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## **PARENTAL COHABITATION AND ADOLESCENT WELL-BEING**

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## PARENTAL COHABITATION AND ADOLESCENT WELL-BEING

### ABSTRACT

As children are spending more of lives in cohabiting parent families, it has become increasingly important to understand the implications of cohabitation for children's well-being. We use the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health to determine whether adolescents in *cohabiting* parent stepfamilies fare as well as adolescents living in *married* parent stepfamilies and whether teens in unmarried mother *cohabiting* families fare better or worse than children living with unmarried *single* mothers. We find that teens living with unmarried mothers are not advantaged or disadvantaged by their mother's cohabitation. Similarly, teenagers living in stepfamilies are often not advantaged or disadvantaged by their mother's cohabitation. However, adolescents living in cohabiting stepfamilies experience greater disadvantage in terms of delinquency and cognitive development than their peers living in married stepfamilies. These results have implications for debates about the importance of marriage for children.

## PARENTAL COHABITATION AND ADOLESCENT WELL-BEING

An extensive literature exists that examines the importance of family structure (defined by marital status) and child well-being. Marital status acts as an indicator of the potential number of caretakers and may imply certain characteristics or qualities of the child's family life. This emphasis on marital status was perhaps more appropriate when relatively few children lived in cohabiting unions. Recent estimates indicate that two-fifths of children are expected to spend some time in a cohabiting parent family (Bumpass and Lu 2000). Despite this shift in children's experience in cohabitation, the research on the implications of cohabitation for children's lives is relatively sparse.

In this paper we examine the well-being of adolescents in cohabiting parent families. We focus on several aspects of well-being: behavior problems, school functioning, cognitive development, and school achievement. We address two key questions in this paper. First, do adolescents in *cohabiting* parent "stepfamilies"<sup>1</sup> fare as well as adolescents living in *married* parent stepfamilies? We determine whether there is some benefit of marriage by evaluating whether children living with two married adults rather than two unmarried adults experience more positive outcomes. Second, do children in unmarried cohabiting mother families fare better or worse than children living with unmarried single mothers? Children whose mothers are cohabiting with a man who is not the child[ren]'s father are often classified as being with single

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<sup>1</sup> We use the term stepfamily to indicate adolescents living with one biological parent and the parental partner (cohabiting stepfamily) or parent's spouse (married stepfamily). This term refers to family structure and not marital status.

unmarried mothers, but children living with their parent's cohabiting partner may benefit from the instrumental and emotional resources that two adults can provide. On the other hand, there may be some negative experiences associated with living with an unrelated adult. For each question, we evaluate whether the effects of parental cohabitation are explained by economic resources, parenting practices, the couple's relationship, and the adolescent's relationship with their resident and nonresident parents. Given minority children's greater likelihood of living with single and cohabiting parents, we evaluate whether there are race and ethnic differences in the effects of cohabitation on adolescent well-being.

This paper builds on prior research and moves beyond prior work in several key ways. First, by employing a large data source (National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health) our analyses are based on a relatively large number of adolescents in cohabiting parent families. Also the large sample size affords us the opportunity to examine racial and ethnic differences in children's experiences in cohabiting parent families. Second, the rich nature of the data allows us to include potentially important mediating factors that represent family processes and may help account for any observed effects of family structure. Third, we are not limited to a single indicator of well-being and focus on measures of well-being that are appropriate for teenagers. Finally, to better understand the implications of cohabitation on child well-being we focus on family type comparisons based on similar household structure (stepfather) or mother's marital status (unmarried mothers). We contrast the well-being of adolescents in cohabiting stepparent families to single mother and married stepfather families.

## BACKGROUND

### *Cohabitation as a Family Structure*

Children in the United States are increasingly likely to spend some of their lives residing in a cohabiting parent family. Indeed, 36% of cohabiting households include children under the age of 15 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1999). In 1990 approximately 2.2 million or 3.5 percent of U.S. children were living in a cohabiting parent family (Manning and Lichter 1996), and in 1999 6 percent of children were living with a cohabiting parent (Acs and Nelson 2001). Bumpass and Lu (2000) estimate that two-fifths of children in the United States are expected to experience a cohabiting parent family at some point during their childhood, and children born during the early 1990s will spend 9 percent of their lives living with parents who are in cohabiting unions.

Traditionally, children living in cohabiting parent families are counted as children living in single mother or single father families because their parents are unmarried. A considerable and growing proportion, 12%, of single mothers actually live with cohabiting partners (London 1998). Furthermore, in 1990, one in twelve children who were living with unmarried mothers lived in a cohabiting couple family (Manning and Smock 1997). However, to continue to regard these as single parent families misrepresents family life in such households because two adults are present. Thus, the everyday experiences of children living with a single parent and those who reside with cohabiting parents may differ in multiple respects.

Extensive variability exists in the living arrangements of children within cohabiting unions. Some children in cohabiting parent families are living with two biological parents while others reside with one biological parent and his/her cohabiting partner. Based on the 1996 Survey of Income and Program Participation, nearly half (46%) of children in cohabiting parent

families lived with two biological parents while 54 percent were living with one biological parent (Fields 2001).<sup>2</sup> Given the instability of cohabiting unions for children (Manning, Smock and Majumdar 2000), older children in cohabiting parent families primarily live with their mother and her partner who is not their biological parent. Brown (2002) reports that almost all children over the age of 12 in cohabiting parent families are living with only one biological parent and nearly 80 percent of children under age 5 in cohabiting parent families are living with two biological parents. Thus, cohabitation for adolescents (unlike young children) represents a family structure most akin to a stepfamily. Moreover, researchers are arguing to expand our traditional understandings of stepfamily life to include cohabiting stepfamilies (Stewart 2001). In this paper we refer to adolescents who live with their mother and her unrelated cohabiting partner as cohabiting stepfamilies and distinguish these from and compare them to stepfamilies which are traditionally defined by marriage.

Minority children experience higher rates of parental cohabitation than majority white children. McLanahan and Casper (1995) report that children are more likely to be present in minority cohabiting couple households (67% of Blacks and 70% of Hispanics) than in White cohabiting couple households (35%). Minority children are more likely to spend some of their lives in cohabiting parent families than white children. About half (55 percent) of African American children, two-fifths (40 percent) of Hispanic children, and three-tenths (30 percent) of White children are expected to experience a cohabiting-parent family (estimates computed from Bumpass and Lu 2000). Thus, it is important to assess the implications of cohabitation for

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<sup>2</sup> According to the National Survey of Families and Households in 1987-88, similar proportions, about 40 percent, of children living in cohabiting parent families were living with two biological parents (Bumpass 1994).

minority children and to determine if there are racial and ethnic differences in the linkages between cohabitation and adolescent well-being.

### *Cohabitation and Family Life*

Children in cohabiting families experience family life that most likely differs from those raised with married or single parents because the nature of the cohabitation, the characteristics of the cohabiting parents, and parenting practices of those who have entered into cohabiting unions.

Nature of Cohabitation. Cohabitation appears structurally similar to marriage: two adults sharing a residence can potentially provide a higher level of caretaking than provided by a single parent. According to a social control perspective, children in cohabiting families will benefit from having the supervision and monitoring that two parents provide. However, it is possible that cohabitation may share some features with single motherhood because the parent is unmarried and living in a union that is not legally sanctioned and whose meaning for all family members is not entirely clear. This may be especially pronounced when one member of the cohabiting relationship has no biological ties to the child.

