

**A NEW LOOK AT UNMARRIED
FAMILIES: DIVERSITY IN HUMAN
CAPITAL, ATTITUDES, AND
RELATIONSHIP QUALITY**

**Center for Research on Child Wellbeing
Working Paper #02-01-FF**

Cynthia Osborne

**Diversity Among Unmarried Parents:
The Importance of Marriage Expectations**

Cynthia Osborne
cosborne@princeton.edu

Princeton University
Office of Population Research
Center for Research on Child Wellbeing

September 3, 2002

Working Paper

The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study is supported by the following federal grants: 5R01-HD-35301 from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and 5P30-HD-32030 from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development through the Office of Population Research, Princeton University. Additional funding provided by: California HealthCare Foundation; The Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society at the University of Pennsylvania; Commonwealth Fund; Ford Foundation; Foundation for Child Development; Fund for New Jersey; William T. Grant Foundation; Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey; William and Flora Hewlett Foundation; Hogg Foundation; Christian A. Johnson Endeavor Foundation; Kronkosky Charitable Foundation; Leon Lowenstein Foundation; John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; A.L. Mailman Family Foundation; Charles Stewart Mott Foundation; National Science Foundation; David and Lucile Packard Foundation; Public Policy Institute of California; Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; St. David's Hospital Foundation; St. Vincent Hospital and Health Services; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (ASPE and ACF).

Abstract

As policy makers seek to devise programs to promote healthy marriages among unmarried parents, significant differences between married and unmarried parents as well as differences among unmarried parents must be taken into account. A majority of unmarried parents express a desire to marry, but many obstacles exist to forming stable unions.

This paper uses data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing survey to answer the following questions: How different are unmarried parents from married parents in terms of their demographic characteristics, human capital, economic resources, attitudes about marriage and gender roles, and relationship quality? How do unmarried parents differ among themselves on these domains? How important are marriage expectations in differentiating unmarried parents? And to what extent do differences in demographic characteristics and socioeconomic status explain differences in attitudes and relationship quality?

The results suggest that expectations of marriage are a key indicator of a couple's marriage potential. Comparing married parents to unmarried parents, based on their living arrangement alone, provides incomplete information regarding the differences in human capital, attitudes, and relationship quality. Cohabitors and visitors are quite similar on most domains. However, mothers with high expectations of marriage have attitudes more favorable for marriage and better relationship quality than do mothers with low marriage intentions, even after controlling for their higher human capital.

These results have important implications in targeting effective policies to help stabilize fragile families.

As a result of fewer women in marriages and declines in marital fertility, nonmarital childbearing in the United States has increased significantly as a proportion of all births. Whereas in 1970, 11 percent of children were born to unmarried mothers, in 1998, nearly a third of all births were to unmarried women (National Center for Health Statistics, table 9). This varies considerably by race, such that almost 70 percent of African American children are born out-of-wedlock, compared to 22 percent of non-Hispanic white children (National Center for Health Statistics, table 9). This is a concern given the negative consequences generally associated with children who do not live with both of their biological parents, and the high rates of poverty and public assistance use among single-parent families (McLanahan and Bumpass, 1988; Duncan and Rogers, 1991; McLanahan and Sandefur, 1994).

A significant portion of the decline or delay in marriages can be attributed to increases in cohabitation. Premarital cohabitation has become the norm among adults, with more than half of all first unions in the early 1990s beginning as cohabitation (Bumpass and Lu, 2000). Nearly two-thirds of the decline in marriage by age 25 between 1970 and 1985 can be attributed to the increase in cohabitation (Bumpass, Sweet, and Cherlin, 1991).

Cohabiting relationships involving children are increasing significantly, which is represented by the growing proportion of nonmarital births to couples in cohabiting relationships. In 1989, almost a quarter of nonmarital births were to cohabiting parents (Bumpass and Sweet, 1989). By the mid 1990s the share of nonmarital births to cohabiting parents had grown to almost 40 percent (Bumpass and Lu, 2000), and by 2000, half of all nonmarital births were to cohabiting parents, most of whom plan to marry in the future (McLanahan and Garfinkel, 2002).

The increase in children born to cohabiting parents is concerning given the instability and lower economic resources associated with cohabiting unions. Relationships that begin as cohabitation are shorter term and less stable than marriages, even if they progress to marriage (Bumpass and Lu, 2000; Graefe and Lichter, 1999). Moreover, cohabitation is selective of individuals with lower human capital (Bumpass and Lu, 2000; Manning and Lichter, 1996), and cohabiting couples with higher economic resources tend to marry, particularly with the presence of children (Manning and Smock, 1995; Smock and Manning, 1997), leaving those remaining in cohabiting unions with lower economic resources.

Another nontrivial portion of nonmarital births are to couples who are romantically involved but not living together when their child is born, referred to as visitors (McLanahan and Garfinkel, 2002, Sigle-Rushton and McLanahan, 2001). McLanahan and her colleagues identified that one-third of nonmarital births in large cities are to couples in a visiting relationship, most of whom plan to marry or live together in the future and jointly raise their child (McLanahan and Garfinkel, 2002). The nature of visiting relationships and the capacities of the partners are less well defined than cohabiting relationships, due to lack of adequate data on this group.

Although marriage is desirable for many of these unmarried couples, many obstacles exist to acting on their plans (Sigle-Rushton and McLanahan, 2001). Identifying the constraints on the capacities of unmarried couples and the differences in attitudes and relationship quality between married and unmarried couples helps clarify the nature of these unmarried relationships as well as the level of effort policy makers will have to employ as they devise programs to promote marriage or stability among these fragile families.

This paper provides new information on unmarried parents in relation to married parents and looks at the diversity among unmarried parents. I extend previous research on unmarried parents in three ways. First, I examine a much richer set of individual and couple indicators, including attitudes, capabilities, and relationship quality. Secondly, I examine couples in visiting relationships who have received very little attention due to data limitations. Thirdly, I look at differences among unmarried parents, taking into consideration both their living arrangement and expectations of marriage. I extend the research on cohabitation by focusing exclusively on new parents and by seeing whether the diversity found among cohabiting partnerships applies to new parents as well.

