

Child Gender and the Transition to Marriage*

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ABSTRACT

We estimate the effect of a child's gender on the mother's probability of marriage or remarriage using data from the PSID Marital History and Childbirth and Adoption History Files. We find that the birth of a son speeds the transition into marriage when the child is born before the mother's first marriage. A competing risks analysis shows that the positive effect of a son is stronger for marriages to the child's biological father than for marriages to stepfathers. We find no significant effect of child gender on the mother's remarriage probabilities when children are

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born within a previous marriage. These results are consistent with a marital search model in which sons increase the value of marriage relative to single parenthood more than do daughters.

Child Gender and the Transition to Marriage

Rates of divorce and of nonmarital birth have increased dramatically in recent decades, prompting public concern about the impact of single-parenthood on children and inquiry into the forces leading to marital dissolution and childbearing outside marriage. One factor that has been found to affect marital stability is the gender of the children. Several authors have reported that, in the United States, having a son relative to a daughter increases the likelihood that a marriage will remain intact (Spanier and Glick 1981; Morgan, Lye and Condran 1988; Mott 1994; Katzev et al 1994), though this differential in divorce rates has declined since 1980 (Morgan and Pollard 2002).

Why might marriages with sons be more stable than marriages with daughters?

Sociological studies of child gender effects on marriage and divorce emphasize the social norms that dictate a more active role for fathers in the parenting of sons than daughters, and postulate a positive causal relationship between paternal involvement and marital stability. In economic terms, father involvement in parenting can be related to marital stability in two distinct ways. First, if fathers are more productive at parenting sons than daughters, perhaps because they play a special role in the emotional and social development of boys, then having a son increases marital surplus, or the value of marriage relative to single parenthood. Second, fathers may simply place a higher value on marriage and family if they have a son. This preference may be due to gender bias on the part of fathers, or to the bonding that occurs when fathers spend more time with the child and are more involved with family activities. In either case, the greater family

involvement of fathers of boys appears to be associated with increased marital satisfaction for mothers and fathers of boys, and a reduced propensity to divorce.

If the birth of a son increases the value of marriage more than the birth of a daughter, then we might expect child gender to affect the probability of entering into marriage following a nonmarital birth, as well as the probability of divorce. Many nonmarital births involve cohabiting couples and couples in long-term romantic relationships (Bumpass and Lu 2000; McLanahan et al 2001), and it would seem likely that the same factors that lead to success in marriage, including male children, would lead to success in a nonmarital relationship. Moreover, mothers of sons may have a greater demand for, or face a greater supply of, husbands other than the child's father than do mothers of daughters.

The likelihood that a divorced or widowed woman remarries may also depend on the gender composition of her children. If men are more effective stepfathers of boys than girls, then a mother of sons will have a higher demand for a husband than a mother of daughters. If, in addition, potential husbands are more eager to marry women with sons than daughters, mothers of sons will face a greater supply of men in the marriage market. We expect, therefore, both supply and demand factors to increase the relative remarriage rates of mothers of boys. If these forces are stronger when the potential husband is the child's biological father, then the effect of a child's gender on the mother's likelihood of remarriage will be less pronounced than the effect on marriage subsequent to a nonmarital birth.

Our objective is to test whether a child's gender affects the transition to marriage, and particularly marriage subsequent to a premarital birth. As with the issue of child gender and divorce, the answer to this question has important implications for the wellbeing of boys relative

to girls. For instance, if mothers of boys are more likely to marry, and remain married, then girls will be more likely to grow up in single-parent households. Furthermore, if the increased propensity of mothers of sons to marry reflects a greater supply of potential husbands, women with sons will be more advantaged in the marriage market than women with daughters.

In this study, we estimate the effect of child gender on the transition to first marriage for mothers of premarital children, using data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID). Then, we test whether a divorced or widowed woman's transition to remarriage depends on the gender of children born within previous marriages. We find that having a boy relative to a girl increases the transition rate of mothers into marriage when the child was born premaritally. A competing risks analysis shows that the positive effect of a son is stronger for marriages to the child's biological father than for marriages to stepfathers. We find no evidence that child gender affects the likelihood of remarriage.

BACKGROUND

Single Mothers and the Transition to Marriage

Concern about the high rates of poverty and welfare dependency among families headed by single women has prompted a great deal of recent research on the causes of changing patterns of fertility and marriage. An extensive literature examines the effects of nonmarital fertility on subsequent marriage, and the determinants of remarriage following divorce. In general, the presence of children is negatively associated with the union formation of mothers, but no studies estimate the effects of sons and daughters on the probability of marriage, or the duration of single parenthood.

Premarital childbearing has been associated with a variety of adverse economic and social outcomes for both mother and child, including diminished marital prospects and future marital instability.¹ An important research issue has been the extent to which early or premarital childbearing cause low marriage rates, rather than reflecting selection into unwed motherhood of women who were unlikely to marry due to other characteristics—poor economic prospects, emotional instability, or an aversion to marriage. Two recent studies have examined the effect of premarital childbearing on subsequent union formation and concluded that the negative association between children and marriage is largely causal. Bennett, Bloom and Miller (1995) and Lichter and Graefe (2001) both find that out-of-union childbearing has a positive association with transitions to informal unions (cohabitation) and a negative association with transitions to formal unions (marriage). Bennett et al control for family-specific aspects of unobserved heterogeneity by comparing the marriage outcomes of sisters with different fertility histories. Lichter and Graefe compare unmarried mothers to women whose nonmarital pregnancies resulted in miscarriage and women who relinquished custody of their nonmaritally-born children. Both conclude that selection appears to explain little of the negative effect of premarital childbearing on the rate of transition to first marriages.

