

## Abstract

### Study Overview:

- Using the *NLSY79* & *NLSY97* to examine adolescents' reports of Expected Family Size (EFS) / Intended Parity (IP) & compare adolescents across categories to assess
  - The youngest age of youth when reporting EFS=0 intentions & intentions to never marry;
  - How distinct adolescents with EFS/IP=0 intentions are from adolescents with EFS/IP>0 intentions in terms of
    - marital goals,
    - family formation values,
    - parented experiences, and
    - intention certainty;
  - National estimates for various EFS/IP categories for the 1960-1964 birth cohort and 1981-1985 birth cohort.

### Findings Verify:

- Voluntary childless intentions (EFS/IP=0) emerge as early as age 14
- Prevalence of EFS/IP=0 youth greatly increases over one generation's time,
- Parity & marital intention correspondence whereby EFS/IP=0 youth disproportionately report intentions to never marry
- EFS/ IP=0 youth report greater certainty than EFS/IP > 0 youth

## 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.
- 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 with three 'rare' characteristics for a study on fertility:
    - Unmarried
    - 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 Quotable

"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).

## Why should we care about family formation intention emergence?

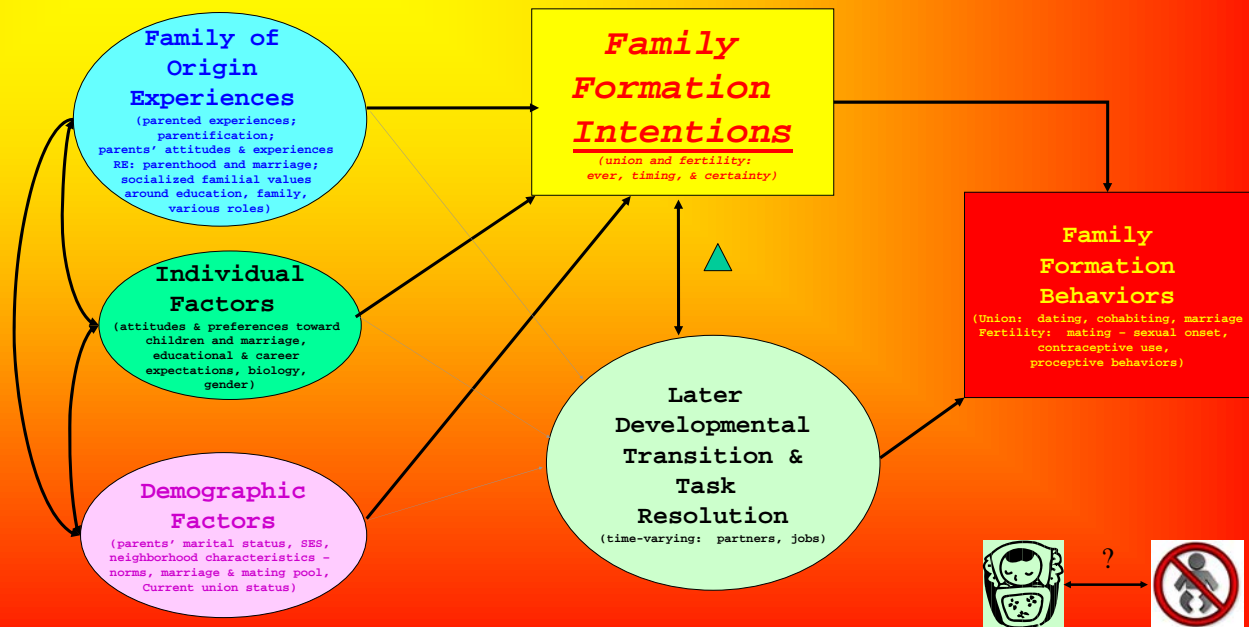
- Lack empirical assessment of family formation intention emergence.
  - Little credence to youth family formation preference or intentions reports (exception: youthful childbearing related)
- If we want to change an outcome (Y), we need to know when the process begins (**EMERGENCE**) and what predicts/ influences (**ANTECEDENTS**: X) the "undesired" outcome.
  - To create 'effective' pronatalist policies, demographers concerned with Below Replacement Fertility must understand the developmental mechanisms and processes (timing and antecedents) underlying family formation intentions.
  - Assumption that a-developmental & aggregate level pronatalist policies will result in behavioral change does not hold.
    - European countries characterized by Pronatalist policies evidence a ricochet effect (even lower TFRs).
- Anti-natalist individual intentions and behaviors **challenge** Pronatalist societal preferences
  - Once fertility rates decline, they do not rise to preexisting levels

