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THE EFFECT OF STEPCHILDREN ON CHILDBEARING INTENTIONS AND BIRTHS*

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THE EFFECT OF STEPCHILDREN ON CHILDBEARING INTENTIONS AND BIRTHS

Current models of fertility have not kept pace with important changes in family formation. Although couples making childbearing decisions today frequently have children from previous unions (stepchildren), the effect of stepchildren on fertility has not been the subject of rigorous empirical study. Guided by James Coleman's concept of social capital, and using nationally representative longitudinal data collected from both partners in cohabiting and married unions, this paper has several goals. First, I examine the effect of stepchildren on individual childbearing intentions. Second, I contrast the effect of stepchildren on intentions vis-à-vis children from the couple's current union (shared children). Third, I examine how stepchildren influence childbearing behavior. Results show that the couple's number of stepchildren reduces individual intentions of having a child. The effect of stepchildren relative to shared children on intentions is moderated by elements of stepfamily structure and complexity. Stepchildren lower couples' risk of having a child, and this effect operates indirectly through intentions to have children. This research suggests that resident and nonresident stepchildren be incorporated into future models of fertility.

THE EFFECT OF STEPCHILDREN ON CHILDBEARING INTENTIONS AND BIRTHS

"Conjugal succession," adults forming unions and having children with multiple partners over the life course, has become the dominant family formation pattern in the United States (Furstenberg and Spanier 1987). As a result, it is now common for couples making childbearing decisions to have children from previous unions (stepchildren). Half of all marriages are remarriages (National Center for Health Statistics 1990), and births in remarriage represent an increasing proportion of all births (Wineberg 1990b). Half of all remarried women have children in their remarriages (Griffith, Koo, and Suchindran 1985; Wineberg, 1990a), and most of these women have children from a previous marriage (Glick and Lin 1987; Sweet and Bumpass 1987; U. S. Census Bureau 1992). These estimates have been restricted to remarriage and do not account for childbearing among first-married and cohabiting couples with stepchildren (Bumpass, Raley, and Sweet 1995).

Although there has been dramatic growth in stepfamilies in the United States in recent decades (Glick 1989; Norton and Miller 1992), few studies consider the role of stepchildren in shaping American fertility patterns. Researchers in Europe are recognizing the importance of understanding fertility in stepfamilies, and the complexity of fertility decisions for couples with stepchildren (e.g., Vikat, Thomson, and Hoem 1999). Childbearing in stepfamilies, and the timing these births, can have major implications for stepfamily functioning (Papernow 1993). As increasing numbers of Americans live in stepfamilies, it is important to examine the determinants of factors associated with stepfamily adjustment. The goal of the present study is to determine how stepchildren influence childbearing intentions and births among U.S. couples.

We do not have a clear picture of the relationship between stepchildren and fertility for several reasons. First, fertility researchers tend to focus on couples with no previous children (e.g., Miller and Pasta 1995; Rindfuss and Parnell 1989; Thomson 1997), or do not distinguish biological children from previous and current unions (e.g., Myers 1997; Schoen et al. 1999). Using the two waves of the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), which allows investigators to disentangle complicated fertility and union histories, the present study incorporates stepchildren into models of childbearing intentions and behavior. I integrate the stepparenting literature with previous theoretical work on fertility, e.g., social capital (Schoen et al. 1997), to create several testable hypotheses about the effect of stepchildren.

Second, most research that has accounted for stepchildren is limited to studies of childbearing in remarried, resident stepfamilies (e.g., Bumpass 1984; Ganong and Coleman 1988; Glick and Lin 1987; Griffith et al. 1985; Wineberg 1990a), which neglects one-third of stepfamilies formed through nonmarital childbearing, one-fourth formed through cohabitation, and couples with nonresident stepchildren (Bumpass et al. 1995; Thomson 1994). I define stepfamilies broadly to include first-married and cohabiting couples with stepchildren, and couples with stepchildren living outside the household. Results will therefore pertain to stepfamilies living in diverse contexts.

A third issue is that previous studies are based on women's retrospective childbearing and marital histories. The fertility of men is either not considered or inadequate proxy measures of husbands' fertility are employed. However, the previous children of men may be as important to fertility as the previous children of women (Vikat et al. 1999). I include in my sample both male and female respondents. Additionally, although men's previous biological children tend to live in other households, only one study has accounted for the residence of the stepchildren (Vikat et

al. 1999). I assess the independent effects of both the parent's gender and the stepchildren's residential status.

Fourth, studies that include stepchildren have been concerned with childbearing *outcomes* (births), rather than *intentions* to have children. Intentions are important predictors of childbearing behavior, and whether or not couples have children reflects each individual partner's intentions of having a child (Rindfuss, Morgan, and Swicegood 1988). Childbearing outcomes, because they are shared by the couple, provide no insight into *how* stepchildren influence couples' fertility decisions. When the goal is to *understand* human behavior, not merely predict it, it is important to identify the determinants of intentions (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980:6). However, recent work suggests that fertility intentions alone are inadequate predictors of fertility (Heaton, Jacobson, and Holland 1999; Schoen et al. 1999). Thus, I measure the effect of stepchildren on both individual childbearing intentions and couples' actual risk of having a child. Moreover, following Thomson's (1997) work, I take a couple-level approach and include reports of intentions from main respondents and their spouse or partner to account for disagreement in intentions between partners.[1]

Finally, I determine whether factors associated with stepfamily structure and complexity moderate these effects, namely the parenting configuration of the couple, their union status, the stepchildren's residence, and the gender of the biological parent and stepparent. Aside from Vikat et al.'s (1999) Swedish study, no study systematically tests for such interactions. Variation in these factors may underlie the ambiguous findings of previous research on stepfamily fertility in the United States.

STEPCHILDREN AND FERTILITY

Namboodiri (1972) established that couples make childbearing decisions sequentially, reevaluating their desires for children after the birth of each child. Because children are associated with high opportunity and financial costs in Western societies, fertility intentions and birth probabilities tend to decline with increasing parity, i.e., number of biological children (Miller and Pasta 1995; Rindfuss and Parnell 1989; Schoen et al. 1997).[2] However, the effect of stepchildren on fertility is much less clear. Most empirical studies find that stepchildren reduce couples' risk of having a child. Studies based on Current Population Survey (CPS) data show that mothers' previous number of children is negatively related to fertility in remarriage (Bumpass 1984; Glick and Lin 1987; Wineberg 1990a). Glick and Lin's (1987) results from the 1980 CPS show an inverse relationship between mothers' number of children before remarriage and childbearing thereafter. Using data from the 1985 CPS, Wineberg (1990a) found that the probability of giving birth in a second marriage was lower among women with parities of two or more, but not among women with one child. Neither study considered the previous children of fathers. Bumpass (1984) reports similar results using the 1980 CPS when he shifts the unit of analysis to children. Children living with more full siblings were less likely to have a half-sibling born in their mothers' remarriage than children with fewer siblings. Children with previously married stepfathers were also less likely to have a half-sibling. Other work using the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) suggests that women with children from previous relationships have a lower risk of childbearing in marriage (Lillard and Waite 1993). Results are similar in studies of post-marital fertility that include women in cohabiting unions (Brown 2000; Loomis and Landale 1994).

Two studies of remarried U.S. couples suggest that stepchildren have no effect on childbearing. Using the 1973 National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG), Griffith et al. (1985) found that a remarried woman's number of previous children does not impact her probability of bearing a child. These authors argue that children are necessary to "cement" the new marriage, regardless of how many children were born prior to the current union. Likewise, Ganong and Coleman (1988), using a snowball sample of resident stepfamilies, found that women's number of previous children was not significantly different for stepfamilies with and without children born within the remarriage. Similar to Bumpass (1984), both studies provide indirect evidence that the previous children of husbands lower fertility. Griffith et al. (1985) found that women with previously married husbands (used as a proxy of previous children) are less likely to have a child in remarriage. Ganong and Coleman (1988) found that couples in resident stepfather households were more likely to have reproduced if the father had no previous children. However, these results are confounded by the residential status of the children.

