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**Her, His and Their Children:
Influences on Couple Childbearing Decisions**

Elizabeth Thomson

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A National Survey of
FAMILIES
and
HOUSEHOLDS

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Department of Sociology and Center for Demography and Ecology

University of Wisconsin-Madison

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Throughout the 20th century, childbearing in the United States has been guided by a strong norm for a minimum of two children (David & Sanderson 1987; Ryder 1973; 1980). With increasing costs and decreasing economic benefits of larger families, most couples desire and have exactly two children. Below and above this number, a woman's parity — the number of children she has previously borne — is the primary determinant of her future childbearing. But what happens when couples bring children from prior relationships to a new union? How does the couple "count" her or his children when deciding to have one or more children together?

The answer to these questions is increasingly important for understanding fertility trends and variations in the U.S. and other industrialized societies. Increasing rates of nonmarital births, cohabitation and divorce combine to produce a substantial proportion of married and cohabiting couples with children from one or the other partner's previous unions (Bumpass & Raley 1995; Bumpass, Sweet & Raley 1995). When couples have children together, the woman may be having her second child, the man his third, or vice-versa. In this example, should we model childbearing as a transition from parity one to parity two, from parity two to parity three, or from parity three to parity four?

Childbearing decisions by couples with stepchildren are also important for understanding ties between stepparents and stepchildren, and between parents and their nonresident children (Booth & Dunn 1994). Does a stepchild “count” as much as one’s biological child, half as much, or not at all, when couples make childbearing plans? Do nonresident children “count” as much as resident children, or does their influence on the couple’s childbearing depend on the strength of the nonresident parent’s ties to such children? Many nonresident parents, particularly nonresident fathers, have very little involvement with their children. And involvement with nonresident children declines if either of the children’s parents enter new unions and/or acquire additional children or stepchildren (Seltzer 1991; Seltzer & Bianchi 1988).

In this paper, I use data from the National Survey of Families and Households to investigate effects of her, his and their children on childbearing intentions and behavior. The analysis is limited to couples in which the wife was under 40 at the time of the NSFH1 interview, i.e., couples still in their childbearing years. The risk of a subsequent birth is observed over a period averaging six years after the initial interviews in 1987-88.

Prior Childbearing and Union Childbearing

In a pioneering study, Griffith, Koo and Suchindran (1985) linked the primary reasons for first and second births to remarriage fertility: (1) the importance of biological parenthood for adult status; (2) the value of siblings to only children; and (3) the meaning of a shared biological child for the marriage. The first value implies that joint childbearing in a new marriage will be especially likely if one of the spouses has no prior children, and will not depend on how many children the other spouse brings to the marriage. Because parenthood has been viewed as more

essential to women's than to men's adult identities, we might expect this "parenthood effect" to be stronger when the childless spouse is the wife, rather than the husband.

The importance of siblings suggests that birth rates will also be high for couples who have only one child between them, but we may not be able to distinguish this effect from the parenthood effect discussed above. That is, the spouse who already has a child may be influenced by the "sibling effect," the spouse without children by the "parenthood effect." When couples each have a separate child, the sibling effect could be discerned if the wife's child (more likely to be living with the couple) had a stronger positive effect on couple childbearing decisions than the husband's child. We may also observe a sibling effect when one of the spouses has one child, the other has two or more. If these couples have a child together, it could be in order to provide a sibling for the one spouse's only child.

This last pattern could also, however, be due to the "marital meaning" effect. But a stronger case can be made for the importance of a shared child as a symbol of the marriage if the rate of having a first child together does not depend on how many children each spouse brings to the marriage.

With one exception noted below, research investigating effects of spouses' separate children on their joint childbearing deals with remarriage. And most of the research includes just half the picture, only the woman's children. Early research on remarriage fertility focused on the potential loss of exposure time to the risk of pregnancy. Investigators hypothesized that women who divorced would have fewer children than women who remained married, because they had shorter marital durations. Research showed that remarriage enabled white women to "catch up"

in completed fertility to women who remained in their first marriages (Thornton 1978; Kalwat 1983).

