

“Fathers in Fragile Families”

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Introduction

Nonmarital childbearing has increased dramatically in the U.S. since the early 1960s, rising from 6% of all births in 1960 to fully 40% in 2007 (Hamilton, Martin, & Ventura, 2009; Ventura & Bachrach, 2000). Whereas similar trends have occurred in many developed nations, the U.S. stands out in the extent to which such births are associated with socioeconomic disadvantage and relationship instability, giving rise to a new term ‘fragile families.’ The increase in fragile families reflects changes not only in the context of births but also in the fundamental nature and patterns of childrearing, particularly with respect to fathers’ roles and involvement with children.

The increase in fragile families is of great interest to social scientists who care about the family. Marriage is one of the oldest institutions in Western society, and previous studies have documented strong associations between stable marriage and a range of positive outcomes for adults and children (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Nock, 1998; Waite & Gallagher, 2000). While nagging questions remain about how much of the marriage effect is causal, prudence suggests that these fundamental changes in family behavior be taken very seriously.

The growth of fragile families is also of interest to researchers and policy makers who care about inequality. African Americans and Hispanics are much more likely than Whites to live in fragile families, and they are disproportionately affected by what happens in these families. Whereas 28% of White children today are born to unmarried parents, the numbers for

African American and Hispanic children are 72% and 51%, respectively (Hamilton et al., 2009). Being born to unmarried parents is also tied to social class. Whereas women in the bottom two thirds of the education distribution have experienced large increases in nonmarital childbearing since 1970, women in the top third of the distribution have experienced virtually no increase (Ellwood & Jencks, 2004). Mothers giving birth outside of marriage typically have a high school education or less, whereas mothers giving birth within marriage typically have some college education. Nonmarital childbearing appears to be an important aspect of how family structure has contributed to growing inequality in American families over the past 40 years (Martin, 2006; McLanahan, 2004; McLanahan & Percheski, 2008).

While we know quite a bit about unwed mothers and their children, until recently, research on unwed fathers was much more limited, in part because these men—especially non-resident fathers—are often under-represented in our national surveys. Some of these fathers are not represented because they are in jail or the military. Others are not counted because they do not know they are fathers. And still others are missing because they are not picked up in our national surveys (Garfinkel, McLanahan, & Hanson, 1998; Nelson, 2004). Most national surveys are household-based, and many unmarried fathers are weakly attached to households. Men who come in and out of women’s lives, for example, are likely to be overlooked in household surveys that occur on an annual (or less frequent) basis and enumerate only those individuals who are living in the household at the time of the interview. Even men who are cohabiting—the most stable of all unwed relationships—may be missed, depending on how, when, and to whom the questions are asked (Casper & Cohen, 2000; Knab & McLanahan, 2006; Manning & Smock, 2005; Teitler, Reichman, & Koball, 2006). More casual (i.e. “visiting”) relationships are often entirely overlooked by traditional demographic surveys (Bachrach & Sonenstein, 1998). Overall,

Hernandez and Brandon estimate that a substantial proportion of men in their prime childbearing ages of 20 to 39 are under-counted in household surveys—20 to 40% of Black men, 15 to 25% of Hispanic men, and 5 to 10% of White men (Hernandez & Brandon, 2002).

Further, until the late 1990s, much of the available information on unmarried fathers came from large-scale studies that combined never-married fathers with divorced/separated fathers or from small-scale studies that were based on unrepresentative samples (Coley, 2001; Garfinkel et al., 1998; Lerman & Sorenson, 2000). The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (described below) is the first nationally representative study to provide extensive information on the capabilities and behaviors of unmarried fathers.

In this chapter, we summarize what is currently known about fathers in fragile families. We draw primarily on data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, but we also include information from studies of low-income fathers and their children, many of whom are unmarried fathers. The Fragile Families Study is a birth-cohort study of nearly 5,000 children born in 20 large U.S. cities at the end of the twentieth century (1998-2000). The data include a large over-sample of unmarried parents. Baseline interviews were conducted with both parents shortly after the child's birth; mothers were interviewed at the hospital within 48 hours of the birth, and fathers were interviewed either at the hospital or as soon as possible thereafter. Follow-up interviews with both parents were conducted when the child was about 1, 3 and 5 years old; 9-year interviews will be completed in the spring of 2010. At baseline, 87% of eligible unmarried mothers agreed to participate in the study, and 75% of the fathers were interviewed.¹ At the 1-year follow-up, 90% of eligible unmarried mothers and 70% of eligible unmarried fathers were interviewed; mothers who participated in the baseline interview are 'eligible' as

¹ The Fragile Families data are most representative of cohabiting fathers (90% response rate) and least representative of fathers who are not romantically involved with the child's mother at the time of birth (38% response rate).

long as their child is alive. Response rates for subsequent waves are 88% (87%) for unmarried mothers and 68% (66%) for unmarried fathers at 3 years (5 years). When weighted, the data are representative of births to parents in cities with populations of 200,000 or more, so the evidence we present can be generalized to unmarried fathers living in large U.S. cities.

We begin by describing the capabilities and resources of unmarried fathers around the time of a baby's birth as well as their relationship status and attitudes; we include information on married fathers as a reference group. Then, we examine what happens to fathers' relationships over time and summarize what has been learned about the factors that predict relationship stability. Next, we describe the prevalence of fathers' involvement with children and summarize what has been learned about the antecedents of involvement and the consequences of involvement for children's wellbeing. Finally, we briefly discuss the implications of our findings for public policy.

Father's Characteristics and Capabilities

Prior to the Fragile Families Study, the most complete national-level information available on unmarried fathers came from two sources—the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH) and the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 cohort (NLSY79). According to these data, men who fathered children outside marriage were younger, more likely to be Black, less likely to have a high school degree, and less likely to have attended college than men who fathered children within marriage (Garfinkel et al., 1998; Lerman, 1993). Unmarried fathers also worked fewer hours per week, were more likely to be unemployed, and had lower hourly wages than married fathers. Not surprisingly, their incomes were also much lower. Finally, these studies showed that unwed fathers had more problems

with disability, depression, and drug and alcohol use than married fathers, and they were more likely to have engaged in criminal behavior and/or been incarcerated (*ibid*).

Data from the Fragile Families study confirm previous findings from the NSFH and the NLSY79, while updating and providing additional information on the characteristics and capabilities of unmarried fathers in large cities. With respect to demographic characteristics, the average unmarried father is about 27 years old at the time of the birth, compared to about 32 years for married fathers (see Table 1). Although teen childbearing has received much attention in recent years, only 13% of unmarried fathers are under age 20; among *first-time* unmarried fathers, however, about one quarter are under age 20 (figure not shown). The latter figure underscores the fact that early childbearing is a major factor behind the trends in non-marital childbearing. The average age difference between unmarried fathers and mothers (3.4 years) is about 1 year greater than the average age difference between married parents (2.3 years).

