



Voices of Fathers: Family Complexity and Father Involvement from a Father's Perspective

Kathryn Edin

2013

"This is the most important study ever written on motherhood and marriage among low-income urban women."
WILLIAM JULIUS WILSON

PROMISES I CAN KEEP

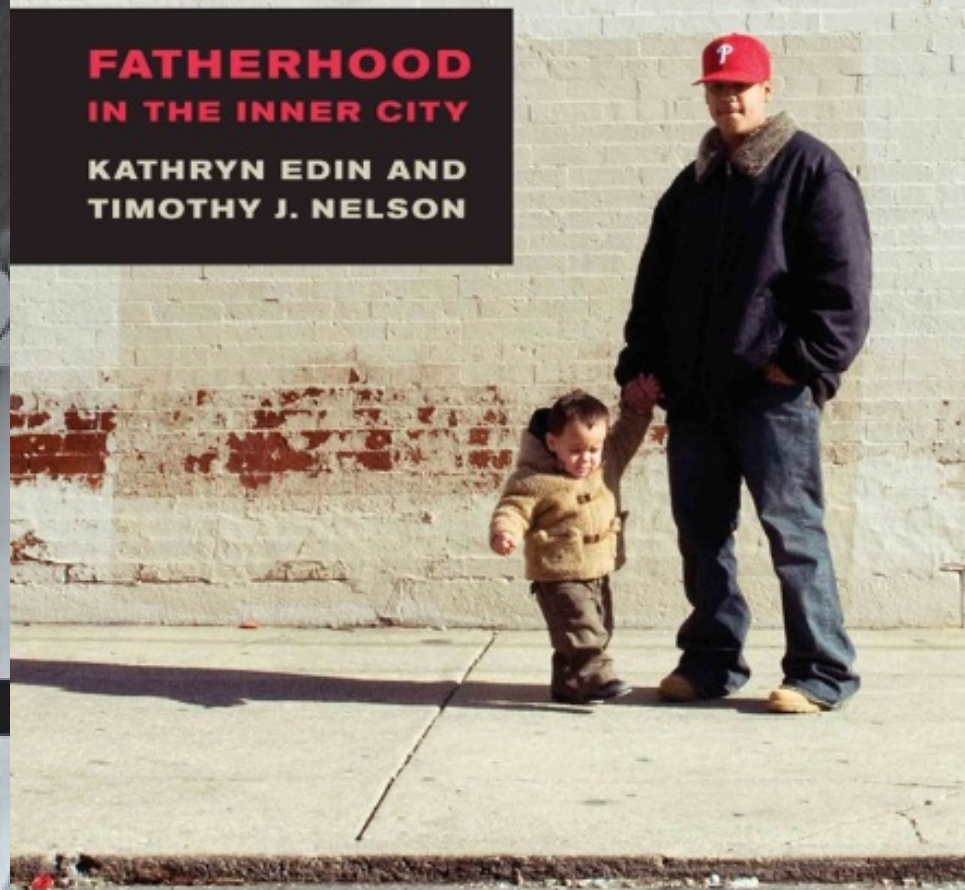
WHY POOR WOMEN
PUT MOTHERHOOD
BEFORE MARRIAGE

KATHRYN EDIN + MARIA KEFALAS

Doing the Best I Can

**FATHERHOOD
IN THE INNER CITY**

KATHRYN EDIN AND
TIMOTHY J. NELSON



Other Data Sources

- Quantitative Data
 - FFS
 - NLSY – 1997 Cohort
 - Men born 1980-1984
 - Ages 23-28 in 2008 survey wave
 - 35% (N=1,473) are fathers

It is less educated men that are....

- More likely to be a father, esp. an unmarried father
- More likely to have more kids
- More likely to have lived apart from their child, though most lived with a child at some point
- More likely to have kids by multiple partners
 - Nearly half of hs dropouts 23-28 with more than 1 child
 - About a third of hs grads/GED holders 23-28 with more than 1 child

