Families and Poverty/Inequality

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Teaching Poverty 101 Workshop
Institute for Research on Poverty, UW-Madison
Key Family Topics Related to Poverty/Inequality

1) Major changes in U.S. family demography

2) Differences in family patterns by socioeconomic status

3) Families and the intergenerational transmission of (dis)advantage
1) Major Changes in U.S. Family Demography

- Marriage and cohabitation
- Divorce
- Nonmarital childbearing
- Single motherhood
- Growing instability and complexity
Age at Marriage - U.S.

Figure 1. Median Age at First Marriage by Sex: 1890 to 2010

Source: U.S. Decennial Census (1890-2000); American Community Survey (2010). For more information on the ACS, see http://www.census.gov/acs
Cohabitation - U.S.

Percent of Women Ages 19-44 Who Have Ever Cohabited before 1st Marriage, by Marriage Cohort

Nonmarital Births (%) - U.S., 1960-2016

Source: National Center for Health Statistics
Figure 1.
Historical Living Arrangements of Children: Selected Years, 1880 to 2009


Source: Krieder & Ellis 2011
Percent of Parents who Broke up by Child Age 15

Percent of All Separated Parents Who Enter a New Union within 6 Years

Percent of Mothers Who Have Children with Two or More Fathers

Taken Together, These Trends Suggest:

- Disconnection between marriage and childbearing/childrearing
- Rise in single parenthood
- Growing family complexity (re-partnering, and children by multiple partners)

“From consensus to complexity” (Furstenberg 2014)
2) Differences in Family Patterns by SES

- “Diverging destinies” in children’s family experiences over time in U.S. (McLanahan 2004; McLanahan & Jacobsen 2014)

- Strong evidence of (growing) demographic inequality in U.S.
  - **Marriage** (Goldstein & Kenney 2001)
  - **Divorce** (Martin 2006)
  - **Nonmarital childbearing** (Ellwood & Jencks 2004; Sawhill 2014)
  - **Age/intention of first birth** (Hayford & Guzzo 2016; Musick et al. 2009)
  - **Multi-partnered fertility** (Guzzo & Dorius 2016; Meyer et al. 2005)
Marriage by Education

Share Currently Married by Education, 1960 and 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HS or less</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College+</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Based on adults ages 18 and older.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of Census 1960 and ACS 2010, IPUMS.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER
Percent Divorced within 10 Years of Entering First Marriage, by Education

Source: Martin, S. 2006
Figure 1: Percent of All Births that are Non-marital by Education, 1990-2010
Source: National Vital Statistics Birth Data Files
Smaller Educational Gradient in Nonmarital Births in European Countries (except the UK)

Percentage of Women Age 35 Who Are Never-Married Mothers by Education Level, 1970–2010

SOURCE: Authors’ calculations from the decennial census (U.S. Census Bureau 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000) and the American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau 2010); includes only mothers with coresiding children.

Source: Cancian & Haskins 2014
Men’s Family Life Course (7 Categories)

- *Stably married w/ kids* – married, then first child, no divorce prior to first child’s 18th birthday
- *Stably cohabiting w/ kids*
- *Married, kids, divorced* – married, then first child, divorced before first child’s 18th birthday
- *Cohab, dissolved*
- *Nonmarital first birth* – first child prior to first marriage
- *Married, no kids* – married, never reported any children
- *No kids or marriage* – never reported a marriage or child
U.S.: Family Experience of NLSY Men (Born 1967-64), through Ages 45-52

Source: Carlson, VanOrman & Turner (in progress)
U.S.: Family Experience of NLSY Men (Born 1957-64), by Education through Ages 45-52

Source: Carlson, VanOrman & Turner (in progress)
Cohort Change: Men’s Experiences to ~Age 30 (1979 and 1997 NLSY Cohorts)

Born 1957-1964

Born 1980-1984

Source: Carlson, VanOrman & Turner (in progress)
To Age 15: Years with Two-Biological Parent Families, by Education

Source: Generations & Gender Survey.
To Age 15: Years with Two-Biological Parent Families, by Education

Children in the US with highly educated mothers spend 4.2 more years with both biological parents than those with less educated mothers.

The average gap in all other countries is just over 2 years.
3) Families and the Intergenerational Transmission of (Dis)Advantage

• How do families transmit (dis)advantages to children?

• Key domains:
  ▫ Economic resources
  ▫ Parental socialization/involvement
  ▫ Connections/networks

• Both structural and socio-cultural aspects (i.e., who’s in the house and what do they bring/do/invest?)
Annette Lareau’s *Unequal Childhoods* (2003)

- Interested in how inequality affects life chances, starting during childhood and adolescence
- Ethnographic study of 12 White and Black families with children in 3rd/4th grades
- Finds big differences in parenting by social class (but not by race)
Working-Class Parenting = ‘Natural Growth’

- Parents work hard to feed, clothe and protect their children
- But they also presume that children will spontaneously grow and thrive
- Children spend much of their non-school time in unstructured play
- Are given independence in school and other institutions
- Childhood is a time to be free of life’s burdens – not to prepare for them!
Middle-Class Parenting = ‘Concerted Cultivation’

- Parents see their children as ‘a project’
- They seek to actively develop their talents, opinions, and skills through organized activities
- Reasoning and language development are important
- Close supervision of their experiences in school
- Childhood seen as a “training ground” for self-actualization and pursing interesting careers
Growing Attention to and Evidence about Differential Family Experiences/Investments by SES
Variation in Income and Parental Engagement across Family Types

Source: Carlson & Berger 2013
Thank You!

- Please feel free to be in touch: carlson@ssc.wisc.edu