Vikat et al. (1999) examined stepfamily fertility in Sweden. In contrast to previous work, their study is based on reports of both men and women, and includes couples in first marriages, cohabiting couples, and couples with nonresident stepchildren. Results suggest that pre-union children do not affect couples' risk of having their first child together, supporting the authors' hypothesis that couples have children to demonstrate their commitment to each other. A second hypothesis was that stepsiblings may "substitute" for full siblings. Results show that although pre-union children exert a negative effect on second-order births, the risk of a second-order birth was significantly higher when the couple's first child was born before the union than within the union. Thus, results do not support a full "sibling effect" of stepchildren.

In sum, previous research on stepchildren and fertility has been limited in scope and has produced rather mixed results. Moreover, despite a plethora of research on the unique challenges of stepfamily life, these studies have not drawn upon this literature. Qualitative work has shed some light on the complexity of this process, but these studies are based on interviews of couples that ultimately had a child together (Beer 1989; Bernstein 1989). Nor have empirical studies advanced our knowledge as how and why fertility decisions may differ in the stepfamily context. This work tends to be atheoretical (Glick and Lin 1987), or stepchildren are included merely as a control (Brown 2000; Lillard and Waite 1993; Loomis and Landale 1994). Or, hypotheses are guided by ideas about traditional functions of children, e.g., conferring adult status, confirming commitment to the union (Ganong and Coleman 1988; Griffith et al. 1985; Vikat et al. 1999; Wineberg 1990a), and the financial and opportunity costs associated with children already born (Bumpass 1984), rather than ideas about the meaning of stepchildren in families.

STEPCHILDREN AS SOCIAL CAPITAL

Scholars have drawn upon Coleman's (1988) concept of social capital to explain why people in low-fertility societies continue to have children when the economic and opportunity costs of doing so are so high. Schoen et al. (1997) suggest that people have children to create social capital for themselves. Whereas human capital refers to the skills and knowledge acquired by an individual, social capital exists in the *relations* among persons (Coleman 1988:S100-S101). In families, social capital exists in relationships between parents and their children, as well as other family members. Coleman (1988:S101) argues that the function of social capital is in "the value of these aspects of social structure to actors as resources that they can use to achieve their interests."

Based on these ideas, Schoen et al. (1997:337) propose that adults are motivated to have children because, "children create social capital by establishing new relations among persons." Children are valuable because they provide their parents with social integration with family and friends as well as social and emotional support. Empirical results show that people who feel that having children is important for creating relationships with others are more likely to intend to have a child (Schoen et al. 1997).

Coleman (1988) does not differentiate between biological children and stepchildren in his discussion of social capital, nor do Schoen et al. (1997) consider stepchildren in their analyses. However, evidence suggests that stepchildren provide less social capital than children shared by both partners in a union. The idea that children from previous unions provide fewer benefits than children from current unions has appeared in the literature. Becker, Landes, and Michael (1977) suggest that children are "marital-specific capital," and are therefore less valuable to their parents' subsequent unions. In support of their argument, the authors provide evidence suggesting that children from previous marriages increase the probability of divorce for remarried women. Others have reported an increased risk of marital dissolution among couples with stepchildren, suggesting that stepchildren are a destabilizing rather than an integrating force (Booth and Edwards 1992; Lillard and Waite 1993).

Indeed, rather than helping to establish new relationships, stepchildren represent links to past sexual entanglements. Contact with "quasi-kin" (the stepchild's other biological parent and their kin) has been shown to negatively affect relations between stepfamily members (Ahrons and Wallisch 1987; Berman 1986; Bohannan 1970). Stepchildren provide fewer opportunities for social interaction as well. Stepchildren leave home earlier than biological children and have less contact with stepsiblings than full siblings as adults (White and Booth 1985; White and

Riedmann 1992). Grandparents have less contact with step- grandchildren than biological grandchildren, and tend to exclude step- grandchildren from inheritances, gifts of money, and family heirlooms (Furstenberg and Spanier 1987). Couples with stepchildren receive less social support from extended family members and the larger community (Booth and Edwards 1992; Cherlin 1978).

Additionally, Coleman (1988) argues that weak relationships between parents and children may contribute to a general lack of social capital in the family. Stepparents are less involved in parenting than biological parents, and tend to be ambivalent about their role in the family (Giles-Sims 1984; Schweble, Fine, and Renner 1991, Thomson, McLanahan, and Curtin 1992). Relationships between stepparents and stepchildren are of poorer quality compared to biological parent-child relationships (Bray and Berger 1993a; Ganong and Coleman 1987; Hobart 1987), and biological parent-child relationships are weaker in stepfamilies than original two-parent families (Hetherington and Jodl 1994; Lawton, Silverstein, and Bengston 1994).

Social networks in stepfamilies may also lack “closure” among its members, a form of social capital not specific to the family (Coleman 1988). Structures that lack closure are those in which some of the actors do not share a relationship. Unlike stepfamilies formed through widowhood in which lost kin are "replaced," stepfamilies resulting from divorce simply add new kin to the existing family structure, which makes family relationships much less clear (Fast and Cain 1966). Additionally, adult members of the stepfamily network tend to minimize contact and communication with one another, such that a pattern of "parallel parenting" develops between formerly married couples and new spouses (Furstenberg and Nord 1985). Parents in this type of social network are less likely to reinforce or sanction each other's behavior toward the children in

the family. This lack of closure may undermine trustworthiness in the social structure needed for the development of obligations and expectations between stepfamily members (Coleman 1988).

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

I am not arguing that stepchildren provide *no* social capital, only *less*. Because stepchildren likely provide *some* social capital to their parents, I expect the net effect of stepchildren on fertility intentions to be negative, consistent with the majority of prior work (Brown 2000; Bumpass 1984; Glick and Lin 1987; Lillard and Waite 1993; Loomis and Landale 1994; Wineberg 1990a). Yet, studies showing that stepchildren do not affect childbearing in new unions (Ganong and Coleman 1988; Griffith et al. 1985; Vikat et al. 1999) suggest that the level of social capital provided by stepchildren is so minimal that they essentially have no impact on childbearing intentions. Either way, previous research has not provided a clear assessment of this relationship. I therefore test the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Number of stepchildren is negatively related to childbearing intentions.

Implicit in previous work is a comparison of the effect of stepchildren and children shared by both partners in a union. However, only one study examined the effect of stepchildren vis-à-vis shared children empirically. Vikat et al. (1999) provide some evidence that compared to children from the current union, stepchildren may have a positive effect on fertility. These findings are consistent with the idea that stepchildren provide less social capital than shared children. Additionally, because stepfamilies are quite structurally diverse, I examine whether several factors moderate this effect. These variables include the couple's current parenting configuration (various combinations of step- and biological children), the residential status of stepchildren

(whether they reside in the household or elsewhere), the gender of the biological parent and stepparent, and the couple's union status (married versus cohabiting).

Hypothesis 2: In contrast to shared children, stepchildren have a positive impact on childbearing intentions.

