

Department of Decision Sciences

Occasional Seminar for Sabbatical Leave

Trust and Fertility Dynamics

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Abstract

We argue that diverging fertility levels in OECD countries are in part driven by differences in trust. The argument builds around the idea that trust implies that individuals and couples are willing to outsource traditional family activities to other individuals outside their own family. Trust is therefore a catalyser for the process of increased female labour force participation, the diffusion of childcare facilities, and hence higher fertility. Support of this hypothesis is drawn from the World Value Survey. We present preliminary evidence from a series of multi-level analysis. We find that trust by itself has a positive impact on fertility, but trust has an important effect which works through education. In particular, as higher education for women has expanded, which traditionally is seen as a robust predictor for lower fertility, trust is a precondition for achieving higher fertility.