Consistent with prior research, unmarried fathers are much more likely than married fathers to be from minority racial/ethnic backgrounds; nearly four-fifths of these men are Black (44%) or Hispanic (35%). In contrast, nearly half of married fathers are White (49%). About 15% of both unmarried and married fathers have a partner of a different race/ethnicity. Immigrants account for a substantial proportion of all new fathers in the US: 16% of unmarried and 24% of married fathers.

(Table 1 about here)

With respect to family characteristics, unmarried fathers are less likely to have lived with both of their parents at age 15 (42%), compared to married fathers (69%), and they are more likely to be having a first birth. Despite their younger age and lower parity, unmarried fathers are

much more likely than married fathers to have had a child with another partner: 32% as compared with 14%. Further, among unmarried fathers with more than one child (i.e., those ‘eligible’ to have had kids by more than one partner), well over half have had a child by another partner (figure not shown). These numbers underscore the growing prevalence of “multi-partnered fertility” in American families (Carlson & Furstenberg, 2006).

Despite the increase in women’s participation in the labor force, breadwinning remains a key component of the father role today, and the Fragile Families data show striking differences by marital status in fathers’ earnings capabilities. Whereas only 15% of the married fathers in the study have less than a high school degree and 28% have a college degree, the pattern is essentially reversed for unmarried fathers: 39% have no high school degree, and only 4% have a college education. Poor health may reduce a father’s ability to obtain or retain a job. Most fathers report that they were in ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’ health, although a slightly higher fraction of unmarried (32%) than married fathers (25%) indicate their health is ‘good’ or below. Whereas nearly all fathers have worked at some point during the year prior to their child’s birth (figures not shown), a substantial proportion of unmarried fathers (21%) were not working in the week prior to the birth (compared with 5% of married fathers).

With respect to social-behavioral characteristics, religious differences between the two groups of men are small compared with other characteristics. About three-fourths of fathers are Protestant or Catholic, regardless of their marital status. Unmarried fathers attend religious services less frequently than married fathers. Other analyses of the Fragile Families data confirm that religious attendance is strongly associated with marital status: More religious parents are more likely to be married at the time of their baby’s birth; and among unmarried couples, they are also more likely to marry following a birth (Wilcox & Wolfinger, 2007).

Fathers' substance use, mental health and incarceration history also affect their ability to work and maintain stable relationships. According to mothers, only a small fraction of fathers in the Fragile Families Study have problems with drugs or alcohol: 6% of unmarried fathers and 1% of married fathers. However, analyses of fathers' mental health (not shown) indicate that unmarried fathers are significantly more likely than married fathers to have experienced a major depressive episode, to have generalized anxiety disorder, or to have used illicit drugs; there is very little difference in heavy drinking by fathers' marital status (DeKlyen, Brooks-Gunn, McLanahan, & Knab, 2006). Most strikingly, mothers report that 40% of unmarried fathers (versus 8% of married fathers) have been incarcerated at some point in their lives. Incarceration is both a cause and a consequence of low earnings (Western & McLanahan, 2001) and also diminishes fathers' family relationships (Western, Lopoo, & McLanahan, 2004).

Taken together, the information from the Fragile Families Study suggests that unmarried fathers differ from married fathers in ways that have important implications for their long-term economic well-being and family stability. Most notable are the low level of education among unmarried fathers (with the majority of men having only a high school degree or less) and the high prevalence of incarceration. These findings suggest that many fathers are limited in their ability to find and retain well-paying jobs. Further, that so many unmarried fathers have had a child with a prior partner signals the fact that these men have even greater demands on their breadwinning capabilities and must deal with even more complexity in their family relationships and parental roles.

Fathers' Relationships with Mothers

Although large-scale quantitative research on unmarried fathers has been limited until recently, an extensive qualitative literature has developed over the past century which sheds light on the nature of relationships and family formation among low-income fathers, especially African American fathers (Furstenberg, 2007). Many of the men in these studies were likely unmarried fathers. Studies in the 1950s and 1960s documented the social disorganization in family behavior typically found in disadvantaged communities, including sexual promiscuity, gender distrust and conflict, high rates of nonmarital childbearing, and instability in relationships (Harrington, 1962; Lewis, 1959, 1968). At least two different perspectives on (low-income) unmarried relationships have emerged in recent decades. One view posits that unmarried men take advantage of women by entering relationships to obtain sex or money but don't intend to 'stick around' long-term (Anderson, 1989; Wilson, 2003). Other scholars paint a much more cooperative picture—that unmarried men are doing what they can to support women after childbirth but are limited by poor job prospects, disadvantaged neighborhood contexts, lack of role models, and complicated life and family circumstances (Jarrett, Roy, & Burton, 2002; Waller, 2002).

One of the most important findings to emerge from the Fragile Families Study is the close connection between unmarried fathers and mothers at the time of their child's birth. According to mothers' reports, 82% of unmarried parents are romantically involved with each other at the time of the birth: 50% are cohabiting, and another 32% are romantically involved but living apart (i.e., *visiting* couples). Only 10% of mothers report having little or no contact with the father at the time of the birth. The proportions in various relationship types are remarkably similar across age groups, except that teenage fathers (under age 20) are less likely to be

cohabiting (30%), and older fathers (25 and older) are much more likely to be cohabiting (56%). These figures stand in stark contrast to the myth that out-of-wedlock births are a product of casual relationships.

Although the proportions of couples in *any* romantic relationship are similar across different racial and ethnic groups, there is considerable racial-ethnic variation in the type of relationship that parents are in at the time of their baby's birth (see Figure 1). Assuming that relationship types can be 'ordered' in terms of closeness and commitment, with cohabitation at the top and no contact at the bottom, White and Hispanic fathers were more likely to be in higher-order relationships than African American fathers: White and Hispanic fathers were more likely to be living with the mother, whereas Black fathers were much more likely to be in visiting relationships. Yet, White fathers were slightly more likely to have little or no contact with the mother than Black or Hispanic fathers.

(Figure 1 about here)

Since attitudes and expectations have a strong influence on family formation (Axinn & Thornton, 2000), we also examined fathers' views about marriage and gender roles as well as the quality of mother-father relationships. Table 2 shows figures for unmarried fathers (overall and for those cohabiting with the mother versus living apart at the time of the birth) and married fathers. According to fathers' reports, a majority of both unmarried and married fathers hold positive views of marriage around the time of their baby's birth: 78% of unmarried men and 91% of married men agree that "marriage is better for children;" 60% of unmarried men and 75% of married men say "it is better to marry than to live together;" and about half of unmarried men and 82% of married men disagree that "living together is the same as marriage." As expected, married men's attitudes are somewhat more positive than those of

unmarried men; there are few notable differences between cohabiting and single men, except that single men more strongly disagreed that living together is the same as marriage.

(Table 2 about here)

Attitudes toward gender roles are not dramatically different across groups, although a higher fraction of married fathers believe that “it is better if the man is the primary breadwinner and the woman is the primary caregiver in the home” (46% vs. 39%). In addition, unmarried fathers express greater distrust of women: 16% of the unmarried fathers said that “women could not be trusted to be faithful,” compared with only 4% of married fathers. Among unmarried fathers, single men indicate greater distrust of women than cohabiting men. We also investigated men’s attitudes toward being a father (figures not shown) and found that the vast majority of both unmarried and married fathers value the father role and intend to be involved in their child’s life. For example, 99% of both married and unmarried fathers either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that “I want people to know I have a new child.”