Previous research has assumed that stepchildren have a direct effect on fertility. Yet, the effect of stepchildren on childbearing behavior may not be straightforward. Childbearing intentions are strong predictors of future fertility, and are assumed to function primarily as a mediator of various family background and structural variables on fertility (Miller and Pasta 1995; Rindfuss et al. 1988). However, Schoen et al.'s (1999) results suggesting that intentions play a very modest mediating role challenge this assumption. These authors show that the effect of parity on the odds of a birth was similar whether or not intentions were included in the model. Thus, examining the effect of stepchildren on intentions alone is inadequate. I assume that the effect of stepchildren on childbearing behavior will be similar in direction and magnitude to its effect on childbearing intentions. However, I anticipate that the effect of stepchildren on childbearing behavior will be indirect as they may be among "situational constraints" that impinge upon individual intentions of having a child (Miller and Pasta 1995). This hypothesis is consistent with evidence highlighting the complicated nature of fertility decisions for couples with stepchildren, which makes a direct path between stepchildren and childbearing unlikely (Bernstein 1989). Moreover, I include a couple-level measure of intentions to capture disagreement in intentions between partners that may reduce couples' risk of having a child (Thomson 1997).

Hypothesis 3: Couples' childbearing intentions mediate the effect of stepchildren on the hazard of a birth.

DATA AND METHODS

Data

Analyses were conducted using data from two waves of the National Survey of Families and Households, a national probability sample of approximately 13,000 respondents randomly selected from each household (Sweet, Bumpass, and Call 1988). When present, partners of cohabiting respondents and spouses of married respondents were asked to complete a subset of the interview questions in a self-administered questionnaire. The first wave (NSFH1), conducted between 1987 and 1988, provides information on sociodemographic characteristics of parents and children, parenting configurations, and the childbearing intentions of each partner. The second wave of the survey (NSFH2), conducted between 1992 and 1994, provides information on the couple's subsequent pregnancies, births, adoptions, and union dissolutions. Of the main respondents participating in NSFH1, 10,008 were reinterviewed in the second wave of the survey. The overall response rate for NSFH1 was 74 percent, and the follow-up response rate was about 82 percent of the original sample (Sweet et al. 1988). Roughly 85 percent of secondary respondents completed the first wave of the survey (this figure is slightly lower for cohabiting than married respondents).

These data contain certain unique features that are especially useful for addressing the relationship between stepchildren and fertility. First, these data contain detailed information on the previous fertility experiences and intentions of main respondents, *and their partners*, as well as childbearing outcomes. These data are not available together in other national surveys such as

the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG), The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY), or The Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID). This allows for couple-level analyses, which is the most appropriate measurement strategy for understanding fertility behavior (Thomson 1997). Moreover, an important advantage of the NSFH is that it directly asks respondents about children from previous unions living in other households. Other data sources require the indirect identification of nonresident stepchildren because they do not attempt to gather data on children living outside the household (e.g., Current Population Survey). Second, unlike other national data sources listed above, the NSFH allows analyses of men's fertility, which improves upon prior work that focuses exclusively on women. The NSFH contains rich retrospective and prospective data from the perspective of both male and female respondents. Third, the NSFH has oversampled certain underrepresented groups such as single-parent families, stepfamilies, cohabitors, ethnic minorities, and recently married couples such that sample sizes are large enough for rigorous statistical analyses. Fourth, the NSFH provides longitudinal data that allow for the prediction of childbearing behavior based on previous sociodemographic conditions and behavioral intentions.

Analytic Samples

Two analytic samples are used for testing the effect of stepchildren on individual childbearing intentions. Both analytic samples are derived from a main sample of 7,437 primary respondents in married or cohabiting unions at NSFH1. Respondents must be currently living with their partner to be considered in a union. Because I am interested in fertility decisions, this sample is limited to 3,016 fecund couples of childbearing age (the female partner is under 40 and neither partner has been sterilized).[3] I also exclude about 5% of couples in which the woman is currently pregnant because it cannot be determined whether reports of birth intentions are in

reference to the expected child or subsequent children (Thomson 1997). Couples in which the main respondent does not provide valid answers on fertility intentions or certainty of intentions (6%) were dropped. A few cases missing on union duration and race were removed, and cases missing on education (less than 1%), income (3%), church attendance (1%), and partner relationship quality (6%) were coded to the mean. The latter criteria resulted in a first analytic sample of 2,754, used for testing the effect of number of stepchildren on childbearing intentions (Hypothesis 1). I refer to this sample as the full sample. Analyses concerning the effect of stepchildren relative to shared children (Hypothesis 2) are based on a restricted sample of 1,935 respondents who have any biological, adopted, or stepchildren under age 18 (i.e., 819 respondents with no children were removed to create a sample of parents).

A third analytic sample used for analyses of childbearing behavior is based on 2,175 married and cohabiting couples at NSFH1 with a completed secondary respondent questionnaire. These analyses require valid information on fertility intentions for both partners. Similar to the analysis of intentions, this sample includes couples in which the female partner is under 40, not currently pregnant, and neither partner has been sterilized. Missing data with respect to either partner's sociodemographic characteristics was handled in the manner described above. Additionally, main respondents must have completed NSFH2 in order to provide information on the couple's subsequent births, pregnancies, and adoptions occurring since the first wave. Secondary respondents need not have completed NSFH2. Eighty-four percent of main respondents completed both NSFH1 and NSFH2, reducing the sample to 1,816. The response rate at NSFH2 does not vary with couples' intentions for children or number of shared children, but attrition is slightly higher for individuals who report stepchildren. Whereas 83% of main respondents with no stepchildren were reinterviewed, 79% of main respondents with stepchildren completed both

waves. Analyses were further limited to 1,798 couples in which main respondents reported valid information on births, pregnancies, adoptions, and union dissolutions between waves of the survey. Hypothesis 3 is tested with this sample.

The main limitations of these samples are the relatively young ages of the main respondents and their partners, and the fact that only fecund couples are included. Thus, results of analyses may not be representative all couples making childbearing decisions--older couples are increasingly having children, and sterile couples still have the option of adopting a child or reversing the sterilization procedure. Analyses of childbearing behavior are further limited by the secondary respondent response rate and sample attrition between NSFH1 and NSFH2.

Analyses are based on respondents in married and cohabiting unions at NSFH1 because, by definition, adults who have stepchildren are people in a union with a partner who has a child from a previous relationship. However, a sample based on currently married and cohabiting couples is left truncated. Left truncation occurs when the subject has been exposed to the risk of experiencing an event for a while before coming under observation (Guo 1993). Respondents who report being in a union at NSFH1 have been at risk for having a child with their current partner since their union began, or since the birth of their last biological child together. Since the date the couple's union began is known, I use a "conditional likelihood approach" to address this limitation (Guo 1993). This means that the couple's likelihood of experiencing a birth is conditioned on their having survived to the start of the observation period. This is handled by removing couples from the risk set between the start of their union and the date of the initial survey (Allison 1995). However, it should be noted that couples with shorter union durations are likely to have been excluded from the sample entirely because their unions are less likely to have survived long enough to be observed, biasing the sample toward more stable couples (Guo

1993). Because childbearing in stepfamilies tends to occur soon after the beginning of the couple's union (Bumpass 1984), these data do not capture an unknown amount of fertility among couples with stepchildren.

Measures

Childbearing intentions. Following Thomson and Brandreth's (1995) findings, I use Thomson's (1997) interval-level measure of childbearing intentions. This measure is based on the questions, "Do you intend to have a(nother) child sometime?" If respondents answered "no," they were asked, "How sure are you that you will not have (more) children--very, moderately, not at all sure?" If respondents answered "yes," they were asked, "How sure are you that you will have (more) children--very, moderately, not at all sure?" These responses are combined and scored from 1 (very sure no child) to 7 (very sure have a child). This scoring results in a larger interval (3 to 5) between those who intend and do not intend to have a child but are "not at all sure" about their intentions, than between intentions in the same direction but with different levels of certainty (Thomson 1997). It is important to differentiate *certainty of intentions,* because Miller and Pasta (1995:534) argue that, "the stronger the intention to have a(nother) child, the sooner the decision to implement will be made."[4]

A couple-level measure of childbearing intentions, included in models of childbearing behavior, is constructed by comparing each partner's individual childbearing intentions. The couple measure incorporates disagreement in partners' intentions. Partners either: (1) disagree in their intentions ("disagree"), (2) partners agree and intend to have a child ("agree and intend"), or (3) partners agree and intend not to have a child ("agree and do not intend"). Couples are coded as disagreeing when partners disagree on whether they intend to have a child *or* disagree in their level of certainty (see Miller and Pasta, 1995; Schoen et al. 1999; Thomson 1997 for similar

strategies). Thus, agreeing couples are in agreement with respect to the direction of their intentions *and* their level of certainty.

