
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

NAME: Abigail Mae Weitzman

eRA COMMONS USER NAME: ABIGAIL.WEITZMAN

POSITION TITLE: Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology

EDUCATION/TRAINING

INSTITUTION AND LOCATION	DEGREE	Completion Date MM/YYYY	FIELD OF STUDY
Smith College, Northampton, MA	BA	05/2005	Government
New York University, New York, NY	PhD	08/2015	Sociology
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI	Postdoctoral		

A. Personal Statement

I am a sociologist whose research focuses on several issues central to family demography, namely on reproductive decision-making and behavior and their implications for population health. A central question animates my research agenda: how do social contexts at different stages of the life course shape the psychosocial dimensions of reproductive processes and relationship dynamics, and in turn, influence women's and men's health and wellbeing? To date, my research has addressed this question by investigating how parents' sexual behavior and relationship violence systematically differ with the sex of firstborn children in developing countries; by examining the determinants of sexual risk-taking and fertility desires among young adult women in the U.S; and by exploring the effects of natural disasters, local violence, and education policies on reproductive and maternal health and intimate partner violence in Haiti, India, Peru, and the United States. Each of these lines of research contributes to the Population Research Center's (PRC) primary research areas of Reproductive Health and Population Health by investigating how particular aspects of the social environment affect individuals' behavior, health, or pivotal demographic events like first-intercourse or first-birth. To carry out these investigations, my work employs large-scale population representative datasets (e.g., The Relationship Dynamics and Social Life Study and Demographic and Health Surveys), and often combines them with geospatial data on indicators of the physical or social environment, such as the level of devastation caused by natural disasters, disease prevalence, or the prevalence of violence. I am currently working on two new projects that leverage information on the timing and location of homicides to understand whether and how exposure to violence in childhood and adolescence contribute to the risk of early fertility. Findings from these projects promise to provide new information on how and why environmental violence shapes fertility desires and related sexual and contraceptive behaviors and to further illuminate whether the geographic concentration of violence or timing of exposure moderates the effects of violence on reproductive desires and processes.

I am also initiating a new line of research with my PRC colleagues Marteleto and Aiken; we recently wrote NSF, R01, and R21 grant proposals focused on women's reproductive responses to the current Zika epidemic in Brazil and the threat of a similar epidemic in Texas. This project is designed to collect and analyze a combination of qualitative and survey data to illuminate which aspects of the epidemic (beliefs about symptoms and transmission, knowing someone who has been infected, etc.) affect women's perceived risk of Zika transmission; how the perceived risk of transmission affects women's fertility desires, contraceptive preferences, and reproductive behaviors; and how the effects of the epidemic on women's perceived risk and reproductive responses vary with socioeconomic status. This research is well positioned to make several significant contributions to current understandings of how health beliefs are formulated and influence behavior; the psychosocial dimensions of reproductive decision-making in situations of uncertainty and potential intrauterine threats; and how new health disparities are created and exacerbated. A portion of the qualitative data collection has already been funded by a PRC seed grant and is currently underway. If the NSF, R01, and R21 grants are not funded in the first round, we plan to revise and resubmit our applications while continuing our qualitative data collection and analysis. We are deeply committed to continuing our pursuit of this line of research amidst the ongoing epidemic.

Although only recently appointed as a faculty research associate, I am already deeply grateful to the PRC. Since my appointment less than one year ago, I have found the support and opportunities for collaboration facilitated by the Center to be essential to the development and advancement of my research program. I have

begun a large-scale data collection effort with several of my new PRC colleagues and have submitted NSF, R01, and R21 grant applications with the support of the PRC administrative core, who has tirelessly worked to assist me on these applications. With regard to my already awarded grants, members of the Administrative Core assisted with transferring the grant from my previous institution, record budget expenditures, help with financial reporting, and provide me with day-to-day administrative support. The Science & Technical Core has also been imperative in helping me prepare for the transfer of restricted secondary data from my previous institution (from the Relationship Dynamics and Social Life Study) and to set up and maintain the computing systems needed for data analysis. For these and many other reasons, both the Administrative Core and Science & Technical Core will continue to be critical to my research and professional development in the upcoming years.

