

**Selection Into and Timing of Social Fatherhood:
Men Who Partner with Single Mothers**

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Abstract

While much attention has focused on the barriers facing single mothers' marriage prospects, relatively little is known about the attributes of men willing to partner with women with children. This paper examines the characteristics of men willing to partner with single mothers. We then explore the types of relationships formed and the speed in which men enter into cohabiting and marital unions with single mothers. Data are from the men's sample of the 2006-2010 National Survey of Family Growth. Our results indicate that men willing to partner with single mothers are on many dimensions negatively selected, offer less formal commitment, and proceed into shared living significantly faster, relative to men who partner with childless women. Results are interpreted in light of recent policy efforts to promote marriage and current research on the factors associated with child and maternal well-being.

Selection Into and Timing of Social Fatherhood: Men Who Partner with Single Mothers

The dramatic transformations in family formation processes have recently taken front stage in contemporary public policy debates. The share of births occurring outside of marital unions reached an all-time high in the early years of the twenty-first century (Ventura, 2009), and divorce rates, while declining, remain quite high (Goldstein 1999; Martin, 2006; Raley and Bumpass, 2003). Many divorced individuals subsequently remarry; however, the prevalence of remarriage has been declining in recent years, largely offset by cohabitation (Bumpass, Sweet, and Cherlin 1991; Goldscheider and Sassler, 2006; Sassler, 2010). High levels of relationship flux have resulted in an increasingly complex partner market. Many single adults looking for a relationship have children, either from a previous marital union or as a result of a non-marital relationship that ended (Goldscheider and Sassler, 2006). Furthermore, children are frequently spread out across several households, as more than half of coresidential stepparents also have children who live in another household (Goldscheider and Sassler, 2006; Stewart et al. 2003). Hence, a substantial proportion of adults at risk of entering a new coresidential union have children, either living with them or tied to them emotionally and financially.

Because women disproportionately retain custody for minor children following relationship dissolution, the pool of eligible women from which men can choose prospective mates contains many women who already have children from previous relationships. While the effect of children on women's likelihood of forming new relationships has been extensively studied (Carlson, England, and McLanahan 2004; Chiswick and Lehrer 1990; Graefe and Lichter 1999; Koo, Suchindran, and Griffith, 1986; Lichter, Graefe, and Brown 2003; Qian, Lichter, and Mellott, 2005), less research

has examined the role children play in men's decisions to enter into new relationships (though see Goldscheider and Sassler, 2006). Men historically have often played social fathers to partners' coresidential children. But relatively little is known regarding how a prospective partner's children shape the kind of relationship into which men enter. Men, in general, are more likely to express a preference for partnering with childless adults than are women (Goldscheider and Kaufman, 2006). This suggests that principles of exchange engaged in by single parents looking for prospective mates may differ from those practiced by childless individuals.

We use data from the 2006-2010 National Survey of Family Growth sample of men to explore two related questions. First, we assess whether men who choose to assume the role of social father differ from men who partner with childless women. Second, we examine whether their relationships progress in different ways, focusing on two aspects of relationship progression: the type of union entered (marriage vs. cohabitation), and the tempo of entering into such unions. Because not all fathers or fathering statuses are equivalent, both in their stability and impacts upon children (Cooksey and Fondell 1996; Hofferth and Anderson, 2003; McLanahan 2002; Yeung et al. 2000), it is important to understand which men are willing to join a family that contains another man's children. Findings are interpreted in light of recent policy efforts to increase and stabilize marriage among single parents (Amato, 2007; Furstenberg, 2007).

Current Research on Social Fathers

A small but growing body of scholarship explores factors shaping men's entrance into fathering situations when they are not the biological father (Anderson 2000;

Bernhardt and Goldscheider 2001, 2002; Goldscheider and Sassler 2006; Hofferth and Anderson 2003; Nock 1998; Stewart et al. 2001, 2003; Sweeney 1997). These studies initially examined factors shaping men's likelihood of remarrying (e.g., Koo, et al., 1986). More recently, this work has expanded the definition of unions to incorporate informal arrangements such as cohabitation (Goldscheider and Sassler, 2006; Hofferth and Anderson, 2003). To date, however, few studies examine the impact that partners' children have on the kind of relationship entered (Bernhardt and Goldscheider 2001; Goldscheider and Sassler 2006).

Various theoretical explanations have been offered to explain the negative proclivity to assume the role of stepfather. Both exchange theory and a growing body of research on evolutionary biology suggests that men may be uninterested in providing resources for children to whom they are not biologically related (Anderson 2000; Hofferth and Anderson 2003), or unwilling to contribute financially to another man's child (Lampard and Peggs 1999). These perspectives suggest that men willing to become step-parents should be of lower socioeconomic status than those entering child-free unions. Men are presumed to prefer investment in biological children, as a symbol of marital capital (Becker 1974). In fact, a survey of single men found that willingness to marry a woman who already had children declined with greater earnings levels as well as educational attainment; the formerly married and older expressed greater acceptance of marriage to a single mother (Goldscheider and Kaufman 2006; South 1991).

