

## Abstract

### Study Overview:

- Using data from the National Survey of Adolescent Males (NSAM), this study explores to what extent fertility intentions among men mediate the relationship between individual characteristics (e.g., attitudes toward fatherhood consequences, personality profiles, perceived risk associated with certain behaviors, demographic characteristics) and manifest behaviors (e.g., sexual practices, substance use, and family formation).

### Significance:

- Given increasing paternity responsibility pressures from both legal and interpersonal (e.g., female partners) sources, it is hypothesized that a nonmarginal proportion of males will intend to never have children and will engage in greater contraceptive use (greater frequency & more reliable methods) and will differ from counterparts in demographic and attitudinal characteristics. This trend defies evolutionary theory by countering the "spreading one's seed" unconscious drive among males to suggest that various pressures (social, legal, life course competition) function to suppress "drives" and intentions to have children, and, inadvertently, serve to prevent STI and HIV/AIDS contraction via more effective contraceptive practices and less risky sexual behaviors.

## Family formation intentions: What is known?

### Family Formation Intentions:

- Researchers still do NOT know *why* people have children, *why* they engage in certain types of unions, and, most importantly, *whether*, *when*, and *how* family formation decisions are made.

### Do People Make Fertility Decisions?

- No direct empirical evidence... we infer:
  - For some, yes.
    - Nonconformists (EFS=0, 1, 4+)
    - Parity-specific
  - For most, no.
    - Status quo & Law of Inertia
    - Large percent of unplanned pregnancies
    - Marital, nonmarital, adolescent

### Intentions predict behaviors (e.g., Azjen & Fishbein; Miller & Pasta)

- Desired family size** described as the most significant factor influencing total fertility rates (Bongaarts, Morgan)
- Greater intention certainty → greater prediction of behavior

### Non-status quo EFS intentions ('nonconformists') reflect active decisions

- Past research focus on married adults intending children.
  - This study examines a sample from a neglected population with four 'rare' characteristics for a study on fertility:
    - Unmarried
    - Male
    - Youth
    - Intended parity range starting at zero (voluntary childless).

### Voluntary Childlessness:

- General characteristics**
  - Less Traditional (Sex role attitudes, marital attitudes)
  - More negative attitudes toward children
  - Less preference for children
  - Higher educational attainment

### Types

- Early Deciders**
  - Actively decided early in life, during adolescence
  - Very distinct (from both other VC and IP>0 groups).
- Late Deciders**
  - Actively decide later in life not to have children
- Perpetual Postponers**
  - Passively chooses a life without children due to a sequence of decisions that the time was not right to have children

## Notable Quotables: At Which Age(s) Do Intentions Become Data Rather than Error?

"We sought to study young adults for whom fertility intentions were meaningful (Walker, 2001), that is who were old enough at baseline for their intentions to be relatively realistic... Consequently we selected individuals who were 40 years and older in 2000, but not less than 21 years old in 1982" (Quesnel-Vallee & Morgan, 2003, 504). [emphasis added]

"It is thought not to be unrealistic to ask youthful respondents about their family size plans and to accept their answers as an indication of how they felt at the time" (Kenkel, 1985, 510). [emphasis added]

## Why should we care about men's family formation intentions?

- Intentionality → investment & behavioral responsibility
- Implications for men's health
  - Marriage
  - Social networks
  - Physical & mental health
- Understanding men's roles
  - Half of the decision-making 'team'
  - Dearth from men's perspective RE: family formation intentions, desires, and behaviors
- If we want to change an outcome (Y), we need to know *when* the process begins (**EMERGENCE**) and what predicts/ influences (**ANTECEDENTS**: X) the "undesired" outcome (e.g., STIs, unwanted fertility)
  - Must understand the developmental mechanisms and processes (timing and antecedents) underlying family formation intentions.