What Happens to Fathers’ Relationships with Mothers over Time?

We’ve seen that most unmarried fathers are romantically involved with the baby’s mother at the time of the birth, but what fraction of couples stay together over time, and what are key factors that help keep couples together? The Fragile Families Study is the first national study that directly follows couple relationships (with interviews of mothers and fathers) after a nonmarital birth. Table 3 shows the fraction of married and unmarried couples in various relationship types at the five-year follow-up survey; figures are shown by relationship status at the time of birth—for married and unmarried couples overall, and then for unmarried couples by type of initial relationship. Among married couples, 77% are still married five years after the birth; 22% have

broken up, and 0.5% report that they are friends (the 0.4% who say they are cohabiting or visiting likely reflect measurement error at either survey, since couples are unlikely to divorce and maintain any type of romantic relationship). Among unmarried couples overall, 17% are married five years after the birth, 19% are cohabiting, 3% are romantically involved but living apart, 20% say they are friends, and 42% say that they have no relationship. Taken together, these figures suggest that less than two-fifths of unmarried couples are in any type of romantic relationship five years after the birth of their child.

(Table 3 about here)

Not surprisingly, couples with greater relational attachment at birth are much more likely to be together five years later. Of couples who were cohabiting at birth, 28% are married, and another 28% are still cohabiting—so, 56% of these couples (as compared with 77% of married couples) are in stable unions five years after the birth of their child. Of couples who were in visiting relationships at the time of the baby’s birth, 7% are married, 14% are cohabiting, and 6% are still in a visiting relationship at five years. Among couples who reported no romantic relationship at birth, a small minority are married or cohabiting: three percent of those who started out as friends and 4% of those who reported ‘no relationship’ are married, while 5% and 6%, respectively, are cohabiting at five years. Yet, fully 90% of couples who were not romantically involved at the time of the birth are not romantically involved at five years. It is useful to note that among this group, those who started off as friends are more likely to remain friends than those who started off with no relationship, suggesting that a friendly relationship likely contributes to parents’ being able to effectively work together in rearing their common child.

Beyond the comparison of parents' relationship status at birth and five years post-birth, it is informative to examine the total number of relationship transitions that unwed parents experience post-birth. Osborne and McLanahan (2007) find that the number of relationship transitions (including changes in dating, co-residence, and marital status) between birth and three years increases as the level of relationship commitment decreases. On average, married couples experience .22 transitions, whereas cohabiting, visiting and non-romantic couples experience .92, 1.45 and 1.59 transitions respectively. Considering the entire five years after the baby's birth, Beck et al. find that parents who are married at birth experienced an average of .67 relationship transitions, compared to 2.55 for unmarried parents (Beck, Cooper, McLanahan, & Brooks-Gunn, 2009). These figures suggest that most children born to unmarried parents will experience notable instability in their family relationships and/or living arrangements during early childhood.

What Factors Predict Marriage and Union Stability?

An extensive body of research has shown that divorce and father absence are associated with a greater risk of adverse outcomes for children and youth (Amato & Sobolewski, 2001; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). (See Amato and Dorius chapter in this volume.) In addition, a growing strand of research has shown that instability per se (net of family structure), is linked to deleterious outcomes in some sub-groups of children (Fomby & Cherlin, 2007; Osborne & McLanahan, 2007; Wu, 1996; Wu & Martinson, 1993; Wu & Thomson, 2001). Therefore, understanding the factors that help couples stay together may be important for child wellbeing, and the Fragile Families Study has provided new opportunities to examine the factors that promote marriage and union stability following a nonmarital birth.

Scholars have identified a number of arguments for why some relationships are more stable than others and why some couples move on to more committed relationships than others. Economic theory points to the role of monetary incentives in couples' decisions to enter (or remain in) cohabiting or marital unions, including shared public goods, insurance against risk, and the benefits of gender specialization (Becker, 1991; Lam, 1988). Nearly all of the empirical evidence about how earnings capacity affects union formation shows that men's earnings are positively associated with marriage (see Ellwood & Jencks, 2004, for a review) and cohabitation (Clarkberg, 1999; Smock & Manning, 1997a) and negatively associated with divorce (Hoffman & Duncan, 1995; South & Lloyd, 1995). However, the evidence is less consistent with respect to women's earnings (Ellwood & Jencks, 2004; Lichter, McLaughlin, Kephart, & Landry, 1992).

Beyond economic factors, culture—defined as widely shared beliefs and practices—can also affect decisions about family formation (Axinn & Thornton, 2000). Most researchers agree that the decades of the 1960s and 1970s were watershed periods for changes in norms and practices governing the family (Cherlin, 1992). Widespread changes in family-related behaviors—such as increases in sexual activity, childbearing, and co-residence outside marriage; delays in marriage; and increases in divorce—were accompanied by dramatic changes in the social acceptance of all of these behaviors. Because cultural change is neither uniform nor uncontested, we would expect some couples to cling longer to traditional views and, hence, to be more likely to marry and stay married than others with less traditional values and gender roles (Clarkberg, Stolzenberg, & Waite, 1995). Cohabitation has been described as a “looser bond” (Schoen & Weinick, 1993) or an “incomplete institution” (Nock, 1995) relative to marriage, with roles that are less scripted by gender or family expectations. Thus, we would expect that positive attitudes about marriage, traditional gender role attitudes, or religiosity would encourage

marriage more than cohabitation. Consistent with this argument, individuals who cohabit are typically more politically liberal, less religious, and more favorable toward nontraditional family roles than are those who do not cohabit (Smock, 2000; Thornton, Axinn, & Hill, 1992).

Finally, given the growing cultural emphasis on marriage as a source of love and companionship rather than a mere economic exchange (Cherlin, 2004), we would expect the emotional quality of a couple's relationship to affect the movement from dating to cohabitation and from either dating or cohabitation to marriage. Many studies from psychology and sociology show that partners' perceptions of the emotional quality of their marriage affect whether they stay together or break up (Cowan, Cowan, Schulz, & Heming, 1994; Gottman, 1994; Karney & Bradbury, 1995). At the same time, drug or alcohol abuse, infidelity, and violence within marriage are strongly associated with low marital quality and divorce (White, 1990).

