**Men Who Do Not Intend to Spread Their Seed:**

Examining the Protective Role of Voluntary Childless Intentions Among Men

Jacinda K. Dariotis, Ph.D., M.A.S., M.S., M.A.

**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) 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 non-negligible 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 Intensions: What is known?**

- 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+)
    - Purity-specific
    - For most, no.
    - Status quo & law of Inertia
    - Large percent of unplanned pregnancies
    - Marital, nonmarital, adolescent.

- Intensions predict behaviors (e.g., Azjen & Fishbein; Miller & Pasta)
  - 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
    - Intended parity range starting at zero (voluntary childlessness).

**Voluntary Childlessness:**

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

- Types
  - Early Deciders
    - Actively decided early in life, during adolescence
  - 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

**Abstract**

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 (Oppedal-Walker & Morgan, 2003, 504). [emphasis added]

“It is thought not to be realistic to ask youthful respondents about their family size plans and to accept their answers as an indication of how they felt at the time” (Falkenziel, 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
- If we want to change an outcome (Y), we need to know when the process begins (EMERGENCE) and what predicts/intfluences (ANTECEDENTS; X) the “undesired” outcome (e.g., STIs, unwanted fertility)
  - Most understand the developmental mechanisms and processes (timings and antecedents) underlying family formation intentions.

Hypotheses & Mechanisms

**Construct**

- Premarital sexual behavior
- Premarital sexual activity
- Intentionality
- Expectations
- Expectations and behavioral consistency
- Attitudes
- Perceptions of responsibility

**Hypothesis**

- Premarital sexual behavior will be non-trivial (although not the predominant pattern)
- Premarital sexual activity will be non-trivial
- Intentionality
- Expectations
- Expectations and behavioral consistency
- Attitudes
- Perceptions of responsibility

**Mechanism**

- Intentionality: More negative perceptions about an outcome decreasing intentions to experience negative outcomes.
- Expectations and behavioral consistency: Stronger intentions predict greater contraceptive use frequency, more reliable method use, and greater male contraceptive responsibility.
- Attitudes: Men intending EFS/IP=0 will report lower marital intentions.
- Perceptions of responsibility: Men persisting with EFS/IP=0 or downwardly shifting intentions will report low intentions to marry relative to men who persist in EFS/IP > 0 or upwardly shift intentions.

**Impetus, Research Questions, & Operationalization**

**Impetus:**
- Focus: men’s intended fertility & union status
- Nonconformists as point of comparison to status quo
- Deliberate
- Normative

**Research Questions:**

1. **Mediating Role of Intentions:**
   - Individual characteristics => family formation intentions => family & risk-taking behaviors.
2. **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
  - Nonvoluntary permanent childlessness – 0 children
  - Small/Singleton – 1 child
  - Large – 4 or more children

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

Focus: men’s intended fertility & union status

- Dearth from men’s perspective RE: family formation
- Half of the decision-making ‘team’
- Emphasis on the process begins (EMERGENCE) and what predicts/intfluences (ANTECEDENTS; X) the “undesired” outcome (e.g., STIs, unwanted fertility)
- Most understand the developmental mechanisms and processes (timings and antecedents) underlying family formation intentions.

**Significance:**

- Given increasing paternity responsibility pressures from both legal and interpersonal (e.g., female partners) sources, it is hypothesized that a non-negligible 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.
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Conceptual Model

Familial/Contextual → Attitudinal/Individual → Cognitive/Intention → Behavioral

Family of Origin Experiences
(parenthood; marriage; siblings; family values around education, family; various roles)

Results - Prevalence & Persistence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1988</th>
<th>1995</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ever Made Someone Pregnant by 1995 as a Function of EFS Persistence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persist None</td>
<td>Persist Some</td>
<td>Persist None &amp; Persist Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.22</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.75</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1988 EFS Group</th>
<th>1995 EFS Group</th>
<th>Resistance EFS Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never Married as a Function of EFS Persistence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persist None</td>
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Findings, Implications, Contributions & Future Directions

Major Finding:
- Men intending permanent childlessness in 1988 are more likely to experience a pregnancy by 1995.

Implications:
- The protective perspective directs attention to assessing potentially viable inroads to change intentions to remain childless.

Contributions:
- Empirically evidences that men intending permanent childlessness are distinct from all other EFS groups.

Future Directions:
- Expanding further inquiry: speed and downward adjustment
- 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