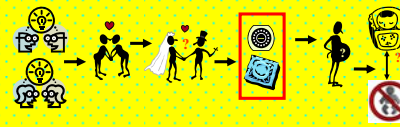
## Impetus, Research Questions, & Operationalization

- Impetus:**
  - Focus: men's intended fertility & union status
    - Voluntary childlessness as point of comparison to status quo
      - Nonnormative
      - Deliberate
- Research Questions:**
  - Mediating Role of Intentions:**
    - individual characteristics → family formation intentions → family & risk-taking behaviors.
  - Understanding Different Intention Groups:**
    - How do men who intend to never have children differ from men who intend to have some children in terms of contraceptive use, risk-taking behaviors, marital intentions, & so on?
- Operationalization: Expected Family Size/Intended Parity (EFS/IP)**
  - Normative/ Status quo
    - Average - 2 or 3 children
  - Nonnormative
    - Voluntary permanent childlessness - 0 children
    - Small/ Singleton - 1 child
    - Large - 4 or more children

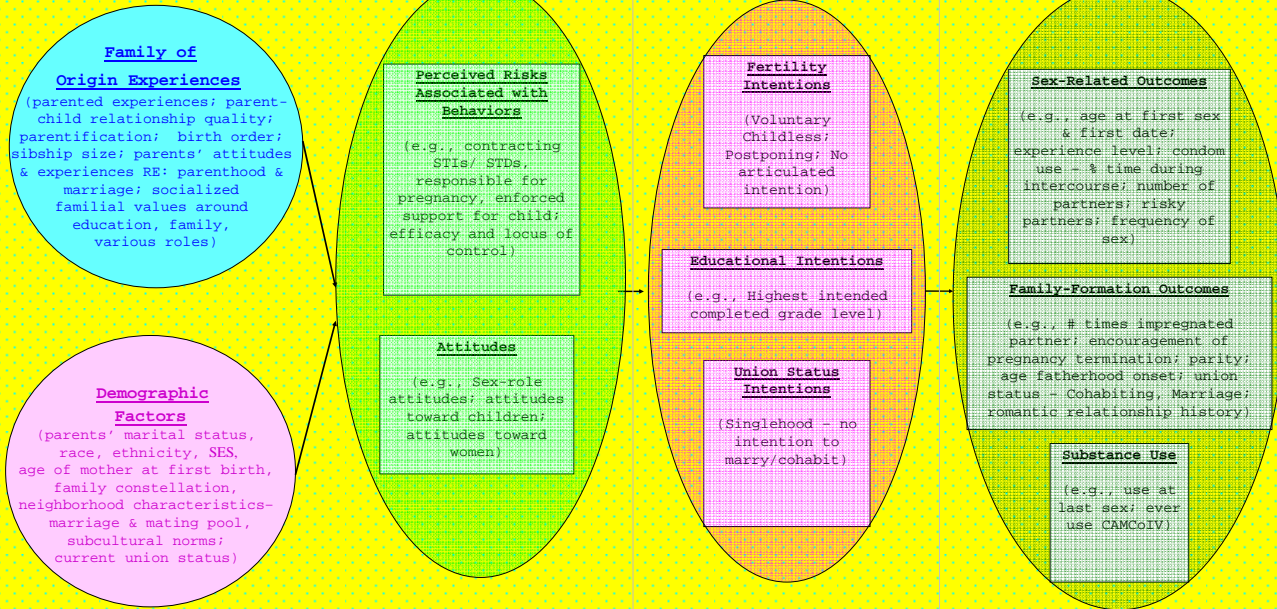
## Hypotheses & Mechanisms

Construct	Hypothesis	Mechanism
<b>Prevalence Rates</b>	Prevalence rates of EFS/IP=0 among men will be non-trivial (although not the predominant pattern)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Life-course competition: increased opportunity costs associated with fatherhood relative to lifestyle preferences.</li> <li>Financial: Cost of children, enforced child support, and reversed flow of wealth outweigh the unconscious 'reproductive fitness' motivation underlying evolutionary theory's prediction of men behaving to prolifically spread their seed.</li> <li>Norms against large families</li> </ul>
<b>Marital Intentions</b>	Relative to men with EFS/IP > 0, men intending no children will report lower marital intentions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marriage intentions: none &lt; small &lt; average &lt; large</li> <li>Men persisting with EFS/IP=0 or downwardly shifting intentions will report low intentions to marry relative to men who persist in EFS/IP &gt; 0 or upwardly shift intentions.</li> <li>Marriage intentions: persist none &lt; downward &lt; upward &lt; persist some</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attitude correspondence across domains (opportunity costs/ life course competition associated with parenthood &amp; marriage).</li> <li>Marriage and parenthood - both are traditional institutions &amp; status quo.</li> <li>Marriage is considered the optimal union for bearing/ rearing children.</li> <li>Many people marry when they are ready to have children.</li> </ul>
<b>Reproductive Health</b>	Contraceptive Use & Responsibility: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Men intending EFS/IP=0 will report greater contraceptive use frequency, more reliable method use, and greater male contraceptive responsibility.</li> </ul>	Intention and behavioral consistency: Strong intentions predict behaviors consistent with actualizing the outcome of those intentions.
<b>Attitudes toward children</b>	Relative to men with EFS/IP > 0, men intending no children will report more negative attitudes about children. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive ATC: none &lt; small &lt; average &lt; large</li> </ul>	Consistency between attitudes and nature of the intended role: Behavior theory: More negative perceptions about an outcome (e.g., children) will decrease intentions to experience negative outcomes.

