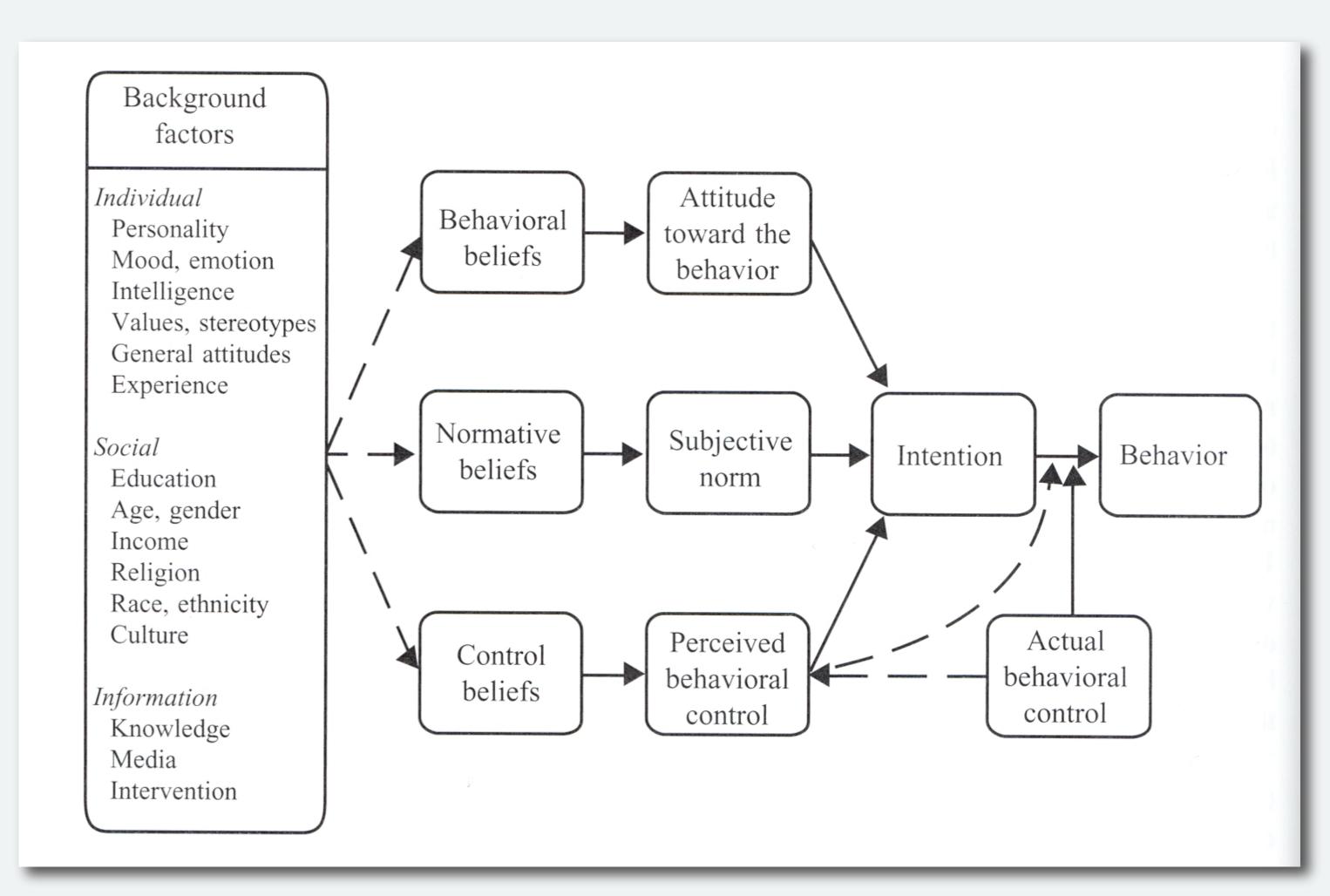
Introduction

Increasingly people are not having children during early adulthood. In the U.S. childlessness among women aged 30-34 increased from 16% to 26% over the the thirty year period from 1976 to 2006 (U.S. Census Bureau 2008). How is this trend of rising childlessness at the midpoint of reproductive years related to fertility outcomes at the end of childbearing years? Compressing childbearing into a narrow span of time suggests the possibility that some people will experience involuntary childlessness. This paper seeks to shed light on childbearing in the later reproductive years by examing the predictors of first birth among men and women childless at age 30.

Conceptual Framework

- Intentions are central to the theory of planned behavior and have a long history in fertility research.
- The theory of planned behavior is motivated to explain intention-behavior inconsistency. Involuntary childlessness and the idea of a fertility gap also call our attention to fertility outcomes in relation to intentions.
- The theory of planned behavior proposes behavioral control as a mechanism for explaining intention-behavior inconsistency.
 Childbearing is a behavior that is low in volitional control because it generally depends on the involvement of a partner.
- Individual control over the transition to parenthood can also be affected by other external factors such as marriage markets, job markets or sequencing norms and internal factors such as fecundity or competing goals and preferences.



Source: Ajzen and Fishbein (2005), p.194

Research Questions

- 1. Are fertility intentions at age 30 good predictors of post-30 transitions to parenthood?
- 2. Are changes in intentions better predictors than level of intentions?
- 3. Which behavioral control variables are the best predictors of post-30 transitions to parenthood?
- 4. Do different behavioral control variables predict unintended transitions compared to intended transitions?