Childbearing behavior. At NSFH2, main respondents report the month and year of their children's births and adoptions occurring since NSFH1, as well as whether the female partner is currently pregnant at NSFH2 (the date of pregnancies is not reported). Only the first birth, pregnancy, or adoption after NSFH1 is considered. Couples in the same marriage or cohabitation at NSFH1 and NSFH2 were coded as having a child if a birth or adoption was reported or if the female partner was pregnant at NSFH2. Couples who separated between waves of the survey were coded as having a child only if the birth or adoption occurred before the end of the couple's union.

The starting date of exposure to a birth was calculated from either (1) the date the couple's union began, if the couple had no biological or adopted children together at NSFH1; (2) the birth date of the most recent biological child the couple had together, if the couple report having shared biological children at NSFH1; (3) the date that the most recent adopted child came to live with the couple, if the couple has adopted children together; or, (4) either the birth date of the most recent biological child or the date that the most recent adopted child came to live with the couple (which ever is most recent), for couples who have both adopted and shared children.[5]

Couples' survival time was calculated in months starting from the date of exposure and ending with the earlier of (1) the date of the couple's first birth or adoption; (2) the date of separation of the couple (for couples who did not stay together until NSFH2); (3) the NSFH2 interview date (if the couple stayed together until NSFH2); or (4) five months after the NSFH2 survey month (for couples who report a pregnancy at NSFH2).

Stepchildren. Stepchildren are defined broadly as either partner's biological (or adopted) children under age 18 from a previous union. Stepchildren may reside with the couple or in another household. I use two measures of stepchildren to operationalize my hypotheses. For testing Hypotheses 1, a measure of the couple's number stepchildren (0, 1, 2+) is used. For testing Hypothesis 2, this variable is coded dichotomously as "none" versus "some" stepchildren. Because the latter hypothesis is tested with a sample of parents, "none" indicates couples who have shared children together and no stepchildren.

I use main respondents' reports of the couple's stepchildren. Thus, stepchildren may be reported by their biological parents or their stepparents (the reports of the stepparent and biological parent match 75% of the time).[6,7] Only minor stepchildren at NSFH1 are considered because data on adult stepchildren is incomplete. Stepchildren who have been adopted by their stepparent are considered shared children rather than stepchildren, because after adoption stepparents become legally responsible for their stepchild (Bray and Berger 1993b). However, some researchers classify adopted stepchildren as stepchildren (Moorman and Hernandez 1989; Norton and Miller 1992).

Control Variables. Control variables included in multivariate analyses are drawn from previous fertility and stepfamily research. Analyses of individual childbearing intentions include the sociodemographic characteristics of main respondents, whereas analyses of childbearing behavior include the characterstics of both partners. Age is coded as a continuous variable in number of years. Age is negatively related to childbearing among married and remarried women (Ganong and Coleman 1988; Griffith et al. 1984; Myers 1997), and couples with stepchildren tend to be younger than couples with biological children (Moorman and Hernandez 1989). Race is coded dichotomously as non-white and white. Evidence is mixed regarding racial differences

in fertility among married and cohabiting individuals (Bumpass and Sweet 1989; Myers 1997; Rindfuss and Parnell 1989). Minorities are overrepresented in stepfamilies compared to original two-parent families (Bumpass et al. 1995; Moorman and Hernandez 1989; Thomson 1994), and blacks may perceive stepparenting differently than whites (Cherlin and Furstenberg 1994; MacDonald and DeMaris 1996; Marsiglio 1992). Due to multicollinearity issues, only the wife's age and race are included in models of childbearing behavior.

Analyses not limited to parents include a measure of the respondent's parity. Because I measure stepchildren in terms of the *couple* (the stepchildren of either partner), parity is not measured in the conventional way. I use parity to refer to the number of children born within the current union, or *shared* children.

Level of education is coded as four dummy variables, "less than high school," "high school," "some college," and "college degree or above." The effect of education on fertility behavior within married and cohabiting unions is mixed (Heaton et al. 1999; Myers 1997; Rindfuss and Parnell 1989; Schoen et al. 1997; Thomson 1997), and women's education may have no effect on fertility in remarriage (Griffith et al. 1985). Parents in stepfamilies tend to be less educated than parents in original two-parent families (Moorman and Hernandez 1989; Thomson 1994), and research is mixed as to whether stepparents' level of education influences relationships with stepchildren (Duberman 1973; MacDonald and DeMaris 1996; Marsiglio 1992). Dummy variables are used to indicate full-time (35 hours +), part-time (1-34 hours), or no employment. Women's employment is associated with lower fertility (Bachu 1993; Loomis and Landale 1994), and couples with stepchildren tend to have higher levels of employment than couples in two-parent families (Bachrach 1983; Thomson 1994). Religiosity is measured by four dummy variables, "never," "yearly," "monthly," and "weekly" attendance. I focus on religiosity

because differences in fertility by religious affiliation have nearly disappeared in the United States (Goldscheider and Mosher 1991). On the other hand, Americans who attend church more often tend to have higher fertility (Mosher and Hendershot 1984; Williams and Zimmer 1990).

Several union characteristics are included as controls. Couples are coded as either married or cohabiting (1=cohabiting). Fertility intentions and birth rates are higher in married than cohabiting unions (Bachrach 1987; Loomis and Landale 1994; Rindfuss and VandenHeuvel 1990), including cohabiting unions formed after divorce (Wineberg and McCarthy 1998). The number of times the main respondent has been married (including the current marriage) is coded as dummy variables from "never," to "once," or "twice or more." Multiple marriages are associated with weak family relationships, as well as marital and mental health problems (Ambert 1989; Palisi et al. 1991). Marital satisfaction is higher in first marriages than remarriages, and among remarried men than remarried women (Vemer et al. 1989).

The duration of the current union is measured as a continuous variable in number of years. This measure accounts for the duration of the stepparent-stepchild relationship as well as the relationship between partners. Durations are measured from the start of the married or cohabiting union until the NSFH1 interview date. If married respondents cohabited with their current spouse prior to their current marriage, union duration is measured from the start of the cohabitation (Bumpass et al. 1995; Thomson 1994; Papernow 1993). Couples with stepchildren tend to have shorter union durations than couples without stepchildren (Moorman and Hernandez 1989), and the likelihood of having a child declines the longer couples have been married (Myers 1997). Some research suggests that stepparents and stepchildren develop more positive relationships over time (Amato 1987; MacDonald and DeMaris 1996; Papernow 1993), whereas

other work suggests that relationships between stepparents and stepchildren may remain stable or even worsen (Bray 1992; Bray, Berger, and Boethel 1994; Ganong and Coleman 1994).

The gap in age between partners is measured as a continuous variable in number of years. Women and men in second marriages tend to be further apart in age, which is related to lower fertility and lower marital happiness (Ambert 1989; Griffith et al. 1985; Lin 1990). The total earnings of the couple is calculated as the sum of the total earnings of each partner (wages, salary, and self-employment income). In cases where one partner is missing on earnings information, the earnings of the other partner substitutes for the earnings of the couple. Among married couples, income is negatively related to childbearing, but is not related to intentions to have children (Myers 1997; Schoen et al. 1997). Stepfamilies may have lower earnings than original two-parent families (Moorman and Hernandez 1989), or just lower savings and investments (Thomson 1994). Research is mixed as to how family income affects stepparent-stepchild relationships (MacDonald and DeMaris 1996; Santrock and Sitterle 1987).

