How can we discuss fertility-related behaviors without talking about fertility intentions?

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Why should we care about fertility intentions?

• What predicts future behavior?
  - Past behavior
  - Intentions
    • Type & Degree

• Below-replacement fertility threat & Pronatalism:
  - Previous polices have failed – why?
  - Insight from studying how intentions influence fertility
  - Requires embracing a new perspective:
    • Emergence
    • Persistence vs. change
    • Process

• Potential for increased investment & behavioral responsibility
  - What do we know about unwanted fertility outcomes?
    • Psychological distress, maltreatment, life-course disruption

• Unmet need at 40+?
  - Temporal juxtaposition issues
  - A-developmental
What Do We Know about Fertility Intentions & Behaviors?

• 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
Conceptual Model

**Family of Origin Experiences**
- parented experiences; parentification
- parents’ attitudes & experiences
  - RE: parenthood and marriage
  - socialized familial values around education, family, various roles

**Individual Factors**
- attitudes & preferences toward children and marriage
- educational & career expectations, biology, gender, perceptions

**Demographic Factors**
- parents’ marital status, SES, neighborhood characteristics - norms, marriage & mating pool, Current union status

**Fertility Intentions**
- (EFS/IP: ever, timing, certainty)

**Fertility-Related Behaviors**
- (Union: dating, cohabiting, marriage
- Fertility: mating - sexual onset, contraceptive use, proceptive behaviors)

**Later Developmental Transition & Task Resolution**
*Given the mediation nature of this study, it is hypothesized that the direct relationship between individual characteristics/attitudes and behaviors (represented by dotted yellow line) will become nonsignificant with the introduction of intentional variables in the model.*
Future Inquiry Needed!!!

• Question: To what extent do people make active, conscious, rational decisions about fertility? What does EFS=2 mean?
  - Solution: assessing individual level processes; qualitative data

• Question: What is the developmental trajectory of intentions? When do they emerge? With what degree of certainty?
  - Solution: longitudinal assessment beginning at earlier developmental stages; Preadolescence and childhood?

• Question: What role do families play in the formation and persistence of intentions? What about biosocial factors?
  - Solution: intergenerational studies and within generation sibling studies; biomarkers