Data and Methods

- National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 Cohort: 2,726 women and men childless at age 30
- Dependent variable: conception leading to a first birth.
 Conception is estimated as 9 months prior to the month of birth.
- Respondents enter the analytic sample at age 30 if they are childless at this point and are followed through until they experience a conception leading to a first birth, are lost to follow-up, or until the most recent survey wave in 2006. At this time, individuals who have not had a first birth are censored.
- Key independent variables: fertility intentions at age 30, level of fertility intentions, change in fertility intentions, age, relationship status, employment, education, income, home ownership.
- Estimation strategy: discrete-time hazard models estimated with logistic regression

Results

- Initial fertility intentions are strong predictors of the transition to parenthood, and they remain significant even after level of intentions, changes in intentions and behavioral control variables have been accounted for.
- Change in fertility intentions compared to intentions in the previous year is a better predictor than either initial intentions or level of fertility intentions. It is the best predictor of transitions to parenthood in the full model.
- Two control variables emerge as strong predictors of the transition to parenthood: being in a partnership and being older than 40. Income, employment experience and home ownership are also significant predictors of the transition to parenthood. This finding is consistent with traditional sequencing norms or "prerequisites" to being ready to have children.

Results Tables

Table 1. One-year log odds of having a first birth, full sample					
	Baseline Intentions	Intentions Only	Control Only	Full Model	
Positive intentions age 30	3.76*** [0.41]	1.52*** [0.19]		1.43*** [0.19]	
Expected number of children	[~ –]	0.99		1.13**	
Change from previous year Remain zero (ref)		1.00		1.00	
Revised downwards to 0		- 1.39 [0.30]		- 1.36 [0.30]	
Revised upwards from 0		5.57*** [1.08]		5.15*** [1.03]	
Remain positive		5.01*** [0.82]		3.62*** [0.62]	
Sex	1.04 [0.07]	1.1	1.01 [0.07]	1.04 [0.07]	
30-34 years (ref)			1.00	1.00	
35-39 years			0.66*** [0.07]	0.88	
40+ years			0.12***	0.23***	
Married			5.03*** [0.42]	4.93*** [0.42]	
Cohabiting			2.72*** [0.37]	2.70*** [0.37]	
4-year College Degree			1.31*** [0.10]	1.11 [0.08]	
Currently in school			0.88	0.85 [0.11]	
Employed (Y/N)			0.89	0.84	
Employment Experience			1.06***	1.08***	
Log Income			1.23***	1.16*** [0.06]	
Overtime (>45hrs/wk)			1.01 [0.08]	[0.00] 1 [0.08]	
Home Owner			1.08	1.17**	
White (ref)			[0.08] 1.00 -	[0.09] 1.00 -	
Hispanic			- 0.96 [0.11]	- 0.98 [0.11]	
Black			[0.11] 0.78***	[0.11] 0.84*	
Person Years LL	17815 -3767	17815 -3651	[0.07] 17814 -3487	[0.08] 17814 -3315	
AIC Notes Ctandard arrays in br	7540	7316	7004	6670	

Notes: Standard errors in brackets

Table 2. One-year log odds of having a first birth, by age 30 fertility intentions^a

	<u>Age 30 i</u>	Age 30 intentions			
	One or more	One or more			
	kids	No kids			
Age					
30-34 years (ref)	1.00	1.00			
	-	-			
35-39 years	0.89	0.89			
	[0.10]	[0.26]			
40+ years	0.24***	0.24**			
	[0.06]	[0.13]			
Married	5.54***	2.00***			
	[0.51]	[0.49]			
Cohabiting	3.00***	1.35			
	[0.44]	[0.53]			
4-year College Degree	1.15*	0.89			
	[0.09]	[0.22]			
Currently In School	0.82	1.14			
	[0.12]	[0.45]			
Employed (Y/N)	0.82	1.05			
	[0.13]	[0.42]			
Employment Experience	1.09***	0.99			
	[0.02]	[0.04]			
Log Income	1.13**	1.36**			
	[0.06]	[0.20]			
Overtime (>45hrs/wk)	1.05	0.67			
	[0.09]	[0.20]			
Home Owner	1.16*	1.06			
	[0.09]	[0.26]			
Sex	1.02	1.03			
	[0.08]	[0.22]			
Person Years	12909	4905			
Notes: Standard errors in brackets; * significant at 10%;					

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** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

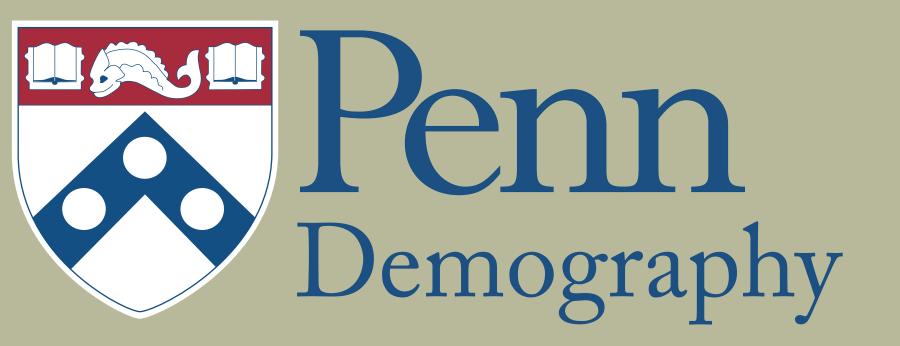
^a Models control for level of fertility intentions, change in intentions and race/ethnicity.

Sources

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^{*} significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%