Either perspective suggests that respondents of higher social status should be less likely to become step-parents, a finding that is consistent with prior research on step-father families in the United States (Anderson 2000; Goldscheider and Sassler 2006), as

well as in Sweden (Bernhardt and Goldscheider 2001). In other words, step-fathers may be negatively selected. For example, Anderson (2000) suggests that non-biological fathers may differ in various ways from biological fathers. They may be less attractive partners because their earnings are low, or they may choose to marry a single mother because they are unable to find a childless woman willing to marry them (Anderson 2000). The data support this assertion; stepfathers and cohabiting father figures earn considerably less than married biological father (Hofferth and Anderson 2003; Goldscheider and Sassler 2006; Graefe and Lichter 2007). Recent research on the union outcomes of single mothers finds that those who do enter into new marriages are less well-matched than married women who are childless (Lichter, Qian, and Mellott, 2006; Qian et al. 2005).

Other Factors Shaping Men's Assumption of the Fathering Role

While men may prefer to partner with childless women, numerous factors may reduce their ability to do so. The pool of eligible women near their age level or in their education bracket may include more parents than not. This is particularly the case for African Americans (Smock and Greenland 2010). Black women in particular are likely to be single parents, given both their higher rates of non-marital births and divorce, relative to white women. Nativity may also influence a man's ability to partner with a childless woman, as foreign-born men's earnings are often lower than their native-born counterparts (Roy and Burton 2007), and their legal status may be tenuous.

On the other hand, some men may view the opportunity to play the role of social father in a positive light (Roy and Burton 2007). Men who have themselves lived with a step-father are more likely to assume a similar role (albeit in cohabiting relationships)

(Bernhardt and Goldscheider 2001; Goldscheider and Sassler 2006). Furthermore, men who are more tolerant of forming relationships with previously married women or mothers have a higher likelihood of entering into coresidential unions than fussier men (Goldscheider, Kaufman, and Sassler 2006).

Another factor shaping men's attractiveness in the partner market is their own parental status. Although men often do not retain custody of their children following relationship dissolution, emotional and financial ties with children may hinder their ability to attract the most desirable partners. Previously married men who retain custody for their children are significantly more likely to wed single mothers than are childless men (Goldscheider and Sassler 2006). Men whose children live elsewhere are also more likely to enter both marriages and cohabiting relationships than are childless men, and they also gravitate towards unions with mothers (Goldscheider and Sassler 2006). Yet research on the marriage propensities of low-income new fathers who have children across different households finds that multi-partner fertility reduces the odds of marriage (if not parenting and cohabitation) (Carlson et al. 2004). Whether men are parents, if they retain child custody, or the extent to which they make child support payments also influence men's ability to re-partner, the kind of woman they can attract, and the type of relationships they enter.

Increasingly important is the type of union into which men can enter. Individuals in weaker bargaining positions may choose cohabiting unions over marriage. In fact, research on cohabitators finds they are selectively different from those who marry without first living together, in that they are generally of lower socioeconomic status, with less education and more unstable marital histories (Blackwell and Lichter 2000; Bumpass et

al. 1991; Clarkberg 1999; Sassler and Goldscheider 2004; Sassler and McNally 2003); they are also less likely to pool income, and even if they do often maintain separate accounts (Addo and Sassler, 2010; Heimdal & Houseknecht, 2003; Treas, 1993). Schoen and Owens (1992) suggest that cohabitation may be a particularly attractive bargain for men who lack attributes that signify the ability to be a good provider. No studies to date examine entrance into sexually involved, non-residential relationships. It may be the case that men who prefer to maintain residential independence are of higher economic status, as one of the primary reasons cohabitators give for moving in together relates to finances (Sassler 2004). Alternatively, men may prefer to date single women rather than move in with them to avoid the additional expenses and responsibilities children impose.

Overview of Study

Based on the existing literature, we hypothesize that men will be less likely to enter into relationships (of all kinds) with women who are already mothers. There is a strong bias against assuming responsibility for another man's child, and children also impose challenges to parents' new relationships. Those men willing to become romantically involved with single mothers should be less attractive on the partner market – more likely to be racial minorities, less likely to be from intact families, and more likely to have grown up in families that experienced economic stress. We would also expect men who were previously married to be more likely to enter into unions with single mothers.

