

July 31, 2018

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. After consulting with two reviewers and a Deputy Editor we have decided to give you the opportunity to revise and resubmit your manuscript. If you do revise and resubmit your paper, it may be sent back to one of the original reviewers (R1) and potentially a new reviewer.

Detailed "Comments to the Author(s)" prepared by the referees are attached. Briefly, the reviewers were overall very positive about the manuscript but saw issues that must be addressed (some comments below come from the Deputy Editor's reading of the manuscript).

The reviewers and deputy editor were positive about the subject matter and methods of the manuscript. Relating lengthening birth intervals to son preference and sex selection is a novel idea and potentially important addition to the literature. However, there were several concerns that should be addressed in a revision.

First, the description of the problem and literature review are sparse. The front end of the paper should be revised to situate the study in the wider literature on son preference and sex selection in the region. The contributions of the current study should be highlighted. R1 offered particularly useful ideas in this regard. These changes would make the paper appeal to the broad readership of *Demography*.

Second, a conceptual framework or theoretical argument is needed to motivate the decision to examine birth intervals and sex composition by maternal education. Does maternal education proxy for access to sex selective technology, preferences for sons, etc.? In addition, how does selection into the highest/lowest educated categories change over the 45 years of the study? How could this impact the interpretation of results?

Third, the paper is heavy on the description of methods and results. These sections could be shortened and reorganized to focus on the most important issues. R1 also offered suggestions regarding the presentation of findings.

Fourth, discussion of the fertility transition is neglected and only discussed in the conclusion. At a minimum, you should consider providing details on fertility levels and distributions across parities over time. Is there an easy way to show the sample sizes/proportion of births in each category of sex composition across years in tables 1-3? More could be said about the potential impact of the ongoing fertility decline.

[Type text]

In addition to these comments, you should carefully consider each of the points raised by the reviewers in their submitted reviews (attached).

If you do decide to revise and resubmit your manuscript, we ask that you send us a revised version of the paper, together with a memo detailing the changes that you have made in response to the reviews. In that memo, include a point-by-point description of how you have addressed the comments and suggestions. It is possible that you will disagree with some of those comments, or choose to not follow a specific recommendation. If so, explain why.

Please submit a revised version of your paper within six months. Papers submitted to *Demography* should have no more than approximately 8,000, words (including the abstract and notes, but excluding references) and no more than 10 total tables and figures. The revised manuscript, in PDF format, and the response from authors should be submitted online using our electronic submission process. The URL is <http://editorialexpress.com/demography>. *Please make sure not to include any identifying information in the revised manuscript or response to editors and referees.*

If you have any questions about the submission process please contact Jack Byerly, Editorial Assistant, at demography@psu.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 in the right hand column.

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

Best wishes,

Stephen Matthews

John Iceland

Jennifer Van Hook

Handwritten signatures of the three individuals listed above. From left to right: Stephen A. Matthews, John Iceland, and Jennifer Van Hook. The signatures are in black ink and are cursive.