Factors affecting union formation and dissolution generally may not be the same among (unmarried) couples who have a biological child together. We know that having a child diminishes an unmarried women's position on the marriage market overall (Lichter & Graefe, 2001), but there has been limited attention to *which* mothers are more likely to marry after a nonmarital birth. Research based on the Fragile Families study presents new evidence on this topic. Qualitative studies point to unmet financial expectations (especially by women toward men) as a fundamental barrier to marriage (Edin & Kefalas, 2005; Gibson-Davis, Edin, & McLanahan, 2005). Yet, the quantitative evidence about the role of men's economic characteristics for union stability has been mixed: aspects of men's economic capacities (wages, employment, and education) are sometimes—but not consistently—linked with marriage within several years after a nonmarital birth. Men's earnings, wages, and employment appear to be more important than education for marriage (Carlson, McLanahan, & England, 2004; Harknett,

2008; Harknett & McLanahan, 2004), and *changes* in men's earnings post birth appear to predict which couples will enter marriage (Gibson-Davis, Forthcoming). For women, education appears to be the key economic factor increasing the likelihood of marriage (Carlson, McLanahan et al., 2004; Harknett, 2008), although Osborne (2005) finds that economic factors matter differently across unmarried relationship types: mothers' education predicts marriage among cohabiting parents, while mothers' earnings predicts marriage among parents in visiting relationships (Osborne, 2005).

Cultural factors and relationship quality are also shown to play important roles in marital decisions after a nonmarital birth. Individuals with more positive attitudes about marriage as an institution are more likely to marry (Carlson, McLanahan et al., 2004), and having high expectations of marriage—particularly when shared by both parents—predicts both marriage and being in a romantic relationship (versus separation) (Waller & McLanahan, 2005). More frequent religious participation is linked to a greater likelihood of marriage (Wilcox & Wolfinger, 2007), and men's (but not women's) religious participation is associated with higher relationship quality—both within marriage and in unmarried romantic relationships—which may contribute to union stability (Wolfinger & Wilcox, 2008). On the other hand, gender distrust and sexual jealousy—especially by women toward men—have emerged from both qualitative and quantitative studies as key deterrents to marriage (Carlson, McLanahan et al., 2004; Edin & Kefalas, 2005; Hill, 2007); distrust is exacerbated when fathers remain involved with children from prior relationships—and hence have ongoing contact with prior partners (Monte, 2007). Fear of divorce may also diminish the likelihood of marriage (Edin & Kefalas, 2005; Waller & Peters, 2008), although a recent study of mothers receiving welfare suggests otherwise (Cherlin, Cross-Barnet, Burton, & Garrett-Peters, 2008). Couples who report having a higher degree of

supportiveness in their relationship are more likely to marry or cohabit as opposed to breaking up (Carlson, McLanahan et al., 2004), and concerns about the couple relationship are identified in qualitative interviews as a key barrier to marriage among unmarried parents (Gibson-Davis et al., 2005).

A number of additional characteristics have been shown to predict marriage and relationship stability after a nonmarital birth. White and Hispanic mothers are more likely to marry than Black mothers (Carlson, McLanahan et al., 2004). Mothers' poor mental health is a strong deterrent to marriage, as mothers with a diagnosed mental illness are only two thirds as likely to marry within five years of a nonmarital birth, even controlling for a host of individual-level characteristics (Teitler & Reichman, 2008). Children's characteristics may also matter for parental relationships; having a child in poor health decreases stability in parents' relationships (Reichman, Corman, & Noonan, 2004). Several contextual factors have been shown to matter for marriage, including the availability of 'marriageable' men (measured by the male/female sex ratio) (Harknett, 2008; Harknett & McLanahan, 2004) and strong child support enforcement (Carlson, Garfinkel, McLanahan, Mincy, & Primus, 2004; Nepomnyashcy & Garfinkel, 2008).

Parents' fertility history affects union formation, and multiple-partner fertility, in particular, has been shown to pose particular challenges to parents' relationship stability over time (Carlson, McLanahan et al., 2004; Carlson & Furstenberg, 2006; Harknett & McLanahan, 2004). In the Fragile Families study, having children by multiple partners was more common among African Americans than among other racial-ethnic groups (Mincy, 2002); the relatively high rates of multiple-partner fertility among African Americans may also help account for the low marriage rates among this group.

Incarceration history is another important factor in the formation and stability of family relationships. Western, Lopoo, and McLanahan (2004) find that after controlling for a wide range of social, psychological, and economic characteristics, fathers who have been incarcerated at some point in their lives are much less likely to be cohabiting with or married to the mother of their child one year after birth. This finding suggests that high incarceration rates among Black men of low socioeconomic status may help account for low rates of marriage among this demographic group. According to Western and colleagues, if the risk of incarceration were reduced to zero for Black fathers with less than high school education, marriage rates among this group would increase by 45%, and the Black-White gap in marriage rates would be reduced by nearly half (Western et al., 2004). Also, incarceration has important implications for children, not only because fathers are separated from their children while in jail or prison, but also because of the social stigma, lower earnings capability, and complicated relationships with mothers typically experienced after they are released (Wildeman & Western, 2009; Comfort 2008).

In sum, data from the Fragile Families Study show that whereas many unmarried parents are in a romantic relationship and are optimistic about their future together at the time of their baby's birth, these relationships are highly unstable and will likely dissolve within only a few years. Parents' resources may be insufficient to establish an independent household or to meet their ideals about the financial prerequisites for marriage. Further, although parents with positive and supportive relationships are more likely to stay together or move toward marriage, a non-trivial number of couples struggle with personal or relationship problems such as substance use, physical violence, or the father's criminal background. Together, these economic and relational factors pose significant barriers to marriage, and family formation among unmarried parents is often complicated by the fact that one or both parents may have children by a previous

relationship. High instability and complexity interfere with parents' ability to work together to rear their common child.

Fathers' Involvement with Children in Fragile Families

Prevalence of Unmarried Fathers' Involvement

Until recently, much of what was known about the relationship between unmarried fathers and their children came from studies of divorced and separated fathers—or from studies of non-resident fathers, most of whom are divorced. Much of this research focused on two aspects of father involvement—paying child support and father-child contact. Studies from the 1980s and early 1990s showed that whereas one third of divorced fathers paid child support on a regular basis and maintained frequent contact with their children, another third disappeared rather quickly from their children's lives (Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991; Furstenberg, Morgan, & Allison, 1987; Garfinkel, McLanahan, & Robins, 1994; Marsiglio, 1993; Seltzer, 1994). (See Fabricius, Braver, Diaz and Schenck chapter in this volume for information about parental investments and family relationships after divorce.) With respect to more recent data, an overview chapter on non-resident father involvement using data from six large U.S. datasets found that sizeable fractions of fathers had no contact with their non-resident child ages 0-5 in the previous year (45-62% of White fathers and 39-81% of non-White fathers) (Argys et al., 2007). A new study of non-resident father involvement (pooling data on both divorced and unmarried fathers from four national surveys over 1976 to 2002) found that the payment of child support and the frequency of father-child contact increased over this quarter-century period, yet the 2002 data suggest that non-resident fathers can still be sorted into three basic groups—those

who have no contact, moderate contact, and frequent contact with their children (Amato, Meyers, & Emery, 2009).