In the next section of the paper I discuss previous research on unmarried couples, focusing mainly on cohabiting couples and the importance of marriage intentions in differentiating cohabiting couples. In the third section I describe the data, variables, and methods used in my analysis. In the fourth section I discuss the results, and in the final section I draw conclusions and discuss policy implications.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

Previous research on the family has focused mainly on comparing the economic resources and child outcomes of married, divorced, and single-parent families, providing a clear understanding that married parents have substantially more resources than unmarried families, which contribute significantly to differences in child outcomes (McLanahan and Sandefur, 1994).

More recently, with the decline in marriage and rise in cohabitation, researchers have begun to look extensively at cohabiting couples in relation to married couples, attempting to

discern if cohabitation is an alternative to marriage or a stage in the marriage process (Smock, 2000). Two general conclusions arise from the research on cohabiting couples. First, cohabitators differ significantly from married couples and singles in many ways (Smock, 2000), and secondly, cohabiting couples differ significantly from each other (Brown and Booth, 1996; Casper and Sayer, 2000).

Cohabiting couples are likely to be less educated and have lower incomes than married couples (Bumpass and Lu, 2000; Nock, 1995; Smock, 2000). They are also likely to categorize themselves as liberal versus conservative, have more egalitarian gender roles, and be less religious than married couples (Clarkberg, Stolzenberg, and Waite, 1995; Smock, 2000). Cohabiting couples also report less satisfaction and happiness with their relationships and lower relationship quality overall, which may contribute to the greater instability of cohabiting couples compared to married partners (Nock, 1995; Brown and Booth, 1996). When cohabitators are compared to both married couples and singles in terms of socioeconomic characteristics and views on marriage, they fall between the two, but are generally more similar to singles than married couples (Rindfus and VandenHuevel, 1990).

Despite the differences between married and cohabiting couples and singles, it is important not to view cohabiting couples as a monolithic group. Casper and Sayer (2000) identified four distinct types of cohabiting couples based on attitudes about marriage and intentions to marry. Some cohabiting couples consider cohabitation a substitute for marriage. They usually have rather stable relationships, but these relationships persist as cohabitation and are not likely to transition into marriage. Another group of cohabitators views cohabitation as a precursor to marriage. These couples are the most likely to transition to marriage and their attitudes are most similar to married couples. Two other cohabiting groups are those that use

cohabitation as a trial period for marriage and those that see it as an alternative to steady dating. Each of these unions is likely to dissolve and not result in marriage or continued cohabitation. In general, they find that intentions or expectations to marry are highly correlated with behavior.

Other research confirms the importance of expectations of marriage in differentiating unmarried groups and their transition to marriage (Brown and Booth, 1996; Brown 2000; Waller and McLanahan, 2001). Brown and Booth (1996) found that although cohabitators reported lower relationship quality than married couples overall, these differences could be largely explained by expectations for marriage. Most cohabitators expect to marry, and those with high marriage expectations have similar relationship quality as married couples. Brown (2000) shows that cohabitators' relationship assessment and expectations of marriage are positively linked with union transition, while Waller and McLanahan (2001) find that while mutual expectations for marriage and cohabitation are both important in predicting marriage among unmarried parents, marriage expectations have a larger effect than living arrangement.

Marriage intentions are a declaration of being in the marriage market, therefore, it is understandable that this group would be more likely to marry, and that this variable would differentiate unmarried couples along other domains as well. Marriage intentions are not always mutual between partners (Bumpass, Sweet, and Cherlin, 1991, Brown and Booth, 1996, Brown 2000), but even with partner disagreement, the results change little (Brown and Booth, 1996).

Despite all that has been learned recently about cohabiting couples, two gaps remain in the current research. Little is known about cohabiting couples with children in relation to married parents (see Manning and Lichter, 1996 as an exception), and virtually no research has looked at romantically involved couples that are trying to jointly raise a child while not living

together (identified as visitors in this paper), to determine if the diversity in cohabiting relationships applies to visitors as well.

In this paper, I focus exclusively on new parents. Further, I compare visiting as well as cohabiting parents to married parents; and I differentiate unmarried parents by their living arrangement and marriage expectations. Understanding the differences between married and unmarried parents, and the differences among unmarried parents can help identify the nature of the relationships of unmarried parents and help target policies to help unmarried families become more stable.

I predict that married couples will have higher human capital, attitudes more favorable for marriage, and better relationship quality than cohabitators or visitors. However, among the unmarried, it is unclear if cohabiting and visiting parents with high marriage expectations will be more similar to married parents, or if cohabitators, regardless of marriage intentions, will be more similar to married parents especially in their attitudes and relationship quality, given the higher level commitment generally associated with cohabitation.

DATA

This analysis uses newly available data from the Fragile Families and Child Well-Being Study. This data set allows for a comparison of cohabiting parents to married parents with a new child. It also provides previously unavailable data on parents who are romantically involved, but not living together when the child is born, referred to as visitors. Other data sets generally categorize women who are not married or cohabiting as single and not involved in a relationship with the baby's father. However, the Fragile Families study shows that visiting relationships

make up a third of nonmarital births (Sigle-Rushton and McLanahan, 2002), and therefore should be considered in analyses relating to unmarried families.

The Fragile Families study collected baseline data in twenty cities throughout the United States from 1998 to 2000, and is nationally representative of cities of more than 200,000 people. A cohort of married and unmarried mothers (and most fathers) was interviewed in the hospital shortly after the birth of the child, and the parents will be reinterviewed when the child is 12 months, 30 months, and 60 months.

This paper uses baseline information from 4221 married and unmarried mothers in all twenty cities. The sample is limited to mothers who report having a romantic relationship with the baby's father to understand the role marriage expectations play in distinguishing unmarried parents. This excludes 651 mothers who were not in a romantic relationship with the baby's father at the child's birth and an additional 18 mothers that did not respond to the question regarding their expectations of marrying the baby's father.

Variables and Methodology

The analysis begins with a comparison of the demographic characteristics, human capital, attitudes about marriage, attitudes about gender roles, and relationship quality between married and unmarried parents, and among unmarried parents. Subsequently, I determine the extent to which differences in demographic characteristics, socioeconomic status and marriage expectations explain the differences in eight attitude and relationship quality variables. Lastly, I use the demographic characteristics and socioeconomic variables to create predicted probabilities of the eight attitude and relationship quality measures for each relationship type.

