find a stronger association was attributed, in large part, to the nature of the sample. The couples included were all urban, with at least eight years of schooling, and married during 1927-1929 so that a large portion of their married life occurred during the depression, when economic constraints made it difficult to act upon values and norms acquired in the family of orientation. Moreover, many had parents

who lived in rural areas and who had considerably less education than the respondents. In short, the highly select nature of the sample maximized differences between the two generations.

Duncan and his associates (1965:515) were the first to suggest that stability of lifestyle may be a necessary condition for the intergenerational transmission of fertility patterns. Using the 1955 Growth of American Families Study data, they found that for couples classified as "fecund planners", controlling for duration of marriage and education did not substantially diminish the relationship between parental family size and birth expectations. Further, they suggest that the relational mechanism linking parental and marital family sizes may be childhood satisfaction. "Whether the child has had a satisfying or an unsatisfying experience in his family of orientation will affect his tendency to recapitulate his earlier experience when he builds his own family" (Duncan et al., 1965:515).

A similar perspective is advanced by Westoff and Potvin (1967) in their theory of ideal family size formation. They posit a theory of family size formation which stresses the number of siblings as well as the number of children in families of friends. They state:

> The norms acquired in the early home environment would be most similar to those held in later years... for persons whose experiences and associates in these years represent little change from before. On the other hand, the children of inmigrants or of rural migrants, or those from small-town backgrounds, or

> young persons whose socioeconomic aspirations might reflect a rejection of the values of their earlier life may alter sharply their earlier views (Westoff and Potvin, 1967:123).

Support for such an interpretation is found in several studies. The Princeton Study reported that family size desires of women after the birth of a second child were directly related to parental family size only for women not reporting an unhappy childhood (Bumpass and Westoff, 1970:92). However, once again the nature of the sample is offered as an explanation for the weak relationships observed. Since only second parity women were drawn, an important source of variation (childless and first parity women) was excluded from the dependent variable.

Finally, Hendershot (1969) found that among a sample of college women size of family of orientation and desired size of family were significantly related, that the relationship was stronger for first-born than for later-born women, and stronger for respondents from families of orientation characterized by a higher degree of solidarity. McAllister, Stokes, and Knapp (1974) replicated Hendershot's first two hypotheses and found no significant relationships. The Hendershot sample of college women was largely urban, white, Protestant, and upper-middle class, whereas the McAllister sample was racially heterogeneous, largely rural, and skewed toward the lower socioeconomic classes. The respondents in Hendershot's study did not anticipate a high degree of discontinuity in intergenerational lifestyle; however, educational aspirations and residential expectations of the McAllister sample revealed a group of rural youths anticipating an

improved socioeconomic status in an urban setting. McAllister et al. hypothesized that the divergent findings of the two studies resulted from the social and demographic differences in the two samples, disparities which minimized the probability of intergenerational change in lifestyle for the one, and maximized the probability for the other. To the extent this interpretation is accurate, these findings support Duncan and Westoff and Potvin's thesis on the effect of stability in lifestyle for family size in successive generations.

Hendershot's findings with regard to the effect of birth order are consistent with the work of Schachter (1959; 1964). Schachter (1964) has shown that first-born children are more dependent upon others than their later-born siblings, are more submissive to group influence in the formation of sociometric choices, and are less popular than the later-born. A logical extension of the evidence that the first-born are more easily influenced would suggest that first-born children are more likely than later-born children to recapitulate the demographic characteristics of the family of origin in the family of procreation. Further support for this interpretation is given by Rossi (1965) who reasons that the integrative role daughters play in kinship systems is more strongly felt by first-born daughters. Since the first-born more often bear the names of subjectively important relatives, they may perceive themselves as significantly, symbolically, and publicly linked with the past. Similarly, Kammeyer (1966) has shown support for the idea that first-born daughters are "conservators of the traditional culture." They are more likely to express traditional views about feminine behavior and feminine personality traits, more likely

to agree with their mothers and fathers about the feminine role, and more likely to describe themselves as religious. The work of Rossi and of Kammeyer thus lends support to the proposition that first-born daughters should have unique family formation patterns.