Many people think of unwed fathers as being much less involved with their children than divorced or separated fathers, but the existing evidence suggests that the patterns are broadly similar. Many unwed fathers are involved early on, but most will live away from their child(ren) within only a few years of the birth (Lerman & Sorenson, 2000; Lerman, 1993). Once they become non-resident, some fathers remain regularly involved, although involvement tends to decrease over time. As with divorced fathers, several studies using NLSY79, NLSY97, and NSFH data suggest notable variation in the extent to which unmarried fathers remain in contact and spend time with their children (Lerman & Sorenson, 2000; Lerman, 1993; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). Some non-resident fathers remain significantly involved—seeing and spending time with the child regularly, but a sizeable fraction of fathers appear to have little connection to their child. Recent qualitative studies underscore this divergence in fathers' roles with children (Johnson, Levine, & Doolittle, 1999; Roy, 1999; Waller, 2002; Waller & Plotnick, 2001).

Being the breadwinner continues to be central to the meaning of fatherhood for most men and women, and a father's ability to provide sufficient economic resources remains a strong predictor of whether or not he maintains a relationship with his child. Fathers who are unable to live up to the breadwinner ideal are less likely to find the father role rewarding and more likely to withdraw from their children. Alternatively, mothers may discourage the involvement of men who are unable to provide for them and their children (Edin, 2000). We know that unmarried fathers are less likely to pay formal child support (and at lower amounts when they do pay) than previously-married fathers (Seltzer, 1991). Informal financial support (i.e., outside the legal child support enforcement system), especially the purchase of goods and

services for the child, is quite common among unmarried fathers, especially around the time of a new baby's birth (Edin & Lein, 1997; Marsiglio & Day, 1997; Waller, 2002). Formal child support orders are rare just after the birth, in part because many unwed couples are still romantically involved.

Given that many unwed fathers are involved with their children at least early on, the question remains: What exactly do fathers do, and how does it matter for child wellbeing? Although the father's role in family life has historically been defined by breadwinning, contemporary fathers are involved in childrearing in numerous ways (Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth, & Lamb, 2000; Lamb, 2004; Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000; Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004). In addition to providing economic support, fathering today may include nurturing and caregiving; engaging in leisure and play activities; providing the child's mother with financial, emotional, or practical support; providing moral guidance and discipline; ensuring the safety of the child; connecting the child to his extended family; and linking the child to community members and resources (Marsiglio & Day, 1997; Palkovitz, 2002). Also, paternal involvement can have both direct and indirect effects on children's wellbeing and may change over the life course (Cabrera, Fitzgerald, Bradley, & Roggman, 2007). Although the 'new' father role has often been discussed with respect to higher-SES fathers, ethnographic studies report that many unwed or low-income fathers describe their roles in terms similar to those used by married or middle-class fathers, even though they face much greater economic constraints (Furstenberg, Sherwood, & Sullivan, 1992; Jarrett et al., 2002; Waller, 2002).

Recent data from the Fragile Families Study confirms the findings of previous studies about non-resident and nonmarital fathering and extend these findings to new areas of father

involvement. With respect to fathers' economic contributions, the Fragile Families data show that informal support from unmarried fathers (both financial and instrumental) is common around the time of a new baby's birth, while formal child support is rare. Mothers report that 83% of fathers gave money or bought things for the baby during the pregnancy, and 80% helped in some other way (such as providing transportation to the prenatal clinic) (figures not shown in table). Nepomnyaschy and Garfinkel (2008) found that as an increasing share of couples break up over time, informal support from fathers declines, and the prevalence of formal child support orders and payments increases as mothers pursue support through the legal system. One year after a baby's birth, 20% of unmarried (at birth) mothers had a formal child support order in place (and 10% received a formal payment), while 60% reported receiving in-kind support (and 60% received informal financial support) from the father. By five years after the birth, 47% of mothers had a child support order in place (and 27% received a formal payment), while 45% received in-kind support (and 32% received informal financial support) (Nepomnyaschy & Garfinkel, 2008).

In terms of fathers' presence and interaction with children, at the time of their baby's birth, most unmarried fathers are 'around' and want to be involved in their child's life. According to mothers (figures not shown), 78% of fathers visited the mother and baby in the hospital, and 84% of babies (will) have the father's surname on the birth certificate; these figures vary notably by the couple's relationship status, as nearly all residential fathers were involved in these ways compared to about one-third of fathers that were not romantically involved with the mother. The high initial levels of involvement among fathers overall are probably due to the fact that many of the parents in fragile families are still romantically involved when they are first interviewed (just after the birth); in short, their unions are still intact. Thus, the comparison with

divorced parents is probably not appropriate. Once the relationship ends, however, fathers' involvement may drop off just as rapidly among never-married couples as it does among divorced couples. As romantically-involved couples break up and fathers move out over time, fathers spend less time with their children. As described earlier in the context of union stability, more than three-fifths of children born outside of marriage will be living apart from their biological father by age 5.

(Table 4 about here)

Once non-resident, the majority of unwed fathers maintain at least some contact with their child. At Year 1, 87% of non-resident fathers had seen their child at some time since the baby's birth, and 63% had seen their child more than once in the past month. By Year 3, 71% of fathers had seen the child since the past interview (around child's age 1), and 47% had seen the child more than once in the past month. At 5 years, 63% of fathers had seen their child since the 3-year interview, and 43% had seen the child more than once in the past month. Consistent with prior research, these figures suggest notable divergence in the level of non-resident fathers' involvement that children experience over time – by their fifth birthday, nearly two-fifths of children born to unmarried parents (37%) have had no contact with their father in the prior two years, and another two-fifths (43%) have regular contact, with the remaining fifth (20%) falling somewhere in between.

Among non-resident fathers who saw their child in the past year, the mean number of days the fathers saw their child was over 8 days at Year 1, falling to just over 5 days at Year 5. Among the sub-set of fathers who saw their child more than once in the previous month, as would be expected, the average level of contact is much higher. These fathers saw their children an average of 13 days a month in Years 1 and 3, and 12 days a month in Year 5. The frequency

of spending one or more hours is close to “a few times a week” at Year 1, declining slightly over Years 3 and 5. The average number of days per week that these fathers engage in activities with their child is 2.1 at Years 1 and 3 and 1.5 at Year 5. Although the mean levels decline, within-person analyses show that fathers typically stay on the same ‘end’ of the involvement continuum over time (Ryan, Kalil, & Ziol-Guest, 2008): dichotomizing father involvement into “high” and “low” categories at each time point, Ryan and colleagues found that nearly three-quarters of non-resident fathers remained in the same category (26% consistently high, and 47% consistently low) between 1 and 3 years after the birth, while an even fraction of the remaining group (14% each) moved between categories.

We also examined differences in levels of fathers’ involvement by race/ethnicity (results not shown). We found that Black fathers were much more likely to be non-resident at each survey wave, compared to White or Hispanic fathers. Yet, among non-resident fathers, Black non-Hispanic men were somewhat more likely to have maintained contact with their child, to have seen their child in the past month, and to have seen their child a greater number of days. This is consistent with research suggesting that Black fathers are less constrained by the “package deal” linking partner and parent roles (Edin, Tach, & Mincy, 2009) and are more accustomed to distinguishing the “baby father” role from the mother-father romantic relationship (Mincy & Pouncy, 2007). We found that race/ethnic differences in the types of paternal engagement are less consistent across measures and over time, compared to the frequency of father-child contact.

