

Introduction

- What is the main contribution of the paper? (Why do we care?)
- What do you actually do?
- Where does your paper belong in relation to the literature?
- What are your results? (Some papers reveal all, others don't reveal at all.)
- Roadmap: only necessary if have a complicated structure

Common errors

- Don't get to the point soon enough
 - Should know by the second paragraph what the paper is about
- Too long
 - Under no circumstances more than 3 pages and in most cases no more than 1.5 pages
- Contains detail that best left for the results section (e.g. nitty gritty stuff about specifications)

Power of the Pill: Paragraph 1

- Start with trend in interesting fact to explain
- Tell the reader what the question is
- Tell the reader what the answer is

The careers of college graduate women and their age at first marriage both changed significantly in the United States with cohorts born around 1950. Women were 10 percent of first-year law students in 1970 but were 36 percent in 1980. Among the cohort of female college graduates born in 1950, almost 50 percent married before age 23, but fewer than 30 percent did for those born in 1957. We ask whether the birth control pill and the legal environment that enabled young, unmarried women to obtain “the pill” altered women’s career plans and their age at first marriage. Our answer is that they did.

Power of the Pill: Paragraph 2

- Explain intuition of how pill worked

The pill directly lowered the costs of engaging in long-term career investments by giving women far greater certainty regarding the pregnancy consequences of sex. In the absence of an almost infallible contraceptive method, young women embarking on a lengthy professional education would have to pay the penalty of abstinence or cope with considerable uncertainty regarding pregnancy.¹ The pill had an indirect effect, as well, by reducing the marriage market cost to women who delayed marriage to pursue a career. With the advent of the pill, *all* individuals could delay marriage and not pay as large a penalty. The pill, by encouraging the delay of marriage, created a “thicker” marriage market for career women. Thus the pill may have enabled more women to opt for careers by indirectly lowering the cost of career investment.

Our empirical argument relies on the timing of various changes and

Power of the Pill: Paragraph 3

- Explain empirical strategy and why it's identified
- Note that very simple explanation:

Our empirical argument relies on the timing of various changes and on formal econometric analyses of the age at first marriage and career change by taking advantage of the differential effect of legal changes by cohort and state. Legal changes by states lowered the age of majority and expanded the rights of minors in the late 1960s and early 1970s and, by doing so, facilitated the diffusion of the pill among young, single women.

Power of the Pill: Paragraph 4

- Give roadmap but note that don't make it boring by saying in Section II we do x, in Section III we do y, etc.

women.

The first issue we explore is the diffusion of the pill among single women and the legal reasons for its delayed dissemination. We then formally model the potential effects of the pill on marriage and career. Next, we use cross-section data for 1971 to establish that the timing of the pill's diffusion among young, unmarried women was, at least in part, caused by legal changes in the age of majority and mature minor statutes. We then present both descriptive time series and formal econometric evidence showing the relationship between pill use, on the one hand, and the age at first marriage and career investment, on the other. Alternative explanations, including legalization of abortion, feminism, and antidiscrimination laws, are considered.

Power of the Pill: Introduction

- Note that no previous literature in the introduction
 - Goldin and Katz really are the literature!
 - NOT true for 99.99% of papers

Katz and Murphy

- Paragraph 1: first sentence tells you that wage inequality increased and the rest of the paragraph explains the three dimensions along which it increased
- Paragraph 2: first sentence tells you there's disagreement about why wage structure changed and gives you a very brief overview of the literature

Katz and Murphy (cont.)

- Paragraph 3: tell you what they do
 - First sentence: “In this paper we examine ...”
- Paragraph 4: the roadmap
- Paragraph 5: what they conclude

Costa and Kahn

- The puzzle in this case needs more explication – economists have not spent a lot of time thinking about desertion so you can't just present a fact and then say what you're going to do
- Paragraph 1: to win a decisive battle (and that's part of western warfare strategy) you need soldiers who aren't going to desert
 - Bring in some examples so clear that is an important issue

Costa and Kahn (cont.)

- Paragraph 2: why doesn't everyone desert? Lots of cites of non-economics literature
- Paragraph 3: what the paper does and why this is a good setting
 - 1st sentence: This paper investigates the determinants of group loyalty
 - Rest of paragraph: horrific war=good setting

Costa and Kahn (cont.)

- Paragraph 4: what contribution of paper
 - 1st sentence: “This paper provides the first large-scale quantitative ...”
 - How measure loyalty, why able to, and why superior to what other, unnamed people have done
 - Note that attributing this to superior data so not bashing on unnamed others
 - Because not naming them, no one can feel singled out

Costa and Kahn (cont.)

- Paragraph 5: relate to literature, naming names
 - “Our analysis contributes to on-going research ...”
 - People like to cited
 - Try to cite someone who might be a favorable referee
- No roadmap
- Don't reveal results ahead of time

Goldin and Margo

- They need to talk about a trend that they're the first to document
- They pull it off by discussing a lot of the trends in the introduction
 - This is very tricky to pull off -- Don't try it out unless you've learned to write really, really well

Goldin and Margo (cont.)

