

April 28, 2020

Dear Author,

The review of your revised submission to *Demography* (MS# 2018-184) "Birth Spacing in the Presence of Son Preference and Sex-Selective Abortions: India's Experience over Four Decades" is now complete. We received two reviews, including one new reviewer. After consulting with a Deputy Editor, we have decided to offer a Conditional Acceptance subject to several changes needed to make some aspects and points more clear to the reader. Please see below, especially those comments listed by Deputy Editor. You must address all comments.

The editorial team will review in house the next version of your manuscript and your response memo. We will draw on prior reviewer expertise only if we cannot make a clear determination on your responsiveness.

Detailed "Comments to the Author(s)" prepared by the referees are attached. A brief summary plus Deputy Editor comments follow.

The reviewers and deputy editor were very positive in their assessment of the revised manuscript. One reviewer had no comments, and one suggested several small changes. In addition, there are several comments from the deputy editor. With respect to the reviewer's comments, please address comments #1, #2, and #4. Note that comment #5 suggests re-writing; while the entire paper does not have to be re-written, please address the deputy editor's comments below with respect to making clarifications.

Deputy editor comments:

1: The overall topic and research question is not clear in the introduction. The main topic relates to changes in birth spacing over time, which are influenced by sex selection/sex composition and maternal education, and how this affects fertility and infant mortality. This is a long list of interesting questions and analyses but this is confusing for the reader. It would be useful to have a succinct statement about what the study is about (what are key independent variables/concepts and key outcomes) and place that in the introduction and before the data and analyses section. This way, the reader can understand why the analyses will proceed in a particular order and what is being tested. In addition, the titles of the figures and tables should be reviewed to see if they could better reflect the analyses undertaken. Overall, the reader needs to be reminded at the beginning and in each section what you aim to do.

2: Please define sex selection early on.

[Type text]

3: Please provide a motivation for using maternal education as a key stratification measure and justify education cutoffs (which have meaning in India).

4: The word “spell” is introduced with no definition. Is spell the same as birth interval? Is it measured in months? This information would be useful for the reader.

5: Please include a brief discussion or footnote about the quality of birth date data in the DHS/NSFH and how this could bias your results or not.

6: Perhaps the conclusion could start with a brief overview of your topic and research question again to remind the reader of the overall motivation for the study.

7: I see the point to reviewer’s comment #4 about the discussion on women’s labor supply. It’s a complex topic to introduce in a few brief sentences. Similarly, referring to Goldin’s U-shaped theory without a more detailed explanation could be confusing for those not well versed in this topic. Perhaps you could also mention that decreasing FLFP is unexpected for developing countries and some potential reasons for this in India.

8: The Klasen and Pieters article is now published.

9: Please have the paper carefully reviewed/edited, as there are numerous grammatical and syntax mistakes.

Also ...

We note that you kept to the table/figure limit; however, some of the figures are several pages long and relatively small. These will have to be evaluated at the copy edit stage as there is no obvious quick fix - the figures reflect the analyses carried out (and some additional ones are in an online appendix). Please make sure to submit as high-resolution image as possible in the format required by the journal. We are somewhat concerned about figure/table size within the print form of the journal.

Note, that while the journal has transferred to Dr. Mark Hayward (University of Texas at Austin) the Penn State team is handling all submissions under review before April 30, 2019.

As you prepare the conditional draft, please ensure that the manuscript has no more than 8,000 words (including the abstract and notes, but excluding references) and no more than 10 total tables and figures). Any appendix material will appear as an online supplement (and would be easily accessible). Please note that supplemental materials are not copyedited and are essentially linked “as is” to the manuscript.

Please include the following manuscript files:

- The manuscript in Word or LaTeX format. Figures and tables can be embedded in the file, or in an Excel file, or as a .pdf file.

[Type text]

- The entire manuscript, including figures, in a single .pdf file.

The revised manuscript and the cover letter should be submitted online using our electronic submission process. The URL is <http://editorialexpress.com/demography>.

If you have any questions about the submission process please contact Yiwen Wang (Editorial Assistant, Demography Editorial Office, at the University of Texas at Austin) at demography@utexas.edu.

For detailed information regarding the preparation of manuscripts for *Demography*, including information on matters of style, visit Springer's *Demography* website at www.springer.com/13524. Click on "Instructions for Authors" on the menu along the right-hand column.

You are required to pay the appropriate page charges to assist in defraying the cost of production (\$20.00 per page). However, if you did not have a grant or institutional support that assisted your research, you may request a waiver by emailing the PAA office c/o membersvc@popassoc.org or danielle@popassoc.org.

Thank you very much for submitting your paper to *Demography*.

Best wishes,

Stephen Matthews

John Iceland

Jennifer Van Hook

Handwritten signatures of Stephen A. Matthews, John Iceland, and Jennifer Van Hook.