Analyses of intentions based on the parent sample control for the total number of children in the family (biological, adopted, and stepchildren) and the age of the youngest child (in years). Stepfamilies tend to be larger and have older children than original two-parent families (Bachrach 1983; Thomson 1994). Having only older school-aged children, as opposed to young children, has been shown to deter childbearing (Griffith et al. 1985; Loomis and Landale 1994).

A measure of the quality of respondents' relationship with their partner is included in all multivariate analyses. Analyses of childbearing behavior include reports of relationship quality from both partners. Respondents were asked, "Taking all things together, how would you describe your marriage/relationship?" This is a continuous measure ranging on a seven-point scale from "very unhappy" to "very happy."[8] Marital happiness has been found to have a positive

impact on childbearing (Myers 1997), and the presence of stepchildren in the household is negatively related to marital happiness (White and Booth 1985). How marital quality influences relationships with stepchildren is unclear (MacDonald and DeMaris 1996; Marsiglio 1992; Saint-Jacques 1995).

Analysis

Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression is used for the analysis of intentions. The six-category measure of individual fertility intentions stands up to tests for interval-level measurement (Thomson and Brandreth 1995). However, all OLS analyses are run using a logistic regression model and a dichotomous measure of intentions ("intend" versus "do not intend") as a precaution. Results produced by this method are similar to results generated by OLS and lead to the same substantive conclusions, but for ease of presentation, only the OLS results are shown.

A proportional hazards model is used for the analysis of childbearing behavior (Cox 1972). Birth risks are based on the number of months from the time of the couples' last birth or adoption (for couples who have a shared child) or the start date of the couples' union (for couples with no shared children) to their first birth, adoption, or pregnancy between waves of the survey. Couples are censored if they do not experience a birth before their date of separation (for couples who did not stay together until NSFH2), or the NSFH2 interview date (if the couple stayed together until NSFH2). I estimate the model using the PHREG procedure in the SAS statistical package.

The analytic strategy is as follows. To test Hypothesis 1, I run a zero-order model to assess the effect of couples' number of stepchildren (0, 1, 2+) on individual childbearing intentions using the full sample ("0" is the contrast category). In three additional models, I sequentially add

controls for the respondent's sociodemographic characteristics, union characteristics, and relationship quality.

Hypothesis 2 is tested using the parent sample. Here, the goal is to assess the effect of stepchildren relative to shared children. I test a model that determines whether having some stepchildren, as opposed to none, has a positive impact on individual childbearing intentions, net of controls for the respondent's sociodemographic characteristics, union characteristics, and relationship quality. This contrast provides a test of Hypothesis 2 because, in a sample restricted to parents, having no stepchildren indicates that the couple has only shared children.

Hypothesis 3 is concerned with the effect of stepchildren on childbearing behavior. I test a zero-order model that assesses the effect of couples' number of stepchildren on the risk of having a child. Then, I test this effect net of controls for each partner's sociodemographic characteristics, characteristics of the union, and relationship quality. I test a third model that includes a couple measure of intentions to have a child in addition to the above variables, to determine whether the effect of stepchildren on the hazard of a birth is direct, or indirect through childbearing intentions.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Table1 compares the childbearing intentions of respondents who have no children, only shared children, and any stepchildren. Respondents with no children have the strongest intentions to have a child. About 80% of childless respondents intend to have a child (with varying degrees of certainty), whereas about half of respondents who have shared children or stepchildren intend to have a child. Respondents with shared children and stepchildren also have

significantly lower mean childbearing intentions than childless respondents (3.9 and 4.0, respectively, compared to 5.6), but their intentions are not statistically different from each other.

Table 1 About Here

Multivariate Results

A distribution of the independent variables included in multivariate analyses of fertility intentions is presented in Table 2.[9] The results in Table 3 provide a test of Hypothesis 1. Model 1 shows the zero-order effect of number of stepchildren on childbearing intentions. Respondents with one, or two or more, stepchildren have significantly weaker intentions of having a child than respondents with no stepchildren, and these variables make a significant contribution to the model of intentions (results not shown). This effect is linear, i.e., a greater negative impact is observed among respondents with two or more stepchildren than among respondents with one stepchild.

Table 2 & Table 3 About Here

Model 2 adds controls for respondents' sociodemographic characteristics. These variables make a significant contribution to the model but do not change the baseline model of intentions. Females have significantly weaker childbearing intentions than males, older respondents have significantly weaker intentions than younger respondents, and the effect of race is not significant. Respondents who have one, or two or more, children with their current partner (i.e., parity) have weaker childbearing intentions than respondents with no shared children. More educated respondents have stronger childbearing intentions than high school graduates and respondents who either don't attend church, or attend church monthly, have significantly weaker childbearing intentions than those who attend services weekly. Employment is not related to intentions of having a child.

Model 3 includes controls for respondents' union characteristics. These variables make a significant contribution to the model of childbearing intentions and these factors do not explain the negative effect of stepchildren. Results show that cohabitors have significantly weaker childbearing intentions than married respondents, as do respondents who have been in their union longer and lower income respondents. Once union characteristics are controlled, results show that respondents with less than a high school education have significantly stronger fertility intentions than respondents with a high school diploma. Additionally, the negative effect of having one shared child is reduced to a nonsignificant level. Neither respondents' number of marriages nor the age gap between partners is associated with childbearing intentions.

Model 4 includes respondents' level of happiness with their partner. This variable makes a significant contribution to the model of childbearing intentions and stepchildren continue to have a negative effect on intentions. As expected, respondents who are happier in their relationship have significantly stronger intentions of having a child. The addition of this variable does not alter the effects of the other variables in the model. These results suggest that the negative effect of stepchildren on childbearing intentions is not explained by differences in marital quality between respondents with and without stepchildren. These results support Hypothesis 1 that the number of stepchildren of the couple is negatively related to childbearing intentions.[10]

Next, I turn to the question of whether stepchildren are associated with stronger childbearing intentions than children shared by both partners (Hypothesis 2). For these analyses my sample shifts to parents. Model 1 in Table 4 shows the effect of having some stepchildren (of either partner) as opposed to no stepchildren, i.e., shared children. Although in the correct direction, the effect of stepchildren is not significant. With the exception of union status, which in this model has no effect, the effects of the covariates are similar to Model 4 in Table 3. The couple's

total number of children and the age of their youngest child have a negative effect on intentions. These results do not support Hypothesis 2.

Table 4 About Here

Given the diversity in stepfamily structure, I consider whether the effect of stepchildren depends on the parenting configuration of the couple. First, I distinguish couples based on whether only the main respondent, only the partner, or both the main respondent and partner have stepchildren, i.e., "own step," "partner step," and "both step." The results in Model 2 show that, compared to respondents with shared children (the reference group), intentions to have a child are significantly stronger among respondents in which the partner is the stepparent ("partner step"). That is, when the respondent has his or her own biological children from a previous union. Additional analyses reveal a second-order interaction with the gender of the parent and the residence of the stepchild (results not shown). The positive effect of having biological children from a previous union only holds true for fathers with children living outside of the household.[11] These results make sense given that nonresident fathers tend to have low levels of contact with absent children. Women with children from a previous union and men whose previous children reside in the household do not have stronger intentions of having a child.