Cohabiting unions are characterized usually as coresidential unions of short duration that lack institutionalization (Bumpass 1998; Nock 1995; Smock and Gupta 2002). Thus, children born into two biological parent cohabiting unions often experience parental dissolutions sooner than children born into marriage (Manning, Smock and Majumdar 2000), but children who live with their mother's cohabiting partner share similar levels of instability as children who reside in a traditional stepparent family (mother and her spouse) (Bumpass, Raley and Sweet 1995). Cohabitation increasingly is moving towards institutionalization, but those unions with children present still do not benefit from legal and social recognition. The responsibilities of cohabiting



partners to children are not specified in cohabitation (e.g., Durst 1997; Mahoney 2002; Seff 1995; Wiesensale and Heckert 1993). This lack of recognition creates some sources of ambiguity in family relationships and may influence the obligations and rights of cohabiting partners to their partner's children. The lack of institutionalization of cohabitation as a context for family formation may result in negative effects of cohabitation on children's well-being.

Environment. Children raised in cohabiting couple families may experience different developmental outcomes in part because of the environment or context in which children are raised. On average, children raised in cohabiting parent families have parents with lower education levels and lower earnings than children in married couple families, and parents with greater education levels and earnings than children in single parent families (Manning and Lichter 1996). These differences in education and income may contribute to the well-being of children in cohabiting parent families. Indeed, economic factors account for a large share of the differences in child outcomes between one- and two-parent families (McLanahan and Sandefur 1994).

Parent's effective parenting may be determined in part by their own psychological well-being. Cohabitors fare worse than married adults in terms of many social psychological outcomes: depression, happiness, relationship quality or happiness, health, violence and alcohol problems (Brown and Booth 1996; Brown 1999; Brown 2000; Horwitz and White 1998; Ross 1995; Stets 1991; Waite and Joyner 1999). However, individual and relationship characteristics often explain these differences. One of the few studies to focus on children shows that among parents (couples with children), cohabitators exhibit higher levels of depression than marrieds (Brown 2000). Brown (2002) reports significantly higher parental psychological distress in two biological cohabiting than two biological married families and in cohabiting stepfamilies than

married stepfamilies. These findings suggest the possibility of a spillover effect, to the degree that parent's cohabiting status influences not only the parents' mental health, but the emotional well-being of the children.

Parenting. Children in cohabiting parent families may fare better or worse than other children because of the specific parenting practices that may be associated with the dynamics within cohabiting unions. Only a few studies have distinguished the parenting behaviors of cohabitators from married couples and/or single parents (Brown 2002; Clark and Nelson 2000; Dunifon and Kowaleski-Jones 2000; Hofferth and Anderson 2001; Thomson et al. 1992). These behaviors include parental response, parental involvement, and parental control. The pattern of results tends to support the notion that slightly more negative parenting practices occur among cohabiting parent families. However, the findings are not consistent and depend to some extent on the modeling strategy as well as race and age of the child.

#### *Cohabitation and Child Outcomes*

Research on the *economic* implications of cohabitation (e.g., Bauman 1999; Brandon and Bumpass 2001; Carlson and Danziger 1999; Hao 1996; Manning and Lichter 1996; Morrison and Ritualo 2000; Winkler 1997) is relatively more common than work on social well-being. To date, a limited, but growing, number of studies examine the *social* well-being of children living in cohabiting parent families (e.g., Brown 2001; Bown 2002; Buchanan et al. 1996; DeLeire and Kalil forthcoming; Hanson et al. 1997; Hao and Xie 2002; Nelson, Clark and Acs 2001; Thomson et al. 1994; White and Gilberth 2001). The work on social development focuses on two main areas: behavior or emotional problems as well as school or cognitive outcomes. Most of the research on the emotional and developmental well-being of children in cohabiting unions has been conducted using multivariate methodologies. Thus, this work has been able to

account for potential mediating factors (parenting, parent-child relationships, socioeconomic status, demographic characteristics, and duration) that might prove useful for explaining differences among family types. Yet, due largely to data limitations no study has accounted for all of these factors simultaneously.

Research on family structure recognizes the importance of biological ties of adults to children and argues that children in two biological parent families fare better than children living with a stepparent (see Coleman 2000). Following this logic, the biological relationship of cohabiting partners should be considered in the analysis of child well-being. As previously discussed, almost half of children in cohabiting parent families are living with two biological parents and half are living with only one biological parent (Fields 2001). Most of the young children living in cohabiting parent families are living with two-biological parents and almost all of the older children living in cohabiting parent families live with only one biological parent (Brown 2001). Hispanic children in cohabiting parent families more frequently live with two biological parents (64%) than White (38%) or Black (45%) children (Fields 2001). Thus, age and race or ethnicity of children are critical components to our understanding of the implications of cohabitation for children.

To assess how cohabitation influences child well-being requires being specific about the appropriate family types for comparison. Research on family structure typically contrasts the well-being of children in two-biological parent families to children in single or stepparent families (e.g., McLanahan and Sandefur 1994). Because two biological married parent families are the most common family structure prior work typically treats that family types as the reference category. Our approach is to compare adolescents across families that share either the same structure of parental marital status, but differ in terms of the presence or absence of a

cohabiting partner. Our analyses are based on two sets of comparisons. First, we examine adolescents who live in stepfamilies -- they live apart from their biological father and live with their mother who is cohabiting or married. We contrast the well-being of adolescents living with a mother who is cohabiting to those residing with a mother who is married. Second, we evaluate the well-being of adolescents living with unmarried mothers. We contrast how adolescents fare who live with an unmarried mother and her cohabiting partner to those who reside with just their unmarried mother. Our discussion of the literature is organized around this approach.

Two Biological Parent Families. Analyses of behavior problems,<sup>3</sup> school behavior, school performance, and school engagement reveal some significant differences between children living with two biological married parent and cohabiting parent families (Brown 2001; Clark and Nelson 2000; Hanson et al. 1997). Brown's (2001) work using the NSAF reveals that children who live with both biological parents who are cohabiting have lower school engagement than their peers living in married two biological parent families. Yet the findings depend to some extent on age and race or ethnicity of the child. Further analysis of the National Survey of American Families (NSAF) shows that greater behavioral problems are experienced by white children in cohabiting parent than married parent families (Clark and Nelson 2000). Similarly, young white children and older Hispanic children in cohabiting two biological parent families were found to fare worse in terms of school engagement than their counterparts in married two biological parent families (Clark and Nelson 2000).