When women have the same number of children across two or more marriages that they would have in one, an inverse relationship should exist between the number of children at remarriage and the number born in remarriage. Bumpass (1984) reported an inverse association between number of children and the probability of any birth in remarriage; Wineberg (1990) found an effect only at two or more children; and Griffith et al. (1985) reported no decrease in birth probability by the woman's number of children at remarriage. Loomis and Landale (1996) included nonmarital unions in their analysis, finding the same inverse relationship reported by Bumpass for married women.¹

Lee Lillard and his colleagues have investigated causal models of childbearing and divorce with controls for selection effects and the potential endogeneity of each decision to the other. Using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1979 through 1990 interviews) female sample, they reported a negative direct effect of at least one child born prior to marriage on childbearing within the marriage (Lillard, Panis and Upchurch 1994). With data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, which includes earlier marriage cohorts (1955 to the early 1980's), Lillard and Waite (1993) reported that the effect of such children on a couple's childbearing was mediated by the higher risk of marital dissolution in such marriages.

Differences between these studies may be due to variations in sample size, which influences statistical power for detecting small differences, or to changes in the effects of a woman's parity at remarriage on subsequent childbearing. The only study to find no effect of previous children on remarriage fertility was based on the smallest sample and on the earliest

cohorts, when remarriage was relatively less common. The studies also had limited information on the husband's children. Most remarried women are married to men who have also been married before, and many if not most of those men are likely to have had children. Levin and O'Hara (1978) demonstrated that the husband's prior marriage, but not wife's, reduced the wife's completed fertility. Only because remarried women were more likely to marry remarried men than were first-married women (56% versus 7%), did remarried women in their sample have smaller numbers of children than women who remained in first marriages. Bumpass (1984) and Griffith et al. (1985) also reported a negative effect of the husband's prior marriage on the likelihood of births in the woman's second marriage.

In two unpublished studies, information on both spouses' children was used to predict childbearing intentions or births. Haurin (1992; 1994) analyzed data for women and men surveyed in the NLSY. She reported an earlier timing to first birth in remarriage than in first marriages, but similarities in the determinants of births (including the woman's parity) in first and second marriages. Children living outside the household reduced births in second marriages, with a stronger effect for the man's children than the woman's children. O'Keeffe (1988; 1990) used the 1982 National Survey of Family Growth to study effects of husbands' prior children on his current wife's birth expectations. She reported negative effects of the woman's parity (including children born prior to the current marriage), and negative effects of the husband's children — and support payments to children — from a prior marriage. The latter effects were not significant when the husband's age was controlled. In both of these studies, the models do not clearly distinguish effects of children born to the wife, to the husband, or to the couple. And they do not consider the distinct effects of having one, two or more children.

What remains unclear from these and earlier studies is whose children influence the couple's subsequent fertility, and at what parities. In part, this gap is due to a gap in data — few surveys include union and childbearing histories for both partners, or ask about the ages and whereabouts of prior partners' children. The studies cited above have taken advantage of the available data on men's children, but have not always distinguished children born to the man versus the woman, or born to the woman before and during a current union. Most of these studies classify couples in terms of their union order, rather than in terms of their previous childbearing. And several studies have not compared parity progressions in first unions to those in subsequent unions. If we want to identify the relative influence of parenthood per se, siblings, and marital meaning for couple's childbearing decisions, we need parity- and spouse-specific counts of children. The data I use are not complete in terms of childbearing histories for prior partners, but provide the opportunity to take an initial look at the influence of her, his and their children on a couple's childbearing decisions.

Samples and Measures

The U.S. National Survey of Families and Households (Sweet, Bumpass & Call 1988) provides data on spouses' childbearing intentions (NSFH1, 1987-88) and on subsequent births, adoptions and marital dissolutions (NSFH2, 1992-94). The survey is based on a national probability sample of households, with double sampling of several ethnic minority groups, single-parent families and step-families, cohabiting and recently married couples. Primary respondents were randomly selected from each household, were interviewed in person and asked to complete supplementary self-administered questionnaires. Partners of married or cohabiting respondents

were asked a subset of the interview questions, in a self-administered questionnaire. The response rate for primary respondents was 74%.