Attitudes about marriage are assessed using three scales (pro marriage for the couple, pro marriage for the child, and marriage as a financial institution) based on a composite of the

mother's responses to various interview questions for each attitude. The pro marriage for the couple scale is comprised of the mother's responses to two questions: 1) "It is better for a couple to get married than just live together" and 2) "Living together is just the same as being married" (opposite coded). Responses ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The pro marriage for the child scale was based on the two questions: 1) "A single mother can bring up a child as well as a married couple" (opposite coded) and 2) "It is better for children if their parents are married." Each scale has a maximum score of eight and a minimum of two. The marriage as a financial institution scale was comprised of three questions: 1) "How important do you think the husband having a steady job is for a successful marriage?" 2) "How important do you think the wife having a steady job is for a successful marriage?" and 3) "The main advantage of marriage is financial security." The first two questions were recoded so that 3 equaled very important and 1 equaled not important. The third question allowed for a 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree) response. I recoded it on a three point scale, collapsing agree (3) and strongly agree (4) into one category. The maximum score for this scale is nine and the minimum is three.

Two scales measure the mother's attitudes about gender roles: one to measure traditional gender role views, and one to measure gender distrust. Each scale is based on two questions with a 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree) response, and a maximum score of eight and minimum of two. The traditional gender role scale is comprised of the two questions: 1) "The important decisions in the family should be made by the man," and 2) "It is better if the husband earns the living and the woman cares for the family." The gender trust scale is based on the two questions 1) "In dating, a man is largely out to take advantage of a woman," and 2) "Men cannot be trusted to be faithful," such that a high score represents low levels of trust.

Finally, to measure the mother's relationship quality with the baby's father, I developed two scales, and I use a dichotomous variable to measure physical abuse. One scale is based on the mother's report of disagreement with the father about money, spending time together, sex, the pregnancy, drugs/alcohol, and being faithful. The responses range from 1 (often) to 3 (never) for a maximum score of 18 and minimum of six, with a high score indicating high levels of agreement. The second relationship quality scale measures the degree of support the mother feels from the father. The three questions in this scale include: 1) "Baby's father is fair and willing to compromise," 2) "Baby's father expresses affection or love for you," and 3) "Baby's father encourages you or helps you do things that are important to you." Each of the questions is based on a 1 to 3 scale, recoded so that 3 represents often, for a total of nine and minimum of three. Physical abuse is measured by the mother's response to the question "Does the baby's father hit or slap you?" The 1 (often) to 3 (never) response was recoded to create a dummy variable such that 0 equals no abuse and 1 equals any abuse.

The mother was supposed to be alone during the interview, however the baby's father and other relatives could have been nearby in the hospital. The preceding questions were also asked directly after she had had a child with the man she is referring to. Therefore, these responses might be underreporting actual levels of disagreement and abuse in the relationship.

The primary independent variables are the mother's relationship status with the baby's father at the child's birth and her expectations of marriage. Mothers are distinguished between married (n=1186) and unmarried (n=3035) based on her report. All unmarried mothers in this sample are in a romantic relationship with the baby's father. Unmarried mothers who report they are living with the baby's father are classified as cohabiting (n=1774) and the other mothers are considered to be in a visiting relationship (n=1261).

To understand the role expectations play in differentiating unmarried parents, I divided the unmarried parents into four groups based on their living arrangement (cohabiting or visiting) and expectations of marriage (high or low). Expectations of marriage represent the mother's reported chances of marriage, based on her response to the question "What do you think the chances are that you will marry the baby's father in the future." Five responses were possible: no chance, little chance, a 50-50 chance, a good chance, and an almost certain chance. A high chance represents a response of good or almost certain, and low represents a response of a 50-50 chance or less. The four unmarried groups include: cohabiting/high (n=1390), cohabiting/low (n=384), visiting/high (n=619), and visiting/low (n=642).

It is possible that unmarried mothers were overly optimistic about their chances of marriage given that this question was asked shortly after their child's birth, yet this should result in fewer differences between the groups being identified.

Demographic characteristics and measures of human capital and employment that might affect a mother's attitudes are also included in the models. I created four dummy variables to represent mother's race including, non-Hispanic white (referred to as white), non-Hispanic black (referred to as black), Hispanic, and other. Nativity is a dummy variable coded as one if the mother reports being born outside of the United States. Age is specified as a continuous variable. Religiosity is a dummy variable coded as one if the mother reports weekly attendance at a religious service.

Human capital includes the mother's and father's employment, education, mother's self-reported health status, father's health problems that limit work, and payment of the birth by Medicaid to capture low-income status. Employment for the mother is a dummy variable, defined as having earnings from work in the year prior to the birth of the child. Father

employment is also a dummy variable, defined as the father working for wages within the week prior to the interview. Education is a set of four dummy variables including less than high school, high school, some college or technical training, and college education or more. Health status refers to the mother's assessment of her current health status based on a four-point scale ranging from excellent to poor. Fair and poor responses were combined to create three health categories, and a dummy variable was created for each. Father's health is a dichotomous variable based on the mother's report of any health problems that limit his ability to work. Medicaid payment is also a dummy variable coded as one if the mother reported that Medicaid was the only method of payment for the child's birth. Father's employment and education are based on the father's report where available, and supplemented with the mother's report for 659 observations.

For each of the eight attitudinal and relationship quality variables, I ran three logistic regression models to predict the difference between married and unmarried mothers in scoring "high" (defined below) on the variable. The first model compares cohabiting and visiting mothers to married mothers, without any controls. The second model adds in variables for mothers' age, race, nativity, religiosity, education, employment, Medicaid use and health, and fathers' employment. Only mother's information (with the exception of employment) is included in the models due to the high correlation between mother's and father's information. The third model interacts living arrangement with marriage expectations, and compares the four groups to married mothers.

A comparison of the coefficients of cohabitators and visitors between the first and second models illustrates the extent to which differences in demographic characteristics and socioeconomic status explain differences in attitudes and relationship quality. By comparing the

coefficients of the demographic and human capital covariates between the second and third models I can determine the extent to which expectations have an independent effect on attitudes and relationship quality. If marriage expectations are a reflection of being prepared to marry, I would expect the coefficients on education and employment to decrease in size and significance when expectations are introduced into the model.