FAMILIAL/ CONTEXTUAL → ATTITUDINAL/ INDIVIDUAL → COGNITIVE/ INTENTION → BEHAVIORAL



Methods



Data →	NSAM
<b>Participants</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nationally representative sample of unmarried males ages 15-19 in 1988 (N=1880)</li> <li>Oversampled African American youth                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>42% White, 34% African American, 21% Hispanic, 3% other</li> </ul> </li> <li>Analyses limited to 1260 never-married, zero-parity youth with complete participation across waves (1237 complete data on fertility intentions across time; 5 had children in 1988)</li> </ul>
<b>Procedures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal interview of youth (PAPI, CATI, A-CASI)</li> <li>Survey Years (mean ages): 1988 (16.8), 1990 (19.3), &amp; 1995 (23.6)</li> </ul>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"In all, how many children do you want to have?" (1988 &amp; 1995)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0= intending no children (permanent childlessness),                                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1=intending only one child (small),</li> <li>2= intending two children (average),</li> <li>3=intending three or more children (large).</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Persistent EFS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Persistent None (0 → 0)</li> <li>Persistent Some (1+ → 1+)</li> <li>Move Up (0→Some)</li> <li>Move Down (Some → None)</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Demographics:</b> father's edu; living arrangements @ 14; marital status</li> <li><b>Marriage Intentions:</b> "How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "I would like to get married someday" (1995 report; unmarried men) [1-agree a lot; 4-disagree a lot]</li> <li><b>Dating:</b> "How old were you when you first went out with a girl?"</li> <li><b>Sexual Activity:</b> "Have you ever had sexual intercourse with a female?"; "How old were you when you had sexual intercourse for the first time?"; Number of sexual partners</li> <li><b>Contraceptive use:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1988: Use of condom or pill versus no effective method at first &amp; last sex</li> <li>1995: % used condom, pill, any affective contraceptive in last year</li> <li><b>Contraceptive Responsibility:</b> (1995) 8 item scale; "Who is responsible for contraception" (1988: male, female, both, neither)</li> <li><b>Pregnancies:</b> "Have you ever actually made someone pregnant?"</li> <li><b>Attitudes toward children</b> (1995): 4 item (alpha=0.67); 4-point (high= +)</li> <li>Freedom (want to do and where you go); Cause Marital disagreements; Heavy Financial Burden; Give up things you enjoy</li> <li><b>Nonparametric Statistics</b> - due to unbalanced design &amp; normality assumption violation.</li> <li>Kruskal-Wallis (~ ANOVA); Mann-Whitney Wilcoxon (-T-test); Odds Ratios; Chi-Square</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Analytic Plan</b>	

The conceptual model underlying this study posits that specific fertility, union, and educational intentions function as either protective factors motivating men to utilize effective methods of contraception (consistency and condom use) and to reduce other risky behaviors (e.g., later onset of sexual behaviors, lower likelihood of drug use).