Consistent with this line of reasoning, we examine the following relationships:

1. Size of family of orientation is positively related to size of family of procreation.

This relationship is further examined under the following conditions:

2. Size of family of orientation is more strongly related to size of family of procreation among first-born children than among later-born.
3. Size of family of orientation is more strongly related to size of family of procreation among those not experiencing intergenerational change in lifestyle than among those experiencing such change.
4. Size of family of orientation is more strongly related to size of family of procreation among those satisfied with the family of orientation than among those dissatisfied.

Procedures

Data for this project were drawn from a 24-year longitudinal study conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and The Pennsylvania State University. The sample for the larger study consisted of all sophomores in 74 rural high schools in Pennsylvania who were first interviewed in 1947. Originally, 1,492 female respondents were included. At the last contact in 1971, 1,095 (73 percent) of the original female subjects had

participated in all aspects of the follow-up study. For purposes of the current report, only women married once and living with their husbands at the time of the final interview (1971) were included. The effective sample size is thus 915. (Some of the N's in the tables vary due to missing or incomplete data on some variables.)

At the time of the last interview almost all of the respondents were between 40 and 44 years of age and thus had virtually completed their childbearing. The measure of marital fertility (size of family of procreation) was restricted to biological children of husband and wife and represents in large measure, completed fertility. In 1947 respondents were asked the ages of all brothers and sisters. They were not asked to distinguish among step-siblings, foster siblings, and biological siblings. Hence, the size of family of orientation is equal to the number of sociological siblings plus the respondent. This yields a sociologically meaningful measure of size of family of orientation, but is a biased measure of fecundity in the previous generation since siblings who died before the respondent's birth or who were born in years following the survey were omitted. This limitation also describes earlier work in this area (Duncan et al., 1965:509). Birth order was determined by ranking the ages of siblings in ascending order and inserting the respondent's age in the appropriate position. Birth order was then equal to the number of older siblings plus one.

Intergenerational change in lifestyle was operationalized using educational attainment of the respondent and her mother. Educational attainment was selected as the indicator of intergenerational change in

lifestyle because it represents the preparation an individual has received to participate in the intellectual, cultural, and technical activities of a society, and is viewed as sensitively linked to differences in lifestyle (Bogue, 1969:438). The number of years of formal education of the respondent's mother was obtained on the 1957 questionnaire, while the educational status of the respondent was available from the 1971 schedule. Both were classified into the following categories: (1) less than high school, (2) high school graduate, (3) some formal training beyond high school, and (4) college graduate. If a respondent's educational level differed from that of her mother, then the respondent was identified as an intergenerational changer in lifestyle.

Familial satisfaction was measured by a thirteen-item summated scale administered in 1947 as part of the California Test of Personality (see Appendix for items). This measure of familial satisfaction at approximately age sixteen permits an examination of the influence of this variable on the completed fertility of these women twenty-four years later. The items were scored so that the range was from 13 to 26. The scale was then dichotomized at 21; respondents scoring above this value were considered satisfied with the family of orientation while those 21 and below were considered dissatisfied.

Regression analysis was used so that the findings would have the greatest comparability with earlier work. We were not interested in estimating the independent effects of birth order, intergenerational change, or familial satisfaction on fertility, but rather in whether or not the basic relationship in question was affected by these variables. This is

equivalent to hypothesizing interaction effects for birth order, intergenerational change in lifestyle, and familial satisfaction. Adding multiplicative terms to the regression equation is one method of estimating these effects. In this case, however, a high degree of multicollinearity between the interaction terms and the main variables rendered interpretation of the interaction terms unreliable, because of the tendency for the multiplicative terms to be deflated in such cases (Althauser, 1971). Thus we ran separate regressions for the different birth-order, intergenerational change and satisfaction categories.

Finally, it should be noted that duration of marriage, education, and residence background were not entered in the regression analysis as was done by Duncan et al. (1965). Since all of our respondents were from rural areas and over ninety percent had been married at least fifteen years, the influence of these factors were effectively removed. Education was not entered since it was used as the measure of intergenerational change in lifestyle.