Stepparent Families. Many of the children who are living in cohabiting parent families, particularly older children, are not living with their biological father, making the traditional

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<sup>3</sup> Behavior and emotional problems are typically measured using indicators of school related problems and commonly include measures of the child's temperament, externalizing behavior, internalizing behavior, sociability and initiative.

married stepparent family an appropriate comparison group. Research that makes statistical comparisons shows overall that children living in cohabiting partner stepfamilies and married couple stepfamilies share statistically similar levels of behavior problems (Clark and Nelson 2000; Morrison 1998, 2000). An exception is White and Gillberth's (2001) analysis of 189 National Survey of Family and Household reinterviewed children living in stepfamilies. They find that children in cohabiting stepfamilies score lower on internalizing and externalizing behaviors. A shortcoming of these studies is that they do not account for parenting behaviors, quality of parental relationship or relationship of child to resident parents (mother and stepfather) or nonresident father. Also, the Clark and Nelson (2000) findings rely on data that do not measure duration of parental relationship or relationship history.

Other evidence shows that the effects of family structure on problem behaviors appear to differ somewhat according to ethnicity and gender. For example, older Hispanic children in cohabiting stepfamilies exhibit greater behavior problems than older Hispanic children in married stepfamilies (Clark and Nelson 2000). However, similar differences are not observed among Black and white children. Gender differences in children's adjustment behavior are found in Buchanan et al.'s (1996) analysis of children who experienced their parent's divorce in the mid-1980's in two counties in California. Girls who live with their mother's cohabiting partner experience similar behavior problems as those who live with their mother's spouse. In contrast, boys experience greater adjustment problems when their mother cohabited, but these differences are explained by the quality of the parent-child relationship and level of parental supervision and control (Buchanan et al. 1996).

With regard to academic achievement, Morrison (2000) accounts for duration of union and parent's cohabitation experience in her analysis of children of divorce, and finds that the effects of cohabitation on school achievement vary by subject area. Clark and Nelson's (2000) analyses of the NSAF data reveal some differences in the effects of mother's marital status on school problems and engagement. White and Hispanic adolescents in cohabiting parent stepfamilies have higher odds of being suspended or expelled from school and lower levels of school engagement than children living in married parent stepfamilies but these differences according to family structure are not found among black children (Clark and Nelson 2000).

Unmarried Parent Families. Only a few studies contrast the well-being of children in unmarried mother families who have a cohabiting parent with that of children who live with only their mother and the findings from these studies are inconsistent. Nelson, Clark and Acs (2001) report that White and Black teenagers living with cohabiting parents and unmarried mothers share similar levels of behavior problems. In contrast, Hispanic teenagers in cohabiting parent stepfamilies have greater behavior problems than teens in single mother families. Yet the Nelson et al. (2001) findings are based on models that only control for gender, parental education and poverty. Morrison's (1998) study employs fixed effects analyses of the NLSY and she reports that those children living with divorced, single parents have statistically similar levels of behavior problems as children in cohabiting parent families. Another set of analyses that uses the same data source and method suggests that children in cohabiting parent families have better social interactions than children in one-parent families (Dunifon and Kowaleski-Jones 2000).

Academic achievement of children from cohabiting parent families is similar or significantly higher than that of children in single parent families (Dunifon and Kowaleski-Jones

2000). Yet, analyses of school behavior indicates that adolescents in cohabiting parent stepfamilies are more likely to be suspended or expelled from school than their peers in single mother families (Nelson et al. 2001). Black teenagers in cohabiting stepparent families have similar levels of school engagement as Black teens in single mother families, but White and Hispanic teens in cohabiting stepparent families had lower levels of school engagement than those in single mother families (Nelson et al. 2001).

### *Current Investigation*

There are two broad questions addressed in this paper. First, does cohabitation provide any advantage for children living with unmarried mothers? Children in single parent families may fare worse than children in cohabitation because they lack the benefits of income and parenting that a cohabiting partner may provide. As a result, we anticipate that children in cohabiting parent families will fare better than children in single mother families. A competing hypothesis is that children experience some disadvantages by living with a mother's unmarried partner who may not be a fully integrated family member. In this case, adolescents in cohabiting stepfamilies fare worse than adolescents in single mother families. Yet, the bulk of research on stepfamilies indicates that children in stepfamilies and single mother families share similar developmental outcomes (Coleman 2000). Thus, we may find that adolescents who live in cohabiting stepfamilies fare as well as children who reside with a single mother.

Second, do children experience any advantage by living in a *married* (or traditional) rather than in a cohabiting stepparent family? We determine whether children in married stepparent families fare as well as children in cohabiting stepparent families. Initially, in zero-order models we expect children in married stepfamilies to have better emotional and developmental outcomes than children in cohabiting stepfamilies. However, once we account

for parent's relationship with child, parent's relationship with one another, duration of family, and socioeconomic characteristics, these differences according to marital status may no longer exist. These findings would suggest that marriage itself does not create the advantage experienced by children in married stepparent families. If differences persist, then such findings would indicate that some feature of cohabitation itself (e.g., lack of institutionalization) may have negative consequences for children in this type of family structure.

We evaluate how the effects of family structure differ according to race and ethnicity. Given minority children's greater chances of experiencing cohabiting parent families, we may find fewer negative implications of cohabitation for minority children. Specifically, Latino children may experience fewer negative repercussions of cohabitation and may in fact experience some benefits because of the prominent role of cohabitation in the family formation process (Manning and Landale 1996). Furthermore, based on the attenuation hypothesis, we expect that family structure will have a greater impact on white adolescents than their Black or Latino counterparts. According to this perspective minority children face more negative life experiences and stress than white children, due in part to their diminished socioeconomic circumstances. As a consequence, minority children may suffer fewer negative implications of family structure or change than their white counterparts (Amato and Keith 1991; McLoyd et al. 2000).

Prior work provides some initial evidence about the effects of cohabitation on child well-being. In this project we build on prior work in five key ways: focus on one specific age group - adolescents; distinguish the biological relationship of cohabiting partner to the child; include family measures of parenting, duration of relationship, socioeconomic status and parent



dynamics; employ a wide range of indicators of well-being; and make comparisons among racial and ethnic groups.

First, many of the previous studies on family structure and child outcomes do not distinguish between adolescents and younger children. Our focus on adolescents limits our conclusions to one stage of childhood, but at the same time allows us to detail the effects of family structure for a critical period of development. We examine outcomes that are most salient for the age group under consideration.

Second, almost all of the adolescents in cohabiting parent families are living with only one biological parent and relatively few live with two biological parents (Brown 2001). Thus, answers to questions about the effects of cohabitation require careful attention to the comparison group. Contrasting the well-being of adolescents in married and cohabiting stepfamilies is more appropriate than comparing the well-being of all children in cohabiting families to those in two biological married families.

Third, we are able to include controls for key variables that may explain some of the effects of family structure on child outcomes. We include measures of parenting relations (closeness to mother, nonresident father, and stepfather as well as monitoring by resident parent[s]), socioeconomic status (mother's education and family income), and couple dynamics (duration of relationship, satisfaction and conflict). Most prior work has accounted for one of these measures but no study has accounted for all these factors simultaneously.

Fourth, we include a range of indicators of well-being. For example, we do not rely on a single measure to indicate academic achievement. We include measures of Peabody Picture Vocabulary Tests, grades in school and college expectations. While any one measure may suffer

some shortcomings, taken together we have indicators of well-being that tap different dimensions of adolescent behavior and academic well-being.

