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Diagonal Reference Models in Longitudinal Analyses of Fertility and Mortality

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Abstract

The diagonal reference model (DRM) is argued to be the best method for estimating an effect of social mobility because it separates this effect from the origin and destination status effects. Recently, the DRM has become a widely accepted approach in research on a broad array of social phenomena, including homogamy. This study considers how the DRM may be applied to longitudinal data in which both social mobility and demographic processes (mortality and fertility) are analyzed as processes. We argue that the complexity of longitudinal data covering occupational careers is important to preserve and propose a strategy for adapting a dynamic approach to the rigid data requirements of a DRM. Our approach functions well when studying both fertility and mortality, but has shortcomings with certain data characteristics. An additional finding is that few meaningful changes occurred when using the DRM in contrast to a standard dynamic approach. The differences that can be attributed solely to the DRM are that we occasionally may uncover a social mobility effect by using a DRM.

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