- Paragraph 1
 - 1st sentence tells you what Great Compression was
 - 2nd sentence: what they do
 - Rest: more details of what they do
- Paragraph 2
 - How wage structure narrowed
 - The discussion sticks to the main points and is chatty, but they even give a table (really hard to pull off in an introduction, again I don't recommend you try it)

Goldin and Margo (cont.)

- Paragraph 3: today is different – it's a reversal
- Paragraph 4: gives you long run trend and graph of trend
 - Easier to pull off a graph in an introduction than a table but only do it if really need it for the argument

Goldin and Margo (cont.)

- Paragraph 5: explanations for compression and convergence could be quite different
 - Cite literature on explanations for convergence
 - Explain unique features 1930s and 1940s
- Paragraph 6: previous work on 1940s
 - Note that saying problem with other research was that didn't have micro data (not the fault of the researchers)
- Paragraph 7: their explanations for the Great Compression

The Conclusion

- Be brief
- Common strategy is to restate findings in paragraph 1
- Can then discuss implications more broadly or discuss some limitations (but in a positive context – you don't want reader to get hung up on these)
- Don't talk about all future research you could do

Power of the Pill

- Paragraph 1: summarizes results
- Paragraph 2: begins discussion of limitations: if helicopter dropped pill on people wouldn't necessarily have increase in women's careers (Japan, other times US history)
- Paragraph 3: pill important for US because US women well-positioned to take advantage of it
- Paragraph 4: What persuasive evidence and yes there were other factors but would expect that

unmarried while investing in a professional career. The pill further reduced the cost of career investment for women by serving to increase the age at first marriage for a large fraction of all young people. The power of the pill in affecting women's careers was magnified by its impact on the age at first marriage.

But not all increases in the age at first marriage and decreases in fertility have involved genuine social change for women. Marriage and fertility rates decreased at other times in U.S. demographic history but did not lead to vast increases in the fraction of women in professional occupations. Similarly, Japanese women experienced a substantial decline in fertility and an increase in the age at first marriage from the early 1970s. Yet women's economic status in Japan has seen little change, and, until 1999, oral contraceptives were not legally available.

The pill is not necessary for demographic change. But a virtually foolproof, easy-to-use, and female-controlled contraceptive having low

⁵⁶ The same exemption did not apply to law students. The draft may have increased the acceptance rate for women applying to law school, but we have not been able to obtain data on law school applications and acceptances.

health risks, little pain, and few annoyances does appear to have been important in promoting real change in the economic status of women (Birdsall and Chester 1987). Moreover, women in the United States were well positioned to take advantage of the pill's side benefit. By the time the pill was available to unmarried women, about 28 percent were graduating from four-year institutions of higher education.⁵⁷ In most other rich countries, the fraction of young women capable of continuing to professional schools was small since college graduation rates were low compared with those of the United States.

The most persuasive evidence for a role of the pill is that its initial diffusion among single women coincided with, and is analytically related to, the increase in the age at first marriage and the increase in women in professional degree programs. Other factors were involved in these changes, to be sure. No great social movement is caused by a single factor.

Cowards and Heroes

- Conclusion is only 1 paragraph
 - Restate question
 - Restate hypotheses
 - Relate back to literature: homogeneity mattered in past and also matters today – isn't that striking?

Katz and Murphy

- 2 paragraphs of summary but in 1st paragraph use reference to Krueger to be slightly speculative
- Last paragraph addresses issue of other OECD countries – cites literatures and suggests good area for future research

Goldin and Margo

- 1 paragraph only (but a long one)
 - Summary of results

The Abstract

- Journal limit to 100-150 words so get to the point
- Most people have longer abstracts in their working papers
- What do, what find, some idea of how do it
- Easier to write once have written introduction and conclusion (but don't make it too similar)

The fraction of U.S. college graduate women entering professional programs increased substantially just after 1970, and the age at first marriage among all U.S. college graduate women began to soar around the same year. We explore the relationship between these two changes and the diffusion of the birth control pill (“the pill”) among young, unmarried college graduate women. Although the pill was approved in 1960 by the Food and Drug Administration and spread rapidly among married women, it did not diffuse among young, single women until the late 1960s after state law changes reduced the age of majority and extended “mature minor” decisions. We present both descriptive time series and formal econometric evidence that exploit cross-state and cross-cohort variation in pill availability to young, unmarried women, establishing the “power of the pill” in lowering the costs of long-duration professional education for women and raising the age at first marriage.

The era of wage stretching has been a current focus, but we direct attention here to a decade of extraordinary wage compression—the 1940s. Wages narrowed by education, job experience, and occupation, and compression occurred within cells. The 90–10 differential in the log of wages for men was 1.45 in 1940 but 1.06 in 1950. By the late 1980s it returned to its 1940 level, thus restoring a dispersion of 50 years ago. World War II and the National War Labor Board share some credit for the Great Compression, but much was due to an increased demand for unskilled labor when educated labor was greatly expanding.

General Writing Tips

- Keep track of what reader knows and doesn't know
 - Remember someone is skimming so each point has to follow logically like a legal case – don't assume something is obvious
- Use active voice
 - I do this
 - This paper does this
 - Table X shows

General Writing Tips (cont.)

- No Germanic sentences: a sentence is subject, verb, object
- Avoid jargon
- Don't have reader search for what something refers to ("This shows that")
- Be very careful with descriptive adjectives
 - you should stick to the facts