Findings

Table 1 presents frequency distributions for the 1955 GAF and 1962 CPS samples used by Duncan and his associates and for the Pennsylvania sample in 1971. Since the women in our sample were approximately forty years of age in 1971, they would have been eligible for inclusion in both of the earlier studies. A comparison of the three samples on number of siblings reveals substantial consistency. As in the GAF and CPS samples, women in our sample have borne considerably fewer children than their

mothers. Almost thirty percent of our respondents had five or more siblings while less than seven percent have borne six or more children.

Table 1 about here

The final two columns of Table 1 reveal a remarkable similarity between the most likely expected births (MLE) from the 1955 GAF study and the number of children borne by women in the Pennsylvania sample. In no case is the difference as large as three percent. Consequently, while a criterion for inclusion in our sample was that these women spent part of their adolescence in nonmetropolitan Pennsylvania, their fertility behavior is quite consistent with that found in national samples.

The slope of the regression line of size of family of procreation on size of family of orientation is .086 for the total sample (Table 2). This finding is similar in magnitude to relationships obtained by Duncan et al. (1965) for the 1955 Growth of American Families (GAF) data and for the 1962 Current Population Survey (CPS). Since our sample had virtually completed childbearing, the most appropriate comparisons between this study and Duncan's work is with the most likely expected (MLE) number of births from the GAF sample and live births (LB) for women 47 to 61 years of age from the CPS data.

Table 2 about here

For women aged 47-61 in the CPS data, completed fertility regressed on wife's siblings yielded a slope of .111 for the total relationship, and .085 with duration of marriage controlled, remarkably similar to our results. Relationships among the GAF data were similar, .067 for the total sample using MLE births, and .080 for MLE births among the "fecund planners".

Relationships of this magnitude suggest that size of family of origin is only weakly related to marital fertility, particularly when compared to the influence of other variables. Nonetheless, as Duncan et al. (1965:510) point out, the relationship is not demographically trivial; it implies a completed family size of .7 or .8 larger among women with ten siblings than among those with none. Similarities between these unstandardized regression coefficients promote confidence in both the approximate magnitude of the effect, and the generalizability of the present data set. This finding then supports the notion that size of parental family does affect fertility, but the magnitude of the effect is small.

Birth Order

The proposition that birth order may be a factor affecting the relationship of family size in successive generations is supported (column two, Table 2). The effect of size of family of origin on the completed fertility of these women is approximately twice as large among first-born as among the later-born. The standardized regression coefficients reveal a slope of .256 for first-born wives compared to .132 for the later-born. Additionally, the beta for first-born women is larger than the beta for the total sample. While we are not accounting for large portions of the variance in marital fertility -- such was not our purpose-- the difference in the betas indicate that birth order does affect the relationship between family size in successive generations. The question as to why this pattern obtains remains an intriguing but unanswered issue.

Intergenerational Change

As noted earlier, Hendershot (1969) and McAllister et al. (1974) report conflicting results on the relationship of family size in successive generations. Among a sample of predominantly upper-middle class white, college females, Hendershot found moderate positive correlations between family size preferences and number of siblings, while McAllister found no consistent or significant relationships among these variables for a sample of rural, racially heterogeneous high school students from predominantly lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Following the suggestion of Westoff and Potvin that this relationship should be stronger for individuals not changing lifestyles, McAllister et al. attributed their conflicting findings to higher expectations for intergenerational change in their sample compared to those in Hendershot's study.

The fourth and fifth rows of Table 2 permit a more direct test of the idea that intergenerational change in lifestyle may influence the connection between intergenerational family sizes. The standardized regression coefficients are in the predicted direction. The standardized slope for women not experiencing intergenerational change is .218, while the intergenerational change category yields a beta of .118. Again, the direction of the difference is consistent with the proposition that women whose experiences (and associates) are most similar to those of the early home environment are more likely to recapitulate the size of family of origin in building their own families.

Familial Satisfaction

The effect of familial satisfaction on the relationship between family size in successive generations was suggested by Duncan et al. (1965) and received support in the work of Westoff and Potvin (1967), Bumpass and Westoff (1970), and Hendershot (1969). While these studies support the idea that satisfaction with the family of orientation is more likely to lead to a recapitulation of parental family size, they each possess limitations in methodology. In the Bumpass and Westoff (1970) study, women in their mid-thirties were asked to recall whether or not their childhood was happy. Westoff and Potvin and Hendershot surveyed college women so their measures of familial satisfaction did not involve recall of a much earlier period. But in these studies the dependent variable was birth expectations, not completed fertility. Consequently, the relationship found between size of family of orientation and birth expectations is dependent upon the reliability of the latter variable. And, while birth expectations have been found to be reliable in the aggregate, they are considered highly unreliable at the individual level.