EDUCATIONAL GRADIENT on MPF IS HUGE

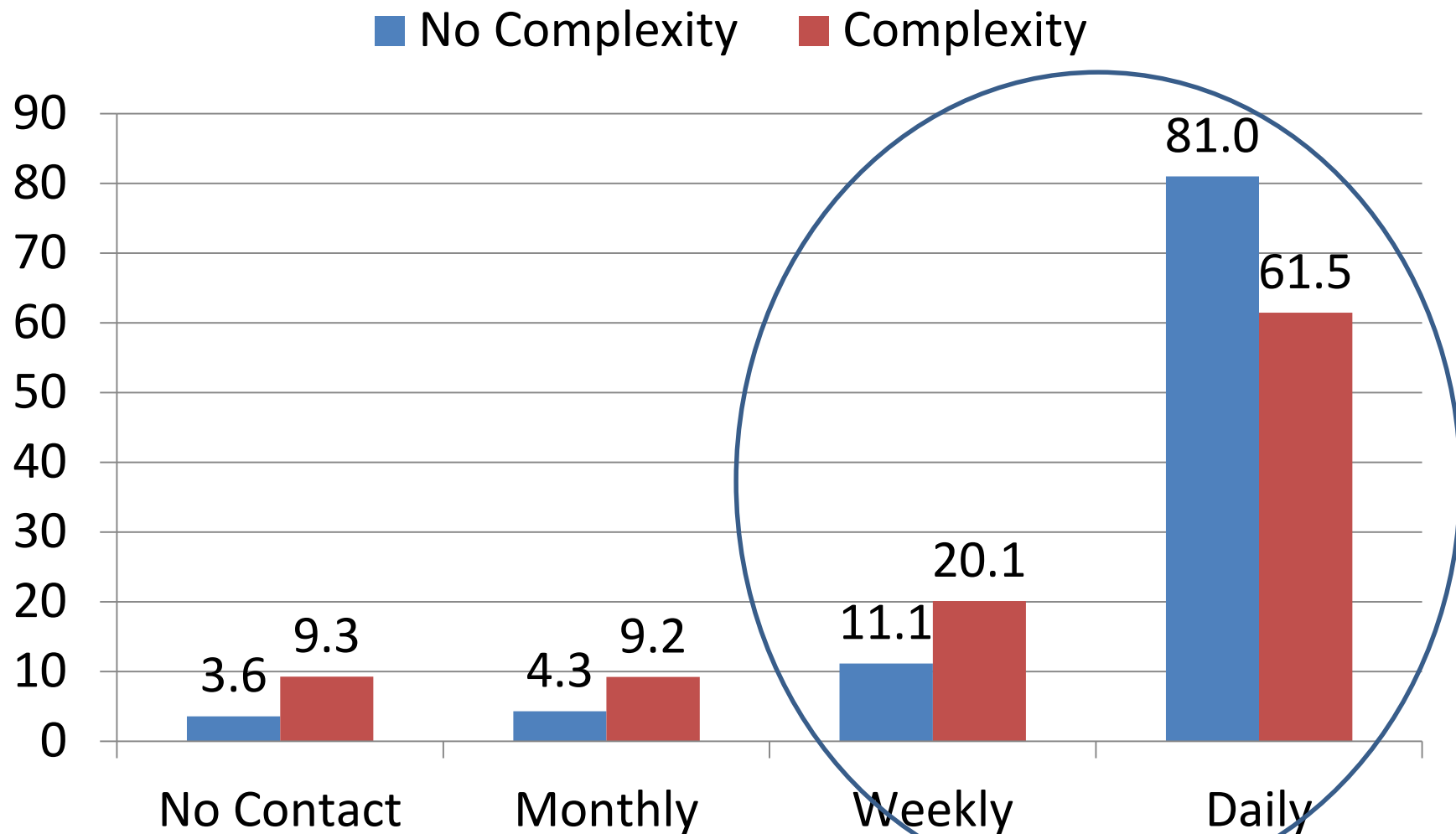
Child Involvement from a Father's Perspective

Table 3. Intensive Father Involvement for NonMarital Children by Time Since Relationship Ended

| | Overall | White | Black | Hispanic |
|--|---------|-------|-------|----------|
| Time Since Parents Stopped Coresiding: | | | | |
| 1 Wave | 49.1 | 47.1 | 52.1 | 44.7 |
| 2 Waves | 34.2 | 26.9 | 37.8 | 29.5 |
| 3 Waves | 24.4 | 20.6 | 26.8 | 19.7 |
| 4 Waves | 17.9 | 17.2 | 19.2 | 14.9 |
| Time Since Parents Were Romantically Involved: | | | | |
| 1 Wave | 42.1 | 43.2 | 42.4 | 40.9 |
| 2 Waves | 25.6 | 22.7 | 27.8 | 23.4 |
| 3 Waves | 19.5 | 16.8 | 21.1 | 16.7 |
| 4 Waves | 8.1 | 13.8 | 9.5 | 3.6 |