Finally, as previously discussed, minority children are more likely to experience cohabitation than white children. Given differences in childhood experiences with parental cohabitation, we expect that cohabitation will have a less negative effect on adolescent well-being among minority children than Whites. Clark and Nelson (2000) report some differences in the effects of cohabitation on children according to race and ethnicity. We examine whether the effects of living in a cohabiting parent family are similar for white, Black and Hispanic children.

### **DATA**

We draw on the National Longitudinal Adolescent Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health). The Add Health is based on interviews with students in grades 7 through 12 and their parents in 1995. The first wave of the main in-home sample consists of 18,924 students. Once design effects are taken into account, these data are a nationally representative of adolescents in the United States (see Bearman, Jones and Udry 1997). These data are appropriate for our project because the Add Health contains a large number of adolescent respondents who are currently living in cohabiting parent families and includes key measures of child well-being and measures of family dynamics that may explain some of the observed differences in family structure effects. Most of the research on social outcomes relies heavily on the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH) because of the complete cohabitation and the child well-being measures included in their project. Yet those analyses are somewhat limited by the number of cases (Thomson et al. 1994; Hanson et al. 1997; Hao and Xie 2002) and now reflect the experiences of children over a decade ago. The Add Health also includes questions about the parents' union history, parenting characteristics, couple relationship and duration of current

relationship. Some data sources (The National Survey of American Families, Current Population Survey, and Census) provide information only about the current family situation and no details about duration of relationship. Yet, the Add Health data do not include details about family structure histories. In sum, the Add Health provides one of the richest data sources on family dynamics, and couple relationships, as well as a variety of consequential adolescent outcomes.

The literature shows that children are generally better off when they live with two biological married parents (e.g., Brown 2002; Coleman et al. 2000; McLanahan and Sandefur 1994). Therefore of greatest interest in this analysis will be other important types of family structure comparisons. Specifically, we first contrast the well-being of adolescents in unmarried single mother to unmarried cohabiting mother families. Our analytic sample of adolescents living with their unmarried mothers (single and cohabiting) consists of 4,156 respondents. The second type of comparison is teenagers in traditional married stepfamilies to adolescents in cohabiting parent stepfamilies. Our analysis of teens living with their mother and a stepfather (married or cohabiting) is based on 1,912 respondents. Dividing the sample is necessary because not all of the predictors can be used for analyses of two parent families can be applied to the one parent families (e.g. stepfather relationship, resident parents' relationship happiness, parents' frequency of fighting or duration of relationship).

We include a range of indicators of well-being. The indicators of behavior problems are ever having been expelled or suspended from school, experiencing trouble in school, and self-reported delinquency scores. The suspension/expulsion measure is a dichotomous measure simply indicating whether the respondent ever received an out of school suspension from school, or an expulsion from school. This is coded such that 1=Yes, and 0=No. The second measure, problems in school, assesses the respondent's difficulty in the school context. The four items

comprising the scale indicate the degree to which, since the start of the school year, the respondent has had problems getting along with teachers, paying attention in school, getting homework done, and getting along with other students. All items are coded such that 0=never, 1=just a few times, 2=about once a week, 3=almost every day, and 4=everyday. The respondents' score on the measure is the mean of the four items for that respondent. This measure has a Cronbach alpha reliability of .69. The delinquency scale is composed of fifteen items, asking the frequency with which respondents engaged in a series of delinquent acts over the past 12 months, including painting graffiti or signs on someone else property or in a public place, deliberately damaging property, lying to parents/guardian about whom respondent had been with, took something from a store without paying for it, got into a serious physical fight, hurt someone badly enough to need medical care, ran away from home, drove a car without the owner's permission, stole something worth more than \$50, went into a house or building to steal something, used or threatened to use a weapon to get something from someone, sold marijuana or other drugs, stole something worth less than \$50, took part in a fight where a group of friends was against another group, was loud unruly, or rowdy in a public place. Responses were scored such that 0=never, 1=1 or 2 times, 2=3 or 4 times, 3=5 or more times, and were summed such that the scores ranged from 0-45. After the items were summed, cases were deleted when less than 75% (11 items) of the items had valid responses. Cases where 75% or more of the items had valid data were given the mean of the scale on any items with missing data. The delinquency measure has a high Cronbach alpha reliability of .85.

Measures of cognitive development or academic achievement and expectations are measured by student reported grade point average, Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, and college expectations. We include these measures because one measure alone may not be an adequate

indicator of academic achievement. Low grade point average is a dichotomous measure indicating whether, of four subject areas in school (English, mathematics, history/social studies, science), the respondent received two or more grades of D or lower. Those respondents receiving two or more D's were given a 1 on the item, with those respondents receiving one or no D's were coded as 0. We believe this is a better measure of academic achievement than simply grade point average because grading systems vary considerably across schools and student grades depend on the types of classes students attend (i.e. a low grade in a college preparatory course does not necessarily equate to a low grade in a remedial course). The second indicator is an abbreviated version of the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test. We use the age-standardized scores with a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15. This is considered a measure of verbal cognitive ability or development. The third indicator measures expectations for college. Respondents are asked how much they want to go to college with responses ranging from 1 (low) to 5 (high). The mean response on this question is quite high with a value of 4.

The key independent variable is family structure, and cohabitation is a central family structure type. Cohabitation is established by the adolescent response in the household roster question and by the parent's response to relationship questions. If either the adolescent or the parent reports the parent is cohabiting, then the family is coded as a cohabiting parent family. We find very few adolescents live in two biological parent cohabiting families. This is consistent with findings from the National Survey of American Families (Brown 2002). Thus, we limit our analyses to adolescents living with their biological mother and her cohabiting partner (cohabiting stepparent families). The columns of Table 1 shows the distribution of the independent variables according to each family type. Among adolescents living in stepfamilies, one-third are living with cohabiting parents and two-thirds are living with married parents.

These findings mirror those reported in the NSAF and NSFH (Brown 2002; Bumpass 1994).

Among adolescents living with unmarried mothers, 13 percent are living with their mother and her cohabiting partner and these are similar to levels reported in the NSAF (Brown 2002).

The other independent variables have been found to be important predictors of our indicators in the literature and are divided into three categories: sociodemographic, parenting or socialization variables, and couple dynamics. The distribution of the sample for each of the independent variables is provided in Table 1.

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

The sociodemographic variables include: race and ethnicity, family income, mother's age, mother's education, child's age, child's gender, importance of religion to the adolescent, number of other children in the household and mother's relationship history. Race and ethnicity of the respondent is based on their own response and coded into four categories: Black, White, Latino, and Other. The "other" category includes groups that are too small to distinguish in analyses. In both stepparent and unmarried mother families the majority of the adolescents are White, while 15% are Black and 12% Latino. The family income measure is logged and the family income values are higher among teens in married stepparent families than in the other family types. A shortcoming of the Add Health data is that a considerable share (23%) of the sample is missing data on income. Those cases are coded to the mean value of income and a dummy variable is included in the model. Mother's age is coded as a continuous variable and the mean value is thirty-two. The number of prior "marriage-like" relationships is included as a control variable. Single mothers have been in, on average, only one marriage-like relationship and cohabiting and married mothers in this sample have been in, on average, two relationships. Mothers' education is coded on an ordinal scale such that 1=eighth grade or less, 2=more than

eighth grade, but did not graduate from high school, 3=went to a business, trade, or vocational school in place of high school, 4=received a GED, 5=high school graduate, 6=went to college but did not graduate, 7=graduated from a college or university, 8=had professional training beyond college. On average, single mothers have a high school education and mothers in stepfamilies the highest levels of education. Religiosity is measured by responses to questions about the importance of religion in the life of the adolescent. The responses range from 1 to 4, with 1 indicating not at all important and 4 indicating very important. The mean response is 3.3 indicating religion is considered "fairly important." The mean age of the child is 15 and the sample is fairly evenly split between boys and girls. On average, about one other child lives in the household.