The analytic sample for this study includes married couples in which the woman was under 40 and not pregnant at the NSFH1 survey, both spouses participated in that survey and reported their intention to have a(nother) child, and at least one of the spouses responded to the follow-up survey and provided information about births or adoptions and marital separation since the first survey (N=2,273).² I excluded cohabiting couples; in spite of oversampling, the number of cohabiting couples who were otherwise eligible was too small to test likely interactions between marital status and the influence of partners' children on the couple's childbearing decisions.

Couples in which one of the spouses was sterilized **are** included in the analysis, even though they were not asked questions about birth intentions (see measurement, below) and only a handful reported a birth or adoption between interviews. The argument for excluding sterilized couples is that their childbearing intentions and outcomes are predetermined by the sterilization. On the other hand, sterilization represents a decision to have no more children. Even if one spouse was sterilized prior to the current union, the decision to marry incorporated a decision to have no more children. I also report results based only on fecund couples, in order to demonstrate how sterilization is part of the process through which children from previous unions influence couples' childbearing intentions and behavior.

The analysis of childbearing decisions includes two components of the decision process — each spouse's childbearing intentions, and the couple's subsequent births. **Childbearing intentions** were measured for the primary respondent in the personal interview, for the spouse in the self-administered questionnaire: “Do you intend to have a(nother) child sometime?” If no:

“How sure are you that you will not have (more) children: very, moderately, not at all sure?” If yes: “How sure are you that you will have (more) children: very, moderately, not at all sure?” These responses were scored from 1 (very sure do not intend to have a child) to 7 (very sure intend to have a child). This scoring intentionally leaves a larger distance (3 to 5) between those who intended and did not intend to have a child, but were not sure about their intentions, than between intentions in the same direction but with varying levels of certainty.³

Primary respondents were not asked the childbearing intentions question if either spouse was sterilized, but the spouse questionnaire did not filter the intentions question by sterilization status. Since 95% of spouse respondents in a sterile couple said they were very sure they did not intend a child, I assigned the lowest intention score to both spouses in sterile couples.

Childbearing/Adoption. Each respondent at NSFH2 (wife, husband or both) reported births or adoptions between surveys, including the birth/adoption month and year. Respondents also reported pregnancies at the NSFH2 interview. Couples in the same marriage at NSFH1 and NSFH2 were coded as having a child if a birth or adoption was reported, or if the wife was pregnant at NSFH2. Couples who had separated between surveys were coded as having a child only if an adoption occurred within the marriage or a birth occurred by the 6th month after separation. Exposure months were calculated beginning with the 6th month after the NSFH1 survey, and ending with the earlier of (1) the birth or adoption month; (2) the 6th month after separation; or (3) four months after the NSFH2 survey month. The last specification allows time for births to women who were pregnant at the second survey and assumes that pregnancies discovered after the survey would not come to term within four months. Since only a few couples adopted a child between surveys, I refer below to all events as births.

As might be expected, many of the couples who were fecund at the first survey were sterile by the time of the second survey. For most of these couples, it is possible to determine when a sterilization occurred and to truncate their exposure to pregnancy risk at the date of sterilization (or a few months later, if the husband was sterilized). I have not done so for three reasons. First, information on sterilization is available for couples who separated between surveys only if both former spouses participated in the follow-up survey or if a responding spouse was sterilized prior to separation. Second, sterilized couples may adopt children (and several did). Third, the choice of sterilization is but one of several behaviors that may effectively prevent pregnancy and that therefore intervene between spouses' childbearing intentions and their subsequent births. Since the NSFH includes no information on use of other contraceptive methods, I ignore sterilization after the first interview.

Her, His and Their Children. At several points in the interview, primary respondents were asked to identify children living in the household (full-time or part-time) and children living elsewhere. Children living in the household were identified in terms of their relationship to each spouse, and the spouse's children living elsewhere were also identified separately from the respondent's children living elsewhere. Unfortunately, no direct information was obtained about the relationship between the current spouse and the respondent's children living elsewhere, unless the children were living with their other original parent. In ambiguous cases, children were assigned to the respondent or to the couple depending on their ages and the duration of the couple's marriage.⁴ From these data, I constructed three variables: number of wife's (and not husband's) children, number of husband's (and not wife's) children, and number of children born

to or adopted together by the couple. Each variable was categorized as none, one, two or more children.

