

Fertility Goals: Conceptualization, Measurement, and Impact for Science and Policy

Workshop sponsored by the Ohio Population Consortium

Organizers:

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Thursday, April 10, 2025

9 am – 5 pm local time

River Birch A&B, Westin DC Downtown

999 9th Street Northwest

Washington, DC 20001

Over the course of the twentieth century, fertility intentions, desires, preferences, and attitudes (fertility “goals”) became key constructs for demographic research on fertility. In high-fertility contexts, unwanted births and unmet need for contraception serve as a justification for intensifying family planning programs. In low-fertility contexts, desired fertility exceeds actual fertility, implying high prevalence of “unrealized fertility” and inspiring hope that appropriate policies can produce fertility rebound. In both contexts, the increasing focus in the past two decades on reproductive autonomy and reproductive justice centers women’s (and occasionally men’s) own desires and preferences as the foundational concern for policy and programmatic activity. Yet even as fertility goals have gained theoretical and policy importance, many questions remain around conceptualization and measurement of these constructs. We seek to explore the ways fertility goals have been defined and measured; how they have been used in scientific research and in policy applications; the challenges and limitations of these constructs, both theoretical and empirical; what we learn by analyzing fertility goals; and what is missed by centering individual fertility goals.

Conference Schedule

9:00: introduction and welcome

Morning:

1. Unintended Fertility (9:15-10:45)

Presenter: Kathryn Kost, Guttmacher Institute

Respondents: Raquel Zanatta Coutinho, Department of Demography, Federal University of Minas Gerais; Nkechi Owoo, Department of Economics, University of Ghana

2. Unrealized Fertility (11:00-12:30)

Presenter: Sara Yeatman, Department of Health and Behavioral Sciences, University of Colorado-Denver

Respondents: Alison Gemmill, Department of Population, Family, and Reproductive Health, Johns Hopkins University; Jia Yu, Center for Social Research, Peking University

Lunch provided

Afternoon:

3. Uncertainty and Fertility (1:30-3:00)

Presenter: Jenny Trinitapoli, Department of Sociology, University of Chicago

Respondents: Amanda Stevenson, Department of Sociology, University of Colorado-Boulder;

Daniele Vignoli, Department of Demography, University of Florence

4. Concluding Presentations: Where Do We Go From Here? (3:15-4:30)

Jennifer Barber, Department of Sociology, Indiana University

Alaka Basu, Department of Development Sociology, Cornell University

Mahesh Karra, Pardee School of Global Studies, Boston University

4:30: reception