## Impetus, Research Questions, & Operationalization

### Impetus & Research Questions:

- With an ever-increasing proportion of adults in this country choosing not to form families through marriage and parenthood, three major questions concerning the decision to have no children include:
  - when & how did adults come to this decision;
  - how distinct are EFS/IP=0 individuals from EFS/IP > 0 persons;
  - what are the prevalence rates of EFS/IP=0 among adolescents & how have they changed over the recent past?
- 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

## Conceptual Model





## Hypotheses & Mechanisms



Construct	Hypothesis	Mechanism
Prevalence Rates	<p>Prevalence rates of EFS/IP=0 among youth will increase with subsequent generation cohorts</p> <p>•Proportion EFS/IP=0: NLSY97 &gt;&gt; NLSY79</p>	<p>•Increased opportunity costs associated with parenthood - esp. with greater female labor participation, decreased male wages making dual incomes a necessity, and greater threat of single parenthood with high divorce rates;</p> <p>•Life course competition (lifestyle choices)</p> <p>•Norms against large families - overall downward shift in EFS/IP</p>
Marital Intentions	<p>1. Intentions to marry (certainty or proclivity) will increase as a function increasing EFS.</p> <p>•Likelihood of marrying: perm childless &lt; small &lt; average &lt; large</p> <p>2. Intended age at marriage will decrease as a function of increasing EFS.</p> <p>•Intended age at marriage: large &lt; average &lt; small &lt; perm childless</p>	<p>•Attitude correspondence across domains (opportunity costs/ life course competition associated with parenthood &amp; marriage).</p> <p>•Marriage and parenthood - both are traditional institutions &amp; status quo.</p> <p>•Marriage is considered the optimal union for bearing/ rearing children. Many people marry when they are ready to have children.</p>
Percent Chance of Having Children	<p>Youth reports of percent chance of parity outcomes map onto their corresponding EFS/IP. EFS/IP=0 youth will report lower chance for any EFS/IP &gt; 0 relative to EFS/IP &gt; 0 youth.</p> <p>•Percent chance any/more: perm childless &lt; small &lt; average &lt; large</p> <p>•Percent chance no/more: perm childless &gt; small &gt; average &gt; large</p>	<p>•EFS/IP=0 denotes active decisions violating the status quo.</p>

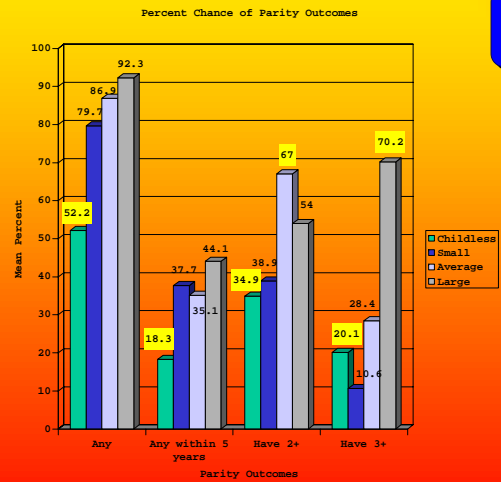
## Methods

Data →	NLSY79	NLSY97
Participants	<p>•Nationally representative sample of youth ages 14-22 in 1979</p> <p>•Sample reduced to non-military, non-oversampled never-married zero-parity youth in 1979 (N=2013)</p> <p>•Average age = 17.8</p>	<p>•Nationally representative sample of youth ages 12 to 16 in 1996</p> <p>•Subsample of 1603 never-married, zero-parity youth ages 16 to 22 in 2001</p> <p>•Average age = 18.8 in 2001</p>
Procedures	<p>•Youth interviews conducted at ages 18, 23, and 31</p> <p>•Analyses for this study were limited to age 18 data - 1980</p>	<p>•Annual interviews began in 1997; CAPI and ACASI</p> <p>•Youth were randomized to one of four experimental groups; only one group received fertility intention questions.</p> <p>•Analyses limited to Round 5 (2001) when fertility intention questions were asked</p>
Measures	<p>•EFS: "Altogether, how many (more) children do you expect to have?"</p> <p>•N/A</p> <p>•N/A</p> <p>•N/A</p> <p>•Marriage Intentions: "Do you expect to get married in the next 5 years?" (yes, no); "At what age do you expect to marry?" (&lt;20, 21-24, 25-29, 30+, never)</p>	<p>•EFS: "Altogether, how many (more) children do you expect to have?"</p> <p>•Certainty about lifetime fertility: "Now looking across your entire life, what is the percent chance you will ever have [any/more] children?"</p> <p>•Certainty about parity-specific fertility: For each specific non-zero parity: "What is the percent chance you will have three or [more/ more additional] children?"; "what is the percent chance you will have exactly [two/two more] children?"</p> <p>•Certainty about fertility within 5 years: "What is the percent chance you will have a(nother) child within the next five years?"</p> <p>•Marriage Intentions: "Now think about five years from now, you will be [respondents calculated age in 5 years] years old. What is the % chance that you will be married?"</p>
Analysis Plan	<p>•Nonparametric Statistics - due to unbalanced design &amp; normality assumption violation.</p> <p>-Kruskal-Wallis (~ ANOVA);</p> <p>-Mann-Whitney Wilcoxon (~T-test);</p> <p>-Odds Ratios/ Chi-Square</p>	