In Model 3, definitions of couples' parenting is further refined based on whether they have any shared children together, i.e., "no shared" versus "shared." Although this is a sample of parents with respect to the couple, some of the individuals may not have any of their own biological children. With this additional distinction, I can distinguish respondents who have no biological children from those who have biological children from previous and/or current unions. Results show that respondents who have stepchildren and no biological children ("own step and

no shared") and respondents whose partners have stepchildren and no biological children ("partner step and no shared") have significantly stronger childbearing intentions than respondents with shared children (the reference group). Thus, childbearing intentions are stronger when one of the partners is childless.[12] Among couples in which each partner has previous biological children, but do not share a child together ("both step & no shared"), respondents do not have stronger intentions of having a child (the effect is positive but not significant). Whereas stepchildren do not appear to "substitute" for first-born children, stepchildren may substitute for shared children should each partner already have a biological child.[13]

The remainder of the analysis is concerned with the effect of number of stepchildren on childbearing behavior. The unit of analysis shifts from individuals to couples. Table 5 presents a distribution of the independent variables included in the multivariate analysis, which closely mirrors that of Table 2 (note that analyses control for characteristics of both partners). Model 1 in Table 6 shows the zero-order effect of having one, and two or more, stepchildren on the relative risk of having a child, compared to having no stepchildren. Relative risks are the exponentiated values of the regression coefficients (e^b) and indicate the change in risk associated with a one-unit change in the variable of interest. Relative risks less than 1.00 indicate a reduced risk whereas relative risks greater than 1.00 indicate an enhanced risk. Couples with two or more stepchildren have a lower risk of having a child. Compared to couples with no stepchildren, having two or more stepchildren reduces couples' hazard of a birth by about 35% (1.00 - .646 = .354). The effect of having one stepchild, although negative, is not statistically significant.

Table 5 and Table 6 About Here

Model 2 in Table 6 adds controls for the sociodemographic characteristics of both partners, union characteristics, and relationship quality. Including these variables reduces somewhat the negative effect of having two or more stepchildren on the risk of a birth, but does not entirely account for the negative effect. The effect of having one stepchild remains nonsignificant. In additional analyses limited to a sample of parents, the effect of stepchildren and shared children on the risk of having a child was similar, and factors associated with stepfamily structure did not moderate this effect (results available upon request).

The hazard of a birth is related to the age and education of the wife, and wives who report greater happiness with their relationship have an increased risk of having a child. Couples with one child together have a birth hazard that is over 75% higher than that of couples with no shared children, whereas the effect of having two or more shared children is similar to having none. Cohabiting couples are at a significantly lower risk of having a child than married couples. The hazard of a birth is lower among couples in longer unions, couples with larger gaps in age between partners, and lower income couples.

Model 3 in Table 6 is concerned with whether stepchildren affect fertility directly, or indirectly through couples' intentions of having a child (Hypothesis 3). The childbearing intentions of the couple are included in the model to determine whether the effect of stepchildren is mediated by couples' intentions of having a child. Couples' intentions to have children are strongly associated with the hazard of a birth. This effect is very similar in a zero-order model and in a model with number of stepchildren alone (results not shown). Including intentions significantly improves the fit of the model. Compared to disagreeing couples, couples who agree and do not intend a child have a 63% lower risk of having a child, whereas couples who agree and intend a child have a 59% higher risk of having a child. These results are similar to findings

of previous work (Thomson 1997). Moreover, including couples' intentions to have children in the model reduces the effect of two or more stepchildren to a nonsignificant level, suggesting that fertility intentions are the avenue through which stepchildren lower fertility. These results support Hypothesis 3, indicating that stepchildren influence childbearing indirectly through childbearing intentions. Similar to Schoen et al.'s (1999) findings, intentions play only a minor mediating role with respect to the other variables in the model. Several covariates have a direct effect on the risk of a birth, including couples' parity, net of intentions.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study demonstrate that stepchildren are important predictors of fertility intentions and behavior among stepfamilies living in diverse contexts. I have found clear evidence to support Hypothesis 1. Stepchildren are negatively related to intentions of having children. These results suggest that Schoen et al.'s (1997) notion of children as providers of social capital may be extended to include children from previous as well as current unions. These findings discount the idea that children are necessary to "cement" new unions, regardless of the presence of children from previous relationships. Rather, spouses with divergent fertility histories take each other's children into account when deciding to have a child together. Moreover, the effect of stepchildren on intentions is linear. Childbearing intentions decline with increasing numbers of stepchildren. These results stand in contrast to the effect of shared children. The intentions of respondents with one shared child are not significantly lower than the intentions of respondents with no shared children. Other researchers, having reported similar findings, suggest that parents may want to avoid having only children (Schoen et al. 1997; Thomson, 1997). On the other hand, a single stepchild reduces childbearing intentions. Perhaps

individuals with stepchildren, already part of a nontraditional family, are less concerned with adhering to the idealized two-child family model.

Hypothesis 2 was generally not supported. Controlling for family size and sociodemographic characteristics, individuals with shared children and stepchildren have similar childbearing intentions. It is puzzling that stepchildren and shared children have the same negative effect on fertility intentions and behavior despite theoretical evidence that stepchildren do not provide as much social capital. One explanation is that stepchildren provide as much social capital as shared children. However, this seems unlikely in light of what is currently known about stepparent-stepchild relationships and stepfamily life. Another possibility is that although stepchildren provide fewer emotional and social benefits, they incur greater costs that may, in a sense, "balance-out" the effect. These costs may be related to increased role strain, parenting difficulties, financial obligations, and loyalty issues that discourage couples from adding new children to the family (Bernstein 1989).

However, results suggest that several structural factors moderate the effect of stepchildren vis-à-vis shared children. The effect of stepchildren varies by the gender of the biological parent and the stepchildren's residence. I found stronger childbearing intentions among men with nonresident children, which suggests that stepchildren who live outside the household do not provide adequate social capital to their biological fathers. Because I include men in my sample in addition to women, and control for the residence of the children, these results provide more reliable evidence of gender differences than prior work that relies on proxy measures of husband's fertility (Bumpass 1984; Ganong and Coleman 1988; Griffith et al. 1985). I also found stronger childbearing intentions among stepparents who have no biological children of their own (and among respondents whose partner is a childless stepparent). This effect is

understandable given the symbolic meaning attached to having one's own biological child (Fawcett 1986). For instance, stepchildren do not allow women to experience childbirth nor men the opportunity to express their masculinity. These results are also consistent with Vikat et al.'s (1999) findings suggesting that pre-union children do not fully substitute for full-siblings in families.

I found support for Hypothesis 3. First, when intentions are excluded from the model, my results are similar to those of previous work (Wineberg 1990a). Couples with two or more stepchildren have lower birth risks, whereas couples with one stepchild and no stepchildren have similar birth risks. However, results differ from those of Vikat et al. (1999), who found a negative effect of pre-union children on fertility only with respect to the couple's second shared child. The authors attribute these differences to the fact that the Swedish government provides considerable support with respect to parenting and gender equality whereas the U.S. has no such policies.

However, the effect of stepchildren on childbearing behavior is not straightforward. Couples' intentions of having a child mediate this effect, which suggests that models that omit intentions are misspecified and may produce biased estimates. It is interesting that stepchildren affect childbearing behavior through intentions to have children, whereas shared children have a direct impact on childbearing. Behaviors that are more or less "automatic" do not necessarily operate through intentions, because individuals do not scrutinize every behavior they engage in (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980). Perhaps because shared children are more normative, their effect on childbearing decisions is less complicated. On the other hand, research shows that childbearing intentions are subject to modification as changes in family circumstances arise (Heaton et al. 1999). Although not tested in the present study, these results are not incompatible with the idea

that acquiring stepchildren produces shifts in childbearing intentions, which in turn affects childbearing behavior. Moreover, variables associated with the structure and complexity of the stepfamily matter to childbearing behavior only to the extent that they affect individual intentions of having a child.