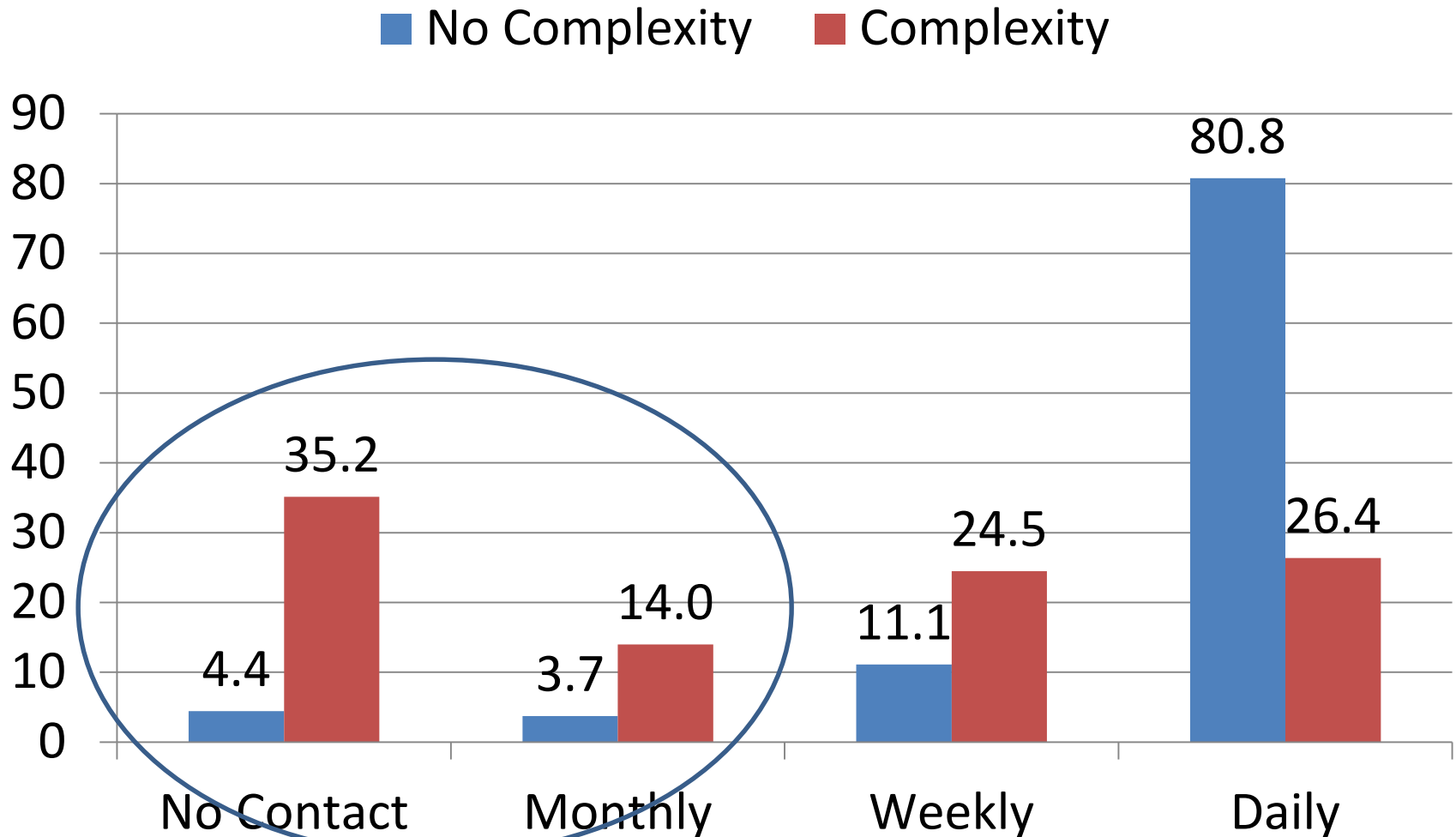
Note: Values are unweighted and pooled across survey waves in person-period format.

Child Involvement from a Father's Perspective: Maximum Child Involvement



Note: Complex = MPF; Sample restricted to fathers with 2+ children.

Child Involvement from a Father's Perspective: Least Child Involvement



Note: Complex = MPF; Sample restricted to fathers with 2+ children.

Question: How do Inner City Men Accomplish Fatherhood?

Take home message: Men with a non-marital birth are rarely either “saints” or “deadbeats” at least in the prime family-building years. They accomplish fatherhood through serial, selecting, parenting.

Preview of APPAM Paper

Tach&Edin 2013

Tests the degree to which taking the father's parenting activities as the unit of analysis offers a portrait of continuous rather than a decline over time.

Doing the Best I Can

Introduction

1. One thing leads to another
2. Thank you, Jesus
3. The stupid shit
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6. Fight or flight
7. Try, try again
8. The new package deal

Chapter 1 Preview

- Relationship status at time of conception:
“together”
 - What does “together” mean?
- Planned Pregnancies are rare, but rarely avoided
 - “Just not thinking at the time”
- Pregnancy transforms “togetherness” into something more
 - Not the outgrowth of a “real relationship” but it’s impetus. Shotgun relationships.

Amin Jenkins

Well my [youngest] son's...mother, I met her at the University of Pennsylvania hospital. She was attracted to me when I first saw her and I made my approach. We begin to socialize and communicate and then from there we began to affiliate and at some point in time we became intimate and my son was born.

John Carr

Actually she was dating a friend of mine and somehow...she wanted me. But it was my friend's girl, so I didn't want to have nothing to do with it. But then [my friend] heard some shit [and] started talking shit saying he would kick my ass. So I was like "whatever. Then I will be with your girl." Eventually, I just got stuck with her for a little while.

