

Rachel Y. L. Fung

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Employment

University of Missouri Postdoctoral Fellow in Health Economics and Policy	2024-Present
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Education

Princeton University PhD in Economics	2024
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Princeton University MA in Economics	2020
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The London School of Economics and Political Science MSc in Econometrics and Mathematical Economics, <i>Distinction</i>	2018
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The London School of Economics and Political Science BSc in Econometrics and Mathematical Economics, <i>First Class Honours</i>	2017
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Working Papers

1. “The Power of Tubal Sterilization: Permanent Contraception, Fertility, and Female Labor Supply.” 2024.

The number of tubal sterilization procedures increased dramatically in the United States in the 1970s due to legal and technological advances, quickly becoming the most popular form of contraception among married women. This method of permanent contraception afforded women almost perfect control over the end of their fertility. This paper studies how this increase in sterilizations affected completed fertility — particularly age at last birth — and female labor supply. Using variation across regions and over time in sterilization rates by age, I show that women more exposed to tubal sterilization at childbirth were less likely to have a subsequent birth. The increase in tubal sterilizations between 1965 and 1985 reduced women’s age at last birth by 1.9 years and the probability of childbirth after age 30 by over 30%. As women spent fewer years caring for young children following the diffusion of tubal sterilization, female labor force participation increased. I also find suggestive evidence that women were more likely to select into occupations that reward experience and tenure, consistent with the power of tubal sterilization to reduce the risk of career interruptions.

2. “Welfare Reform and Fertility.” 2022.

This paper studies the fertility effects of 1990s-era welfare reform in the US, which ended unconditional cash assistance to low-income mothers. I show that individuals more likely to be on welfare pre-reform and thus more likely to be affected experienced larger fertility declines after the reform relative to those less likely. Moreover, this effect is larger in states with more generous pre-reform welfare payments. A back-of-the-envelope calculation suggests that welfare reform in the 1990s may explain over 24% of the decline in overall U.S. fertility between 1992 and 2000. These results have implications for current debates on reinstituting unconditional cash benefits through the Child Tax Credit.

3. “The Effect of Mandated HIV/AIDS Education on Fertility and Marriage.” With Jessica Min. 2024

Sex education has been a controversial and contested issue in the U.S. Critics claim that sex education leads to higher rates of teen sexual activity, whereas advocates argue that education reduces the risks of STDs and unwanted pregnancies among teenagers who are already sexually active. This study investigates the effect of mandated HIV/AIDS education on teen sexual activity, fertility, and marriage. We leverage the implementation of HIV/AIDS education mandates in response to the AIDS epidemic for plausibly exogenous variation in sex education. Using a difference-in-differences strategy, we compare women who were in school before and after implementation, in states with and without these mandates. We find preliminary evidence that sex education increased the incidence of first birth between ages 15 to 17 by 13%.

Professional Activities

Presentations

2024 (incl. scheduled) APPAM Fall Research Conference, Family Policy and Population Research Forum (UN Commission on Population and Development), Population Association of America Annual Meeting, Chinese Economists Society North America Conference

2023 Labor Economics Seminar (Princeton), Graduate Labor Workshop (Princeton)

Referee Service

American Economic Journal: Applied Economics

Fellowships and Awards

Clarence J. Hicks Memorial Fellowship, Princeton University	2023-2024
NBER Gender in the Economy Fellowship Runner-up	2023-2024
Graduate Student Fellow, Griswold Center for Economic Policy Studies	2022-2023
Graduate Student Teaching Prize, Department of Economics, Princeton University	2022
Princeton Graduate Economics Fellowship	2019-2022
J. Edward Lundy *40 Fellowship for Economics, Princeton University	2018-2019
Centaline Charity Fund Scholarship	2015-2018

Research Experience

Research Assistant to Professors Natalie Bau and Adrien Matray	2019-2020
Research Assistant to Professor Maria Micaela Sviatschi	2019

Teaching Experience

<i>Princeton</i>	ECO 981 Junior Independent Work (TA, 2023-2024)
	ECO 313 Econometric Applications (TA, Spring 2023)
	ECO 312 Econometrics: A Mathematical Approach (TA, Fall 2020, Spring 2022)
	ECO 302 Econometrics (TA, Spring 2021, Fall 2021)
<i>LSE</i>	EC210 Macroeconomic Principles (TA, 2017-2018)

Languages

Cantonese Chinese (Native), English (Native), Mandarin Chinese (Native)

Last updated: September 2024