Introduction

- Today’s parents, even those in unions, often experience high levels of family complexity
- Multipartnered fertility (MPF) - an individual has children with different partners, usually their current partner and a past partner
- Resident and nonresident stepchildren – an individual is partnered with someone who has children from a prior relationship
- Nonresidential biological children
- Growing body of work on how family complexity affects child well-being
- Less clear how this complexity affects parents’ psychological well-being

Family Complexity & Parental Psychological Well-Being

- Parenthood may be more difficult when individuals have different parental obligations than their partners
- Varying relationships between and across parents, partners, and children
  - MPF – individual has clear ties to all his/her own children but partner does not
  - Stepchildren – partner has clear ties to his/her own children but individual does not
- Obligations across households
- Boundary ambiguity

Variables & Method

- Multipartnered fertility (MPF)
- Stepchildren
- Nonresidential children

Data

- Family & Relationships Survey (FRS) 2013
  - Nationally representative survey of 7,517 adults ages 18-65
  - Designed by NCPRF @ BGSU and collected by GfK – online panel
- Analytical sample restricted to partnered parents (N=3,099) whose children were all minors (N=1,412) and who had at least one minor child in the household (N=1,377)
- Analytical sample varies across dependent variables due to missing data

Variables & Method (cont’)

- Parental stress: 8-item scale, constructed if at least 3 valid responses are provided, scores range from 0-5 (α = 0.79)
- Evaluation of partner as parent: 6-item scale, constructed if at least 4 valid responses are provided, scores range from 0-4 with higher scores indicating a more positive evaluation (α = 0.86)
- Perceived fairness of childrearing: dichotomous indicator, 1 = time spent on childcare is fair, 0 = not fair
- Key independent variables: MPF, presence of residential & nonresidential stepchildren, and whether respondent has any nonresidential biological children
- Control variables include socioeconomic, demographic, and union/family variables

Variables & Method (cont’)

- Four dependent variables
  - Depressive symptoms: 12-item CSED subset, constructed if at least 8 valid responses are provided, scores range from 0-7 (α = 0.93)
- Parental stress: 8-item scale, constructed if at least 3 valid responses are provided, scores range from 0-5 (α = 0.79)
- Evaluation of partner as parent: 6-item scale, constructed if at least 4 valid responses are provided, scores range from 0-4 with higher scores indicating a more positive evaluation (α = 0.86)
- Perceived fairness of childrearing: dichotomous indicator, 1 = time spent on childcare is fair, 0 = not fair
- Key independent variables: MPF, presence of residential & nonresidential stepchildren, and whether respondent has any nonresidential biological children
- Control variables include socioeconomic, demographic, and union/family variables

Bivariate Results

- Variables include subjective, demographic, and union/family variables
- Approach
  - Bivariate associations
  - Multivariate OLS & logistic regressions

Multivariate Results

- Having MPF does not decrease parental psychological well-being
  - Counterintuitive finding for no MPF
- Having residential stepchildren is associated with more depressive symptoms and lower perceptions of fairness
- Having nonresidential minor children actually increases perceptions of fairness

Summary

- Only weak evidence of negative link between family complexity and parental well-being
- Residual stepchildren
- Analyses excluded single parents – possible selection into unions of parents with better psychological well-being despite complexity