Antecedents of Fathers' Involvement

Since some unmarried fathers do maintain high levels of involvement, it is instructive to consider what are the characteristics and circumstances that promote fathers' continued involvement with children over time. Prior research on fathers in general suggests that fathers' human capital (Cooksey & Craig, 1998; Landale & Oropesa, 2001) and identification with the father role (Ihinger-Tallman, Pasley, & Buehler, 1993; Marsiglio & Cohan, 2000) promote greater paternal investment. Also, the quality of relationship with the baby's mother is strongly tied to parental involvement among (married) resident fathers (Erel & Burman, 1995) and among non-resident fathers (Seltzer, 1991). After the couple relationship has ended, fathers' re-partnering and having new children is shown to diminish fathers' contact and economic support of prior children (Manning & Smock, 1999, 2000; Smock & Manning, 1997b; Stewart, 2003).

Recent studies of low-income fathers taken from welfare samples or studies of children who participated in the Early Head Start program have also provided new evidence about paternal involvement among disadvantaged men, many of whom are never-married. Given the difficulty of recruiting low-income fathers, much of this research is based on small, non-representative samples of fathers (sometimes including both biological fathers and other father-figures together) who were willing to participate—typically men with greater resources, men who were romantically involved with the child's mother, and men who were involved in their child's life. Therefore, these studies may not generalize to larger populations of poor, minority or unmarried fathers. At the same time, this research provides important new evidence about fathering in disadvantaged settings, often based on fathers' own reports on and perspectives about their involvement with children.

According to this research on disadvantaged men, resident fathers (either cohabiting or married) are much more involved with young children than non-resident fathers as we would expect (Cabrera et al., 2004). Results are mixed about the role of socioeconomic resources, with some research showing no association between economic capacities and father involvement (Kalil, Ziol-Guest, & Coley, 2005), and other research suggesting that higher education, income and/or employment are positively linked with supportive parenting and frequent interaction (Cabrera, Shannon, & Tamis-LeMonda, 2007; Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999). Among non-resident low-income fathers, men who are romantically involved with the mothers are more involved than men who are just friends or have no relationship with the mother (Cabrera et al., 2004), and parents' ability to cooperate and avoid conflict seems to be important for both resident and non-resident fathers' involvement (Coley & Hernandez, 2006). More broadly, mothers in low-income communities often take an active role and employ a range of strategies to encourage biological fathers—and other father-figures—to be positively involved in their children's lives (Roy & Burton, 2007).

Within the Fragile Families data, a number of individual and contextual characteristics are shown to be associated with higher levels of biological father involvement. As we might expect, fathers who demonstrate involvement early on—whether via providing financial or instrumental support during the pregnancy (Cabrera, Fagan, & Farrie, 2008) or via establishing paternity shortly after the baby's birth (Mincy, Garfinkel, & Nepomnyaschy, 2005)—are also more likely to be involved over the child's first three years (with respect to time, engagement, and financial support). Greater human capital (measured by education, employment or earnings) is positively linked to greater involvement, although all measures do not always reach statistical significance, particularly when multiple indicators are included in the same models (Cabrera et

al., 2008; Carlson & McLanahan, 2004; Ryan et al., 2008). Fathers' financial support of children tends to promote greater father-child contact (more than vice versa); this finding is particularly true for informal payments, although there is some evidence that formal child support is also associated with fathers' visitation (Nepomnyaschy, 2007).

Fathers' social-psychological characteristics are highly salient to their involvement over time. Analyses of both quantitative and qualitative data show that fathers who display problem behaviors—including being physically violent and having problems with drugs or alcohol—are less likely to maintain contact with their children (Waller & Swisher, 2006); the lack of contact appears to partly reflect mothers' taking actions to protect their children, such as ending their relationship with the baby's father or limiting his access to the child after the relationship has ended (Claessens, 2007; Waller & Swisher, 2006). Both current and past incarceration (typically correlated with the behavioral problems noted above) is shown to strongly deter fathers' engagement with children and payment of child support (Ryan et al., 2008; Swisher & Waller, 2008). While theories about gender identity and socialization suggest that fathers may be more involved with sons than daughters, this finding appears to be limited to married fathers; there is no difference in fathers' involvement after a nonmarital birth based on whether the child is a girl or boy (Lundberg, McLanahan, & Rose, 2007).

Another important finding to emerge from the Fragile Families Study concerns the role of the mother-father relationship in shaping fathers' involvement with his children. Consistent with prior studies of married fathers (Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991; Townsend, 2002), the "package deal" that circumscribes fathers' partner and parent relationships appears to be highly salient for unmarried fathers (Tach, Mincy, & Edin, Forthcoming). Both the type of relationship after a nonmarital birth (i.e., cohabiting, romantic but living apart, friends, or no relationship), as well as

the quality of relationship net of type (i.e., supportiveness and ability to communicate effectively), are linked to greater involvement by unmarried fathers in fragile families (Carlson & McLanahan, 2004; Fagan & Palkovitz, 2007; Ryan et al., 2008). The importance of the mother-father relationship for paternal involvement has been similarly observed in the United Kingdom using data on fathers of young children from the Millennium Cohort Study (Kiernan, 2006; Kiernan & Smith, 2003). Even after parents are no longer romantically involved, the ability of the parents to get along remains salient for paternal involvement: among non-resident fathers, the quality of the co-parenting relationship strongly predicts higher levels of interaction (Carlson, McLanahan, & Brooks-Gunn, 2008). However, when parents (especially mothers) re-partner and have new children—fathers are less likely to see their children (Tach et al., Forthcoming).

Fathers' Involvement and Children's Wellbeing

An extensive literature has demonstrated the benefits of father involvement for child wellbeing by resident fathers (see ___ chapter in this volume), although much of this work has focused on middle-income samples and school-aged children or adolescents (Shannon, Tamis-LeMonda, London, & Cabrera, 2002). The evidence about non-resident father involvement is more limited and less consistent (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; King, 1994; King & Sobolewski, 2006). (See Amato and Dorius chapter in this volume.) Part of the reason for differential effects of father involvement by residential status may result from differences in the characteristics of men who end up living with their children (and typically with the child's mother) versus men who live away from their children (Jaffee, Caspi, Moffitt, Taylor, & Dickson, 2001). Fathers' involvement with children may not be beneficial, for example, if the father has a history of

violent or abusive behavior; some research shows that the benefits of fathers' presence and caretaking for children's behavior depend on whether the father himself displays anti-social behavior (Jaffee, Moffitt, Caspi, & Taylor, 2003).

A growing literature on samples of low-income and/or African American fathers has explored whether and to what extent greater paternal involvement is beneficial to children's development and well-being. Recent studies focusing on pre-school-aged children find that low-income fathers who display more nurturing parenting have children with better cognitive and behavioral outcomes (Black, Dubowitz, & Starr, 1999; Martin, Ryan, & Brooks-Gunn, 2007; Shannon et al., 2002; Tamis-LeMonda, Shannon, Cabrera, & Lamb, 2004). Also, fathers' payment of formal and informal child support has been linked with better socio-emotional outcomes among a sample of African-American pre-school-aged children of never-married mothers receiving welfare (Greene & Moore, 2000). There is also evidence that involvement by non-resident fathers predicts lower levels of delinquency among young adolescents (ages 10-14) living in low-income neighborhoods in Boston, Chicago and San Antonio (Coley & Medeiros, 2007).