B. Positions and Honors

Positions and Employment

2010-2012 Research Associate, Wagner School of Public Service, New York University
2010-2015 Research Associate, Department of Sociology, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, New York University
2015-2016 Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Population Studies Center, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan
2016-present Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Texas at Austin

Other Experience and Professional Memberships

2006-2008 Volunteer, Peace Corps Peru
2008-2009 Volunteer, Peace Corps Belize
2012-present Member, Easter Sociological Society
2012-present Member, American Sociological Association
2012-present Member, Population Association of America
2012-present Member, Population and Poverty Research Network
2013-present Member, Southern Sociological Society

Honors

2005 Dean's List, Smith College
2005 High Honors, Smith College
2011 NSF GRFP
2013 Best Student Paper Award, ASA Population Section
2013 Best Student Paper Award, ASA Section on the Family
2014 Best Student Paper Award, Honorable Mention, ASA Section on Sex and Gender
2014 Best Student Paper Award, Honorable Mention, ASA Section on the Family
2015 Best Poster Award, Population Association of America
2015 Best Student Paper Award, ASA Section on Development

C. Contributions to Science

1. **Identifying new determinants of sexual behavior and risk-taking.** Sexual behaviors and risk-taking have substantial implications for population health and growth. Through three scholarly papers, I have examined overlooked contexts that influence these behaviors. This research has included an examination of the effects of firstborn sex and age on fathers' sexual risk-taking (Weitzman, 2015, *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*), which revealed that on average across 37 diverse countries, fathers with firstborn sons were more likely to have unprotected sex and to pay for sex than fathers with firstborn daughters, particularly when firstborns are in adolescence (a time of concentrated sexual development). In addition, my research has explored the effects of a catastrophic natural disaster (the 2010 earthquake in Haiti) on sexual coercion, contraceptive use, and unintended pregnancy (Weitzman and Behrman, 2016, *Sociological Science*; Behrman and Weitzman, 2016, *Studies in Family Planning*). Together, my co-author and I found that the disaster had no effect on women's total desired fertility but nonetheless heightened the rate of unintended pregnancy among women living in devastated areas of the country several years later. Our findings indicated that this rise in unwanted pregnancy was attributable both to a decrease in access to long-acting contraception and to a change in women's negotiating power within their intimate partnerships. This work is especially timely for public health policymakers given recent disasters of similar magnitude in Haiti (hurricane Matthew) and has possible extensions to other types of disasters, such as the current refugee crisis in North Africa, the Middle East, and

Europe. Currently, I am expanding this work in my new NICHD R03 funded investigation of the contexts and determinants of late adolescent sexual behavior. This newer researcher explores which individual and relationship experiences influence sexual frequency, unprotected sex, partner switching, and the probability of having overlapping sexual partners during the transition to adulthood.

- a. Weitzman, A. and Behrman, J. (2016). Disaster, Disruption to Family Life, and Intimate Partner Violence: The Case of the 2010 Earthquake in Haiti. *Sociological Science*. DOI 10.15195/v3.a9.
- b. Behrman, J. and A. Weitzman. (2016). Effects of the 2010 Haiti Earthquake on Women's Reproductive Health. *Studies in Family Planning*, 47(1): 3-17.
- c. Weitzman, A. and England, P. Class and Sex for Young Women. *Contexts*. Invited blog post. <http://blog.contexts.org/2014/12/07/class-and-sex-for-young-women/>
- d. Weitzman, A. (2014). The Second Adolescence: The Sex of Firstborn Adolescent Offspring and Fathers' Sexual Behavior and Health in the Developing World. Population Association of America 2014 Annual Meeting, Boston, MA.