Scoring “high” is defined as scoring 6 out of 8 on the pro marriage for the couple and child scales and the two attitudes about gender roles scales; 9 out of 9 on the marriage as a financial institution scale and supportiveness scale; scoring 1 versus 0 for physical abuse; and 9 or less out of 18 on the disagreement scale. In this case, the respondents have to disagree “often” (1) about three of the areas and at least “sometimes” (2) about the others.

The goal of this analysis is to show the association between relationship status and attitudes and relationship quality, net of differences in background; the goal is not to determine a causal link. The parents in this sample selected into their respective relationships and living arrangements based on many of the demographic and human capital characteristics being analyzed in this paper (Carlson, et al, 2001). Carlson and her colleagues (2001) found that black women are less likely to choose a coresidential relationship, and that education and father’s employment increase the likelihood a couple will be in a cohabiting relationship or marriage. Further, more favorable attitudes toward marriage, and more emotional support from the father increases the likelihood new parents will be in a romantic relationship and that they will be cohabiting or married.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Differences in Demographic Characteristics and Human Capital

Married versus Unmarried Parents

Understanding the differences between married and unmarried parents provides insight into the type and amount of resources unmarried parents may need in order to form stable unions. Significant differences in human capital characteristics would suggest that investments in policies related to education, job training, tax relief, child care, and health insurance would be necessary. Differences in attitudes about marriage and gender relations, and in relationship quality, especially net of capacity differentials would suggest that marriage counseling might be necessary to help unmarried parents.

Table 1 lists the demographic and human capital characteristics of unmarried parents in relation to married parents. The second column in the table combines cohabiting and visiting parents to illustrate all unmarried parents in this sample. The results show considerable differences between married and unmarried parents on all demographic and human capital domains. Married parents in this sample are more likely to be white, while over half of the unmarried parents are black. Married mothers are also more likely than unmarried mothers to be born outside of the United States. Married parents are, on average, five years older than unmarried parents, but the age difference between the mother and father is the same for married and unmarried parents. Married mothers are also twice as likely to report attending a religious service every week.

Employment differences between married and unmarried fathers are substantial. Over 90 percent of married fathers were working just before the baby was born, compared to 75 percent

of unmarried fathers. Employment differences between married and unmarried mothers are smaller, but significant.

Education is the biggest area of difference between married and unmarried parents. Approximately a third of married parents has a college degree or higher, compared to three percent of unmarried parents. Two-fifths of unmarried parents in this sample did not graduate from high school. Married mothers are also more likely to report being in excellent health, and married fathers are half as likely to have a health problem that limits their ability to work.

Cohabiting versus Visiting Parents

Policy makers often assume that cohabiting couples are more committed and perhaps more marriage ready than other romantically involved couples who are not living together. If this is the case, cohabitators may need less help to create stable unions, or alternatively, policy makers might want to focus on cohabitators since they would be an easier target.

These results show that cohabitators are not significantly different from visiting parents on most domains. On average, cohabiting parents fall between married and visiting parents, but the largest differences are between married and unmarried parents rather than among cohabiting and visiting parents (see Table 1).

Table 1 shows the demographic and human capital characteristics of cohabiting and visiting parents in relation to each other and to married parents. Cohabitators and visitors differ largely by race and nativity. Approximately 70 percent of parents in visiting relationships are black compared to about 45 percent of cohabiting parents in this sample. Over a third of cohabiting mothers are Hispanic, compared to 20 percent of visitors, and 17 percent of cohabiting mothers are foreign born compared to 10 percent of visiting mothers.

The two groups are more similar on the human capital domains, yet differences, particularly in employment, exist. Cohabitors are more likely than visitors to be employed, especially the fathers. Approximately 80 percent of cohabiting fathers were working prior to the baby's birth compared to two-thirds of visiting fathers. Almost 69 percent of cohabiting mothers worked in the year prior to the baby's birth, compared to 62 percent of mothers in a visiting relationship. Cohabitors are, on average, slightly more educated than visitors. However, few unmarried mothers or fathers in either group are highly educated, and again, this is where unmarried parents differ most from married parents. Mothers in visiting relationships report slightly *better* health than cohabiting mothers, and cohabiting fathers are somewhat more likely than visiting fathers to have a health problem that limits his ability to work.

A significant area of difference between cohabiting and visiting mothers is their expectations of marriage to the baby's father. Almost 80 percent of cohabiting mothers report high expectations of marriage compared to about half of visiting mothers. This difference is large given the similarities these mothers share in other domains related to marriage readiness.

Marriage Expectations

Table 2 shows descriptive statistics for the four unmarried groups, based on their living arrangement and expectations of marriage, in relation to each other and to married parents. This shows that comparing cohabiting and visiting parents without regard to their marriage expectations does not provide the full story. As mentioned in the first section of this paper, marriage expectations have been shown to distinguish cohabiting couples in terms of their commitment and similarities to married couples (Brown, 2000; Casper and Sayer, 2000). This analysis confirms the previous studies and finds that this is also true for parents in visiting

relationships. Cohabiting and visiting parents with high marriage expectations are more similar to each other and to married parents, than are other unmarried parents on most domains.

Within cohabiting and visiting relationships, those with high marriage expectations have higher human capital and look more like parents who are married than do parents with low marriage expectations. For example, cohabitators are, on average, more likely to be white than visitors, yet cohabitators and visitors with high marriage expectations are more likely to be white than are their counterparts with low marriage expectations. This holds true for religiosity, and mother's and father's employment as well. Those with high marriage expectations report higher levels of education and health than do parents with low marriage expectations, regardless of living arrangement.

Differences in Attitudes and Relationship Quality

Model 1 in tables 3 through 5 shows that there are significant differences in attitudes and relationship quality between married and unmarried mothers. The question remains, do the significant differences in background characteristics and marriage expectations, described above, explain these differences? Models 2 and 3 answer this question.

Attitudes about Marriage

Table 3 shows the results of scoring high on the three measures of attitudes about marriage. Model 1 shows that in comparison to married mothers, cohabiting and visiting mothers have significantly less favorable attitudes about marriage for the couple and the child, and are more likely to think of marriage as a financial institution.

When background and socioeconomic characteristics are controlled (Model 2), the differences between the groups are diminished, but remain large. Blacks are most likely to think that marriage is the best institution for a couple, and the least likely to think it is best for a child.