The impact of a prospective partner's maternal status on the type of union entered is also of importance. Here, however, there is less literature to suggest possible outcomes. Assuming that men are less willing to take on responsibility for another man's

child, we expect men to be more likely to enter into cohabiting unions with single mothers than marriages, while men should be more likely to marry childless women relative to cohabitation. The presence of children may be less detrimental to less committed relationships. That is, men with poorer prospects may choose to live with or date a single mother, over remaining single. Given the lower marriage rates of African-Americans, as well as the greater availability of single mothers with whom to partner, we expect men who are racial minorities and from non-intact families to be more likely to enter into cohabiting and dating relationships with single mothers than marital ones, relative to White men. Foreign-born men are expected to be more likely to enter marital unions over cohabiting or dating ones, though it is not clear whether the presence of children will exert much of an impact. Other factors suggesting lower social status – growing up in disrupted families or having mothers with low levels of education – should increase the likelihood of entering into cohabiting unions, particularly with single mothers, over marital ones. Finally, previous union experiences should also increase the likelihood of entering into less formal unions over marriage, as cohabitation often replaced remarriage (Bumpass and Sweet 1989). More advantaged men (those who are white, native-born, and from intact families, as well as those of more advantaged social class status) are expected to be more likely to wed childless women.

There is little research on relationship tempos, or how rapidly couples move from sexual involvement to coresidence. What little research exists suggests that men move more rapidly into coresidential relationships when they are more advantaged than their partner. Sassler and Joyner (2011), for example, found that white men partnered with minority women moved more rapidly into sexual involvement and cohabitation than did

white men partnered with white women, or minority men partnered with white women. We therefore expect men to move in more rapidly with single mothers than childless women, and for their progression to be particularly rapid into cohabitation and slower for transitions directly into marriage. Other studies have found that racial minorities enter into shared living arrangements and marriage more slowly than do Whites (Sassler, Addo, and Hartman, 2009; Sassler and Michelmore, 2012). Those who have experienced parental divorce are also more likely to experience expedited relationship transitions, as are those who have been previously married or who are serial cohabitators (Sassler, Addo, and Lichter, 2012).

Data and Methods

Data are from the 2006-2010 National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) men's sample. The NSFG is a household survey that investigates topics related to childbearing and reproductive health. For this analysis, we focus on the relationships of men who were between the ages of 18 and 45.

Dependent Variables

We utilize two dependent variables in our analysis, to capture the type of union entered and the tempo of union transitions. For our first dependent variable, information on men's most recent sexual partner in the past 12 months allows us to ascertain whether and what kind of relationship men were in. Men who reported never having sex with a female were excluded ($n = 816$) from the sample. Men reporting no opposite-sex partner in the previous twelve months are classified as single, and are also not included in our study ($n = 2,622$). Among men reporting a sexual partner in the previous 12 months, we next determine their current marital status. We distinguish those who were currently

married (and reported that their last partner was their spouse) and did not cohabit from married men who cohabited with their spouse prior to marriage, as well as from men who were in cohabiting unions at the time of the survey. Men who were not married or living with their partner at the time of their interview, and who report having sex with their most recent partner more than once, are classified as being in a dating relationship. Our subsequent two analyses are based on samples of 5,491 men with non-missing covariates.

Our second dependent variable explores the tempo from the onset of the sexual relationship to coresidence for relationships that progressed directly into marriage or began with cohabitation. We distinguish between married men who wed without first living with their spouse and those who cohabited prior to marriage; those who lived with their spouse prior to marriage are grouped with those who entered into a cohabiting union (and had not married by their survey date). Furthermore, dating relationships are disaggregated into those that ended without ever becoming coresidential (heretofore designated as Break-Ups), and those that are on-going, but not (yet) characterized by shared living quarters.

Information on the date of first sexual involvement with current partner, the date of marriage or move-in (if cohabiting), as well as responses to questions about whether the relationship was on-going, and the date of last sexual involvement for relationships that dissolved are utilized to construct the duration measure. Those who indicate they are still romantically involved with their most recent sexual partner, but do not classify themselves as cohabiting at the time of their interview are right-censored, and the model assumes that their spell ends sometime in the future.

Independent Variables

To determine the maternal status of men's most recent romantic partner, we rely on information men provided on their partners' attributes at the initiation of the relationship. Men were asked if their last partner had any biological, adopted, or foster children when their sexual relationship began. We then distinguish unions with women who had children and those who did not.

Other independent variables in the analyses include characteristics of the men in the sample, their family background, and experiences. Men's individual characteristics include age, race and ethnic origin, and nativity. Separate categories are used to disaggregate men into those who report being non-Hispanic White, Black, Hispanic, and Other. Nativity is constructed by creating a dummy variable for foreign-birth. Family background characteristics include the religion in which the respondent was raised, family structure while growing up, and maternal educational attainment. Although the data classified eight different religious categories, we group Baptists and Evangelical Protestants, following analyses indicating that they did not differ significantly in outcomes, and utilize this as our omitted category. Other religious affiliations include Catholic, Methodist, Mainline Protestant, No religion, and Other (non-Christian) religion. Family structure is constructed from responses to a question on parental living situation at age 14. Those who were living with two biological or adoptive parents are the omitted intact-family reference group; those who were living in a blended family and those living in a non-parental or other (e.g., single parent) household type serve as contrasts. Finally, indicators of maternal educational attainment serve as rough proxies for class status of origin family. The few men who did not know their mother's educational level are grouped with those reporting that their mother had less than a high school degree.

