

Child Survival, Evolution of Income-dependent Relative Preferences, and Modern Fertility Transition

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Abstract

Among human hunter-gatherers as well as non-human primates, child survival exerts a major selective pressure and is significantly influenced by parents' social status. This study incorporates this relationship into a life history model and demonstrates that the influence of social status on reproduction emerges when the resource level becomes sufficiently high. These results suggest that preferences that encourage status-enhancing behaviors when the resource level is high, such as income-dependent relative preferences, contributed to reproduction in our evolutionary past and remain in the current population. Incorporating such preferences, an economic model gives explanations for the relationship between the modern economic growth and the modern fertility transition and the weak correlation between happiness and income. It suggests that relative preferences, which were to raise fitness, result in lowering fitness today.

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