Results - Prevalence & Persistence

EFS Prevalence	1988 n (%)	1995 n (%)
None (EFS = 0) (permanent childlessness)	96 (7.7%)	54 (4.3%)
Small (EFS = 1)	102 (8.2%)	97 (7.8%)
Average (EFS=2)	650 (52.2%)	600 (48.0%)
Large (EFS = 3+)	398 (31.9%)	498 (39.9%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>1246</b>	<b>1249</b>

EFS Persistence	n (%)
Persist None (EFS = 0 → 0)	16 (1.3%)
Move Down (EFS = some → none)	36 (2.9%)
Move Up (EFS = none → some)	80 (6.5%)
Persist Some (EFS = some → some)	1105 (89.3%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>1237</b>

Results - EFS Group Sexual Activity, Pregnancy, & Contraceptive Differences

VAR	1988 EFS Group				1995 EFS Group				Persistence EFS Group			
	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	None	Down	Up	Some
EverSex	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	Low	High	High	Some
AgeSex	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	Older	Older	Older	Older
#Sex	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	Low	Low	High	High
Par	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	Low	Low	High	High
Use1st	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	Low	Low	High	High
UseLast	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	Low	Low	High	High
Ever Preg	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	Low	Low	High	High

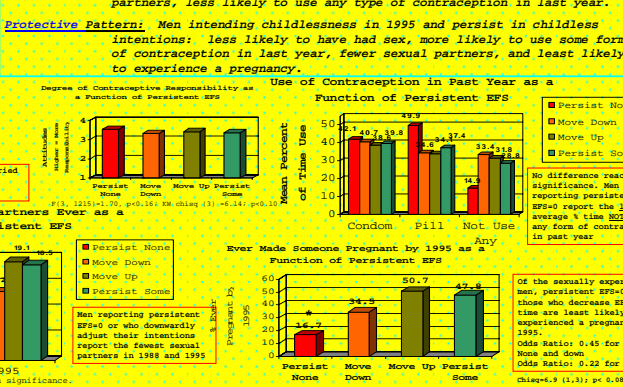
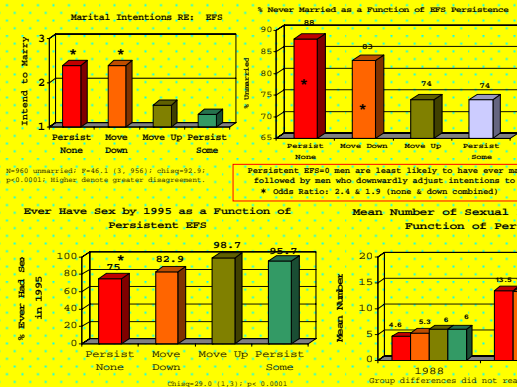
Results - EFS Group Marriage & Relationship Differences

VAR	1988 EFS Group				1995 EFS Group				Persistence EFS Group			
	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	None	Down	Up	Some
Never Married	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	Low	Low	High	High
Marital Intent	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	Low	Low	High	High
AgeDate	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	Older	Older	Older	Older
AgeRelat	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	Older	Older	Older	Older

**Risk Pattern:** Men intending childlessness in 1988 are precocious in terms of dating and relationship onset.

**Protective Pattern:** Men downwardly shifting family size intentions may refrain from regular relationships to prevent childbearing. Men intending childlessness in 1995 report older age at first regular relationship (protect against childbearing).

Marital and fertility intentions are consistent across groups.



Findings, Implications, Contributions & Future Directions

- Major Finding:**
  - Men persisting in EFS=0 & men who downwardly adjusted EFS reported (1) lower marital expectations; (2) lower likelihood of ever having sex; (3) later age at first sex; (4) fewer sexual partners; (5) fewest pregnancies; & (6) least positive attitudes toward children. Speaks to marital & fertility intention consistency.
- Implications:**
  - The protective perspective directs attention to assessing potentially viable inroads to interventions focusing on increasing protective intentions and to call attention to the protective nature of intentions to remain childless
- Contributions:**
  - Empirically evidences that men intending permanent childlessness are distinct all other EFS groups. Men reporting persistent EFS=0 or who downwardly adjust EFS exhibit PROTECTIVE rather than risky sexual behaviors.
- Future Directions:**
  - Groups warranting further inquiry: upward and downward adjusters
  - Modeling sexual orientation: How do intentions differ in terms of antecedents?
  - Moving beyond the descriptive to testing mediation models; Need larger sample size
  - Comparison to females