Education is associated with more favorable attitudes about marriage, and thinking less of the financial benefits of marriage. Father employment is associated with being more likely to think that marriage is good for the couple, while mother employment is associated with being less likely to think marriage is important for the child.

Model 2 also shows that cohabitators have slightly more favorable attitudes about marriage than do visitors, and that they are much less likely to think of marriage as a financial institution. All of the differences are significant at the .10 level or below.

Model 3 interacts living arrangement with marriage expectations and compares the four groups of unmarried mothers to married mothers. This shows that mothers with high marriage expectations as compared to low have more favorable attitudes about marriage for the couple and child. Visitors are more likely to think of marriage as a financial institution, regardless of marriage expectations.

If marriage expectations are a reflection of a mother's preparation for marriage, then looking at variables associated with marriage readiness would be sufficient, and looking at marriage expectations would be unnecessary. However, if expectations predict attitudes about marriage independent of human capital and demographic characteristics associated with marriage readiness, then expectations are a useful tool in sorting out unmarried couples.

Indeed, model 3 shows that marriage expectations have an independent effect on predicting attitudes about marriage. Comparing the coefficients on the covariates between model 2 and 3 shows little change in the odds ratios on the variables that are associated with marriage readiness when expectations are included in the model.

Attitudes about Gender Roles

Unmarried mothers report less traditional views on gender roles than do married mothers, and report significantly higher levels of distrust in men (see Table 4). Controlling for differences in background characteristics does little to explain differences in attitudes about gender roles, and explains about a quarter of the difference between married and unmarried mothers' trust in men. Older mothers are more traditional and less trusting. Mothers born outside of the United States report less trust in men, as do black mothers. Black and white mothers hold similar views on gender roles, and mothers who regularly attend religious services have twice the odds of having traditional views. Education is linked with more trust in men and less traditional views, as is mother's employment. Use of Medicaid is linked with less trust in men, while health is associated with greater trust.

Cohabiting and visiting mothers have similar attitudes about gender roles and levels of trust in men. However, dividing these unmarried mothers by their expectations of marriage shows a more complete picture. All unmarried mothers report similar views on gender roles, while those with low marriage expectations are the ones with very low levels of trust in men. Mothers with high marriage expectations report levels of trust similar to married mothers. Again, marriage expectations seem to have an independent affect on attitudes about gender roles. Expectations moderate some of the effect of race on gender distrust, but the differences by race remain large and significant.

Relationship Quality

Table 5 shows that married mothers as compared to unmarried mothers report lower levels of disagreement and physical abuse in their relationships with the baby's father (model 1).

Married mothers report similar levels of emotional support from the baby's father as cohabiting mothers, but about twice the support of visiting mothers.

However, differences in background characteristics explain much of these differences. Model 2 controls for differences in demographic and human capital characteristics and shows that when these differences are taken into account cohabitators have similar levels of disagreement as married mothers, there is no difference between married mothers and unmarried mothers in terms of physical abuse in the relationship, and cohabiting mothers actually report higher levels of emotional support than do married mothers. White mothers are the least likely to be in an abusive relationship, and father employment reduces the odds by half that there is abuse in the relationship. Whites are the most likely to receive substantial emotional support from the baby's father, as are women born outside of the US and those who report weekly religious service attendance. Education, father employment, and mother's health are also linked with more emotional support.

Again, comparing cohabitators and visitors to married mothers does not give a complete picture. Model 3 shows that mothers with low marriage expectations have higher levels of disagreement, are more likely to be in physically abusive relationships, and receive significantly less emotional support. Mothers with high marriage expectations report similar relationship quality as married mothers.

Predicted Probabilities

Tables 6 and 7 present the predicted probabilities of scoring high (as defined in the previous section) on each of the attitudinal and relationship quality measures, based on the logistic regression models just discussed, to show the prevalence among the groups.

Married versus Unmarried Mothers

As predicted, married mothers are almost twice as likely as unmarried mothers to believe marriage is best for a couple, all else equal (66 percent versus 38 percent). This is not surprising given that these women chose to marry. However, the extent to which married mothers' attitudes changed as a result of marriage is unclear. Looking at marriage for children, surprisingly, fewer than half of married mothers report that marriage is the best institution for children, yet, this is still double that of unmarried mothers. Married moms are less likely to think of marriage as a financial institution (19 percent versus 29 percent), yet again, married mothers might have become less concerned about the financial benefits of marriage after marriage.

Few mothers report being very traditional or having low levels of trust in men. However, the differences between married and unmarried mothers are quite large. Fifteen percent of married mothers are traditional compared to less than 10 percent of unmarried mothers. Six percent of married mothers report low levels of trust in men, compared to almost nine percent of unmarried mothers.

Differences in relationship quality, however, are small. Few parents, married or not, report high levels of disagreement, and less than three percent of mothers report physical abuse. As stated in the previous section, these reports might be suppressing actual levels of conflict as they are given just following the birth of a child. Nevertheless, if this is so, married and unmarried mothers seem to be "underreporting" similarly. Approximately two-fifths of all mothers report strong emotional support from the baby's father, and this does not vary much by marital status.

Cohabitators versus Visitors

About 40 percent of cohabiting and visiting mothers think marriage is the best institution for a couple (37 percent and 40 percent respectively). Even fewer think it is the best institution for a child; 27 percent of cohabitators and 21 percent of visitors. Cohabiting mothers are slightly less likely than visitors to think of marriage as a financial institution, yet less than a third of the mothers in each group scores high on this attitude.

Mothers in cohabiting and visiting relationships have similar attitudes about gender roles, but cohabiting mothers report better relationship quality than visiting mothers. Very few mothers report high levels of disagreement, and cohabiting and visiting mothers are equally likely to be in a relationship that is physically abusive (2.3 percent). However, cohabitators are much more likely to report that their partner is emotionally supportive. In fact, cohabitators are more likely than married mothers to report strong emotional, all else equal (48 percent versus 43 percent, respectively).

Marriage Expectations

Table 7 shows the predicted probabilities of scoring high on the eight attitudinal and relationship quality variables, similar to what was shown in table 6, taking into consideration marriage expectations. When all cohabitators were compared to all visitors, cohabitators tended to have more pro marriage attitudes and better relationship quality, however, this picture was incomplete.

