



Traditional Methods Use in the U.S.: The Effect of Knowledge and Attitudes

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Background and Conceptual Framework

Background

- Traditional methods of contraception include natural family planning and withdrawal
- Many couples report using traditional methods despite a program and policy push towards effective hormonal methods of contraception
 - 6 in 10 sexually experienced women ages 15-44 have ever used withdrawal; 2 in 10 have ever used natural family planning
 - 3-6% young adult women ages 20-29 currently use traditional methods as their primary method

Background

- Traditional methods are more effective at preventing pregnancy than nothing, though less effective than condoms, hormonal methods, and LARCs
 - Typical use failure rate = 25-27%
 - Perfect use (correct and consistent) failure rate = 3-4%
- Men and women use traditional methods for several reasons
 - Convenience, ease of use, the “all natural” feeling, fear of hormonal method side effects, etc.
- Limited research identifies how individual knowledge and attitudes are linked to traditional methods use

Conceptual Framework

- According to the Rational Choice theory, the decision to use a contraceptive method depends on:
 - 1) Perceived costs associated with using the method
 - 2) Perceived benefits associated with using the method
- Perceived costs and benefits of traditional method use can be shaped by:
 - Knowledge and sources of knowledge about contraceptive methods (e.g. knowledge about method effectiveness)
 - Attitudes about contraception and pregnancy can shape perceptions of risks and benefits of using traditional methods (e.g.

Study Aims

- Use quantitative and qualitative data to:
 1. Identify, among young adult men and women, the role of knowledge and attitudes in the decision to *ever use* traditional methods
 2. Identify the role of knowledge and attitudes in the decision to *currently use* traditional methods



Methods

Data

Quantitative Data	Qualitative Data
<i>Natural Survey of Reproductive and Contraceptive Knowledge (the “Fog Zone”)</i>	<i>Contraceptive Use and Decision-Making among Students study</i>
Phone interviews conducted in 2008-2009	Semi-structured, longitudinal interviews and focus groups conducted in 2009-2010
Nationally-representative (N=1800)	Community college students (N=101)
Males and females ages 18-29	Males and females ages 18-29
Analytics Sample (N=1,148*)	Analytic Sample (N=101)
60% white, 16% black, 17% Hispanic, 7% Asian or other	34% white, 37% black, 22% Hispanic, 8% Asian or other
Unmarried	Unmarried
Sexually active (sex in the past year)	Sexually active (sex in the past year)
Not pregnant/trying to get pregnancy	Not pregnant/trying to get pregnancy
Not medically sterile	Heterosexual

* “Current use” analyses restricted to those with a current sex partner and past month contraceptive use (n=779)

- *The qualitative sample was younger, more racially/ethnically diverse, lower income, and was less likely to have children*

Quantitative Measures

- Traditional method use (vs. non-use of traditional methods)
 - Included ever and current (past month) use of natural family planning methods and/or withdrawal
- Knowledge and sources of knowledge about contraception
 - Incorrect knowledge of relative effectiveness
 - Accessed sexual or reproductive health services
 - Past year sources of sexual health knowledge
 - Sex education
- Attitudes about contraception and pregnancy
 - Side effect concerns (from hormonal methods)
 - Fatalism
 - Motivation to avoid pregnancy

Methods

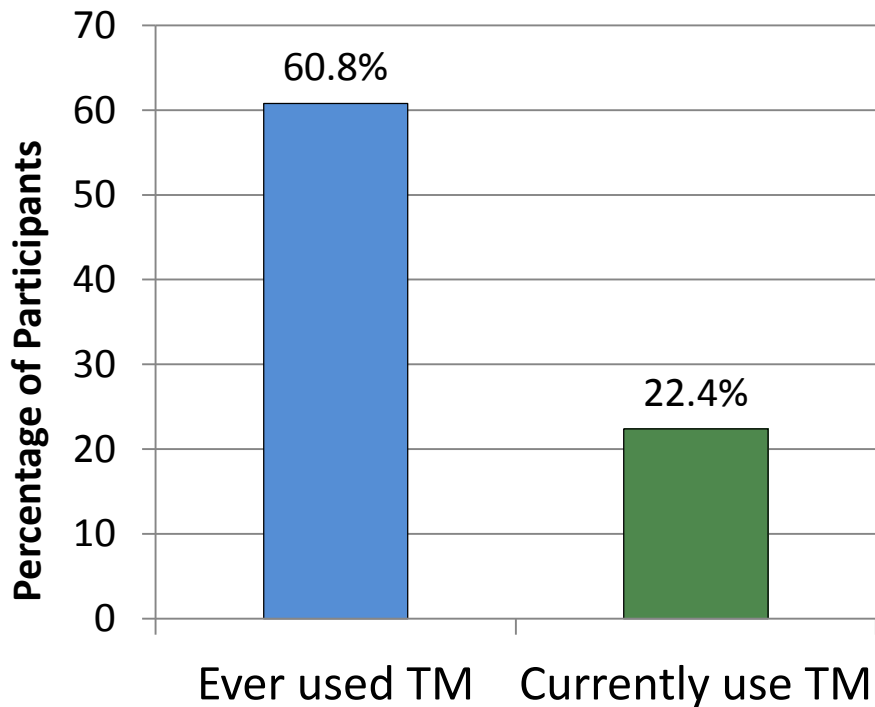
- Quantitative analyses involved logistic regressions
 - Analyses using Stata produced odds ratios of associations between knowledge and attitudes and ever use/current use
- Qualitative data informed variable selection for quantitative analyses and were used shed light on quantitative findings
 - Analyses using NVIVO 8 focused on themes related to knowledge and attitudes that may influence method choice



