

ECON 460: Women, Work, and the World Economy

Reading Guide: “The Power of the Pill: Oral Contraceptives and Women’s Career and Marriage Decisions”

This article is long. I wouldn’t recommend reading it straight through without pausing to review the authors’ main points along the way.

1. First, read the introduction and Section I, and then answer the following questions
 - (a) What is the main (specific) empirical research question that Professors Goldin and Katz test in their article?
 - (b) When did oral contraceptives first become available to women in the United States? Which women were the first to start using the pill?
 - (c) When did unmarried women first gain access to the pill?
 - (d) Which birth cohorts were the most likely to start using the pill before age 18?
 - (e) What is the “age of majority” and how did it change in the early 1970s?
 - (f) When did universities start offering female students access to oral contraceptives?
 - (g) When regression specifications are reported in Table 3? Why do the authors report these results? What are the main takeaways?
2. Now read Section II, in which the authors describe their theoretical model. Do not get bogged down with the formal notation; we will work through that in class.
 - (a) What are the main empirical predictions of the model presented in the paper?
3. Now read the rest of the paper characterizing the empirical results.
 - (a) How did the number of women entering law school and medical school change between 1960 and 2000?
 - (b) How does women’s age-at-first-marriage change over the same time period?
 - (c) What empirical specification do Professors Goldin and Katz use to test the predictions of their model in a difference-in-differences framework?
 - (d) What is the main takeaway from Table 4? Did access to oral contraceptives lead to a statistically significant decline in the likelihood of being married by age 23?
 - (e) How does the authors’ “cohort analysis” in Table 5 differ from the analysis presented in Table 4?
 - (f) What is the main takeaway from Table 5?