From:	Gustavo De Santis
To:	José Manuel Aburto
Cc:	contact@niussp.org; Floridi, Ginevra; Ella Fegitz
Subject:	Re: N-IUSSP Piece on recent trends in life expectancy and lifespan inequality
Date:	21 March 2020 11:38:25
Attachments:	NIUSSP Aburto&Co Lifespan_Inequality.docx

Dear José Manuel, Ginevra and Ella,
I received you N-IUSSP article. I thank you for that, but I regret to say that I did not like it. Please do not feel insulted (I have had very unpleasant experiences in this sense as chief editor of N-IUSSP).
I think that the topic is nice for N-IUSSP and that a revised version of the article could be OK. But you need to change several things.
1) (almost) all our articles (and all those that present measures) come with numbers: tables, figures, evolution over time, comparison between countries, genders, socio-economic groups. Instead, you do not have a single number in your article! Why? You need to insert them - several of them, I suggest.
2) Your article is about inequality, and you do not even define it. How come? Please do it - first thing.
3) You claim that there is a historical relation between life expectancy and inequality, but I do not see it anywhere in your article (OK, I admit: this is practically the same as point 1)
4) at the beginning and at the end (conclusions) you say that, if one must choose (because of limited resources), it is better to save a young life than an old life. Frankly, this is obvious to everybody, and is already incorporated in several widely used measures (e.g. DALY). Anyway, OK: there is no evil in repeating it (although, if I may suggest, it should be presented for what it is: an obvious notion), especially in that it fits well with the issue of inequality. But then you present the examples of Central and Eastern Europe plus Venezuela, where things run counter your argumentation: better survival at young ages leads to greater inequality. This needs to be qualified (with numbers, dates, etc.) and to be justified. Instead, you present things almost as if they were corroborating your point (e.g. "increased lifespan inequality in periods when ... improvements in mortality at very young ages").
5) You seem to imply that this (increasing) inequality is linked to SES (socio economic status) but you don't prove it in any way - not even suggest it illustratively. Now, if this connection with SES is not there, I am not sure that I agree with what you say. Let me use the following example. Imagine that everybody is guaranteed to survive up to 80 years. Then you can choose between three scenarios (all yielding exactly to e0=85)
a) everybody dies exactly on the day of their 85th birthday, at noon;
b) everybody dies between their 84th and the 86th birthday (at random)
c) there is a very wide (and random) dispersions of ages at death past age 80 (with average 85).
As you move from a) to c) inequality increases. Is (a) your preferred scenario? Would you like to know the exact day and time of your death? Do you think that this preference of yours is shared by everybody, or at least by the vast majority? I doubt it.
6) when it comes to differences by SES, I stick to the old-fashioned idea that if blue collars die at (say) 75, while white collars die at 85 (general average=80, for the sake of the argument) this is unjust, unequal, etc. Adding other measures of inequality (within groups I suppose? That between groups is already in the 10 years of difference in life expectancy), adding these new measures, I was saying, simply blurs the picture, and distracts from the main problem. Am I wrong? Most likely. But please prove it.
I am also attaching a revised version of your article, on which I had worked (as I always do) to make it closer to our style. You may want to restart from it, which also includes a few comments (basically the same as in this email).
Once again: please don't hate me. "I am not bad: I'm just drawn that way"
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XAnNvnViJpo
Hope I'll hear again from you soon
Sincerely yours

Gustavo

Gustavo De Santis

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email: gustavo.desantis@unifi.it (Please visit: www.niussp.org and www.neodemos.info)

Il giorno ven 20 mar 2020 alle ore 19:21 José Manuel Aburto <jmaburto@sdu.dk> ha scritto:

> Dear N-IUSSP team,
>
> I hope this email finds you and your families well given the current circumstances.
>
> I am attaching a piece for consideration in N-IUSSP about the relationship between life expectancy and lifespan inequality.
>
> We look forward to your response,
>
> Best wishes,
>
> José Manuel Aburto
>
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From: Gustavo De Santis <gustavo.desantis@unifi.it>
Sent: 05 March 2020 13:12
To: José Manuel Aburto <jmaburto@sdu.dk>
Subject: Re: N-IUSSP Piece on recent trends in life expectancy and lifespan inequality

Dear José Manuel,

Thank you for thinking of N-IUSSP and yes, we are definitely interested in receiving a diffusion version of your paper.

You are probably aware of our guidelines , which are also on our website (but we are flexible). Here is a reminder: we want a simple, clear, short, self-contained article (about 1000 words) with the most important substantive findings (no method!), which must be of interest to, say, journalists, policy makers, colleagues outside the demographic sphere, and the like. You may of course insert a link to your scientific paper, so that interested readers may go deeper into the matter, but this should be only incidental and not the main purpose of the N-IUSSP article. Ideally, this has a short title (max 70 characters, preferably original), a short summary (max 50 words), is subdivided in 2/3 sections, with their own titles, and has 1/2 simple tables or graphs. Please consider reading a couple of articles in our website to better understand our style.

Please note that all articles submitted to N-IUSSP are refereed: publication is not guaranteed

Until soon, then

Yours

Gustavo

Gustavo De Santis

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Il giorno mer 4 mar 2020 alle ore 13:22 José Manuel Aburto <jmaburto@sdu.dk> ha scritto:

> Dear Gustavo,

I hope this email finds you well.

We recently published an article on PNAS about the relationship between life expectancy and lifespan equality (https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1915884117). This was the central topic of my PhD dissertation which included 6 articles on this topic including the PNAS piece, which I finished a couple of weeks ago. I was considering on writing a piece summarizing the findings of the papers in the thesis and the potential implications for societies for N-IUSSP. This piece would be together with Ella Fegitz (cc here) from University of Southern Denmark and possibly another coauthor.

A short summary of the PNAS piece is below

Most countries experienced major increases in life expectancy in the second half of the 20th century. This progress has meant that people are living longer on average and, at the same time, ages at death have become compressed to a narrow band of ages within populations. In other words, ages at death have become more similar, or lifespan equality has increased as populations live longer. Using data for 49 countries and regions, in our recent research study, we found that both changes in life expectancy and lifespan equality are weighted totals of rates of progress in reducing mortality. Recent trends in several countries however indicate that continued improvements in longevity are not inevitable, with stalls in life expectancy occurring in some low mortality countries, such as the UK, and increasing premature mortality resulting from violence in contexts such as Latin America. These recent dynamics indicate increasing complexity underpinning population health improvements and highlight the need to analyze population health through the lens of lifespan equality. Saving lives at ages below life expectancy is the key to increasing both life expectancy and lifespan equality.

Please let me know if this would be of interest for a piece in N-IUSSP

Have a nice day!

José Manuel

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