The potentially important mediating variables are parenting characteristics (monitoring, closeness to mother, nonresident father, and stepfather and mother's parental monitoring) and features of the couple's relationship (duration of relationship, happiness and conflict). Parental monitoring is important for keeping children's behavior on task, and ensuring they meet their individual responsibilities. McLanahan (1997) and Bulcroft, Carmody, and Bulcroft (1998) find that a lack of supervision by parents is associated with their poor school performance among children in single and stepparent families. Lack of monitoring may lead to the neglect of homework and other responsibilities by the teen. We include monitoring as a scale of six items. These are coded dichotomously such that 0=no and 1=yes, and then summed. Adolescent respondents are asked whether parents let them make their own decisions about the time they must be home on weekend nights, the people they hang around with, what they wear, how much TV they watch, what time they go to bed on week nights, and what they eat. This works quite well as a scale with an alpha of .64. The mean level of monitoring is 5, indicating a fairly high

level of parental supervision and monitoring.

Closeness to parents is also a key aspect of children's behavior problems, as positive and supportive interactions between parents and their children teaches children appropriate social behavior with others, and makes them feel as if they have value as persons. Spending time with children and interacting in positive ways with them has been shown to raise grade point averages and decrease externalizing behaviors (O'Connor, Hetherington, and Clingempeel, 1997; Mosely and Thompson, 1995). Here closeness to resident father and resident mother are individual items, each asking the teen how close to they feel to the respective parent, coded 1=not at all, 2=very little, 3=somewhat, 4=quite a bit, 5=very much. The average closeness to mothers ranges between "quite a bit" to "very much." Stepfather closeness is lower with an average of "quite a bit." For those respondents who report having a non-resident biological father, the same question is included as a predictor. The average value is "somewhat close." In addition, a dummy variable measuring whether responses were missing on closeness to nonresident father was also used in the regressions.<sup>4</sup> Approximately one-quarter of the sample is missing on the indicator of closeness to nonresident father.

Children are arguably affected by the nature of the parental relationship. The following indicators are only available for two parent families. Marital happiness is highly predictive of parenting satisfaction, which in turn will affect how parents relate to their children (Rogers and White, 1998). Happiness with the parental spouse or cohabiting partner asks, "On a scale from 1 to 10, where 1=completely happy and 10=completely unhappy, how would you rate your relationship?" The mean value is 8 indicating relatively happy relationships. The item we

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<sup>4</sup> In other analyses we also included measures of nonresident father involvement but this measure was closely correlated with closeness.



employ measuring conflict between the parent and his or her spouse or cohabiting partner asks “How much do you fight with your current spouse or partner?” coded such that 1=a lot, 2=some, 3=a little, 4=not at all. The average response is "some fighting." Stability of the family is measured in terms of the duration of the parental relationship. The mean duration of the cohabiting stepfamilies is 4.4 years while the mean duration of the married stepfamilies is 6.7 years. This is consistent with findings from the NSFH (Hao and Xie 2002).

The analytic method depends on the nature of the dependent variables. Logistic regression is used for analyses of dichotomous dependent variables, whether the adolescent was expelled or suspended from school and whether the teen received low grades. Ordinary least square regressions are estimated for all remaining outcomes. Our analytic strategy is to estimate a series of models for each outcome. We first estimate a zero-order model that includes only family structure. The second model we present adds the potential mediating factors, including socioeconomic, parenting, and couple measures. We also enter each block of variables and assess how they contribute to the fit of the models, but do not present the results in the tables. We also test for interactions of race and ethnicity and family structure for each child outcome.

## **RESULTS**

Table 2 presents the mean and median values of the dependent variables according to each family type. This provides information about the basic levels of the well-being indicators, and shows the range of values for the measures of well-being. Most teenagers, regardless of family type, are not expelled or suspended from school. Two-fifths of adolescents in single mother and cohabiting stepfamilies were expelled or suspended and three-tenths of teens living in married stepfamilies experienced school suspension or expulsion. Delinquency levels range from 0 to 45 so those reported are quite low, and the mean values are highest for teens living in

cohabiting stepparent families. In terms of school problems, the values fall within a narrow range from 4.51 to 4.78, suggesting that the majority of teenagers have just a few troubles in school. The measure of academic achievement shows that the vast majority of teens in each family type have not received D's or F's in two or more subjects. The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) is an indicator of cognitive development and the scores range from 98 to 102, with adolescents in stepfamilies scoring best. Finally, most teens possess high expectations for attending college and there appears to be only slight variation according to family type.

[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Unmarried Mother Families. Table 3 presents the effects of cohabitation for children living in unmarried mother families on problem behaviors. The first model shows the zero-order or bivariate effects and the second model presents the effects of family structure, net of the other variables. Teenagers living with their mother and her cohabiting partner are not advantaged or disadvantaged over children living with just their unmarried mother.

[TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

The first and second columns show that adolescents living with unmarried single mothers have similar odds of being expelled or suspended from school than adolescents living with their mother and her cohabiting partner. The next column is a bivariate model of family structure and delinquency. Delinquency is lower among adolescents living with just their mother than those living with their mother and her cohabiting partner. Yet, the next column shows that these differences are no longer statistically significant with the inclusion of the remaining covariates. This effect is largely explained by the socioeconomic variables – age, gender, education, income

and number of marriages. The final two columns of Table 3 show that adolescents living with single mothers and cohabiting partners share similar troubles in the school context.

The remaining covariates operate in the expected direction. Older adolescents and boys more often engage or experience problem behaviors. Mother's education and family income are typically negatively related to problem behaviors. The indicator of importance of religion is typically negatively associated with problem behaviors. Closeness to mother as well as closeness to nonresident father are associated with fewer problem behaviors.

Table 4 shows the effects of cohabitation for children living in unmarried mother families on academic well-being. Adolescents living with unmarried mothers who are cohabiting have higher odds of having low grades than teens living with single mothers. The inclusion of the remaining covariates shifts the relationship of family structure and grades such that teens in cohabiting stepparent and single mother families share similar odds of having low grades. The family structure effects are primarily explained by the sociodemographic indicators in the model. The next two columns show the effects of cohabitation on PPVT, an indicator of cognitive development. Teenagers living in unmarried mother families without cohabiting partners and with cohabiting partners have statistically similar PPVT scores or verbal ability. However, in the multivariate model the single mother coefficient is not statistically significant suggesting that teens' mother's cohabitation status is not related to cognitive development. The final two columns show that youth in cohabiting stepparent families and single mother families share similar expectations for college. Overall, the additional parent does not appear to improve or worsen adolescents' school performance or aspirations.

[TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE]

These results lead to the question of whether teens living with married stepfathers experience more positive outcomes than teenagers living with unmarried single mothers. To test whether married stepfathers provide any benefit an additional set of analyses were conducted that contrast the well-being of teens in unmarried single mother families and those in married stepfather families. For almost every outcome, married stepfathers do not provide a statistically significant benefit to children. A key exception is that teens living with married stepfathers have lower levels of delinquency than teens living with unmarried single mothers (results not shown).

The interaction effects of race/ethnicity and family type are tested for each outcome (results not shown). In no case, are there significant differences in the effects of family type according to the adolescent's racial or ethnic group. Thus, the family structure findings presented in Tables 3 and 4 apply to all children regardless of race or ethnicity.

Stepfather Families. The next research question addresses whether teenagers in cohabiting stepparent families fare better or worse than teens living in married stepparent families. Thus, the following two tables (Tables 5 and 6) are restricted to teenagers living in stepparent families. For some domains marriage provides an advantage, but it does not consistently for each outcome considered here.

In terms of behavior problems there appears to be some advantage to parental marriage over cohabitation. The first column of Table 5 show that teenagers living in married stepparent families have significantly lower odds of being suspended or expelled from school than teens residing in cohabiting stepparent families. The second model shows that teens living in married and cohabiting stepparent families share similar odds of being suspended or expelled from school. The next two columns indicate that teenagers living in married stepparent families have

lower delinquency scores than teens who living in cohabiting stepparent families. Yet, teenagers in cohabiting and married stepparent families have similar levels of school problems.

[TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE]

The results in Table 5 show that the effects of the covariates in the models depend somewhat on the problem behavior considered (similar to Table 3). Yet, it appears there are significant differences according to race and ethnicity with minority teens more likely to be engaged in problem behaviors. Boys consistently are more likely to experience problems. Mother's education is negatively associated with problem behaviors. The greater the number of mother's marriages, the higher the incidence of problem behaviors. In addition, teens who are closer to their mothers and resident stepfathers exhibit fewer problem behaviors.

The first column of Table 6 shows that teenagers living in married stepfamilies have lower odds of earning low grades than teens in cohabiting stepfamilies. Yet the inclusion of the remaining covariates (income in particular) explains this difference. The next set of columns shows that adolescents in married stepfamilies score higher on the PPVT than teens in cohabiting parent stepfamilies. The effect of cohabitation cannot be explained by the inclusion of the explanatory variables. The last two columns demonstrate that adolescents living in cohabiting stepfamilies possess lower college expectations but these differences no longer persist in the final model. The differences in the effect of family structure on college expectations reduce to nonsignificance when income is included in the model.

[TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE]

We tested whether the effects of family type differ according to the duration of the parental relationship. The effects were anticipated to be strongest early on in the relationship. Analysis of interaction effects indicates that the effects of family type differ according to

duration for only one outcome, school problems (results not shown). The effect of marital status on school problems is greater early in the relationship and then diminishes at later union durations.

We anticipated that the effects of family structure on adolescent well-being would differ among White, African American and Latino youths. Yet, the interaction terms were not statistically significant indicating that the effects of marital status do not differ according to race or ethnicity (results not shown).

## DISCUSSION

Increasing numbers of children will spend some part of their lives in a cohabiting parent family. This project contributes to our knowledge about the implications of cohabitation for children's lives. The results from this paper suggest that teenagers living with unmarried mothers do not seem to benefit from the presence of their mother's cohabiting partner. Thus, as found in the stepfamily literature (e.g., Coleman et al. 2000) male presence alone is not sufficient or necessary to create positive outcomes for children. Indeed, our results show that stepfathers (married or cohabiting) provide limited benefit when contrasted to single mother families.

The marital status of the male in the household does not consistently influence adolescent well-being. Our analyses of teenagers living in stepfamilies show that in some cases their mother's marriage is tied to more positive behavioral and academic outcomes for them. Adolescents living in married and cohabiting stepparent families share similar college expectations, school suspension or expulsion, school problems, and odds of receiving low grades. At the same time, we find that teenagers living in married stepparent families have lower delinquency and score higher on cognitive development than teens living in cohabiting parent stepfamilies. In other words, differences in delinquency and cognitive according to cohabitation and marital status cannot be explained by the factors included in our model. For instance, we lack measurement of "role ambiguity" which may serve to define parenting roles in both cohabiting and married families (Cherlin 1978). Possibly married stepfathers have a more clearly defined obligation to their stepchildren than cohabiting stepfathers. We attempt to capture the fluidity of families by evaluating whether the effects of family structure differ according to duration of the relationship. We find that family structure effects do not differ according to duration, except for school problems. Taken together, these findings suggest that

there must be some untapped element of life in a cohabiting parent family that influences some dimensions of adolescent well-being.

Recent debates have emerged about the advantage of marriage for adults and children (eg., Waite and Gallagher 2000). Adolescents in two-biological parent families fare better than children in any of the family types examined here, single mother, cohabiting stepfather, and married stepfather families (results not shown). Yet the advantage of marriage appears to exist primarily when the child is the biological offspring of both parents. Our findings suggest that neither parental cohabitation nor marriage to a partner or spouse who is not related to the child (stepfamily formation) is associated with uniform advantage in terms of behavioral or academic indicators to teenagers living in single mother families. Obviously, these findings are merely suggestive because longitudinal analyses are necessary to accurately evaluate how parental cohabitation or marriage *changes* adolescent's well-being. It appears that children whose mothers decide to form a union (stepfamily) *sometimes* are advantaged by their mother's marriage rather than cohabitation. However, marriage rather than cohabitation is not always associated with more positive outcomes.

Our findings also speak to the complexity of family relationships and their implications for children's lives. We find that closeness of teens to their biological mothers, stepfathers, and nonresident fathers are positively related to many indicators of adolescent well-being. Our findings are more consistent with attachment than social control theories of child development. Our work suggests that it is important to account not only for the structure of families but the nature of relationships that exist within and across households.

The issue of cohabitation and child development has become more important as cohabitation has become an increasingly large part of children's family experiences (Bumpass



and Lu 2000; Graefe and Lichter 2000). The findings from this paper represent an initial step toward understanding the implications of parental cohabitation on adolescent well-being. Research that focuses on younger children and examines the well-being of children born into cohabiting parent families is warranted. Future efforts must consider potential selection issues from both the adult's and child's perspective as well as model the fluid nature of cohabiting unions by incorporating longitudinal analyses (e.g., Kallil 2002; Graefe and Lichter 2000; Hao and Xie 2002; Manning 2002).