While evidence from the Fragile Families Study is just emerging, research in progress shows that a higher level of father involvement is linked with lower child behavioral problems among resident fathers but not among non-resident fathers (Carlson, McLanahan, & Brooks-Gunn, 2009): greater frequency of father-child contact, engagement in father-child activities, and shared parental responsibility show essentially no association with child behavioral scores for fathers who live away from their children. However, the benefits of non-resident father involvement may depend on the father's ability to effectively work together with mothers in rearing their common child; fathers' involvement *is* associated with significantly lower

behavioral problems when mothers and fathers have a high-quality co-parenting relationship (*ibid*). Further research is warranted to understand for which unmarried fathers, and under what conditions, greater involvement across a range of domains contributes to children's development and wellbeing.

It is important to note that biological fathers are not the only father-figures in the lives of children born outside of marriage. (See Marsiglio and Hinojosa chapter in this volume.) As we've noted, unwed couples often break up soon after the baby's birth, and both mothers and fathers are likely to re-partner. One study finds that 31% of unmarried mothers have re-partnered with a new man by the child's fifth birthday (5% are re-married, 17% are cohabiting, and 9% are dating but living apart), and these new partners tend to have better socio-demographic characteristics than the previous partners (Bzostek, Carlson, & McLanahan, 2007). Resident 'social fathers' are often involved with (non-biological) children to the same extent as are resident biological fathers (Berger, Carlson, Bzostek, & Osborne, 2008), and there is evidence that their involvement is equally beneficial for young children's behavior and health status (Bzostek, 2008). Other work that differentiates the types of social fathers involved with disadvantaged children suggests that involvement by male relatives may be more beneficial than involvement by mothers' romantic partners (Jayakody & Kalil, 2002). Future research should consider the variation in patterns of involvement by fathers and father-figures, especially as family structure changes over time, as well as the conjoint influence of involvement by biological and social fathers on children's wellbeing.

In sum, although most unmarried biological fathers are involved during the pregnancy and around the time of the birth, five years later, a significant fraction of fathers has little or no regular interaction with their child. Nearly two-thirds of unmarried fathers live away from their

child, and nearly 30% of non-resident fathers have not seen their child in the past year. Further, when non-resident fathers *are* more involved, it is not clear that such involvement is beneficial to children's wellbeing. By contrast, among fathers married at the time of the baby's birth, their involvement with children remains much higher over time, largely because the majority of these men are still living with their child by age 5, and greater involvement by these resident fathers is positively linked to children's wellbeing (figures not shown). This evidence raises concern about the circumstances of children born outside of marriage in terms of what they can expect to receive with respect to both time and money from their biological fathers, and the extent to which such contributions may enhance their wellbeing. Ultimately, these differential parental inputs may be an important aspect of how family structure is contributing to growing socioeconomic disparities in the U.S. (McLanahan & Percheski, 2008).

Conclusion

In this chapter we have described the characteristics and family relationships of fathers in fragile families, which we define as unmarried parents who have had a child together. We find that unmarried fathers differ notably from their counterparts who are married at the time of their baby's birth, particularly in terms of their human capital and fertility histories. Most unmarried fathers have a high school education or less; one fifth are not working at the time of the birth; and nearly one third have children by another partner. These factors suggest that unwed fathers face serious challenges in providing for their children and maintaining stable family relationships over time.

Most unmarried fathers are romantically involved with their baby's mother at the time of the birth, and most have high expectations for marrying the mother in the future. However, less

than one fifth of unmarried couples had actually married by the time their child was 5 years old. Similarly, most unmarried fathers say they intend to be highly involved with their child at the time of the birth. Yet, five years later, nearly two-thirds are living away from their child, and of those living away, less than half saw their child more than once in the past month.

This descriptive portrait of fathers in fragile families points to both opportunities as well as challenges for policy makers interested in strengthening family ties. Contrary to popular perceptions that unmarried parents are not interested in family commitment, most unmarried fathers say that they value marriage, expect to marry the baby's mother, and want to be involved in rearing their children. These hopes and positive attitudes provide an encouraging starting point from which policy could help unmarried parents strengthen their family relationships. At the same time, many unmarried parents face an uncertain economic future and complex family arrangements, which make it difficult to sustain a stable family life. Thus, if these fragile families are to meet their goal of raising their child together, they will likely need both public and private support.

Insofar as most individuals believe that children would be better off if they were raised by both biological parents, and insofar as most parents in fragile families want to marry, a restructuring of social policy to strengthen fragile families would appear to have wide bipartisan support. Indeed, there is a growing emphasis in policymaking of funding programs that address exactly these aims. Of course, new initiatives to promote marriage and father involvement do not exist in a vacuum, and their success will depend in large part on how they interact with welfare and child support enforcement policies. Ultimately, we contend that the most effective strategy for helping unmarried parents would involve a multifaceted approach that focuses on both

improving parents' human capital and relationship skills while also eliminating any disincentives to family formation in our tax and transfer policies.

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Table 1. Fathers' Characteristics, by Marital Status at Birth (in percent)

	Unmarried	Married
<u>Background/Demographics Characteristics</u>		
Age		
Under 20	12.8	0.4
20-24	33.3	13.2
25-29	23.5	21.1
30 and older	30.4	65.3
Mean age (years)	27.10	31.65
Mean age difference w/ mother (years)	3.36	2.32
Race/ethnicity		
White non-Hispanic	17.6	49.2
Black non-Hispanic	43.7	14.1
Hispanic	34.6	28.3
Other	4.2	8.4
Parents are of different race/ethnicity	15.9	13.7
Immigrant	15.8	23.8
Lived with both parents age 15	42.2	69.1
Other children		
First birth	48.8	36.4
With biological mom only	19.0	49.7
With biological mom and other woman	11.5	6.1
With other woman only	20.8	7.8
<u>Economic Characteristics</u>		
Education		
Less than high school	38.5	14.8
High school or the equivalent	37.5	24.7
Some college	19.7	32.1
College degree or higher	4.4	28.4
Worked week before baby's birth	78.7	95.0
Self-reported health status		
Poor	0.4	0.3
Fair or good	31.6	24.7
Very good or excellent	68.0	75.0

(table continued next page)

Table 1 (continued). Fathers' Characteristics, by Marital Status at Birth (in percent)

	Unmarried	Married
<u>Social-Behavioral Characteristics</u>		
Religious affiliation		
Protestant	42.7	45.3
Catholic	32.9	37.4
Other religion	10.5	9.5
No religion	13.9	7.9
Frequency of religious attendance (range=1-5)	2.59	3.23
Substance problem	6.4	1.2
Ever incarcerated (1-year survey)	38.7	7.7
Unweighted number of cases (<i>n</i>)		
All fathers	3,710	1,187
Interviewed fathers	2,779	1,051

Note: All figures are weighted by national sampling weights. Fathers' age, race, education, employment status, and substance problems are reported by mothers. All other figures are reported by fathers themselves (for the subset of fathers who were interviewed).