Our final three independent variables consist of personal experiences that might shape the kind of union entered. Those who have already experienced marital disruption are increasingly likely to cohabit rather than marry (Bumpass et al. 1991); we therefore include an indicator of prior marital experience. Because age at first sexual debut serves as an indicator of conservatism, we include a dummy variable capturing those men who first engaged in sexual relationships at an age later than the average (age 18 or greater); we would expect such men to be more likely to enter into marital relations than to cohabit or remain single. Finally, we include a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent had ever been on active duty in the Armed Forces for a period of 6 months or more. Including such a variable serves multiple purposes. One, it may be yet another indicator of class status, as all the men in the sample came of age after the draft had been disbanded, and those who entered the Armed Forces may have had fewer options for attending college. Army involvement may be more conducive to marriage – perhaps because it often provides housing.

Weighted means for the variables used in our analyses are presented in Table 1, which depicts the overall sample mean, as well as means for the three main relationship categories. In total, the largest share of men (22%) is found in the youngest age category (18 to 24). Over half of men who are in relationships with single mothers, on the other hand, are ages 35 to 45. Life cycle clearly plays an important role in men’s likelihood of living with children. As for other attributes of interest, Black men are over-represented among those in relationships with single mothers. While more than two-thirds of the overall sample grew up in an intact family, men who were involved with single mothers had a greater prevalence of alternative family structures. Men involved with single

mothers are also substantially overrepresented among those from lower social class background (measured via maternal education), those who have been previously married, and men who have served in the Armed Forces.

[Table 1 About Here]

Analytic Approach First, we assess whether men who choose to assume the role of social father differ from men who partner with childless women. Second, we examine whether their relationships progress in different ways, focusing on two aspects of relationship progression: the type of union entered (marriage vs. cohabitation), and the tempo of entering into such unions.

Our analysis proceeds in three stages. First, we examine the factors associated with entering into the role of social father, relative to partnering with a childless woman. We conduct a logistic regression analysis of entrance into shared living with a partner who had children versus those who partnered with childless women. Next, we utilize multinomial logistic regression to explore the type of unions into which men enter when children are present; this approach allows for simultaneous estimation of polytomous outcomes (Maddala 1983) to model the probability of entering into a coresidential union, relative to remaining single.

Our final outcome applies event history techniques to examine the timing to shared living, distinguishing between cohabitation, marriage, and remaining in sexually involved dating (non-residential) relationships. We estimate proportional hazards models that formally test whether men who enter into partnerships with single mothers and childless women differ in their timing from sexual involvement to cohabitation, marriage, and dissolution, before and after controlling for demographic variables.

RESULTS

Entrance into Unions with Single Mothers

Factors that influence the likelihood of forming relationships with women with children are presented in Table 2. Women without children serve as the reference category. The results indicate that more disadvantaged men, such as those who are racial minorities, who experienced early sexual debut, and who have been previously married are substantially more likely to enter into relationships with single mothers than are more privileged men. As hypothesized, Black and Hispanic men are substantially more likely than are white men to form relationships with single mothers. Black men are twice as likely to form relationships with single mothers as white men. Previously married men are over 2.7 times more likely to form relationships with single mothers than men who have never married.

[Table 2 About Here]

Our results also reveal strong life-cycle dimensions associated with entrance into relationships of all kinds. The youngest respondents, men ages 18 to 24, are substantially less likely to enter into relationships with single mothers. Older men (those over 35) are significantly more likely to form relationships with women with children. Our findings also indicate that men whose families were of higher social class, as indicated by having mothers with some college education or a bachelor's degree, are significantly less likely to form relationships with single mothers than men whose mothers had only a high school degree or less. Men who are foreign-born are less likely to form relationships with single mothers relative to their native-born counterparts.

Correlates of partnering with single mothers are not always consistent across relationship status. Those who marry single mothers are older than those who date and cohabit with single mothers. Furthermore, service in the Armed Forces appears to elevate men's odds of marrying single mothers, but military service is not associated with a heightened likelihood of dating and cohabiting with single mothers.

Not all union types are the same, however. Are men from more disadvantaged backgrounds entering into marital unions with single mothers, or are they choosing less formal (and more unstable) relationship options? Table 3 compares the likelihood of forming relationships with single mothers across dating, cohabiting, and marital relationships. The reference group is men in a dating relationship. Men who partner with women with children are more likely to do so in less formal relationships. They are most likely to be in a dating relationship with single mothers rather than coresidential relationships. Those in coresidential relationships with single mothers are less likely to be married.

[Table 3 About Here]

In sum, the results indicate that men willing to enter into relationships with single mothers are generally more likely to do so in cohabiting or dating relationships. Black men, men who grew up in step-families or in alternative family arrangements rather than intact families, and those who have been previously married demonstrate the greatest likelihood of forming unions with single mothers. In general, they more frequently do so in cohabiting unions rather than marital ones. These findings do not bode well for those interested in encouraging single mothers to wed, as men appear to be generally

disinclined to assume responsibility for another man's children unless they are disadvantaged in the partner market.