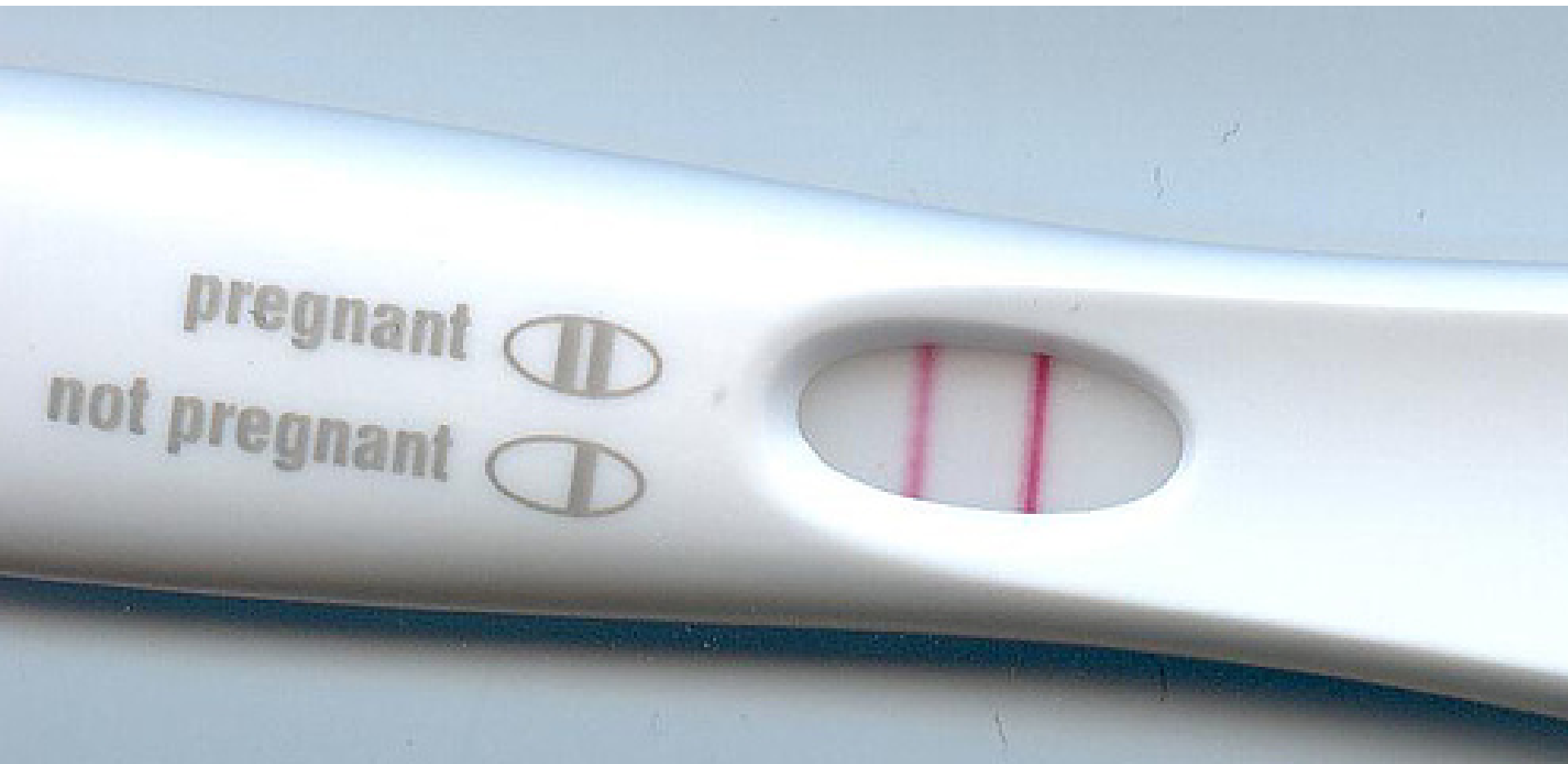
Length of Pre-Pregnancy Period

- Fathers 6-7 months (Edin&Nelson)
- Mothers 6-7 months (Edin&Kefalas)
- TLC3 6-7 months (Reed)
- FFS “knew each other” for less than a year (under 25)

Summary of Pre-Pregnancy Narrative

- Exceedingly brief
- Modest cohesion signaled by a change in condom use
- Women let contraception lapse
 - ambiguous “signal” lowers the perceived cost
- Little, if any, selectivity employed
- “Don’t ask, don’t tell” with regard to female contraception, left entirely up to her
- Most meet the standard of “togetherness” before conception, in part because it is then that serious attempts at contraception often fade

PREGNANCY-> REAL RELATIONSHIP



Will Donnelly

I had just come out of a juvenile institution. I think I just turned 17...and I started going with her friend. And then one day she came around and we started talking, then I went with her and left her friend, and me and her got together and started having kids together and then we got closer and closer. Then we started living together.

Byron Jones Before.....

I had my little house. I used to sell a little wine, a little weed. [She and one of her girlfriends,] they'd come over.... She was a lot younger than me..., she said she was 18 but she wasn't.... When she came over to the house with her friend, me and my cousin was there and I was like, "Dag. I like her, man!"