Table 2. Fathers' Attitudes and Couple Relationship Quality, by Relationship Status at Birth

	Unmarried			Married
	Total	Cohabiting	Single	
<u>Attitudes¹</u>				
Positive attitudes about marriage				
Better for children if parents married	77.8	78.8	76.2	90.5
Better to marry than to live together	60.2	60.4	60.0	74.6
Living together is the same as marriage (disagree)	48.8	45.2	54.4	81.5
Mean (range=1-4)	2.76	2.73	2.80	3.15
Traditional gender role attitudes				
Important decisions should be made by man	31.6	29.1	35.4	33.6
Better if man earns living/women care	39.3	41.0	36.7	45.6
Mean (range=1-4)	2.35	2.34	2.38	2.40
Distrust of women				
In dating, woman out to take advantage of man	17.5	15.6	20.5	5.0
Women cannot be trusted to be faithful	15.5	12.2	20.4	3.9
Mean (range=1-4)	2.04	2.02	2.07	1.79
<u>Relationship Expectations and Quality</u>				
Chances of marriage to mother				
No or a little chance	12.1	4.4	23.8	NA
50-50	16.3	11.8	23.2	NA
Pretty good or almost certain	71.7	83.8	53.1	NA
Supportiveness (Mother "often" ...)				
Was fair and willing to compromise	46.9	57.0	36.8	66.2
Expressed affection or love to father	73.4	84.2	62.6	80.0
Criticized father or his ideas (coding reversed="never")	73.2	76.3	70.0	71.9
Encouraged father to do things important to him	68.9	82.8	54.9	74.5
Mean (range=1 to 3) ¹	2.64	2.67	2.60	2.69
Frequency of conflict (6 items), mean (range=1 to 3) ¹				
	1.44	1.39	1.51	1.35
Physical violence ("often" or "sometimes")				
Mother's report about father	4.0	2.8	5.3	2.4
Father's report about mother	14.0	11.5	17.8	5.7
Mother's report, ever seriously hurt by father (1 year)	7.3	7.0	7.6	4.0
Unweighted number of cases (<i>n</i>)				
Interviewed fathers	2,779	1,602	1,177	1,051

¹ Frequencies reflect endorsing the statement as "strongly agree" or "agree" (or "strongly disagree" or "disagree" as indicated for the 'living together' item).

² Possible outcomes are "never" (1), "sometimes" (2) and "often" (3).

Note: All figures are weighted by national sampling weights. All items are reported by fathers, except for mother's reports about father's violence (at time of birth and 1 year).

Table 3. Relationship Stability, Birth to Five Years (mothers' reports) ¹

Time of Birth	Five Years after Birth of Child				
	Married	Cohabiting	Visiting	Friends	No Relationship
Married	77.3	0.2	0.2	0.5	21.9
Unmarried	16.7	19.2	2.9	19.5	41.6
Cohabiting	27.6	27.5	1.9	14.0	29.0
Visiting	7.2	14.0	5.8	27.1	45.9
Friends	3.2	5.2	1.2	34.3	56.2
No relationship	3.5	5.6	0.1	9.9	80.8

¹ Percentages shown are of row totals.

Note: Figures are weighted by national sampling weights. Cohabitation at five years is defined as living together "all or most of the time" or "some of the time;" time of birth cohabitation is a dichotomy (yes/no) for whether mothers say they are living with the baby's father.

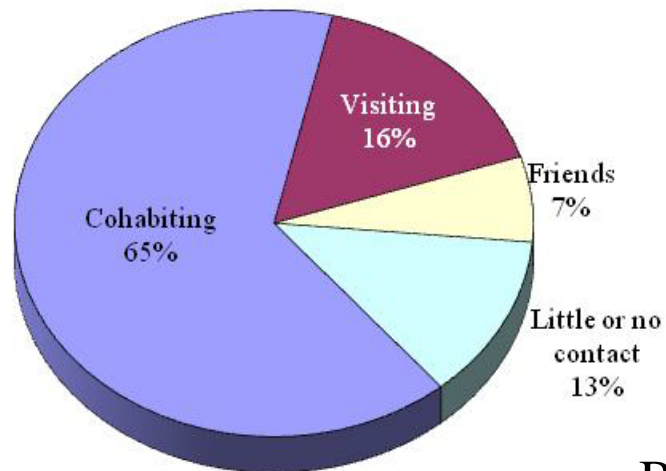
Table 4. Prevalence of Fathers' Involvement after Nonmarital Birth (Mothers' Reports)

	Year 1	Year 3	Year 5
	% or <i>M</i> (SD)	% or <i>M</i> (SD)	% or <i>M</i> (SD)
	(<i>n</i> =3,234)	(<i>n</i> =3,113)	(<i>n</i> =3,037)
Nonresident fathers (%)	47.6	55.9	62.9
<i>All nonresident fathers</i>			
Saw child since previous survey (%)	87.0	70.9	63.2
Saw child more than once in past month (%)	62.7	47.0	43.1
Mean # of days father saw child (range=0-30)	8.36 (10.92)	6.28 (9.96)	5.26 (9.17)
<i>Fathers who saw child more than once in past month</i>			
Mean # of days father saw child (range=1-30)	13.33 (11.13)	13.35 (10.79)	12.21 (10.50)
Mean frequency of spending 1+ hours (range=1-5)	3.70 (1.24)	3.67 (1.14)	3.54 (1.06)
Mean engagement in activities (range=0-7 days)	2.08 (1.79)	2.10 (1.70)	1.51 (1.80)

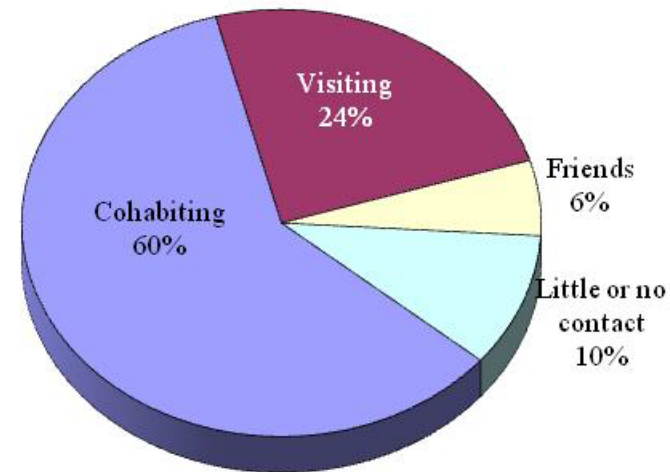
Notes: All figures weighted by national sampling weights for each respective year. Unweighted numbers of cases (*n*) indicate mothers interviewed at each survey wave living with the focal child that had non-missing data on father co-residence status.

Figure 1. Relationship Status of Unmarried Parents, by Race/Ethnicity

White non-Hispanics



Hispanics



Black non-Hispanics