Control Variables. Several socioeconomic characteristics that might be associated with desires for large families, with fecundity, or with contraceptive effectiveness could create a spurious relationship between children from previous unions and the couple's childbearing intentions or behavior. Analyses therefore control for the wife's age (under 25, 25-29, 30-34, 35 and older); the husband's relative age (two or more years younger, five or more years older, or in between); the wife's education (not a high school graduate, high school graduate, some college, college graduate); the husband's relative education (less, same, more); spouse's employment (wife — not employed, 1-34 hours per week, 35 hours or more; husband — 40 hours or less, 41 hours or more); whether either spouse is Catholic or Mormon, and whether either spouse is Hispanic or nonwhite.

Analyses and Results

Table 1 presents the distribution of couples with various counts of her, his and their children. The number of cases in each combination is unweighted, and the percentages are weighted to account for sampling methods and response rates. The first row includes only couples who had no children prior to their marriage and constitutes 80% of the sample. The number of cases as well as the percentage distributions are too small to detect differences in intentions or childbearing risks for each of the 27 combinations of her, his and their children. They were, however, sufficient for detecting several theoretically informative differences in childbearing intentions or risks.

[Table 1 about here]

The parenthood effect on couple's childbearing intentions and risks implies that couples in which one or the other spouse is childless will be similar to couples in which both spouses are childless. That is, the other spouse's children will not influence the couple's having a first child together. The parenthood effect also implies that these couples' childbearing intentions and risks will be greater than for couples who have one shared child or who each have a separate child.

The sibling effect might produce similar childbearing intentions and risks for couples in which either spouse has one child, regardless of whether the child is shared or whether one of the spouses has additional children. We may see evidence of the sibling effect in differences between couples in which the wife has one separate child or the couple has one shared child, compared to couples in which the husband has one separate child. Because the husband's child is more likely to live elsewhere, she/he would not benefit as much as a resident child from the new sibling.

The importance of a child for marital meaning implies that no differences will exist between couples who have no shared children, whether or not one or both of the spouses has prior children. Spouses' prior children may, however, influence whether the couple goes on to have two or more shared children.

In order to identify empirically as well as theoretically distinct combinations of children, I conducted tests to compare the fit of more restrictive combinations than the full 3x3x3 matrix of Table 1. Models of each spouse's childbearing intentions were estimated with ordinary least-squares regression, and included all control variables identified above. Separate tests were conducted for the full sample and for fecund couples. Models of the couple's childbearing risk were estimated with proportional hazards methods using RocaNova (Martinelle 1996), and

included a reduced set of control variables, since models with the full set of control variables would not converge. In models without spouses' children, neither spouses' employment hours nor the couple's ethnicity had a significant effect on the childbearing risk, net of other variable effects, so they were eliminated from further analysis of the childbearing risk. The hazard models also included a five-interval baseline hazard, distinguishing births within two years of the interview and at one-year intervals thereafter.

The appendix provides a reference point for theoretical combinations of her, his and their children. The entries in each indicate, for various combinations of children, how many children were born to the wife, how many were born to the husband, and how many the couple has altogether. That is, these numbers indicate each spouse's individual parity, and the couple's combined parity, including separate and shared children. I first tested gender equality in effects of her and his children. The model constrained the following pairs of couples to have the same childbearing intentions or birth rates. (In this listing, wife's or husband's children refer to separate children only.)

	Couple has no shared children	
wife none, husband one		husband none, wife one
wife none, husband two+	*	husband none, wife two+
wife one, husband two+	*	husband one, wife two+
	Couple has one shared child	
wife none, husband one	*	husband none, wife one
wife none, husband two+	*	husband none, wife two+
wife one, husband two+		husband one, wife two+
	Couple has two or more shared children	
wife none, husband one		husband none, wife one
wife none, husband two+		husband none, wife two+
wife one, husband two+		husband one, wife two+

The asterisks between pairs of descriptors indicate significant differences in spouses' intentions or couples' childbearing rates, depending on which spouse had more separate children. I return to these results in a moment.

I conducted further tests to identify differences between couples with the same combinations of separate children, but different numbers of shared children, with the following results (asterisks indicate significant differences depending on the number of shared children).