Byron Jones After.....

I was doing the right thing. After I found out I had that baby [coming], shoot! I was giving up [my] money [to *her*]! You know what I mean? [I stopped] messing around with certain people. [Shari was] all I wanted. Shoot! I was talking about getting married! (How was it during the pregnancy?) We had a good time, man. While she was pregnant, I couldn't go *nowhere*. Shoot! She wanted me to do this, wanted me to do that. I was like a puppy anyway. I waited on her. I'd do certain things that she wanted me to do, [getting pickles and ice cream]. [I didn't mind at all.] I was *glad* man!

David Williams before.....

[When I was first with Winnie] I had a girlfriend on the side too, Kathy. She's somebody that I met at a [Narcotics Anonymous] meeting. We got close and we were helping each other [with our addictions]. One thing led to another and we got intimate.... Me and Winnie would get into an argument, she'd tell me to leave, I'd go stay with Kathy. (So how did you end it with Kathy?) "Winnie got pregnant, and I had to do what was right, stand by Winnie.

David Williams after....

Each month [of the pregnancy], you know, we got closer and closer. I wanted to be with her more.... And then like 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning, she had me running to a Pathmark [grocery store] buying different foods. So that brought us a lot closer too. And then, watching [him] born [brought us even closer]. On her last push he came spinning out like a bullet! Nothing was more beautiful than Julian. The way he came out of his mother..., that was amazing. And I held him, I didn't want to let him go.

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Reaction to Pregnancy

“Think back to when you first learned she was pregnant. What was your first reaction to the news?”

PCFS Fathers

77%

Happiness /Acceptance

FFQ(TLC3) Fathers

75%

Happiness/Acceptance

FFQ(TLC3) Mothers

58%

Happiness/Acceptance

African American

- Darryl “I lit up!”
- Stan “I wanted a kid real bad.”
- Paul “I said, ‘You know that I am getting ready to go away [to prison] and really it is your choice, but I want you to have the baby because I don’t have any kids and I would like a child.’”
- Steve “Deep inside I wanted to have a child.”
- Bernie “I had wanted a child for years.”
- Byron “Shoot, I was happy, man!”
- Amin “Even though I was not in love, I wanted a son.”
- Wilbert “I was so happy, even though in the back of my mind I wondered, ‘Is it mines?’”
- Lacey “I was going to have a baby! I was happy!”
- O “I was happy! All the other girls killed my babies. I said, ‘She’s my first, I’m gonna give her everything.’”
- Seven “My first son, I really looked forward to having him.”
- David “I was happy! She was having a boy.”
- Steven “I was glad! It was no major obstacle.”

White

- Joe “I wanted a son and I had a son.”
- James “I [planned] it. I said I want to have a kid. I wanted to get my girlfriend pregnant and have a baby. Nobody made me that way, that is me, how I came up.... I didn’t really think about the financial. I just wanted a kid.”
- Roger “I always wanted one.”
- Little E. “I just wanted to be a dad.”
- James “When I found out she was pregnant everything changed I was like ‘I don’t care if she is cheating’ and at first I was so happy.”
- Monte “I was ready to have a kid.”
- George “I said, ‘I love you,’ you know, ‘I’d love to have a child with you.’”
- Kevin “I loved it, I love kids.”
- Giovani “I thought, aw, sweetie, I’m going to be a daddy. That was my feeling.... if I could [have] bottled it and keep it, I would have.”

Why “Thank you, Jesus”?

- What “happy” reaction really means
 - Chance for redemption
 - Way to neutralize the negativity
- Response to “What would your life be like without your children?”
 - Rooted in the meaning and sense of identity that drew from parenthood

What would your life be like if you
hadn't had children?



AA Fathers

Kevin, 21

“I’ d probably be in jail.”

Q, 24

“[I’ d be] Dead, because of the simple fact that it wasn’t until Brianna was born that I actually started to chill out....”

Mike, 27

“I’ d probably be dead somewhere, or back in hail, in and out of rehabs. It’ s given me something to fight for, something like a destination. I got to BE somewhere.”

Apple, 27

“I guess after I got caught up in the bad life, as far as jail, the kids helped me keep my head up, look forward. I got something to live for. Kids give you something to live for.”

John A., 34

”I don’ t think I would be as happy as I am now. Cause my kids make me feel totally different.... I feel more like a man.”

Lee, 42

“Without the kids I’ d probably be a dog. I hope not with Aids.”

Seven, 37.

“I couldn’t imagine being without them because when I am spending time with my kids it is like, now that is love. That is unconditional love.... It is like a drug that you got to have.”

