Power of the Pill or Power of Abortion? Re-examining the effects of young women's access to reproductive control

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Abstract

Recent research postulating that the diffusion of the birth control pill to young women in the United States contributed to the dramatic social changes of the 1960s and 1970s has not adequately accounted for the largely contemporaneous diffusion of abortion. This paper uses variation in state legal environments to evaluate the separate effects of both forms of reproductive control. The results suggest that while the dissemination of the pill to young unmarried women may have played a role in the sexual revolution, it is the dissemination of abortion that contributed to delayed marriage and childbearing and increased post-secondary educational attainment.