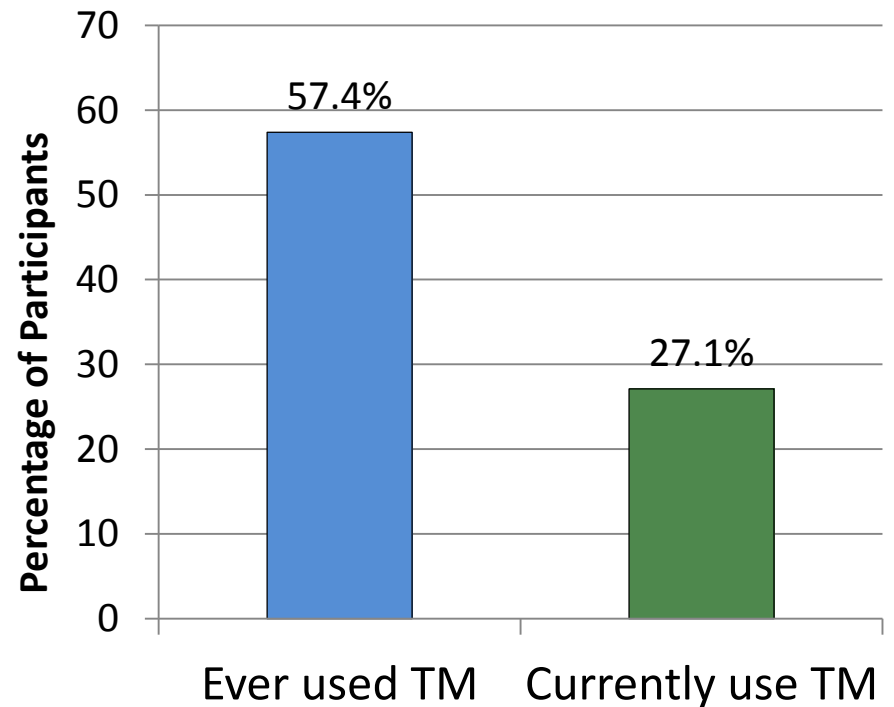
Results – Traditional Method Use

Results – Traditional Method Use (Quantitative Sample)

Women



Men



- Among those who ever used traditional methods, 93% had used withdrawal, 1% had used natural family planning, and 7% had used both



Results – Knowledge and Traditional Method Use

Results - Young Adult's Knowledge (Quantitative Sample)

Incorrect knowledge of relative effectiveness¹

Pill vs. condom	47%
Shot vs. condom	37%
Withdrawal vs. nothing	24%

Accessed sexual or reproductive health services 67%

Past year source of sexual health knowledge

Doctor or teacher	33%
Partner or friend	22%
Parent, relative, or minister	12%
Media	33%

Sex education

No sex education	21%
Abstinence only/abstinence-focused	50%
Comprehensive (contraceptive-focused)	29%

¹Asked only of women

Odds Ratios: Knowledge and Traditional Methods Use¹

	Ever Use		Current Use	
Incorrect knowledge of relative effectiveness ^a :				
Pill vs. Condom	1.68	+	1.18	
Shot vs. Condom	2.25	*	1.83	
Withdrawal vs. Nothing	0.36	**	0.34	*
Accessed sexual or reproductive health care	0.66		0.27	+
Past year sexual health knowledge				
Partner or friend	2.94	*	2.69	+
Parent, relative, or minister	1.38		0.56	
Media	1.01		1.17	
Sex education				
Abstinence only/abstinence-focused	1.47		1.17	
Comprehensive	1.36		1.72	

+ p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01

^aOnly asked of women

¹Associations net of controls

Qualitative Results: Knowledge

- Knowledge of method effectiveness plays an important role in young adults' decisions to use various contraceptive methods

Hispanic female

Moderator: What are some other reasons [for not using birth control]?