White Fathers

- Michael, 21 “Basically like drugs, and robbing cars. I didn’t want my son to look at me and think that’s okay.”
- Alex, 22 “I would be out getting high because I would not have [anything]. I would have my girlfriend but my baby is the most important thing in my life right now.”
- Wil, 24 “I think I’d probably be in jail. My little brother is in jail and I figure without kids, whatever he was doing I’m sure I would have been doing it with him.”
- Tony, 26 “I’m saying dead because I think she’s the only thing that make me stop [using.]”
- Walt, 37 “I would be dead. I would have killed myself a long time ago.... I already tried suicide twice....”
- Joe, 45
such
8th “Man I wouldn’t even know how to answer that, they are a big part of my life....I would probably be a bum down on and Race or in jail at 8th and Race.”
- Bill, 38 “I’d still be out there.... I’d still be fucking off, drugs and Ill. I think about my kids and there’s just this HOPE [I have now] of getting a good relationship with them.”

Elvis, 35

(What did you think your future was going to be before you had him?)

I wasn't going to live past the age of 30.

(And then once you had him?)

I can't even picture my life without [little] Elvis in it.... I had already made a promise to myself. I had told my friends, "I don't want to live past the age of 30. If I make it to 30, I'm going to take myself out.... He came into the picture when I was like 27, and that all changed. Everything changed. My whole life changed.



Neutralizing the Negativity

“Every day I look at the news I hear about something that happened in Camden, whether it’s a shooting, a drug bust, a missing kid, a fight or a robbery, and it upsets me. Every time I hear about someone getting killed, I picture that person being someone in my family or someone I really care about. Put down the guns and pick up the babies”.

- LaCondia Catlett, Winner, Stop the Violence Educational Forum and Essay Contest



Relevant “facts” for your studies

- Couples “together”, not a “real relationship” before conception
- Unplanned pregnancy evokes father thirst
- Shotgun relationships often follow
- New Package Deal: the “stupid shit” plus lack of “glue” leads to breakup
- Then, moms may swap daddies while dads swap kids, looking for a clean father scorecard
- Dads’ desire to “get the whole family experience” may be an engine driving MPF

Question: What does this mean for kids?

- Most older kids will experience intensive involvement, both during pregnancy and in the early years of life, but sharply declining involvement over time. Most fathers may exhibit continuous involvement, but via serial fatherhood. Serial fatherhood is likely both a consequence, as well as a cause, of weakening relationships with prior children. What does the uneven pattern of father involvement mean for child wellbeing?
- Among women with a non-marital birth, there are no (or almost no) stable single mothers. Thus, instability may be chronic, and is often compounded by complexity. What does this mean for child wellbeing?
- To what extent do mothers' new partners make up for the absence of biological fathers, both in the short term and throughout the life course?

Remainder of the book

Introduction

1. One thing leads to another
2. Thank you, Jesus
3. The stupid shit –
sources of couple breakup
4. Ward Cleaver
men's views of traditional fatherhood role
5. Sesame street mornings –
how men have attempted to “redefine fatherhood”
6. Fight or flight
the sources of paternal disengagement
7. Try, try again
slaking the father thirst through serial, selective fatherhood
8. Conclusion
the new package deal



