



Mathematical Population Studies >

An International Journal of Mathematical Demography

Volume 16, 2009 - [Issue 2](#)

236 | 22 | 3
Views | CrossRef citations to date | Altmetric

Original Articles

Unobserved Heterogeneity Can Confound the Effect of Education on Mortality

ANNA ZAJACOVA , NOREEN GOLDMAN & GERMÁN RODRÍGUEZ

Pages 153-173 | Published online: 10 Apr 2009

Cite this article <https://doi.org/10.1080/08898480902790528>

Sample our
Geography
Journals
>> [Sign in here](#) to start your access
to the latest two volumes for 14 days

Full Article

Figures & data

References

Citations

Metrics

Reprints & Permissions

Read this article

Share

Abstract

Two opposing hypotheses were proposed to explain the life course pattern in the effect of education on mortality: “cumulative advantage,” where the education effect becomes stronger with age, and “age-as-leveler,” where the effect becomes weaker in old age. Most empirical studies bring evidence for the latter hypothesis, but the observed convergence of mortality patterns could be an artifact of selective mortality due to unobserved heterogeneity. A simulation shows that unobserved heterogeneity can bias the estimated effect of education downward so that the cohort-average effect of education decreases in old age regardless of the shape of the underlying subject-specific trajectory.

Keywords:

age-as-leveler

cumulative advantage

education

heterogeneity

life course

mortality

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We gratefully acknowledge the financial support provided by a research grant from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (R01 HD053696). We also appreciate insightful and constructive comments by Chris Hall, Milica Cudina, and the anonymous reviewer.

Related research

People also read

Recommended articles

Cited by
22

Information for

[Authors](#)

[R&D professionals](#)

[Editors](#)

[Librarians](#)

[Societies](#)

Opportunities

[Reprints and e-prints](#)

[Advertising solutions](#)

[Accelerated publication](#)

[Corporate access solutions](#)

Open access

[Overview](#)

[Open journals](#)

[Open Select](#)

[Dove Medical Press](#)

[F1000Research](#)

Help and information

[Help and contact](#)

[Newsroom](#)

[All journals](#)

[Books](#)

Keep up to date

Register to receive personalised research and resources by email



Sign me up



Copyright © 2025 Informa UK Limited [Privacy policy](#) [Cookies](#) [Terms & conditions](#)

[Accessibility](#)



Taylor & Francis Group
an informa business

Registered in England & Wales No. 01072954
5 Howick Place | London | SW1P 1WG