The Next Step: Assessing Relationship Progression

Portraying the attributes of those men amenable to forming relationships with single mothers is one way of suggesting the challenges facing single mothers hoping to repartner. Such findings are generally supportive of existing research differentiating the attributes of step-fathers and biological fathers, though they also reveal the considerable variation between cohabiting and dating social fathers. They largely replicate the measures used in previous studies, and find that while more disadvantaged men are less likely to form relationships with childless women, they do enter into relationships – often informal ones – with single mothers. Such findings suggest that exchange differs for men partnering with single mothers and childless women, in that women who already have children are less able to partner with the most desirable men. But what other aspects of relationship formation might indicate the operation of exchange mechanisms that disadvantage single mothers' ability to form stable relationships? A growing body of qualitative research suggests that cohabiting couples often enter shared relationships rather quickly, because it makes fiscal sense and is more convenient rather than because they have discussed future plans (Manning and Smock 2005; Sassler 2004; Stanley, Rhoades, and Markman 2006). A unique attribute of the NSFG data is the opportunity it provides to examine the duration from sexual involvement to coresidence. Our final analysis therefore examines the tempo of relationship progression for men

entering into relationships with single mothers and childless women, again disaggregating by union type.

Because the emphasis of this final analysis is on a new independent variable – duration from sexual involvement to coresidence – the data must be modified in several ways. We first construct life-table estimates of union transitions, and graph survival estimates that depict the duration from sexual involvement to union formation (or dissolution). The dependent variable remains the kind of coresidential union entered. Figure 1 shows the prevalence of different types of relationship transitions by the motherhood status of men’s partners. For those who are married or cohabiting, the date of first sexual involvement with the most current partner and the reported date of moving in together are utilized to estimate the duration to coresidence. If men cohabited prior to marrying, the duration variable is censored at the point they first move in with the partner (rather than the month they wed). Information on the date of first sex and how the respondent classified the current relationships are used to construct duration measures for men involved in non-coresidential romantic (dating) relationships. If a respondent reported no longer being romantically involved with their most recent sexual partner, we utilize the dates for first and last sex to determine the duration from sexual involvement to dissolution. Those who indicate they are still romantically involved with their most recent sexual partner, but who are not cohabiting at the time of their interview are right-censored, and the model assumes their spell ends some time in the future.¹

Survival Estimates of Relationship Progression

The pace of moving from sexual involvement to coresidence varies dramatically by union type and whether children were present. Figure 2 presents survival estimates for men's entrance into cohabiting and marital relationships with single mothers and childless women. The most rapid relationship progression is evidenced for men who cohabit with single mothers, and subsequently marry them. Men who enter into cohabiting unions also enter their shared living arrangements rapidly, though their pace is significantly slower than that of the previously mentioned group. Nonetheless, these relationships proceed at a significantly more rapid pace than do marriages to childless women.

[Figure 2 About Here]

We next present results from a multinomial logistic regression model of union type following the initiation of a sexual relationship. The motherhood status of men's partners remains as the independent variable of interest; the other control variables also remain the same. For ease of interpretation we present the results as odds ratios. These coefficients can be interpreted as the change in the likelihood of experiencing a particular union type associated with the motherhood status of men's partners. An odds ratio greater than 1.0 indicates an increased likelihood of an event occurring relative to the reference group. We limit the duration measure to 36 months, given the small sample size of the parental groups and the rapidity with which most parents enter into coresidential unions. This analysis is based on the relationship experiences of 5,491 men with complete information, who contribute 50,209 person months of information. Results of the discrete-time multinomial logistic regression results are presented in Table 4. We focus only on the motherhood status of men's partners duration results for this discussion. The

omitted category is being at risk of a relationship transition. Entrance into cohabiting unions is significantly faster. Perhaps women with children raise the topic of marriage sooner within their relationship than do childless women; alternatively, single mothers may feel pressured to pursue shared living arrangements (and provide sexual access and domestic services) more rapidly than childless women, given their disadvantaged position in the partner market.

[Table 4 about Here]

Discussion and Conclusions

Many critics of current marriage promotion policies assert that these policies disadvantage women, encouraging them to enter or remain in poor marriages. What attention has been paid to fathers has generally been focused on ensuring they pay child support. This paper attempts to marry these two topics, by examining what kinds of men are willing to enter into relationships with single mothers. A presumption is that men who do so will contribute in some way that benefits both the mother and the child.

Our results suggest that policies emphasizing marrying off single mothers will face numerous challenges. For starters, the men most willing to enter into relationships with single mothers are more disadvantaged than those men who partner with childless women. They are substantially more likely to be racial minorities, to have experienced family flux themselves with children, and to already have experienced the dissolution of a marriage. Men from more privileged social backgrounds, in direct contrast, appear to eschew unions with single mothers in favor of relationship with childless women. Furthermore, men willing to enter into relationships with single mothers are more likely to do so in cohabiting or dating relationships. That is, they trade off more formal

arrangements for relationships that have lower expectations for them, in terms of providing and other forms of responsibility. Yet an implicit component of the marriage promotion agenda is to encourage a culture of marriage. Encouraging union formation among single parents, then, may be antithetical to achieving this other goal.