The results of this study have implications for both fertility and stepfamily research. The way we typically think about parity, a basic demographic variable, has become less meaningful for describing contemporary families because an underlying assumption of this measure is that children belong to both partners in a union. Growth in stepfamilies suggests the need for a paradigm shift as we incorporate stepchildren into our existing fertility models. Individuals take their own biological children, *and the biological children of their current partners*, into account when deciding to have children. These results suggest a reconceptualization of parity measures in future models of fertility.

Second, results add support to Thomson's (1997) work suggesting that single-sex models based on women's reports are no longer adequate for understanding fertility. Individuals make decisions to have children in relation to the fertility decisions of their current partners. Thus, accurate information concerning both partners' fertility histories is required. Moreover, because stepchildren influence childbearing through couples' rather than individuals' intentions to have children, each partner's intentions to have children must be assessed separately and included in models of behavior.

That stepchildren reduce stepparents' chances of having their own biological children has implications for parent-child relationships, child and adult well-being, and intergenerational support. Stepchildren leave home earlier than biological children, and stepchildren have less contact with their parents as adults (White and Booth 1985; White and Riedmann 1992).

Stepparents who opt out of having their own biological children, especially should their union dissolve, may have fewer alternatives for old-age support. Additionally, the fact that stepparents still have no legal rights means that they cannot make basic decisions nor share responsibility for the some or all of the children in their lives (Fine 1994). We also know relatively little about the long-term consequences of childbearing in stepfamilies in terms of stepfamily cohesion, stability, and relationships between step- and half- siblings.

This research provides further evidence that family relationships are becoming less dependent on biology and more dependent on union formation patterns (Cherlin and Furstenberg 1994; Scanzoni and Marsiglio 1991; Seltzer 1994). The stepfamily is expected to persist as a common family form into the next millennium, indicating that the context in which couples make fertility decisions is becoming increasingly complex. Integrating these changes will lead to a better understanding of fertility patterns in the United States.

[1]In this study, “partner” is used to refer to either a spouse or a cohabiting partner.

[2]However, childlessness and stopping at one child are relatively infrequent (Schoen et al. 1997). Negative stereotypes of only children and changes in gender roles brought about by the first birth may produce a peak in childbearing motivation after the first child (Fawcett 1986). The probability of a birth for couples with one child may be higher than that of couples with no children (Thomson 1997).

[3]The birth rate for women age 40 to 44 has increased 29 percent since 1990, and 87 percent since 1981 (Ventura et al. 1999). Unfortunately, the NSFH excludes women over 40 from questions pertaining to childbearing motivations and intentions.

[4]Childbearing desires are an intermediate step in the fertility decision making process, between childbearing motivations, attitudes, and beliefs, and childbearing intentions (Miller and Pasta 1995; Thomson 1997). A measure of childbearing desires is sometimes included when predicting fertility intentions. The NSFH lacks a prospective question with respect to respondents' desires for children (e.g., "do you want to have a(nother) child sometime?"), and measurement strategies based on a comparison of respondents’ desired number of children and current number of children (see Thomson 1997) are problematic for respondents with stepchildren. Thus, desires for children are not included in the analyses.

[5]For cases in which one partner has adopted the other partner's biological children from a previous union, and the couple has no biological or adopted children together, exposure time is calculated from the start of the couple's union rather than the child's birth date.

[6]Main respondents provide the most reliable information on the children in the family. Relying upon the biological parent’s report would require data from both partners, and secondary

respondents provide incomplete information on biological children from previous unions. Moreover, 17% of secondary respondents did not complete the survey. Although stepparents may underreport stepchildren on surveys, i.e., stepchildren are either reported as biological children (Filinson 1986), or are not reported at all (Pasley 1987), these same concerns may affect biological parents' reports.

[7]Main respondents are asked directly to list stepchildren living in the household at least half the time at NSFH1 (resident stepchildren), as well as the children of spouses and partners living in other households at least half the time (nonresident stepchildren). These are the stepchildren of the main respondent. Identifying the stepchildren of partners (main respondent's children from previous unions) is less straightforward. I use the following questions to determine whether main respondents' resident biological children are children from a previous union or the biological children of their current spouse, (M23) "I've recorded (names) as your biological children. Is (each of these children/he/she) the biological child of your current (husband/wife/partner)?" If no, (M24) "Which ones are not the biological children of your (husband/wife/partner)?" The reliability of these items has been questioned. Rather than use these questions, Bumpass et al. (1995) identify main respondents' children not belonging to spouses with the main respondents' retrospective fertility and union histories. They claim that their method is preferable because they are able to identify children missed in the full-time household roster that is the basis for M23 and M24. However I found that these "missing" children in fact show up in main respondents' "absent child" roster (The authors note that the missing children may live in another household). Thus, questions M23 and M24 are accurate for identifying *resident* children who are not the biological children of the current partner. It can be inferred that main respondents' biological children living in other households are not the children

of the current partner. Combining these two pieces of information yields a count of main respondents' previous biological children (resident and nonresident) comparable to Bumpass et al.'s (1995) method.

[8]Relationship quality was also assessed on a 6-point scale based on respondents' frequency of disagreements with their partner on several issues: household tasks, money, spending time together, sex, having a(nother) child, in-laws, and the children (alpha coefficient is .73). This measure of disagreement did not improve model fit and was subsequently replace with the global measure.

[9]Note that analyses pertaining to *number of* stepchildren (full sample) and stepchildren *relative to* shared children (parent sample) require slightly different measures to account for family size.

[10]In analyses not shown, I limit my measure of stepchildren to the respondent's own stepchildren (the previous biological children of the respondent's partner) and measure parity in the conventional way (*total* number of biological children rather than biological children from the current union). This method produced very similar results.

[11]This interaction produced rather small cell sizes so results should be considered exploratory.

[12]Vikat et al. (1999) also discuss the possibility that the effect of pre-union children on fertility may depend on whether one partner is childless, but were unable to adequately test this hypothesis because partners with no biological children could not be distinguished from partners with nonresident biological children.

[13]I found no evidence of interactions between stepchildren and the union status of the couple or the gender of the stepparent in any of the analyses.

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Table 1. Childbearing Intentions of Respondents, by Type of Children in the Family

	No Children	Only Shared Children[a]	Any Stepchildren[b]	Total
Very sure intend	44.0	22.1	20.3	27.6
Moderately sure intend	27.3	18.6	19.8	21.1
Not at all sure intend	10.7	7.7	8.8	8.7
Not at all sure not intend	3.7	6.8	10.8	6.7
Moderately sure not intend	7.2	21.4	17.6	16.9
Very sure not intend	7.2	23.5	22.7	19.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(819)	(1,332)	(603)	(2,754)
Mean intentions	5.6	3.9	4.0	4.4

Notes: Weighted percentages and means and unweighted Ns. The difference in mean intentions between respondents with shared children and stepchildren is not statistically significant. The mean intentions of respondents with no children are significantly higher than either category at $p < .05$ or better.

[a]Children shared by both partners.

[b]Stepchildren of either partner.

Table 2. Distribution of Independent Variables in Models of Childbearing Intentions

	Full Sample (N=2,754)	Parent Sample (N=1,935)
Number of stepchildren[a]		
None	81.6	----
One	10.3	----
Two or more	8.1	----
Any stepchildren		
None	----	74.9
Some	----	25.1
Respondent characteristics		
Gender		
Male	49.1	47.5
Female	50.9	52.5
Age (mean)	30.1	31.0
Race		
White	79.7	77.2
Non-White	20.3	22.8
Parity[b]		
None	35.9	----
One	28.8	----
Two or more	35.2	----
Education		
< High school	12.0	13.2
High school	37.4	38.7
Some college	25.2	25.0
College degree +	25.5	23.2
Employment		
Not employed	23.1	26.7
Part-time	11.9	12.4
Full-time	64.9	60.9
Church attendance		
Never	22.6	21.1
Yearly	25.6	23.1
Monthly	19.5	19.6
Weekly	32.3	36.2

Table 2. Continued

	Full Sample (N=2,754)	Parent Sample (N=1,935)
Union characteristics		
Union status		
Married	86.2	90.6
Cohabiting	13.8	9.4
Times married		
Never	9.7	5.4
Once	77.7	80.7
Twice +	12.6	13.9
Total number of children	----	2.0
Age of youngest child	----	3.8
Duration of union (years)	6.4	7.5
Gap in partners' age	3.4	3.5
Total earnings	35,523	34,952
Relationship quality	5.9	5.9

Notes: Weighted percentages and unweighted Ns.