Thirty-nine percent of cohabiting mothers with high marriage expectations think marriage is the best institution for the couple, compared to 28 percent of cohabiting mothers with low marriage expectations. The difference for visitors is even larger (47 percent versus 32 percent). The same pattern holds for considering marriage the best institution for children. Over a quarter

of mothers with high marriage expectations are pro marriage for the child compared to 19 percent of cohabitators and 16 percent of visitors with low expectations.

Mothers with high and low expectations differ most in their trust in men, the presence of physical abuse in the relationship, and in the emotional support the mother feels from the father. Mothers with low marriage expectations are twice as likely as those with high expectations to think that men are not trustworthy (13 percent versus about 6 percent), four times as likely to be abused by the baby's father, and half as likely to report strong emotional support. Indeed, mothers with high marriage expectations report similar levels of trust in men and relationship quality as married mothers do.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The results suggest that expectations of marriage are a key indicator of a couple's marriage potential. Comparing married parents to unmarried parents, based on living arrangement alone, provides incomplete information regarding the differences in human capital, attitudes, and relationship quality. Cohabitators are more similar to married couples than are visitors, but this is largely explained by differences in marriage expectations. Interacting living arrangement with marriage intentions shows that high expectations of marriage are a better predictor than cohabitation of an unmarried mother's marriage potential.

This paper extended the current research on comparing cohabiting couples to married couples in three ways. I focused only on new parents, so the results show the differences between married and unmarried parents, rather than including couples with and without children. This is important given that it is unmarried relationships that involve children that are of greatest concern to the public.

Secondly, I included romantically involved parents that were not living together at the child's birth, but plan to raise their child together (visitors). The results show that including this group in subsequent analyses is important when considering options to help stabilize unmarried families. Visitors are similar to cohabitators on most domains, and those with high marriage expectations are perhaps better candidates for marriage than are cohabitators with low expectations of marriage.

Finally, by differentiating the unmarried parents based on their living arrangement and marriage expectations, I showed that parents with higher marriage expectations have higher human capital, attitudes more favorable for marriage, and better relationship quality than do couples with low marriage intentions. Marriage expectations are independent of capacity. Mothers seem to align their expectations of marriage with their attitudes and relationship quality. Asking a mother if she plans to marry the father of her child may yield a great deal of information on the quality of the relationship and the couple's marriage potential.

This is useful information for targeting the right policies toward the right individuals. These results show that parents with plans to marry seem to be better potential marriage candidates in terms of relationship quality and attitudes. When differences in capacity are taken into consideration, mothers with high expectations of marriage report better relationship quality than do married moms. However, differences in capacity between married and unmarried parents are huge. Therefore, education and training, employment programs, child care, and health insurance might be the right solutions for these parent, with only minimal needs for relationship counseling.

For couples with no plans to marry, they need even greater investments in human capital development, and they also need intensive relationship counseling, particularly in the areas of

increasing their trust and relationship quality. Even if marriage is not the goal for these parents, they share a child together and learning to cooperate will benefit the child's future.

A portion of unmarried parents may not be good candidates for marriage at all, including parents who were not in a romantic relationship when the child was born and those in violent or high conflict relationships.

Overall, this analysis confirms that high expectations of marriage are an important indicator of a couple's marriage potential and must be considered in addition to living arrangement. Further, the differences among the unmarried couple's reveal that a one-size-fits-all type of policy may be ineffective in meeting the diverse needs of unmarried parents.

Table 1: Demographic and Human Capital Variables by Relationship Status

	Married N=1186	All Unmarried N=3035	Cohabiting N=1774	Visiting N=1261
Mother's Race				
White	41.9	13.8	18.1	7.9
Black	24.8	54.7	44.4	69.2
Hispanic	25.4	28.3	34.2	19.9
Other	7.9	3.2	3.3	3.1
Father's Race				
White	41.2	11.0	15.1	5.4
Black	26.2	57.3	46.8	72.0
Hispanic	24.4	28.5	34.7	19.7
Other	8.2	3.2	3.4	2.9
Mother Foreign Born	24.5	13.7	17.4	9.9
Age				
Mother's Age	29.3	23.9	24.2	23.5
Father's Age	31.7	26.8	27.1	26.4
Mother Attends Weekly Religious Service	33.5	18.2	15.2	20.1
Employment				
Mother	71.4	66.0	68.9	61.9
Father*	91.6	74.9	80.7	66.8
Education				
Mother's				
Less than H.S.	16.6	40.5	40.1	40.9
High School	19.9	33.7	33.4	34.2
Some College	28.8	22.8	23.3	22.0
College	34.6	3.1	3.2	2.9
Father's*				
Less than H.S.	16.9	39.7	39.8	39.6
High School	24.6	37.5	35.0	40.9
Some College	27.7	19.8	21.9	16.9
College	30.7	2.9	3.2	2.5
Medicaid Paid for Birth	26.8	73.4	71.7	75.4
Health				
Mother's				
Excellent	73.4	63.3	62.1	64.9
Good	22.2	28.2	29.1	26.9
Poor	4.4	8.5	8.8	8.2
Father's Health Limits Work	3.2	6.3	6.8	5.7
High Marriage Expectations	NA	66.2	78.4	49.1

*Father's employment and education are based on father's report where available, and supplemented with mother's report.