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Table 1. Distribution of Independent Variables, by Family Type

	Unmarried Mother	Step Married	Step Cohabiting
<b>Sociodemographic</b>			
Race			
White	.49 (.04)	.73 (.02)	.56 (.04)
Black	.33 (.04)	.11 (.02)	.19 (.03)
Hispanic	.13 (.02)	.11 (.02)	.19 (.03)
Other Race	.05 (.01)	.06 (.01)	.07 (.01)
Log Family Income	3.01 (.04)	3.63 (.03)	3.19 (.05)
Missing Income (1=yes)	.21 (.01)	.08 (.01)	.15 (.03)
Mother's Age	39.15 (.22)	38.19 (.23)	37.53 (.28)
Mother's Education	5.04 (.10)	5.43 (.09)	4.89 (.13)
Child's Age	15.35 (.14)	15.33 (.13)	15.20 (.17)
Child's Sex (1=male)	.47 (.01)	.51 (.02)	.54 (.03)
Importance of religion to child	3.33 (.02)	3.31 (.03)	3.21 (.04)
Number of Children in Household	1.28 (.06)	1.45 (.05)	1.41 (.09)
Number of Mother's Marriages	1.45 (.03)	2.12 (.03)	2.16 (.06)
<b>Parental Relationship</b>			
Duration of Relationship	--	6.67 (.23)	4.44 (.27)
Parental Happiness	--	8.45 (.06)	8.38 (.10)
Frequency of Conflict	--	2.16 (.03)	2.18 (.05)
<b>Parenting Behaviors</b>			
Monitoring by Parents	5.20 (.07)	5.03 (.08)	5.18 (.10)
Closeness to Mother	4.58 (.02)	4.63 (.02)	4.49 (.05)
Closeness to Resident Father	--	3.86 (.04)	4.16 (.04)
Closeness to Non- Resident Father	3.06 (.03)	3.13 (.05)	3.11 (.07)
Missing Closeness to Non- Resident father (1=yes)	.25 (.01)	.26 (.02)	.27 (.03)



Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations of Outcome Variables<sup>a</sup>

	Unmarried Mother <i>N</i> =3597	Step Married <i>N</i> =1353	Step Cohabiting <i>N</i> =559
<b>Dependent Variables</b>			
Suspension/Expulsion			
Mean (Standard Dev.)	.39 (.02)	.30 (.02)	.41 (.03)
Median	0	0	0
Delinquency			
Mean (Standard Dev.)	4.67 (.15)	4.29 (.18)	5.44 (.33)
Median	3	3	3
School Problems			
Mean (Standard Dev.)	4.52 (.09)	4.60 (.11)	4.79 (.19)
Median	4	4	4
Low Grade Point Average			
Mean (Standard Dev.)	.15 (.01)	.14 (.01)	.19 (.02)
Median	0	0	0
PPVT			
Mean (Standard Dev.)	98(.78)	102 (.62)	98 (1.02)
Median	97	101	98
College Expectations			
Mean (Standard Dev.)	4.37 (.03)	4.42 (.04)	4.28 (.07)
Median	5	5	5

<sup>a</sup> Means are weighted using Wave I grand sample weight

Table 3. The Effects of Socio-Economic Characteristics and Parenting Variables in **Unmarried Mother** Families on Childrens' Behavioral Outcomes<sup>ab</sup>

	Suspension/Expulsion <sup>c</sup>		Delinquency		School Problems	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
<b>Family Type</b>						
Unmarried Single Mother (Cohabiting Step)	-.11 (.13)	-.08 (.14)	-.77* (.35)	-.11 (.39)	-.27 (.19)	-.03 (.20)
<b>Socio-Economic Characteristics</b>						
Race (White)						
Black		.95*** (.14)		.24 (.27)		-.32 (.20)
Hispanic		.14 (.20)		1.09* (.42)		-.28 (.22)
Other Race		.10 (.24)		.88 (.60)		-.02 (.37)
Log Family Income		-.24*** (.07)		-.14 (.14)		.06 (.08)
Missing Income (No)		.20 (.13)		-.23 (.29)		.01 (.15)
Mother's Age		-.01 (.01)		-.00 (.02)		.02+ (.01)
Mother's Education		-.14*** (.02)		-.06 (.06)		-.04 (.04)
Child's Age		.05 (.04)		-.22** (.07)		-.13* (.05)
Child's Sex (Female)		.97*** (.11)		2.18*** (.27)		.97*** (.15)
Importance of religion to Child		-.22** (.07)		-.75*** (.18)		-.24* (.11)
Number of Children in Household		.10** (.03)		-.03 (.09)		.05 (.06)
Number of Mother's Marriages		.11* (.05)		.34* (.15)		.10 (.07)
<b>Parenting Characteristics</b>						
Monitoring		.03 (.03)		.16+ (.09)		.08 (.06)
Closeness to Mother		-.22*** (.06)		-1.27*** (.17)		-.52*** (.09)
Closeness to Non-Resident Father		-.09* (.04)		-.32*** (.09)		-.16** (.06)
Missing Closeness to Non- Resident Father (No)		.02 (.11)		-.28 (.30)		-.21 (.14)
Intercept	-.35**	1.25	5.44***	15.56***	4.79***	8.40***
F-value <sup>d</sup>	-2781.49	-2482.34	4.84*	12.48***	2.03	6.15***
R <sup>2</sup>			.00	.09	.00	.06

Note: Reference category in parentheses \* p < .05 \*\* p < .01 \*\*\* p < .001

<sup>a</sup> Unstandardized coefficients are presented, standard errors in parentheses

<sup>b</sup> N=4156 <sup>c</sup> Logistic regression was used for suspended or expelled 1=Yes.

<sup>d</sup> The Log Likelihood is shown for the models predicting suspension or expulsion

Table 4. The Effects of Socio-Economic Characteristics and Parenting Variables in **Unmarried Mother** Families on Childrens' Academic Outcomes<sup>ab</sup>

	Low Grade Point Average <sup>c</sup>		Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test		College Expectations	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
<b>Family Type</b>						
Unmarried Single Mother (Cohabiting Step)	-.33* (.16)	-.24 (.19)	.32 (.98)	1.34 (.81)	.09 (.07)	.04 (.06)
<b>Socio-Economic Characteristics</b>						
Race (White)						
Black		.03 (.16)		-8.59*** (.83)		.14* (.06)
Hispanic		.21 (.19)		-6.42*** (1.05)		.06 (.09)
Other Race		-.53+ (.29)		-2.76* (1.33)		.20* (.08)
Log Family Income		-.22** (.07)		2.15*** (.41)		.08** (.03)
Missing Income (No)		.48* (.19)		-2.49*** (.76)		-.13 (.07)
Mother's Age		-.01 (.01)		.04 (.05)		.01 (.00)
Mother's Education		-.09** (.03)		1.55*** (.15)		.04*** (.01)
Child's Age		-.04 (.04)		-.43* (.19)		-.09** (.02)
Child's Sex (Female)		.36** (.12)		1.18 (.54)		-.23** (.04)
Importance of religion to Child		-.25** (.08)		-.48 (.46)		.14** (.03)
Number of Children in Household		-.07 (.05)		-1.13*** (.22)		-.04 (.02)
Number of Mother's Marriages		.12* (.05)		-.18 (.35)		-.03 (.03)
<b>Parenting Characteristics</b>						
Monitoring		.02 (.04)		1.30*** (.23)		.03 (.02)
Closeness to Mother		-.24** (.08)		-1.12*** (.34)		.07* (.03)
Closeness to Non-Resident Father		-.12* (.050)		-.056 (.254)		.04* (.02)
Missing Closeness to Non-Resident Father (No)		-.14 (.15)		-1.92*** (.57)		-.11 (.05)
Intercept	-1.427***	2.39*	97.74***	93.68***	4.28***	4.18***
F-value <sup>d</sup>	-1778.52	-1707.03	.11	46.76***	1.95	9.90***
R <sup>2</sup>			.00	.27	.00	.07