Several surprising results emerge in these results. Men who have served in the military are more amenable to relationships with single mothers than those with no experience in the armed forces. Whether their experiences in the military make them more familistic, or if their circumstances are somehow more supportive of families requires further study. Much of the popular press relating to military families emphasizes the strains it places on families. Overlooked in such stories is the possibility that a major reason for additional strain might be the greater likelihood of blended families among those who have served.

Most research on union formation reports that Black men have significantly lower odds of marrying than do White men. This may be in part an artifact of their partner market. Marriage rates are lower when women have children, and many single black women are already parents. Given the partners available to Black men, marriage rates are perhaps higher than expected. Black men are nearly twice as likely as white men to wed and cohabit with women with children.

Perhaps the most surprising result to emerge from this analysis has to do with the pace at which relationships with single mothers proceed. The presence of children should hypothetically serve as a deterrent to coresidence, given that women who already have children must divide their attention between children and a new partner, and may maintain ties to the biological father of their children. Single mothers ostensibly also

have less time in which to form new relationships. Nonetheless, or perhaps as a result, relationships with single mothers proceed at a much more rapid pace than do those with childless women. The attractions of shared living (sexual access, domestic services) appear to outweigh the drawbacks associated with sharing a household with a new partner's children. Yet such rapid entrance to shared living may present challenges to relationship stability, since it curtails the ability to develop a relationship without the strains imposed by day-to-day living. Further research is needed to ascertain if more rapid formation of coresidential unions is associated with higher rates of relationship dissolution experienced by blended families.

This study is not without limitations. Men's own parental status has not been included. Additionally, it is not possible to ascertain with NSFG data where children were living with their fathers at the time the relationship was formed with the new partner, or the extent of contact with non-resident children. Furthermore, men may have been spurred to enter into more serious (coresidential) relationships with new partners in response to a pregnancy. Perhaps the largest drawback to such a study is our inability to ascertain who initiates the move, and to what type of relationship. While existing research suggests that men have more power to progress relationship to a more serious level, given normative gender expectations (Sassler and Miller 2006), women who have been previously married may be less willing to re-wed. Studies of low-income single mothers find that they are particularly hesitant about marrying men who they feel will not be able to be good providers (Edin 2000; Edin and Kefalas 2005). Nonetheless, the research that exists suggest that women appear to have more power to prevent relationships or end them than to progress them (Sassler and Miller 2006). Remarriages

are generally more prone to break up than first marriages. Less formal relationships, such as cohabiting unions, are even more likely to dissolve, as few cohabiting unions last for more than five years (Lichter et al. 2006). Overall, these findings suggest the importance of treading with caution when promoting marriage for single mothers.

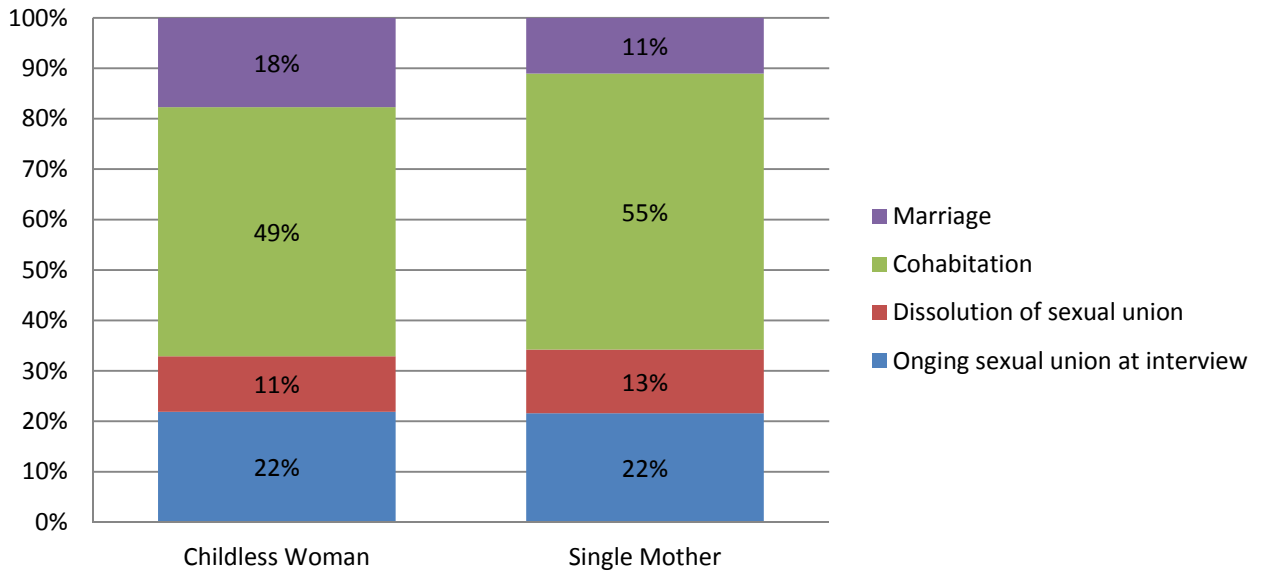
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Figure 1: Outcomes for Relationship Transitions by Motherhood Status and Union Type



