

Unintended Fertility and Drinking Patterns Among Young Adults

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Introduction

- The transition to parenthood is stressful
 - Having an unintended 1st birth may exacerbate the stress of parenthood
- Unintended births linked to poorer parental mental health
 - Less clear whether they are linked to changes in risky behavior, such as drinking (which may be a coping mechanism)

Background

- Parenthood could expedite the transition to adulthood, leading to desistance in risky behaviors
 - Hypothesis 1:** Over time, individuals who become parents would reduce alcohol consumption relative to childless individuals
- Stressors accompanying unintended fertility may lead to maladaptive coping mechanisms
 - Hypothesis 2:** Compared to parents with intended 1st births, those with unintended 1st births may experience a smaller decline or an even an increase in alcohol consumption
 - May vary by type of unintendedness
- Unintended fertility occurs more frequently among disadvantaged individuals in less stable relationships
 - Hypothesis 3:** There is no link between parenthood/intendedness and alcohol use once accounting for socioeconomic and relationship characteristics

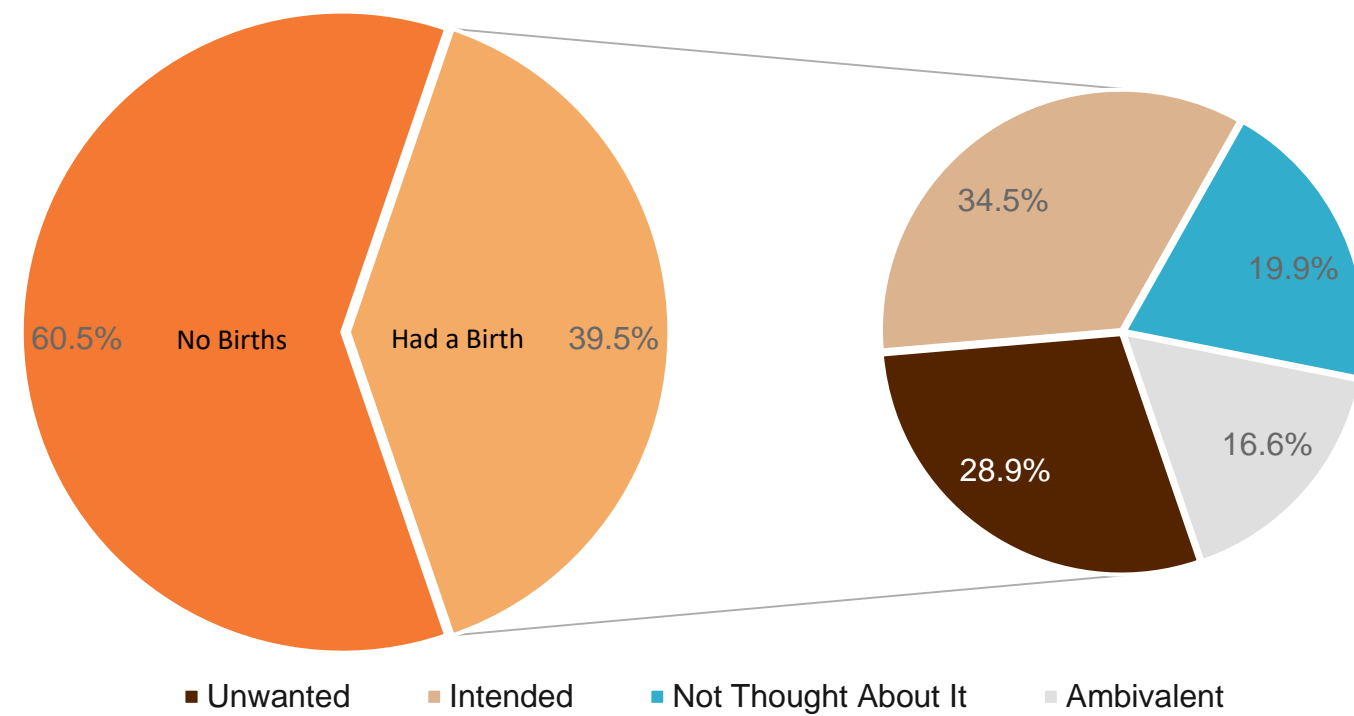
Current Study

- How is parenthood associated with changes in alcohol consumption?
 - Does it vary by birth intendedness?
- Improves upon prior research by
 - Analyzing longitudinal data
 - Disaggregating intendedness

Data

- Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study (TARS)
 - Longitudinal Panel Study
 - Wave 1: 2000-2001, Wave 5: 2011-2012
 - 990 Respondents
 - DV: Alcohol change from Wave 1 to Wave 5
 - Key IVs: 1st birth and intendedness
 - 4 categories of intendedness: intended, unwanted, 'not thought about it', and 'ambivalent'