## Results & Discussion

When Do Family Formation Intentions Emerge? Evidencing Distinctness Among Early Adolescent Youth  
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	EFS/IP	Study 1 - NLSY79	Study 2 - NLSY97
Prevalence (adjusted)		<p><b>Hypothesis confirmed:</b> Clearly, there is a notable proportion of youth intending to never have children. There is, however, a preference for average or larger families.</p> <p>NLSY97 youth are over 2 times more likely to report voluntary childlessness intentions relative to their NLSY79 counterparts. Odds Ratio: 2.22; Pearson Chi-Square = 60.39, P &lt; 0.001</p>	<p><b>Hypothesis confirmed:</b> A non-negligible proportion of nationally representative youth intend to never have children. Furthermore, compared to previous cohort (NLSY79), non-normative family sizes below-replacement value are increasing in proportionality (two-fold). This is attributable to a downward shift in EFS/IP.</p>
Childless		8.18% (N=169)	16.86% (N=271)
Small		6.9%	10.95%
Average		71.31%	62.18%
Large		13.61%	10.01%
Marital Intentions (%)		<p><b>Hypothesis confirmed:</b> youth intending childlessness report less certainty about marrying within five years (OR: 5.26 times more likely to say no) and ever marrying (OR: 4.0 times more likely to say 'never'). Chi-square = 84.5, DF= 3, p&lt;0.0001/ OR: 5.26; Chi-square = 45.4, DF= 3, p&lt;0.0001/ OR: 4.0</p>	<p><b>Hypothesis confirmed:</b> youth intending childlessness were least certain about marrying in one year and five years relative to youth in other EFS categories (3.3 times more likely to say no for marriage within a year &amp; 2.9 times more likely to report no for marriage within 5 years) (OR: 3.3, Chi-square = 10.0, DF=3, p &lt;.02 / OR: 2.9, Chi-square = 55.3, DF=3, p&lt;.0001).</p>
Childless		15.6% (within 5 years) / 'never' = 19.1%	2.23% (within 1 year) / 25.86% (within 5 years)
Small		33.3 / 3.9	8.42 / 47.25
Average		49.5 / 0.9	6.51 / 50.11
Large		55.9 / 0	7.98 / 55.63
Percent Chance Have Any Children (mean %)			<p><b>Hypothesis confirmed:</b> Youth expecting to have no children report lower mean percent chance of having any children over their lifetime relative to currently childless youth who expect to have one, two, or three-or-more children. Given that none of the confidence intervals for these groups overlap, each is significantly different from the others in the expected direction. (Kruskal-Wallis chi-square = 238.3, DF=3, p&lt;.0001).</p>
Childless		N/A	52.2* (CI: 47.6, 56.8)
Small		N/A	79.7 (CI: 76.2, 83.2)
Average		N/A	86.9 (CI: 85.4, 88.5)
Large		N/A	92.3 (CI: 90.8, 93.8)
Percent Chance Have a Child within Five Years (mean %)			<p><b>Hypothesis confirmed:</b> Youth expecting to have no children reported the lowest percent chance and youth expecting to have a large family reported the highest chance of having a child in the next five years, both of which significantly differ from each other and from the two middle groups of youth expecting small families of one child and average families of two children. (Kruskal-Wallis chi-square = 127.6, DF=3, p&lt;.0001).</p>
Childless		N/A	18.3* (CI: 5.1, 21.5)
Small		N/A	37.7 (CI: 32.7, 42.6)
Average		N/A	35.1 (CI: 32.6, 37.6)
Large		N/A	44.1 (CI: 41.2, 47.1)



## Findings, Implications, Contributions & Future Directions

- ✓ **Major Finding:**
  - Youth intending permanent childlessness reported (1) lower marital expectations within the one and five years and ever, & (2) lower percent chance of ever having children or higher order parity. Marital & fertility expectation consistency.
- ✓ **Implications:**
  - This study highlights increasing intended childlessness prevalence rates and later expected marital onset within one generation.
- ✓ **Contributions:**
  - This study empirically evidences that youth intending permanent childlessness are distinct from youth intending at least one child. These youth will constitute an increasing proportion of adults foregoing parenthood and marriage in current and future generations.
- ✓ **Future Directions:**
  - Need to explore family formation intentions earlier in development, the degree to which reports represent active, conscious, and rational decisions versus status quo responses, & the persistence & change of these intentions.