Cumulative Proportion of Men at Risk of Relationship Transitions: Union Type and Motherhood Status

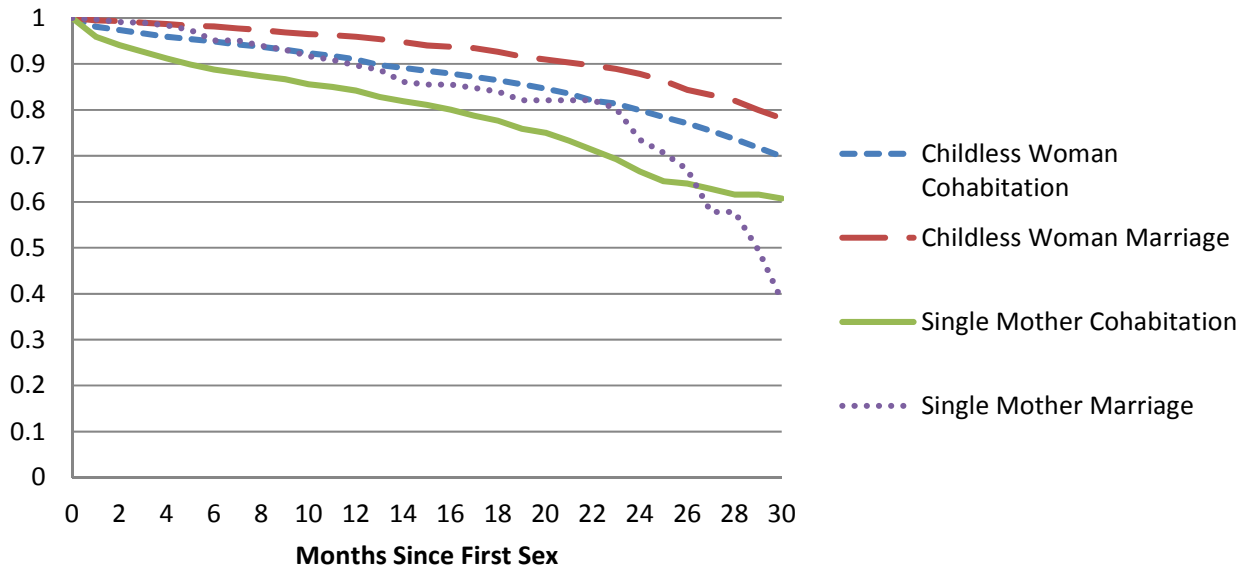


Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Sexually Involved Men by Motherhood Status of Partner

	Total	Type of Relationship							
		In Relationship		Ongoing Sexual Relationship		Cohabitation		Marriage	
		Single Mother	Childless Woman	Single Mother	Childless Woman	Single Mother	Childless Woman	Single Mother	Childless Woman
Age (Mean)	31.55	34.76 ***	30.56	32.46 ***	25.23	35.70 ***	32.37	37.19 +	35.39
18-24 (%)	22.1	9.3 ***	26.0	17.3 ***	56.7	5.1 ***	13.2	5.3	4.7
25-29 (%)	20.0	15.0	21.6	20.1	22.3	13.0	23.7	8.7	14.2
30-34 (%)	18.4	20.3	17.8	19.5	8.7	21.9	23.0	14.6	20.2
35-39 (%)	20.1	23.6	19.0	20.2	7.6	26.1	22.6	21.7	30.1
40-45 (%)	19.4	31.9	15.6	22.7	4.6	34.0	17.5	49.7	30.6
Race									
Non-Hispanic White	61.4	53.9 ***	63.8	47.3 ***	60.8	52.7 **	65.0	80.4 +	65.6
Black (%)	12.0	17.2	10.4	24.7	13.8	14.4	9.0	7.6	8.0
Hispanic (%)	18.9	20.8	18.3	22.9	18.4	21.8	18.0	9.4	18.8
Other (%)	7.7	8.1	7.6	5.1	7.0	11.1	8.0	2.6	7.6
Foreign-Born (%)	14.9	14.1	15.1	14.7	11.1	14.0	15.6	12.8	21.0
Religion									
None (%)	10.5	8.3 *	11.1	10.8 **	11.9	6.7	12.4	8.8	6.3
Catholic (%)	36.9	35.6	37.3	35.9	38.0	39.4	37.5	15.6	35.7
Baptist & Evangelical Protestant (%)	23.2	28.4	21.6	28.1	19.6	27.3	21.0	35.0	24.3
Methodist (%)	13.3	12.2	13.6	9.1	13.9	12.6	12.8	19.8	15.6
Mainline Protestant (%)	9.7	10.5	9.5	13.4	10.4	8.2	9.3	12.7	8.3
Non-Christian Religion (%)	6.4	5.0	6.8	2.7	6.3	5.8	6.1	8.1	9.7
Family Structure at age 14									
Intact Family (%)	68.4	64.8 +	69.5	64.0	68.3	63.2	68.4	74.8	75.0
Step-Family (%)	8.0	8.0	8.0	7.0	7.7	9.0	9.0	6.1	5.9
Other (%)	23.6	27.3	22.5	29.0	24.0	27.8	22.7	19.1	19.2
Maternal Education									
Less than high school (%)	21.1	27.8 ***	19.0	24.2 ***	13.5	27.7 ***	21.1	39.2	23.7
High school (%)	38.0	42.8	36.5	41.2	32.2	47.5	38.6	23.9	38.1
Some college (%)	20.9	19.1	21.5	19.0	23.4	17.9	20.7	24.9	20.3
Bachelor's Degree (%)	20.0	10.4	22.3	15.6	30.8	6.9	19.6	12.1	18.0
Previously Married (%)	13.5	29.6 ***	8.6	29.9 ***	6.5	27.8 ***	9.9	37.9 ***	8.7
In Armed Forces (%)	9.3	12.8 **	8.1	10.5 ***	3.8	13.6 +	9.4	16.2	12.9
Age at first sex (Mean)	16.65	16.22 ***	16.79	16.08 +	16.52	16.09 *	16.63	17.30	17.73
Late age at first sex (>=18)	29.6	22.8 **	31.7	22.4 +	29.2	19.2 ***	29.4	42.3	42.8
N	5,491	1,339	4,152	647	1,842	612	1,755	80	555