[a]Stepchildren of either partner.

[b]Children shared by both partners.

Table 3. OLS Models Predicting Childbearing Intentions, by Number of Stepchildren (Full Sample)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Stepchildren (*ref. none*)				
One	-0.560***	-0.414***	-0.551***	-0.530***
Two or more	-0.783***	-0.743***	-0.931***	-0.909***
Respondent characteristics				
Sex (female)		-0.384***	-0.260**	-0.259**
Age		-0.155***	-0.103***	-0.104***
Race (non-White)		0.006	0.051	0.064
Parity (*ref. none*)				
One		-0.286**	-0.118	-0.089
Two or more		-1.880***	-1.407***	-1.368***
Education (*ref. high school*)				
< High school		0.181	0.264*	0.266*
Some college		0.343***	0.261**	0.278**
College degree +		0.741***	0.507***	0.500***
Employment (*ref. full-time*)				
Not employed		0.049	0.040	0.030
Part-time		0.021	0.023	0.028
Church attendance (*ref. weekly*)				
Never		-0.651***	-0.621***	-0.582***
Yearly		-0.187	-0.177	-0.130
Monthly		-0.351**	-0.359***	-0.334**
Union characteristics				
Union status (cohabiting)			-0.524**	-0.487**
Times married (*ref. once*)				
Never			0.215	0.210
Twice +			-0.180	-0.206
Duration of union (years)			-0.124***	-0.121***
Gap in partners' age			0.004	0.003
Total earnings ($10,000)			0.029**	0.029**
Relationship quality				
Happiness with partner				0.146***
Intercept	4.736***	10.095***	9.049***	8.124***
r^2	0.014	0.348	0.376	0.382

*p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001

Table 4. OLS Models Predicting Childbearing Intentions, by Any Stepchildren (Parent Sample)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Some stepchildren[a]	0.191	----	----
Own step	----	0.001	---
Partner step	----	0.430*	----
Both step	----	0.030	---
Own step & no shared	----	----	0.672**
Own step & shared	----	----	-0.313
Partner step & no shared	----	----	0.928***
Partner step & shared	----	----	0.264
Both step & no shared	----	----	0.539
Both step & shared	----	----	-0.453
Respondent characteristics			
Sex (female)	-0.158	-0.155	-0.134
Age	-0.090***	-0.090***	-0.092***
Race (non-White)	0.046	0.042	0.077
Education (*ref. high school*)			
< High school	0.440**	0.425**	0.405**
Some college	0.202	0.215	0.208
College degree +	0.544***	0.554***	0.537***
Employment (*ref. full-time*)			
Not employed	0.033	0.024	0.036
Part-time	0.021	0.010	0.011
Church attendance (*ref. weekly*)			
Never	-0.561***	-0.551***	-0.536***
Yearly	-0.106	-0.094	-0.058
Monthly	-0.306*	-0.305*	-0.273*
Union characteristics			
Union status (cohabiting)	-0.076	-0.110	-0.301
Times married (*ref. once*)			
Never	-0.105	-0.034	0.034
Twice +	-0.154	-0.239	-0.226
Duration of union (years)	-0.112***	-0.115***	-0.096***
Gap in partners' age	0.022	0.024	0.027*
Total earnings ($10,000)	0.034*	0.035*	0.035*
Total number of children	-0.488***	-0.469***	-0.446***
Age of youngest child	-0.076***	-0.073***	-0.108***
Relationship quality			
Happiness with partner	0.178***	0.179***	0.172***
Intercept	7.642***	7.614***	7.562***
r^2	0.310	0.312	0.318

[a]Reference category is shared children and no stepchildren.

*p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001

Table 5. Distribution of Independent Variables in Models of Childbearing Behavior

	Percent
Number of stepchildren[a]	
None	83.1
One	9.7
Two or more	7.2
Characteristics of wife[b]	
Age (mean)	28.9
Race	
White	86.1
Non-White	13.9
Parity[c]	
None	36.1
One	28.7
Two or more	35.2
Education	
<High school	9.6
High school	35.8
Some college	27.1
College degree+	27.4
Employment	
Not employed	33.6
Part-time	19.2
Full-time	47.2
Church attendance	
Never	17.6
Yearly	31.8
Monthly	21.1
Weekly	29.4
Characteristics of husband[d]	
Education	
<High school	10.5
High school	32.0
Some college	26.6
College degree+	30.9
Employment	
Not employed	7.7
Part-time	4.4
Full-time	87.9

Table 5. Continued

	Percent
Church attendance	
Never	20.5
Yearly	36.8
Monthly	19.3
Weekly	23.4
Union characteristics	
Union status	
Married	87.9
Cohabiting	12.1
Times married	
Never	8.5
Once	78.9
Twice +	12.6
Duration of union (years)	6.3
Gap in partners' age	3.2
Couple earnings	37,224
Relationship quality	
Wife's happiness with husband	6.1
Husband's happiness with wife	6.0
Couple intentions	
Partners disagree	50.1
Partners agree & do not intend	21.8
Partners agree & intend	28.2

Notes: Weighted percentages and unweighted Ns.

[a]Stepchildren of either partner.

[b]Wife or female partner.

[c]Children shared by both partners.

[d]Husband or male partner.

Table 6. Relative Risk of Pregnancy, Birth, or Adoption by Number of Stepchildren

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Stepchildren (*ref. none*)			
One	0.808	0.894	1.007
Two or more	0.646***	0.735*	0.885
Characteristics of wife			
Age		0.952***	0.962***
Race (non-White)		1.013	0.927
Parity (*ref. none*)			
One		1.758***	1.809***
Two or more		0.909	1.246
Education (*ref. high school*)			
< High school		1.106	1.112
Some college		1.230*	1.172
College degree +		1.172	1.082
Employment (*ref. full-time*)			
Not employed		0.934	0.908
Part-time		1.021	1.022
Church attendance (*ref. weekly*)			
Never		0.788	0.794
Yearly		0.974	0.956
Monthly		0.907	0.907
Characteristics of husband			
Education (*ref. high school*)			
< High school		1.269	1.239
Some college		1.056	1.035
College degree +		1.173	1.115
Employment (*ref. full-time*)			
Not employed		0.918	0.878
Part-time		0.732	0.756
Church attendance (*ref. weekly*)			
Never		0.900	0.975
Yearly		0.964	1.001
Monthly		0.943	0.952
Union characteristics			
Union status (cohabiting)		0.618*	0.646
Times married (*ref. once*)			
Never		0.955	0.898
Twice +		0.980	1.050
Duration of union (years)		0.936***	0.926***
Gap in partners' age		0.974*	0.973*
Total earnings ($10,000)		1.017*	1.012

Table 6. Continued

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Relationship quality			
Wife's happiness with husband		1.085*	1.080*
Husband's happiness with wife		0.978	0.975
Couple intentions (*ref. disagree*)			
Agree & do not intend			0.369***
Agree & intend			1.587***
Model chi-square	14.490***	245.117***	360.708***
Degrees of freedom	2	30	32

*p < .05 **p < .01 ***p <.001