

**NEST DISTINGUISHED
SPEAKER SERIES**

Friday, March 22, 2024

2:00 - 3:30 pm

SSC 6210

Refreshments to be provided

Childbearing desires and models of “good” parenthood among U.S. young adults

After many years of stability, birth rates in the United States have recently declined to their lowest recorded level. This decline has been attributed in part to increasing economic precarity, particularly among young adults, coupled with high demands for investment in children. Still, most young people in the U.S. want to have children at some point. Understanding young people’s plans and goals for future childbearing is important for predicting future demographic trends. It can also shed light on the social meanings that young people assign to parenthood. In this talk, I draw on data from in-depth interviews with childless young adults to describe how young people envision “good” parenting and the extent to which these parenting logics are related to plans for future childbearing. Results suggest that young people feel a strong responsibility to provide emotional support as well as economic support to potential future children. The perceived emotional demands of parenting serve as a motivation for delaying parenthood.

Dr. Sarah Hayford: Is professor at Ohio State University studying family formation and reproductive health, primarily in the United States and sub-Saharan Africa. She is interested in how people make plans about these behaviors and who is able to carry out these plans. Recent and current research topics include the determinants of unintended childbearing in the United States and policy impacts on reproductive health access and outcomes in Ohio. Hayford is working with a multi-disciplinary, multi-institutional team to collect survey data on the effects of parental migration on children’s socioemotional development, educational outcomes, and family formation behaviors in Mexico, Mozambique, and Nepal. Her research has been funded by the National Institutes of Health, private foundations, and seed grants from OSU’s Department of Sociology.