*** p <.001; **p<.01; *p<.05; +p<.1

Significant tests indicate whether value is significantly different across motherhood status within the same relationship type

Table 2. Factors Predicting Men's Entrance into Relationships with Single Mothers by Relationship Status (Exponentiated Coefficients)

	Relationship w/ Single Mother vs. Childless Woman	Type of Relationship		
		Dating Single Mother	Cohabiting w/ Single Mother vs. Childless Woman	Married Single Mother
Age (ref = 30-34)				
18-24	.33 ***	.49 ***	.34 ***	.09 ***
25-29	.76 **	.93	.90	.43 ***
35-39	1.15	.99	1.10	1.39 *
40-45	1.69 ***	1.34 *	1.62 *	2.26 ***
Race (ref= Non-Hispanic White)				
Black	2.19 ***	2.76 ***	1.92 ***	1.51 *
Hispanic	1.79 ***	1.63 **	2.64 ***	1.53 *
Other	1.12	.93	1.39	1.24
Foreign-Born	.78 *	.73 *	.93	.74 +
Religion (ref=Baptist & Evangelical Protestant)				
None	.73 *	.87	.71	.50
Catholic	.65 ***	.67 **	.62 *	.62 **
Methodist	.80 +	.75 +	.85	.82 **
Mainline Protestant	.95	.95	1.12	.81
Non-Christian Religion	.63 **	.51	.80	.68
Family Structure at age 14 (ref=Intact Family)				
Step-Family	1.07	.94	1.24	1.19
Other	1.13	1.02	1.28 +	1.23
Maternal Education (ref= less than high school)				
High school	.91	1.02	.76	.85
Some college	.73 **	.73 *	.72 +	.73 +
Bachelor's Degree	.52 ***	.68 *	.31 ***	.45 ***
Previously Married	2.72 ***	3.22 ***	2.87 ***	2.08 ***
In Armed Forces	1.08	.90	.87	1.48 *
Late age at first sex (>=18)	.68 ***	.74 **	.50 ***	.73 *
N	5,491			

*** p <.001; **p<.01; *p<.05; +p<.1

Table 3. Fathers' Partnering by Single Motherhood Status Across Relationship Types (Exponentiated Coefficients)

	(1)	(2)		(3)	
	Coresidential vs. Dating	Cohabitation vs. Dating	Married vs. Dating	Dating vs. Cohabitation	Married vs. Cohabitation
Single Mother	.51 ***	.60 ***	.22 ***	1.68 ***	.37 ***
N	5,491				

*** p <.001; **p<.01; *p<.05; +p<.1

Controls: age, race, immigrant status, religious affiliation, family structure at age 14, mother's education, previously married, active duty military service, and late sexual debut.

Table 4. Hazard Ratios (Exponentiated Coefficients) from Competing Risk Hazard Models of Time from Sex to Coresidence and Dissolution

	Cohabitation	Marriage	Dissolution of Sexual Union
Single Mother	1.15 **	.51 ***	2.38 ***
N (Person months)	50,209		

*** p <.001; **p<.01; *p<.05; +p<.1

Controls: age, race, immigrant status, religious affiliation, family structure at age 14, mother's education, previously married active duty military service, and late sexual debut.