Note: Reference category in parentheses \* p < .05 \*\* p < .01 \*\*\* p < .001

<sup>a</sup> Unstandardized betas are presented, standard errors in parentheses

<sup>b</sup> N=4156

<sup>c</sup> Logistic regression was employed for low grade point average (1= low grades)

<sup>d</sup> The Log Likelihood is shown for the models predicting low grade point average

Table 5. The Effects of Socio-Economic Characteristics and Parenting Variables in **Stepfamilies** on Childrens' Behavioral Outcomes<sup>ab</sup>

	Suspension/Expulsion <sup>c</sup>		Delinquency		School Problems	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
<b>Family Type</b>						
Married Stepfamily	-.52***	-.28	-1.15**	-.95**	-.19	-.12
(Cohabiting Stepfamily)	(.14)	(.15)	(.37)	(.34)	(.22)	(.22)
<b>Socio-Economic Characteristics</b>						
Race (White)						
Black		.99***		.54		-.12
		(.19)		(.46)		(.25)
Hispanic		.13		1.27*		-.63*
		(.23)		(.59)		(.32)
Other Race		.32		2.00*		.44
		(.22)		(.81)		(.40)
Log Family Income		-.14		.27		.06
		(.11)		(.21)		(.11)
Missing Income (No)		.19		-.24		.44
		(.18)		(.46)		(.30)
Mother's Age		-.03		.05		.02
		(.02)		(.04)		(.02)
Mother's Education		-.17***		-.14		-.09*
		(.03)		(.10)		(.04)
Child's Age		.14**		-.23*		-.08
		(.05)		(.10)		(.06)
Child's Sex (Female)		.90***		1.67***		.72***
		(.13)		(.31)		(.17)
Importance of religion to child		-.05		-.57*		-.21
		(.10)		(.25)		(.12)
Number of Children in Household		-.18**		-.00		-.06
		(.05)		(.14)		(.06)
Number of Mother's Marriages		.23**		.46		.37***
		(.08)		(.26)		(.10)
<b>Parental Relationship</b>						
Duration		.00		.01		-.01
		(.02)		(.04)		(.02)
Parental Happiness		-.02		-.06		-.12
		(.05)		(.09)		(.07)
Frequency of Conflict		.07		.39		.02
		(.11)		(.27)		(.11)

(CONTINUED)



Table 5. The Effects of Socio-Economic Characteristics and Parenting Variables in **Stepfamilies** on Childrens' Behavioral Outcomes (CONTINUED)<sup>ab</sup>

	Suspension/Expulsion <sup>c</sup>		Delinquency		School Problems	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
<b>Parenting Characteristics</b>						
Monitoring by Parents		-.02 (.06)		-.01 (.17)		-.00 (.08)
Closeness to Mother		-.20 (.10)		-.81*** (.22)		-.54*** (.12)
Closeness to Resident Father		-.10 (.09)		-.50* (.20)		-.27** (.09)
Closeness to Non- Resident Father		.02 (.05)		-.17 (.12)		-.02 (.07)
Missing Closeness to Non- Resident Father (No)		.26 (.15)		.16 (.38)		.40* (.20)
Intercept	-.35**	.40	5.44***	12.46***	4.79***	9.45***
F-value <sup>d</sup>	-1199.11	-1077.78	9.87**	5.75***	.77	6.14
R <sup>2</sup>			.01	.10	.00	.08

Note: Reference category in parentheses \* p < .05 \*\* p < .01 \*\*\* p < .001

<sup>a</sup> Unstandardized betas are presented, standard errors in parentheses

<sup>b</sup> N=1912

<sup>c</sup> Logistic regression for suspended or expelled (1=Yes)

<sup>d</sup> The Log Likelihood is shown for the models predicting suspension or expulsion

Table 6. The Effects of Socio-Economic Characteristics and Parenting Variables in **Stepfamilies** on Childrens' Academic Outcomes<sup>ab</sup>

	Low Grade Point Average <sup>c</sup>		Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test		College Expectations	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
<b>Family Type</b>						
Married Stepfamily	-.38*	-.21	4.22***	2.13*	.14*	.00
(Cohabiting Stepfamily)	(.18)	(.20)	(.99)	(.88)	(.07)	(.07)
<b>Socio-Economic Characteristics</b>						
Race (White)						
Black		.28		-8.52***		.03
		(.26)		(1.03)		(.09)
Hispanic		.11		-6.24***		.04
		(.29)		(1.45)		(.09)
Other Race		.65*		-3.24*		.00
		(.30)		(1.62)		(.13)
Log Family Income		-.18		1.36**		.15***
		(.09)		(.45)		(.04)
Missing Income (No)		-.12		-1.66		.18*
		(.28)		(1.40)		(.09)
Mother's Age		-.01		.04		.00
		(.02)		(.10)		(.01)
Mother's Education		-.11*		1.50***		.06***
		(.05)		(.19)		(.02)
Child's Age		-.08		-.63**		-.10***
		(.06)		(.24)		(.02)
Child's Sex (Female)		.55**		2.40***		-.19**
		(.18)		(.68)		(.07)
Importance of religion to child		-.18		-.69		.13**
		(.12)		(.55)		(.05)
Number of Children in Household		-.01		-.50		.04
		(.06)		(.26)		(.02)
Number of Mother's Marriages		.12		-.76		-.03
		(.09)		(.51)		(.04)
<b>Parental Relationship</b>						
Duration of Relationship		.00		-.07		.02*
		(.02)		(.08)		(.01)
Parental Happiness		-.03		-.29		-.00
		(.06)		(.25)		(.02)
Frequency of Conflict		.05		.10		-.04
		(.15)		(.53)		(.05)

(CONTINUED)

Table 6. The Effects of Socio-Economic Characteristics and Parenting Variables in **Stepfamilies** on Childrens' Academic Outcomes (CONTINUED)<sup>ab</sup>

	Low Grade Point Average <sup>c</sup>		Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test		College Expectations	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
<b>Parenting Characteristics</b>						
Monitoring by Parents		.02 (.05)		1.47*** (.29)		.04 (.03)
Closeness to Mother		-.12 (.14)		-.51 (.51)		.14** (.05)
Closeness to Resident Father		-.19 (.11)		-.07 (.43)		.03 (.04)
Closeness to Non-Resident Father		-.06 (.07)		-.12 (.33)		.04 (.03)
Missing Closeness Non-Resident Father (No)		-.06 (.19)		-1.63* (.76)		-.11 (.07)
Intercept	-1.43***	2.63+	97.74***	99.13	4.28***	3.68***
F-value <sup>d</sup>	-824.15	-787.56	18.07***	15.65***	3.93*	6.81***
R <sup>2</sup>			.02	.24	.00	.10

Note: Reference category in parentheses \* p < .05 \*\* p < .01 \*\*\* p < .001

<sup>a</sup> Unstandardized betas are presented, standard errors in parentheses

<sup>b</sup> N=1912

<sup>c</sup> Logistic regression was employed for low grade point average (1=low grades)

<sup>d</sup> The Log Likelihood is shown for the models predicting low grade point average