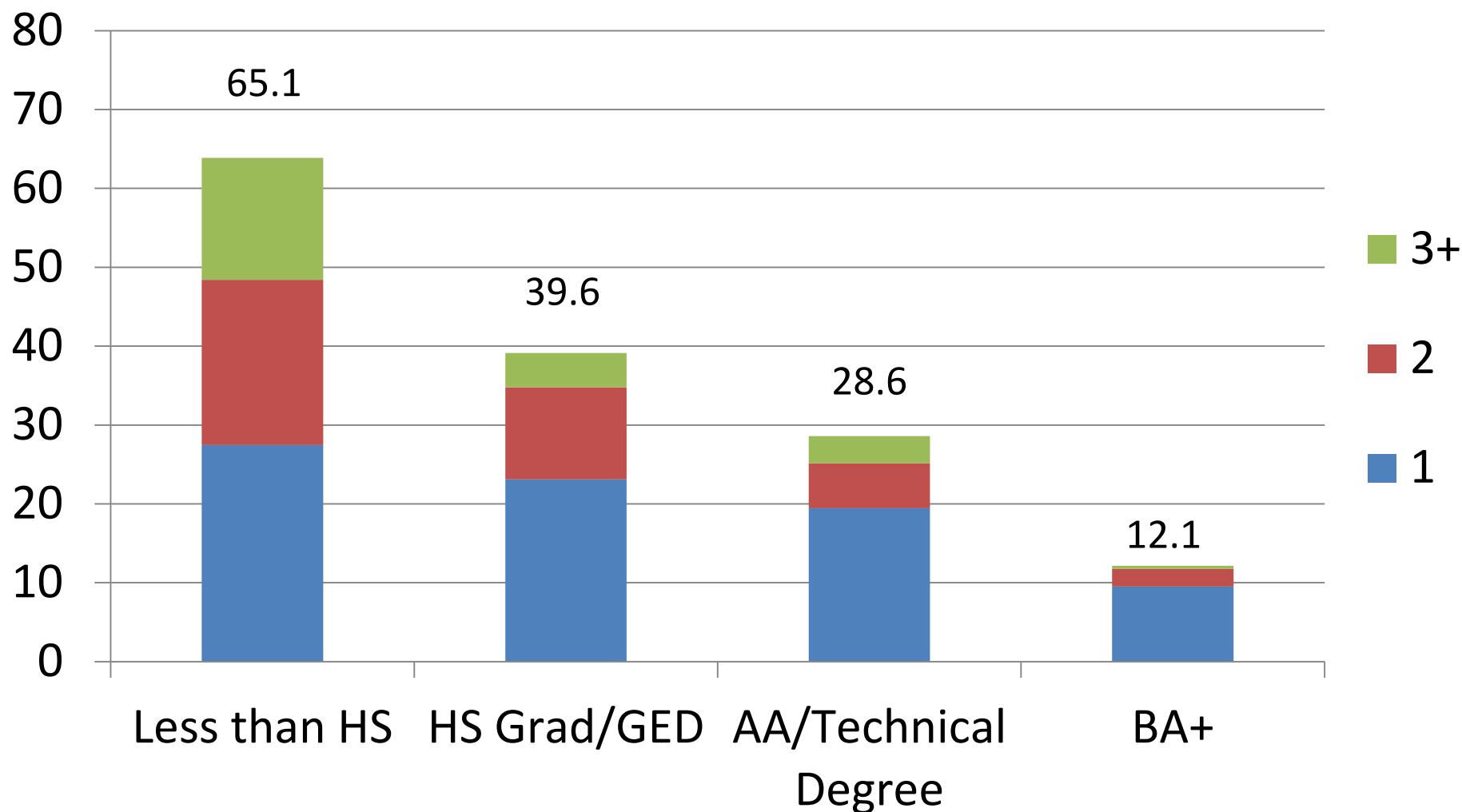
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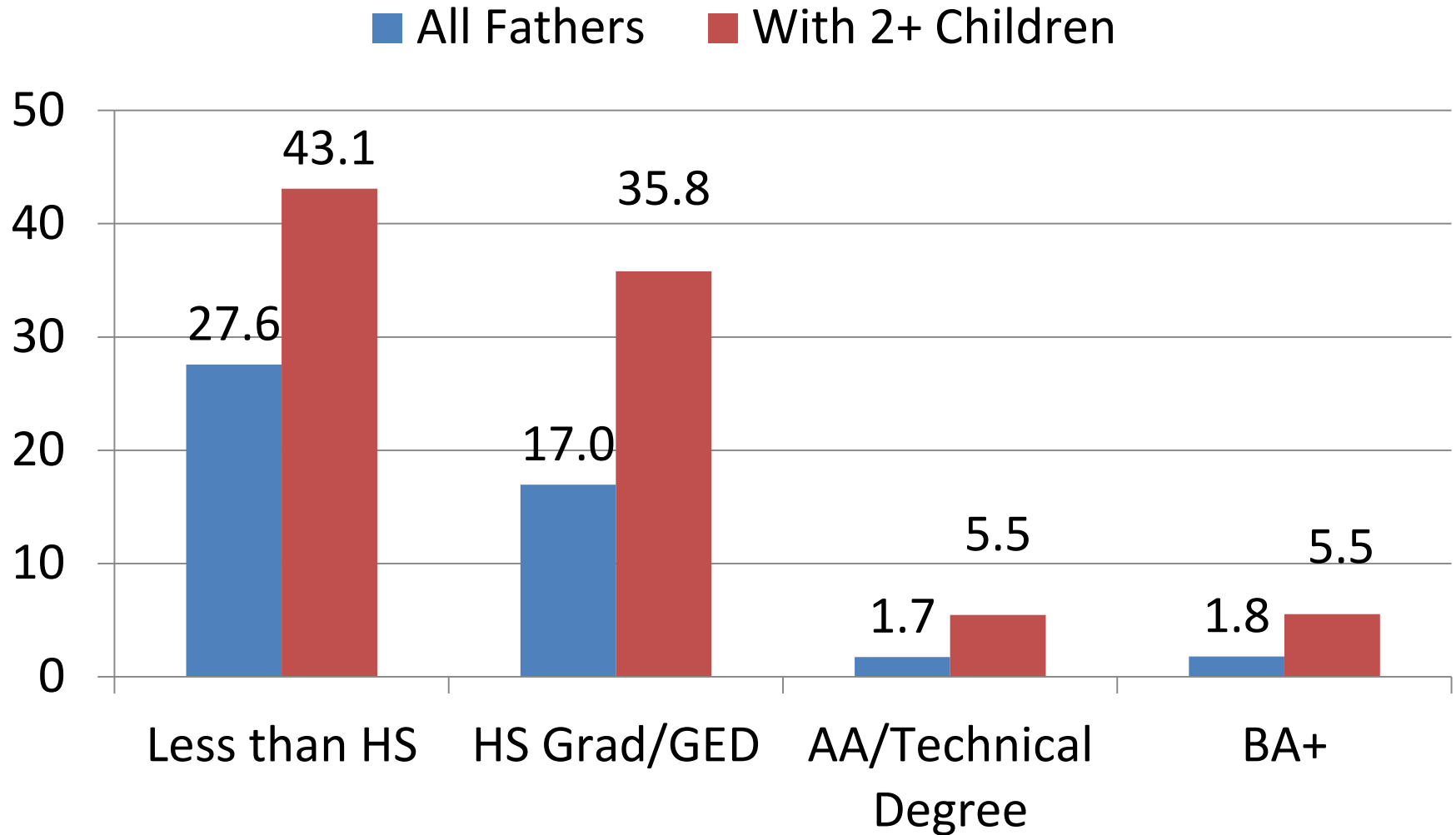