The present data permit an examination of the influence of familial satisfaction measured at approximately age sixteen, and completed family size twenty-four years later. The standardized regression coefficients for the satisfied and dissatisfied categories support the proposition that familial satisfaction is a factor in the relationship between family size in successive generations. Among those respondents who at age sixteen were dissatisfied with their family of orientation the beta is a negligible .022, while for those who were satisfied it is .175. Thus among women who

were dissatisfied with their parental family, no effect of size of family of origin is observed. For women who were satisfied with their experiences in the family of orientation, there is a tendency for them to establish a family of similar size to that of their parents.

The final rows in Table 2 afford comparisons of the various birth orders, intergenerational change, and familial satisfaction combinations. Given the above findings it is not surprising that the strongest relationship is among first-born women who did not change lifestyle (beta = .419). These women, leading lives similar to those of their parents, are perhaps the most traditional of all. The number of cases on which this relationship is based is not large enough to place great confidence in the absolute values of the regression weights. Nonetheless, it is large enough to be suggestive that birth order and change in lifestyle are important conditions affecting the intergenerational transmission of family size. Similarly, stronger effects were found among the first-born-satisfied and the no change-satisfied categories while no relationships or very weak ones were observed for the later-born-dissatisfied and the change-and-dissatisfied categories.

Discussion

This study has demonstrated a small but persistently positive effect of size of family of orientation on size of family of procreation. In comparison to the effects of variables such as socioeconomic status, religion, or race, size of family of origin appears to have a modest influence on marital fertility. However, these findings suggest that this effect is stronger under certain conditions.

First-born women were found to be more likely to reproduce the size of their family of origin than later-born women. Reasons for this relationship were not examined in this study although several plausible explanations were advanced. Chief among these alternatives is the suggestion by some researchers that first-born children are more submissive to group influences, have more dependent personalities, more traditional attitudes, and play particularly important roles in kinship systems (Schachter, 1959; 1964; Kammeyer, 1966; Rossi, 1965). While the explanation for this relationship remains open for the present, findings do direct future research on this topic to include birth order as a variable. The influence of birth order should become even greater as average family size decreases. A decrease in average family size would mean that an increasing proportion of children would be first-born and thus more likely to reproduce the size of the family of orientation.

Intergenerational change in lifestyle was also found to have an important effect. Women who changed lifestyles from those of their mothers--operationalized as change in educational attainment--were less likely to recapitulate the size of their family of origin than women who did not experience intergenerational change. The nature of our sample maximized the probability of an intergenerational change in lifestyle as well as an intergenerational change in family size. The respondents were born during the Depression, when family size declined; but the bulk of their childbearing was during the postwar baby boom. Seventy-seven percent of the sample changed educational categories from those of their mothers. Future generational changes in educational levels should slow, so that

change in lifestyle, as indexed by educational change, should become a less important factor influencing family size in successive generations. Further, the stabilization will have occurred at a higher absolute level of educational attainment.

Familial satisfaction was found to influence the relationship in question. Women who were satisfied with their parental family at age sixteen were more likely to have a similar number of children twenty-four years later than those who were dissatisfied. In fact, among those who were dissatisfied there was no relationship between family size in the two generations. These findings suggest that studies of the formation of family size preferences among adolescents should examine the satisfaction of individuals with their family of orientation. Women who had satisfying role relationships in their family of orientation may recreate a family of similar size in order to "mobilize familiar resources, relationships and roles" (Duncan et al., 1965:514).

Finally, the relationship between size of family of origin and marital fertility was strongest for first-born women not experiencing change in lifestyle. For these women, the effect of size of family of orientation is similar in magnitude to that of more well-known variables such as socio-economic status and religion, although this generalization was limited by the size of this subsample.