2. **Improving measurement of fertility desires and their antecedents.** Fertility desires bear heavily on individuals' sexual behaviors and contraceptive use, yet empirical examinations of these desires often suffer from measurement problems including infrequent and retrospective assessment and conceptualizations that emphasize only one-dimension (e.g. desire *for* pregnancy but not desire to avoid it). In a series of ongoing co-authored studies, I use weekly panel data on young adult women's fertility desires collected prospectively (before a pregnancy occurs) to improve our understanding of whether women simultaneously possess positive and negative pregnancy desires and whether and how trajectories of pregnancy desire change during the transition to adulthood. Regarding the former, my co-authors and I are conducting one of the first studies to ever investigate the consistency with which young adult women report wanting a near-term pregnancy and wanting to avoid a near-term pregnancy. Our analysis reveals an extraordinarily high degree of consistency between the two measures and further suggests that individual-level characteristics predicting desire for pregnancy, such as demographic background and mental health, also predict desire to avoid pregnancy (but in the opposite direction). A manuscript summarizing these findings has recently been revised and resubmitted to the *Journal of Marriage and Family*. Regarding the latter measurement issue—changes in fertility desire over time—my co-authors and I have recently begun to use latent class analyses that identify trajectories of fertility desire during the transition to adulthood. These analyses will provide new insights into how the desire for early pregnancy evolves and why some young women's desire for early pregnancy increases while other young women's desire for early pregnancy remains stable (and primarily low). Beyond expanding the ways in which family demographers measure and conceptualize fertility desires, my research considers how fertility desires are affected by uncertainty and change in the social environment. In one completed study in this area, a co-author and I exploit exogenous spatiotemporal variation in devastation caused by the 2010 earthquake in Haiti to examine how disasters affect women's fertility desires. Despite existing research suggesting that families and communities long to replace their deceased, we found that the earthquake had no effect on women's overall desired number of children or desire for additional children (Behrman and Weitzman, 2016, *Studies in Family Planning*). In a newer study, I move from examining the effects of a natural disaster to exploring the effects of political violence on fertility desires. To do so, I combine geospatial data on politically motivated homicides and kidnappings in Peru during the era of the Shining Path with nationally representative survey data collected subsequent to this era. Analyses of these integrated data promise to uncover new information about the long-term effects of childhood exposure to violence on women's desired family size. In another ongoing project, my co-author at UT Austin and I examine how the current Zika epidemic in Brazil, and the threat of a Zika epidemic in Texas, are affecting women's pregnancy desires and contraceptive preferences. In the summer and fall of 2016 we collected new focus group data with women of reproductive age and in-depth interviews with obstetricians and gynecologists to illuminate how women perceive their risk of infection and how this perceived risk shapes their reproductive intentions and behaviors and to understand how these changes in women's needs and preferences are affecting doctor-patient relationships. We are still collecting and analyzing these data and are also planning to launch a complimentary state-representative survey in Brazil in the winter of 2017. Relatedly, we have applied for funding from the NSF and from an NICHD R01 and R21 to support the continued expansion of this research.

- a. Behrman, J. and A. Weitzman. (2016). Effects of the 2010 Haiti Earthquake on Women's Reproductive Health. *Studies in Family Planning*, 47(1): 3-17.
- b. Weitzman, A., Barber, J., Kusunoki, Y., and England, P. (2014) Desire For and the Desire to Avoid