**Table 2: Demographic and Human Capital Variables
by Relationship Status and Expectations of Marriage**

	Married N=1186	Cohabiting/ High Chance of Marriage N=1390	Cohabiting/ Low Chance of Marriage N=384	Visiting/ High Chance of Marriage N=619	Visiting/ Low Chance of Marriage N=642
Mother's Race					
White	41.9	20.4	9.9	8.7	7.0
Black	24.8	41.9	53.4	68.0	70.3
Hispanic	25.4	34.4	33.6	20.0	19.8
Other	7.9	3.4	3.1	3.2	2.9
Father's Race					
White	41.2	17.2	7.3	7.1	3.7
Black	26.2	44.5	55.5	70.1	73.8
Hispanic	24.4	34.8	34.6	20.0	19.3
Other	8.2	3.6	2.6	2.8	3.1
Mother Foreign Born	24.5	17.1	18.5	9.1	10.9
Age					
Mother's Age	29.3	24.2	24.4	23.1	23.9
Father's Age	31.7	26.9	27.7	25.7	27.0
Mother Attends Weekly Religious Service	33.5	16.4	10.9	21.7	18.7
Employment					
Mother	71.4	69.9	65.6	65.1	58.9
Father*	91.4	81.9	75.8	70.3	63.2
Education					
Mother's					
Less than H.S.	16.6	38.1	47.7	36.2	45.5
High School	19.9	34.3	29.9	36.7	31.8
Some College	28.8	24.0	20.6	24.2	19.9
College	34.6	3.6	1.8	2.9	2.8
Father's*					
Less than H.S.	16.9	38.3	45.3	35.1	43.9
High School	24.6	35.0	34.9	44.1	38.0
Some College	27.7	23.4	16.4	18.7	15.3
College	30.7	3.3	3.4	2.1	2.8
Medicaid Paid for Birth	26.8	69.3	80.5	74.8	76.0
Health					
Mother's					
Excellent	73.4	64.0	55.2	66.4	63.4
Good	22.2	27.8	33.6	27.1	26.8
Poor	4.4	8.1	11.2	6.5	9.8
Father Health Limits Work	3.2	6.3	8.6	4.0	7.3

*Father's employment and education are based on father's report where available, and supplemented with mother's report.

Table 3: Results from Logistic Regressions of Attitudes about Marriage Odds Ratios

	Pro Marriage for the Couple (Odds of Scoring 6 out of 8)			Pro Marriage for the Child's Well-Being (Odds of Scoring 6 out of 8)			Marriage as a Financial Institution (Odds of Scoring 9 out of 9)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Relationship Status								
(Married)									
Cohabiting	.24***	.30***		.31***	.46***		2.54***	1.59***	
Cohabiting/High			.33***			.50***			1.61***
Cohabiting/Low			.19***			.29***			1.51***
Visiting	.32***	.35***		.21***	.33***		3.29***	1.88***	
Visiting/High			.46***			.42***			2.00***
Visiting/Low			.25***			.24***			1.76***
Demographic Characteristics									
Age Mother		1.00	1.00		1.00	1.00		1.00	1.00
Foreign Born		1.04	1.05		1.39***	1.40***		1.08	1.09
Race Mother									
(Black)									
White		.61***	.59***		1.61***	1.57***		.37***	.37***
Hispanic		.49***	.48***		1.43***	1.40***		.94	.94
Other		.75*	.73*		2.01***	1.98***		.80	.80
Weekly Religion		2.09***	2.06***		1.78***	1.75***		1.09	1.09
Human Capital									
Education Mother									
(< High School)									
High School		1.08	1.05		.87	.84*		.94	.94
Some College		1.32***	1.28***		.95	.93		.62***	.62***
College		1.75***	1.70***		1.37**	1.35**		.33***	.32***
Employment									
Mother		.99	.99		.84**	.84**		1.21***	1.21***
Father		1.19**	1.17*		1.01	.99		.86	.89
Medicaid		.98	.99		.88	.89		1.07	1.07
Health Mother									
Great		1.09	1.06		1.03	.99		.85	.85
Good		1.16	1.13		1.08	1.06		.90	.89
(Poor)									
N	4221	4221	4221	4221	4221	4221	4221	4221	4221
R-squared	.0599	.0949	.1021	.0683	.0951	.1004	.0331	.0686	.0689

*** P value less than or equal to .01

** P value less than or equal to .05

* P value less than or equal to .10

**Table 4: Results from Logistic Regressions of Attitudes about Gender Roles
Odds Ratios**

	Traditional Gender Roles (Odds of Scoring 6 out of 8)			Gender Distrust (Odds of Scoring 6 out of 8)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)
Relationship Status						
(Married)						
Cohabiting	.69***	.63***		1.76***	1.29*	
Cohabiting/High			.62***			1.08
Cohabiting/Low			.63***			2.26***
Visiting	.56***	.53***		2.00***	1.55***	
Visiting/High			.58***			.96
Visiting/Low			.48***			2.24***
Demographic Characteristics						
Age Mother		1.05***	1.05***		1.05***	1.05***
Foreign Born		1.14	1.14		1.48***	1.47***
Race Mother						
(Black)						
White		.87	.87		.81	.87
Hispanic		1.62***	1.62***		1.35**	1.42***
Other		1.61**	1.61**		1.68**	1.76**
Weekly Religion		2.08***	2.07***		1.08	1.14
Human Capital						
Education Mother						
(< High School)						
High School		.54***	.54***		.64***	.66***
Some College		.39***	.39***		.41***	.42***
College		.34***	.34***		.23***	.23***
Employment						
Mother		.72***	.71***		.68***	.68***
Father		1.07	1.07		.82	.84
Medicaid		1.16	1.16		1.37***	1.34**
Health Mother						
Great		.75*	.74*		.48***	.49***
Good		.93	.92		.65***	.66***
(Poor)						
N	4221	4221	4221	4221	4221	4221
R-squared	.0077	.0836	.0839	.0095	.0881	.1021

*** P value less than or equal to .01

** P value less than or equal to .05

* P value less than or equal to .10

**Table 5: Results from Logistic Regressions of Relationship Quality
Odds Ratios**

	Disagreement (Odds of Scoring <=9 out of 18)			Physical Abuse (Hit/Slap Sometimes or Often)			Supportiveness (Odds of Scoring 9 out of 9)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Relationship Status								
(Married)									
Cohabiting	2.10*	1.57		1.97***	1.22		.94	1.21**	
Cohabiting/High			1.27			.73			1.48***
Cohabiting/Low			2.70**			3.10***			.46***
Visiting	4.58***	2.95***		2.27***	1.23		.50***	.68***	
Visiting/High			1.89			.48			1.17
Visiting/Low			4.08***			2.06***			.32***
Demographic Characteristics									
Age Mother		1.05***	1.05**		1.03	1.02		.98***	.98***
Foreign Born		.44*	.43*		.94	.89		1.18*	1.22**
Race Mother									
(Black)									
White		.49	.52		.34***	.38**		1.39***	1.32***
Hispanic		.79	.81		1.14	1.23		1.08	1.03
Other		1.28	1.34		2.14**	2.31**		1.07	1.02
Weekly Religion		.61	.63		.68	.74		1.35***	1.29***
Human Capital									
Education Mother									
(< High School)									
High School		1.14	1.19		.82	.89		1.09	1.02
Some College		.99	1.05		.71	.78		1.12	1.05
College		.42	.44		.63	.68		1.58***	1.50***
Employment									
Mother		.71	.72		.92	.95		1.07	1.06
Father		.62*	.64*		.52***	.54***		1.36***	1.30***
Medicaid		.83	.81		1.63**	1.56*		.98	1.02
Health Mother									
Great		.37***	.38***		.77	.82		1.52***	1.44***
Good		.59	.59		.65	.67		1.14	1.06
(Poor)									
N	4221	4221	4221	4221	4221	4221	4221	4221	4221
R-squared	.0294	.0748	.0855	.0096	.0512	.0907	.0154	.0339	.0674