These findings support the interpretation that norms and role relationships encountered in the family of orientation exert an influence on fertility behavior. The conditional nature of this relationship once again

illustrates the complexities involved in untangling the network of influences affecting family size. Future work on the influence of family of origin should be expanded to include birth order, intergenerational change in lifestyle, and familial satisfaction. Such additions should aid our understanding of fertility behavior by isolating the effects of these variables and by specifying more precisely the conditions under which they operate.

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Appendix

Items used in the 1947 familial satisfaction scale

1. Are you troubled because your parents are not congenial?
2. Do the members of your family frequently have good times together?
3. Do your folks seem to believe that you are not thoughtful of them?
4. Are there things about one or both of your folks that annoy you?
5. Are you troubled because your folks differ from you regarding the things you like?
6. Do your folks appear to doubt whether you will be successful?
7. Does someone at your home quarrel with you too much of the time?
8. Do you like your parents about equally?
9. Do the members of your family seem to criticize you a lot?
10. Do you usually like to be somewhere else than at home?
11. Do some of those at home seem to think they are better than you?
12. Are your folks reasonable to you when they demand obedience?
13. Do you sometimes feel like leaving your home for good?

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Table 1. Percent distribution of GAF (1955), CPS (1962), and Pennsylvania (1971) samples by number of siblings and number of births[a]

Number of siblings or births	Number of siblings			Number of births			
	GAF (wives 18-39 in 1955)	CPS (wives 27-46 in 1962)	Pennsylvania (wives 40-44 in 1971)	Children born by 1955 to GAF wives	Children born by 1962 to CPS wives	Total children expected (MLE) by GAF wives	Children born by 1971 to Pa. wives
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
0	8.1	7.4	7.5	15.5	9.7	4.8	4.9
1	14.8	16.0	17.3	22.2	13.9	8.4	8.2
2	15.5	16.5	19.3	31.1	27.4	27.5	26.2
3	14.4	13.7	16.1	17.3	22.8	25.3	26.7
4	12.0	11.4	10.3	7.0	14.2	20.1	17.2
5	8.9	15.7	9.7	3.8	5.4	6.0	8.9
6	7.8		6.1	1.6	2.9	3.8	3.3
7	5.8	19.3*	4.5	0.6	1.7	1.4	1.3
8	4.1		2.6	0.4	0.9	0.9	1.2
9	8.6		2.8	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.3
10 or more			3.7	0.3	0.7	0.8	0.3
Unknown	...	...	...	...	...	0.7	1.5

*Includes a negligible number with number of siblings not reported.

[a]Data for GAF (1955) and CPS (1962) samples are from Duncan et al. (1965).

Table 2. Regressions of size of family of procreation on size of family of orientation under varying conditions

Relationship examined	(1) Unstandardized regression coefficient	(2) Standardized regression coefficient	(3) R^2	(4) Significance level	(5) Number of cases
Total sample	.086	.140	.020	.001	901
Birth Order					
First-born	.248	.256	.065	.001	286
Later-born	.082	.132	.017	.001	600
Intergenerational Change in Lifestyle					
Change	.070	.118	.014	.01	647
No change	.163	.218	.047	.01	195
Familial Satisfaction					
Satisfied	.112	.175	.031	.001	713
Dissatisfied	.013	.022	.000	N.S.	165
Birth Order and Change					
First-born and no change of lifestyle	.414	.419	.176	.001	62
First-born and change of life-style	.149	.155	.024	.05	218

Table 2. (continued)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Birth Order and Change (continued)					
Later-born and no change of lifestyle	.175	.227	.052	.01	128
Later-born and change of lifestyle	.058	.097	.009	.05	422
Birth Order and Satisfaction					
First-born and satisfied	.250	.253	.064	.001	228
First-born and dissatisfied	.197	.193	.037	N.S.	55
Later-born and satisfied	.106	.165	.027	.001	485
Later-born and dissatisfied	-.000	-.001	.000	N.S.	110
Change and Satisfaction					
Change and satisfied	.083	.135	.018	.01	523
Change and dissatisfied	.014	.025	.001	N.S.	112
No change and satisfied	.223	.287	.082	.001	149
No change and dissatisfied	.022	.026	.001	N.S.	39