Respondent: Knowledge in general....A lot of people don't know the different types of birth controls, so they don't put the effort to actually get it.

Qualitative Results: Knowledge

- Many young adults don't consider traditional methods to be forms of contraception

19-year-old white female

Respondent: I guess we never really thought about it as a means of birth control. It was just better than...nothing.

Qualitative Results: Knowledge

- Some young adults have reservations about the efficacy of traditional methods

19-year-old white female

Interviewer: What do you like the most about condoms and withdrawal?

Respondent: Uh, withdrawal feels better, but it's riskier. And condoms is safer.

Qualitative Results: Knowledge

- Those who rely on traditional methods tend to over-estimate the effectiveness of these methods and under-estimate the effectiveness of other methods


20-year-old Hispanic female

Interviewer: So how effective do you think withdrawal is at preventing pregnancy?

Respondent: Isn't withdrawal like—I know I read this online. It's—It's a pretty high percentage. If I had to guess...like 90% or something

Results: Knowledge

- Thus, knowledge of contraceptive methods (and the sources of this knowledge) influence young women's decision to use traditional methods or not
- Many women do not consider traditional methods to be contraception or do not think traditional methods are effective in preventing pregnancy
- Those that do not see the added benefit of traditional methods are less likely to use those methods
- Those that *do* use traditional methods may underestimate their effectiveness, given that typical use failure rates range from 25-27%



Results – Attitudes and Traditional Method Use



Results - Young Adult's Attitudes (Quantitative Sample)

Side effect concerns (from hormonal methods)	36%
Fatalism (pregnancy will happen when it's meant to happen)	39%
Motivation to avoid pregnancy	89%

Odds Ratios: Attitudes and Traditional Methods Use¹

	Ever Use	Current Use
Side effect concerns (from hormonal methods)	1.79 +	2.59 *
Fatalism	0.91	0.94
Motivation to avoid pregnancy	0.23 **	0.23 *

+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

¹Associations net of controls

Qualitative Results: Attitudes

- Side effect concerns shaped young adult women's decisions about what methods to use, occasionally leading them to use traditional methods

20-year old Asian female

Respondent: Sometimes when I would research [the pill], I would see the side effects. I think that's what attracted me the most [to withdrawal]...I would be so cautious about [the pill] because I—I didn't want to have anything to deal with like that.

Results: Attitudes

- Thus, attitudes about contraceptive methods and attitudes about pregnancy influence young women's decisions to use traditional methods
- Motivation to avoid pregnancy was strongly linked to using methods other than traditional methods
- In particular, our quantitative and qualitative analyses revealed that concerns about side effects from hormonal methods was linked to use of traditional methods – perhaps due to a conscious decision to avoid hormonal methods



Discussion and Implications

Discussion/Implications

- Our analyses revealed that more than half of young adults have used traditional methods
 - While not necessarily relying exclusively on traditional methods, one in four reported using traditional methods in the past month
 - Our qualitative analyses indicated that some young adults use traditional methods as a back-up method
- Knowledge and attitudes were associated with traditional method use in both our quantitative and qualitative samples

Discussion/Implications

- These findings support the need for better knowledge about effectiveness and the likelihood of side effects so that young adults can make informed decisions about contraceptive methods
- Relying on withdrawal or calendar methods for natural family planning (vs. other methods) increases the risk of pregnancy
 - Though using traditional methods as a back-up or vs. nothing decreases the risk

Discussion/Implications

- These data (and other survey data) may underestimate the prevalence of traditional methods use because:
 - 1) Young adults don't consider traditional methods contraception
 - 2) They are only using traditional methods as backup methods
- Limitations
 - Measures
 - Example: relative effectiveness questions were limited by not having a comparison of the relative effectiveness of traditional methods and other methods
 - Sample size limited analyses of traditional methods use versus other methods
 - Endogeneity of variables of confounding variables

Next Steps

- Limited research attention has focused on factors associated with the use of traditional methods, including withdrawal and natural family planning
- Our next steps include:
 - 1) Examining whether use of traditional methods and fertility awareness knowledge are linked
 - 2) Exploring classes of knowledge and side effect fears about contraceptive methods
 - 3) Looking at associations between these classes and contraceptive method choice



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