3. Elucidating the causes of intimate partner violence and the implications of this violence for demographic behaviors. Intimate partner violence (IPV) is responsible for more fatalities each year than all wars and civilian conflicts combined and is thus an important cause of early mortality. Moreover, research suggests that IPV also affects a variety of demographic processes including cohabitation and marriage, unintended pregnancy, and employment. My past research on IPV has focused on identifying and better measuring its determinants, while my current and ongoing research emphasizes the effects of IPV on child mortality and other important demographic patterns. In terms of my past research, I have explored the effects of the relative economic status of spouses in a patriarchal environment (India), finding that women with higher educational, employment, or earnings status than their husbands are at greater risk of recent IPV than women with more traditional arrangements in which they have lower status than their husbands (Weitzman, 2014, *Population and Development Review*). In another study that is currently undergoing review, I have found that in India, where sons are strongly preferred, women with firstborn daughters are more likely to experience physical and sexual IPV than women with firstborn sons but that the effects of firstborn sex on IPV are limited to states with masculine sex ratios of first-births. Both studies have important policy implications for improving the health and wellbeing of women and girls in India and in other environments where women lack civil liberties and/or access to public goods like education. Relatedly, in another study I examine the effects of women's education on a variety of forms of IPV in Peru. I improve upon existing research by exploiting an exogenous source of variation in women's education—an amendment to compulsory schooling laws in the 1990s. In so doing I am able to isolate the effects of education from potential confounders such as childhood poverty. This study is currently undergoing peer review. Beyond the effects of women's resources and child composition, my research on the determinants of IPV has also considered how violence is affected by disasters. For instance, a co-author and I integrate geospatial data on the 2010 earthquake in Haiti with survey data collected pre- and post-disaster to compare changes in IPV in the least affected areas of the country to the most affected ones. The results of this analysis indicated that women exposed to devastation from the 2010 earthquake were more likely to experience both physical and sexual IPV than women who were not exposed (Weitzman and Behrman, 2016, *Sociological Science*). These findings are particularly relevant to policymakers today as millions of families continue to face physical devastation caused by manmade and natural disasters. In my most recent research I turn my attention to the implications of IPV for important demographic outcomes. This includes two endeavors. In the first, I am using new household-level data on the timing of IPV and the timing of infant and child deaths to advance our understanding of whether IPV increases the risk of infant and child mortality or vice versa and to identify the mediators of this relationship. In the second, I am writing a review article that elucidates both how IPV contributes to socioeconomic and gender inequalities via its effects on relationship stability, living arrangements, labor force participation, fertility, health, and disability.

- a. Weitzman, A. and Behrman, J. (2016). Disaster, Disruption to Family Life, and Intimate Partner Violence: The Case of the 2010 Earthquake in Haiti. *Sociological Science*. DOI 10.15195/v3.a9.
- b. Weitzman, A. (2016). Women's Education and Intimate Partner Violence: Evidence from a Natural Experiment. Population Association of America 2016 Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C.
- c. Weitzman, A. (2014). Women's and Men's Relative Status and Intimate Partner Violence in India. *Population and Development Review*, 40(1), 55-75.
- d. Weitzman (2013). The Daughter Tax: How Daughters Impact Maternal Outcomes in the Developing World. Population Association of America 2013 Annual Meeting, New Orleans, LA.

D. Research Support

Ongoing Research Support

R03HD087422 (A. Weitzman, PI)

04/12/16-03/31/18

National Institute for Child Health and Development

Sexual Behavior During the Transition to Adulthood and Associated Health Outcomes

This study provides new insights into the childhood and adolescent experiences, personal circumstances, and relationship dynamics that contribute to sexual concurrency among young adult women. The findings promise to advance scholarship on sexual behavior and health by highlighting both fixed and time-varying sources of heterogeneity in sexual concurrency, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of a highly prevalent form of sexual risk-taking during a particularly consequential period of the life course. The findings from the proposed

study will inform outreach strategies and public health campaigns intended to target young adult populations at particularly high risk of unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, and relationship volatility.

Role: Principal Investigator

Responsibilities: Oversee all facets of the project including the data cleaning, data analyses, writing, and finding dissemination.

Completed Research Support

2012-7263 (A. Weitzman, PI)

09/01/12-08/31/14

Hewlett Foundation/ IIE

It's a Girl... A Quasi-Experimental Study Observing the Effects of Offspring Sex on Parents' Employment, Health, and Marital Status in Thirty-One Developing Countries

This research investigates how the sex of firstborn children influences parents' demographic and health-related behaviors including intimate partner violence, birth spacing, sexual risk-taking, nutritional intake, and migration.

The project relies on data from Demographic and Health Surveys collected throughout South and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, and the Caribbean, and additionally analyzes data from the Mexican and Latin American Migration Projects.

Role: Principal Investigator

Responsibilities: Oversee all facets of the project including the data cleaning, data analyses, writing, and finding dissemination.

2011117755 (A. Weitzman, PI)

09/01/11-08/31/14

National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship

For Better or For Worse: Working Women and Gender Power Dynamics in the Developing World

In this study, I examine the effects of women's personal resources and their relative share of household resources on intimate partner violence and household decision-making processes in India and Peru, where women's educational enrollment and labor force participation is dramatically changing.

Role: Principal Investigator

Responsibilities: Oversee all facets of the project including the data cleaning, data analyses, writing, and finding dissemination.