	Couple's Shared Children
one spouse has a separate child, the other does not:	none * one * two+
each spouse has one separate child:	none * one = two+
one spouse has one separate child, the other two or more:	none * one = two+
each spouse has two or more separate children:	none = one = two+

Before reviewing differences in effects of spouses' children, consider the meaning of combinations that were **not** significantly different from one another. The gender analysis suggests that the parenthood effect is equally strong for wives and for husbands only so long as the other partner has only one child. It could be that equality between these two groups of couples is due to the simultaneous influence of desires for parenthood that are stronger for women than for men, and the influence of desires for the first child's sibling, which could be stronger for the parent residing with a child — usually the mother — than for the parent with a nonresident child. Also, when each spouse has two or more children (whether shared or not), it does not matter whether the wife or the husband has additional children in terms of spouses' intentions or couple childbearing.

The second set of model tests shows that if both spouses have at least two children, whether shared or not, it does not matter how many of those children are shared. This indicates

that step- and half-siblings are sufficient to meet the demand for siblings, when one of the spouses has only a single child.

Table 2 shows the reduced distribution of couples' children, separately for couples who were fecund and for couples in which one spouse was sterilized at the initial interview. It is not surprising that couples in which one or the other spouse had been sterilized have greater numbers of children, particularly shared children, since sterilization occurs after one or both spouses have decided they want no more children. Note also that sterilization is more common among couples in which the only the wife has two or more children than among couples in which only the husband has two or more children. These differences are consistent with the much higher incidence of female than of male sterilization in the United States. That is, if a couple with prior children marries, it is much more likely that the woman will have been sterilized than that the man has had a vasectomy.

[Table 2 about here]

Table 3 presents parameter estimates for effects of spouses' children on spouses' intentions to have a child, adjusted for effects of the control variables discussed earlier. The first two columns present results for all couples, the third and fourth columns for fecund couples. Wives' intentions to have a child are equally strong for childless couples, couples with one shared child, couples in which one spouse has a child and the other does not, and couples in which each spouse has a separate child. Even when the husband has two or more children, a childless wife reports strong intentions to have a child. Among fecund couples, the wife's childbearing intentions are not significantly weaker until each of the spouses has at least one child. And then

the wife's additional children appear to have a stronger negative influence on intentions than the husband's.

[Table 3 about here]

Husbands' intentions are weaker when either spouse has a child or when the husband has two or more children — even though the wife may be childless. These differences are quite small, however, and do not hold for fecund couples. When childless husbands have married women with two or more children, they express weaker intentions to have a child than other childless husbands — but not if the couple is fecund. Similar effects of two or more children, given each spouses' parenthood, are found for husbands' intentions as for wives' intentions.

These results are consistent with a desire of each spouse to have at least one child (the parenthood effect), whether or not they married someone with prior children. The sibling effect appears for couples with one shared child, whose intentions are as strong as those of childless couples. The strong childbearing intentions for couples who each have a single child could also be viewed as a sibling effect, or interpreted in terms of the meaning of a shared child for the marriage. Note, however, that the model testing reported above showed that when both spouses had at least one child and one spouse had two or more, intentions did not depend on whether the couple had a shared child or not. The total number of children for whom the couple is already responsible appears to outweigh the marital meaning of a shared child.

The model for all couples suggests that the impetus for parenthood is stronger for wives than for husbands, since wives' childbearing intentions are significantly lower when they have two children and the husband has none, but not when the husband has two children and the wife has none. This difference could also reflect the greater demands of the wife's children who are likely

to be living with the couple, compared to the husband's children whose primary residence is likely to be elsewhere. A similar interpretation can be made for the stronger negative effect of the wife's having two or more children while her husband has one, compared to couples in which the wife has one, the husband two or more. In this case, the difference could also represent a conditional sibling effect, where a single child living with the couple would be more likely to benefit from the couple's having another child than would the husband's children living elsewhere.