*** P value less than or equal to .01
 ** P value less than or equal to .05
 * P value less than or equal to .10

Table 6: Predicted Probabilities of Attitudes About Marriage, Gender Roles, and Relationship Quality by Relationship Status

	Married N=1186	All Unmarried N=3035	Cohabiting N=1774	Visiting N=1261
Attitudes About Marriage				
Pro Marriage for Couple	65.5	37.8	36.6	39.8
Pro Marriage for Child's Well-Being	44.1	24.3	26.6	20.8
Marriage as a Financial Institution	19.1	28.6	27.3	30.7
Attitudes About Gender Roles				
Traditional Gender Roles	15.1	9.5	10.0	8.6
Gender Distrust	6.3	8.6	8.0	9.4
Relationship Quality				
Often Disagree	0.7	1.4	1.1	2.0
Physically Abusive	1.9	2.3	2.3	2.3
Often Supportive	43.2	42.5	47.8	34.2

Predicted probabilities of those who agree or strongly agree are listed, except for relationship quality which is noted. Mother's race, nativity, age, religiosity, employment, education, Medicaid use and health, and father's employment are controlled at their means.

Table 7: Predicted Probabilities of Attitudes About Marriage, Gender Roles, and Relationship Quality by Relationship Status and Expectations of Marriage

	Married N=1186	Cohabiting/ High Chance of Marriage N=1390	Cohabiting/ Low Chance of Marriage N=384	Visiting/ High Chance of Marriage N=619	Visiting/ Low Chance of Marriage N=642
Attitudes About Marriage					
Pro Marriage for Couple	65.8	38.9	27.7	46.9	32.4
Pro Marriage for Child's Well-Being	44.4	28.7	18.7	25.2	16.4
Marriage as a Financial Institution	19.1	27.5	26.2	32.1	29.3
Attitudes About Gender Roles					
Traditional Gender Roles	15.1	9.9	10.1	9.4	7.8
Gender Distrust	6.2	6.7	13.0	6.0	12.9
Relationship Quality					
Often Disagree	0.7	0.9	1.8	1.3	2.7
Physically Abusive	1.9	1.4	5.6	0.9	3.8
Often Supportive	43.8	53.6	26.2	47.8	19.9

Predicted probabilities of those who agree or strongly agree are listed, except for relationship quality, which is noted. Mother's race, nativity, age, religiosity, employment, education, Medicaid use and health, and father's employment are controlled at their means.

Reference List

- Brown, Susan. 2000. "Union transitions among cohabitators: the significance of relationship assessments and expectations." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 62: 833-846.
- Brown, Susan, and Alan Booth. 1996. "Cohabitation versus marriage: a comparison of relationship quality." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 58: 668-678.
- Bumpass, Larry and Hsien-Hen Lu. 1999. "Trends in cohabitation and implications for children's family context in the U.S." Working paper No. 98-15, Center for Demography and Ecology, University of Wisconsin, Madison.
- Bumpass, Larry, James Sweet, and Andrew Cherlin. 1991. "The role of cohabitation in declining rates of marriage." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 53:913-927.
- Carlson, Marcia, Sara McLanahan, and Paula England. 2002. "Union formation and stability in Fragile Families." Center for Research on Child Wellbeing, Working Paper #01-06-FF, Princeton, NJ.
- Casper, Lynn and Liana Sayer. 2000. "Cohabitation transitions: different attitudes and purposes, different paths." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Population Association of America.
- Clarkberg, Marin, Ross Stolzenberg, and Linda Waite. 1995. "Attitudes, values, and entrance into cohabitational versus marital unions." *Social Forces* 74: 609-634.
- Duncan, Greg and Willard Rodgers. 1991. "Has children's poverty become more persistent?" *American Sociological Review* 56: 538-550.
- Graefe, Deborah Roempke and Daniel Lichter. 1999. "Life course transitions of American children: parental cohabitation, marriage, and single motherhood." *Demography* 36: 205-217.
- Manning, Wendy and Daniel Lichter. 1996. "Parental cohabitation and children's economic well-being." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 58: 998-1010.
- Manning, Wendy and Pamela Smock. 1995. "Why marry? Race and the transition to marriage among cohabitators." *Demography* 32: 509-520.
- McLanahan, Sara and Larry Bumpass. 1988. "Intergenerational consequences of family disruption." *American Journal of Sociology* 94:130-152.
- McLanahan, Sara, and Gary Sandefur. 1994. "Growing Up With a Single Parent: What Helps, What Hurts." Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

National Center for Health Statistics, 2000. Nonmarital childbearing according to detailed race of mother.

Nock, Steven. 1995. "A comparison of marriages and cohabiting relationships." *Journal of Family Issues* 16: 53-76.

Rindfuss, Ronald, and Audrey VandenHeuvel. 1990. "Cohabitation: a precursor to marriage or an alternative to being single?" *Population and Development Review* 16: 703-726.

Sigle-Rushton, Wendy and Sara McLanahan. 2002. "For Richer or Poorer." Working paper, Center for Research on Child Wellbeing, Princeton, NJ.

Smock, Pamela. 2000. "Cohabitation in the United States: an appraisal of research themes, findings, and implications." *Annual Review of Sociology* 26: 1-20.

Smock, Pamela, and Wendy Manning. 1997. "Cohabiting partners' economic circumstances and marriage." *Demography*, 34: 331-341.

Waller, Maureen, and Sara McLanahan. 2001. "Do unmarried parents' expectations predict marital transitions? Early evidence from the Fragile Families and Child Well-Being study." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association.