Figure 1: Parenthood and 1st Birth Intendedness

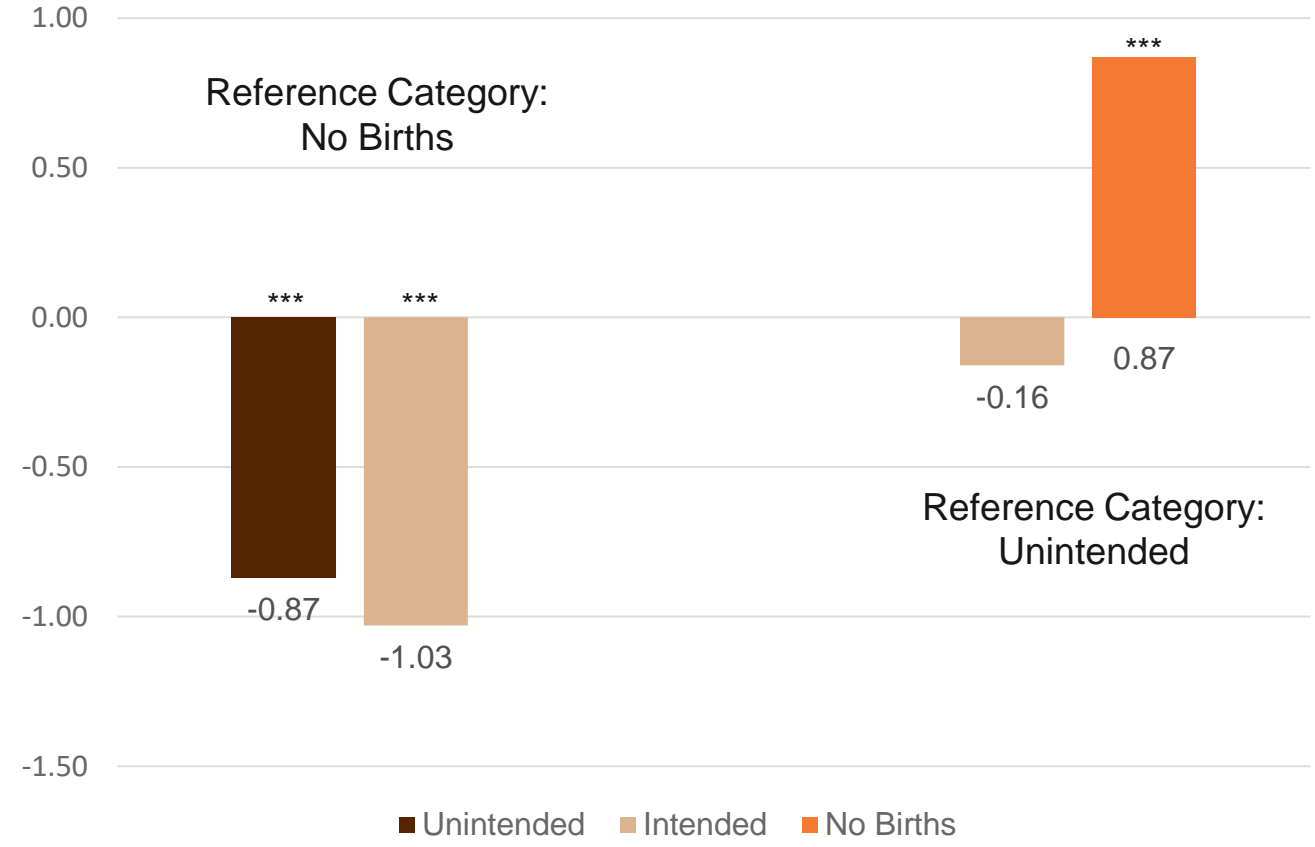


Source: Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study

Analysis

- Use OLS regression to model change in alcohol consumption from Wave 1 to Wave 5
 - Use 3-category IV: no birth, intended 1st birth, unintended 1st birth (unwanted/ambivalent/'not thought about it')
 - Use 5-category IV with disaggregated unintended category
- Control for: relationship history, prior delinquency, age, gender, race, and mother's education

Figure 2: Alcohol Consumption Change from Wave 1-Wave 5



Source: Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study ^p<0.10, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001; All models control for socioeconomic, demographic, and relationship characteristics.

Conclusions

- Parenthood expedites the transition to adulthood, with larger declines in alcohol use for parents than childless
 - BUT, unpacking the unintended categories reveals more nuance – **support for Hypotheses 1 and 2**
- Need investigation into other behavioral changes to consider both internalizing and externalizing behaviors

Results

- Across waves, parents showed larger declines in alcohol use than childless men and women
 - No differences by intended vs. unintended
- When disaggregate by intendedness, evidence that unwanted births differ from other births
 - Larger decline for intended and for 'not thought about it' births than unwanted births
 - Difference between unwanted and no birth is only marginally significant

Figure 3: Alcohol Consumption Change from Wave 1-Wave 5 (Disaggregated)