Comparing results for the fecund couples to those for all couples sheds some additional light on the effect of wives' having two or more children. First, there is no significant difference in the adjusted model between the childless couples and couples in which the wife has two or more children, the husband none. Thus, if the couple is able, it appears that the wife's intention reflects the desire for her husband to have a biological child. The negative effect found for all couples is presumably due to the fact that some of the women with two or more children have been sterilized and are unable to have, or to intend, future births, even if they marry a man without children. Even for fecund couples, however, there is a bigger reduction in wives' intentions when the wives have two or more children, the husband one, compared to the parallel situation in which the husband has two or more children, the wife one. This result suggests that the sibling effect on couple childbearing depends on whether the children are likely to be living with the couple.

Table 4 presents presents relative risks of a birth (or adoption) for each combination of spouses' separate and/or shared children. These results are quite similar to the models of childbearing intentions. For all couples, and for fecund couples, the childbearing risk is similar for childless couples, couples with one shared child, and for spouses who each have a separate child. A somewhat elevated risk is associated with one spouse having a child, the other not, which

would minimize the difference in ages between half-siblings. Recall, however, that the childbearing risk for these couples did not depend on whether the single child was brought to the marriage by the wife or by the husband, and therefore whether the shared child would be living with her/his half-sibling.

[Table 4 about here]

As for intentions, the husband's two or more children did not have nearly as strong an effect on the childbearing risk as did the wife's two or more children, when the other spouse did not have a child. The rate of first births to wives was reduced by only 22% if the husband had two or more children, while the rate of first births to husbands was reduced by 68% if the wife had two or more children. The latter reduction, similar to the results for intentions, was as much or more than when one of the spouses had one child, the other two or more. The childbearing risk was further reduced, by about half, when each spouse had at least two children, a much larger reduction than found for childbearing intentions.

Results for fecund couples are very similar to those for the full sample, except that the reduction in childbearing risks are not as great at higher parities, either the wife's, the husband's or the couple's. This is consistent with the higher parities of sterilized couples and the fact that fecund couples at the same parities are less likely to have decided they want no more children.

Discussion

What do these results tell us about the theoretical sources of couples' joint childbearing? First, the results are consistent with each spouse's desire to have at least one biological child. Controlling for determinants of family size preferences, contraceptive effectiveness or fecundity,

childbearing intentions and risk were similar for childless couples and for couples in which one spouse was a parent but the other was not. The only exception was when the wife had two children, the husband none. As discussed further below, this exception may be related to wives' sterilization, but could also represent a somewhat weaker impetus for biological parenthood among men than among women.

A strong sibling effect was found for couples who had one shared child, since their childbearing intentions and birth rates did not differ from those for childless couples. When the wife had one child, the husband two or more, her childbearing intentions were relatively stronger than when her husband had only one child and she had two or more, consistent with her interest in providing a sibling for the child; but this difference was not so apparent for husbands' intentions nor for the couple's childbearing risk.

The fact that couples each having a separate child had as strong intentions and at least as high a childbearing risk as childless couples could support the "meaning of marriage" theory. Depending on the husband's involvement with his child, the couple's first child together may be equivalent to a third birth, and such "third birth" rates are much higher than those for couples whose first two children were shared. Further, among couples who had three or more children, those who had only separate children had stronger intentions and higher birth rates than couples who had one or two shared children among their total of three. And couples with four or more separate children had essentially the same intentions and birth rates as couples with a shared child and only two separate children or couples with only two shared children.

Differences between the total sample and fecund couples suggest that some of the influence of spouses' separate children occurs through the decision of one spouse — perhaps

prior to the marriage — to be sterilized. For example, when women with two or more children are married to childless men, childbearing intentions are not significantly different from those for childless couples, among fecund couples. When sterilized couples are included, they significantly lower the intention scores for such couples. Of course, we must keep in mind that if the sterilization occurred prior to the current marriage, childless husbands marrying sterilized women were in fact making a decision to have no biological children. And if the sterilization occurred during the current union, it would have been to some extent a joint decision of the two spouses. In addition, even among fecund couples, the childbearing risk was much lower when the wife had two or more children, the husband none, compared to childless couples.

These results are consistent with and augment the more recent analyses of spouses' separate children on their joint childbearing. The analyses have several limitations, not least the very small number of couples with particular combinations of children. The fact that differences could not be detected between, for example, couples with three separate children and no shared children and couples with one shared child and two separate children, may be due to the relatively small number of couples in each category. These data limitations are most problematic for investigating the sibling effect on shared childbearing, since that effect is best distinguished from other types of influences when both spouses have at least one child.