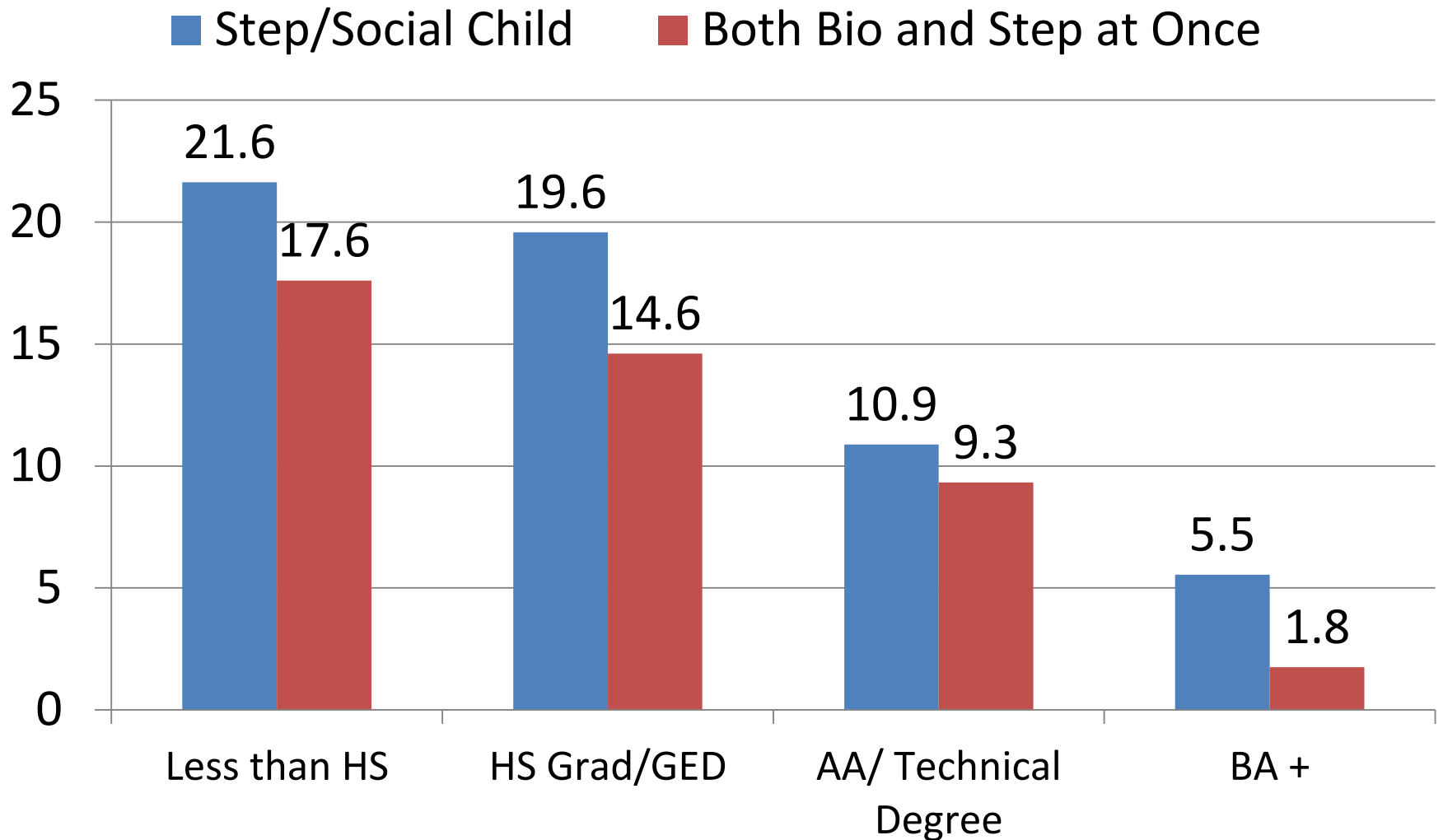
Selection into Fatherhood: Number of Children, by Father Education



Fathers' Multi-Partner Fertility in Young Adulthood



Step/Social Children in Fathers' Households



Fathers Living Apart from Biological Children