The theoretical issues raised at the beginning of this paper also point to some additional analyses that may or may not be possible with the limited number of couples who have separate children. I have made several references to the possible and apparent differences between effects of the husband's separate children and those of the wife, based on the strong pattern of children living with their mothers and on the relatively low involvement in childrearing by nonresident

fathers. It is, of course, possible with these data to identify children in terms of their residence and, for nonresident parents to distinguish those who are more or less involved with their nonresident children. Because of the small number of couples with separate children, however, the best we could expect to do is to conduct these analyses for couples living with the wife's child(ren) and not with the husband's separate child(ren). This would simply clarify the meaning of differences between effects of husbands' versus wives' prior-born children on the couple's childbearing decisions and outcomes.

The most important message of these results is that the parity classification for one out of five married couples is ambiguous, and that the ambiguity has implications for our understanding of the determinants of marital fertility, particularly for studies based on parity progressions. In order to understand changing fertility, it is essential to know whose children are being counted and how they influence the couple's joint childbearing decisions.

NOTES

1. Several differences in these patterns have been reported for African-American women. For example, Thornton (1978) found that marital disruption substantially reduced African-American women's fertility, whether or not they remarried. Griffith et al. (1985) found that childless black women were **less** likely to have a child than were black mothers who remarried. Loomis and Landale (1996) found no association between a woman's children at union formation and her childbearing within the union.
2. According to the survey documentation, couples who were expecting a child at the first interview may have responded in reference to the current pregnancy rather than in reference to a subsequent birth.
3. Only a handful of respondents volunteered that they did not know whether they intended to have another child.
4. Marital duration was measured in months, but consistent information on all children's ages is available only in years.

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Table 1. Her, His and Their Children

Couple's/Husband's Children	Wife's Children					
	None Separate		One Separate		Two+ Separate	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Couple: none shared						
Husband: none sep	409	14.9	50	1.7	44	1.5
Husband: one sep	40	1.5	18	0.7	17	0.5
Husband: two+ sep	46	1.7	20	0.6	28	0.7
Couple: one shared						
Husband: none sep	413	18.2	51	1.9	23	0.8
Husband: one sep	26	0.9	7	0.2	6	0.1
Husband: two+ sep	32	1.2	7	0.4	7	0.2
Couple: two+ shared						
Husband: none sep	888	46.8	35	1.3	10	0.4
Husband: one sep	39	1.8	8	0.3	1	0.0
Husband: two+ sep	26	1.2	6	0.2	8	0.3

Source: National Survey of Families and Households, 1987-88.

Note: Married couples, wife under 40 and not pregnant at NSFH-1 survey, both spouses responded to survey, at least one spouse responded to NSFH-2 survey, and valid data for all variables in subsequent models (see text). Percentage distributions weighted, number of couples unweighted.

Table 2. Wife's, Husband's, and Couple's Children by Fecundity

Spouses' Children	Sterilized		Fecund		All Couples	
	Wtd %	Unwtd N	Wtd %	Unwtd N	Wtd %	Unwtd N
Neither has children	1.9	14	22.5	395	14.9	409
One shared child	5.8	37	25.5	376	18.2	413
One spouse has child	2.5	26	3.6	64	3.2	90
Each has separate child	0.7	8	0.6	10	0.7	18
Wife has no child, husband has two+	1.3	13	1.9	33	1.7	46
Husband has no child, wife has two+	2.9	29	0.7	15	1.5	44
Wife has one child, husband has two+	2.9	28	2.6	50	2.7	78
Husband has one child, Wife has two+	5.1	50	2.2	41	3.3	91
Each has two or more	76.8	568	40.5	516	53.9	1084
Total	100.0	773	100.0	1500	100.0	2273

Source: National Survey of Families and Households, 1987-88

Note: Married couples, wife under 40 and not pregnant and NSFH-1 survey, both spouses responded to survey, at least one spouse responded to NSFH-2 survey, and valid data for all variables in subsequent models (see text). Percentage distributions weighted to account for sampling variability.

Table 3. Childbearing Intentions by Spouses' Children

Spouses' Children	All Couples		Fecund Couples	
	Wives	Husbands	Wives	Husbands
Neither has children	--	--	--	--
One shared child	0.05 (0.13)	0.06 (0.13)	0.20 (0.15)	0.08 (0.15)
One spouse has child	-0.41 (0.24)	-0.74** (0.24)	0.22 (0.30)	-0.27 (0.31)
Each has separate child	-0.30 (0.47)	-0.58 (0.47)	0.91 (0.64)	0.46 (0.65)
Wife none, husband two+	-0.31 (0.31)	-0.74* (0.32)	0.40 (0.40)	-0.25 (0.41)
Husband none, wife two+	-1.78** (0.33)	-1.99** (0.33)	-0.61 (0.62)	-1.06 (0.63)
Wife one, husband two+	-1.54** (0.25)	-1.93** (0.25)	-0.93** (0.33)	-1.55** (0.34)
Husband one, wife two+	-2.14 * (0.23)	-2.12** (0.24)	-1.88** (0.35)	-1.64** (0.36)
Each has two or more	-2.22** (0.12)	-2.32** (0.13)	-1.69** (0.15)	-1.80** (0.15)
R-squared	.53**	.51**	.45**	.42**

Source: National Survey of Families and Households, 1987-88.

Note: See Table 1 for sample information. Models include age youngest child, wife's age, husband's relative age, wife's education, husband's relative education, spouses' employment, either spouse Mormon or Catholic, either spouse of Hispanic origin or African-American. Intentions measured from 1 (very sure not intend child) to 7 (very sure intend child).

*p<.05

**p<.01

Table 4. Relative Childbearing Risk by Spouses' Parities

Spouses' Parities	All Couples	Fecund Couples
Neither has children	1.00**	1.00**
One shared child	0.93	1.11
One spouse has child	1.35	1.47
Each has separate child	1.05	1.07
Wife none, husband two+	0.78	0.82
Husband none, wife two+	0.32	0.44
Wife one, husband two+	0.41	0.58
Husband one, wife two+	0.38	0.66
Each has two or more	0.21	0.43
Restricted log-likelihood	-3978.5	-3758.4
Unrestricted log-likelihood	-3329.1	-3162.0
Chi-square/df	1,298.8/23	1,192.8/23

Source: National Survey of Families and Households, 1987-88.

Note: Married couples, wife under 40 and not pregnant at NSFH-1 survey, both spouses responded to survey, at least one spouse responded to NSFH-2 survey, and valid data for all variables in the model (includes age youngest child, wife's age, husband's relative age, wife's education, husband's relative education, spouses' employment, either spouse Mormon or Catholic, either spouse of Hispanic origin or African-American).

**Relative risk varies by parity categories, $p < .01$

Appendix: Spouses' Parities by Separate and Shared Children

Couple's/Husband's Children	Wife's Children		
	None Separate WP, HP, CP	One Separate WP, HP, CP	Two+ Separate WP, HP, CP
Couple: none shared			
Husband: none sep	0, 0, 0	1, 0, 1	2+, 0, 2+
Husband: one sep	0, 1, 1	1, 1, 2	2+, 1, 3+
Husband: two+ sep	0, 2+, 2+	1, 2+, 3+	2+, 2+, 4+
Couple: one shared			
Husband: none sep	1, 1, 1	2, 1, 2	3+, 1, 3+
Husband: one sep	1, 2, 2	2, 2, 3	3+, 2, 4+
Husband: two+ sep	1, 3+, 3+	2, 3+, 4+	3+, 3+, 5+
Couple: two+ shared			
Husband: none sep	2+, 2+, 2+	3+, 2+, 3+	4+, 2+, 4+
Husband: one sep	2+, 3+, 3+	3+, 3+, 4+	4+, 3+, 5+
Husband: two+ sep	2+, 4+, 4+	3+, 4+, 5+	4+, 4+, 6+

WP=Wife's parity

HP=Husband's parity

CP=Couple's parity (including shared and separate children)

Center for Demography and Ecology
University of Wisconsin
1180 Observatory Drive, Rm. 4412
Madison, WI 53706-1393
U.S.A.
608/262-2182
FAX 608/262-8400
comments to: thomson@ssc.wisc.edu
requests to: cdepubs@ssc.wisc.edu