Similarly, many studies find that divorced women with children are less likely to remarry than childless divorced women (Teachman and Heckert 1985; Koo and Suchinarian 1980; Koo, Suchinarian, and Griffith 1984, Thornton 1977; Bumpass et al 1990; Smock 1990), though Sweeney (1997) finds that significant negative effects on remarriage rates are restricted

¹ Much of the literature has focused on teenage nonmarital childbearing specifically (Geronimus and Korenman 1992; Hoffman, Foster, and Furstenberg 1993), but older unwed mothers are significantly disadvantaged relative to married child-bearers as well (Hoffman and Foster 1997; Foster, Jones and

to children under age six.

Why should the presence of children reduce the probability that a woman marries, or decrease the rate of transition into marriage? A simple economic model of marriage begins with an individual (which we will take to be the woman) who compares expected well-being in marriage with expected well-being when single. The value of marriage will depend upon the characteristics of potential husbands, and therefore on her own attractiveness in the marriage market and the marriage choices of the available men. A child can influence marriage outcomes either through effects on the mother's marriageability (the supply of potential husbands), or through her desire for marriage rather than single parenthood (her demand for a husband). It is usually assumed that a child reduces a woman's marriageability, and therefore reduces the quality of the husbands she can expect to attract. The costs of assuming a paternal role will be daunting for many men, and the demands of childrearing may divert the mother's time and resources away from investments that enhance her attractiveness, such as education.² A child will also affect the perceived value of marriage to a woman, though the sign of this effect is ambiguous. On one hand, single parenthood is an economically precarious state, so childbearing may increase the demand for a spouse who can provide additional resources to the household. However, nonmarital childbearing can provide an alternate route to family formation; the love and companionship of a child may reduce the demand for a husband.

Many recent studies have used the duration of a spell of single motherhood rather than the probability that a woman marries within some specified time period as the outcome of

Hoffman 1998).

² The effects of a child on the marriageability of a woman are likely to depend upon whether the potential husband is the child's biological father or not. Both Bennett et al and Lichter and Graefe present results that

interest. This approach is consistent with a dynamic version of the simple marital status choice model, in which a woman is searching for a marriage partner rather than comparing static utilities in two states. A woman samples each period from a distribution of potential husbands, and decides to marry if her current “draw” from this distribution is above some reservation, or minimum acceptable, husband quality.³ Child effects on both the supply of husbands and demand for husbands can be reinterpreted in this framework, and will have the expected effects on the probability of transition into marriage. For example, child effects on a woman’s marriageability will reduce the quality of the distribution of potential husbands, making it less likely in any period that she will get a “draw” whose quality is above her reservation level (even if she reduces her standards somewhat). This deterioration of the husband pool reduces her rate of transition into marriage, and increases the expected duration of a spell of single motherhood. The search model introduces a new role for children in limiting their mother’s marriage prospects, however. The presence of children may increase the cost of searching in the marriage market, due to time, money, and mobility constraints that limit activities in which mate searching might occur. If search intensity is reduced, the expected time until an acceptable husband is located will be increased.

Child Gender and the Value of Marriage

A child’s gender appears to influence a variety of family outcomes, including time use, the quality of relationships, and the stability of the household. The most striking difference

both include and exclude marriages within 6 months of the birth to allow for these differences.

³ A simple search model is presented in Mortensen (1970). For a non-technical application of search theory to marriage markets, see England and Farkas (1986), pp. 31-42

between families with sons and families with only daughters is the extent and type of involvement of fathers: fathers of boys tend to have stronger ties to the family than fathers of girls. Men spend more time with their sons (Yeung et al 1994), and also with their children overall, if they have sons (Barnett and Baruch 1986, Harris and Morgan 1991). Fathers of sons are more involved with their children's discipline, schoolwork and other activities than are fathers of daughters (Lamb et al 1987, Morgan et al 1988). Moreover, mothers report greater emotional attachment of their husbands to sons than to daughters (Morgan et al).

Child gender affects not only parental time with children, but also time devoted to market work: marriages with sons are characterized by more traditional gender roles than marriages with daughters. Lundberg and Rose [2000] find that men work about 40 hours per year more after the birth of a son relative to a daughter, and that the hourly earnings of fathers of sons increase more after childbirth than do the earnings of fathers of daughters. The increase in labor supply appears to be at the expense of men's leisure, rather than time with the child.

Several authors (Barnett and Baruch, Katzev et al 1994, Cox et al 1999, Mizell and Steelman 2000) report greater satisfaction of partners in marriages with sons than with only daughters. Teachman and Schollaert [1989] find that couples whose first child is a boy tend to have a subsequent child sooner, and attribute their finding to the greater stability of the relationship associated with the birth of a son.⁴

Clearly, family dynamics differ in families with sons and families with daughters. Marriages with sons tend to be more stable and more traditional, and are characterized by

⁴ There is also a literature in child development that documents differences in how parents socialize their sons and daughters. See Maccoby [1998] for a survey.

greater father involvement on a variety of dimensions. These patterns suggest that either the mother, the father, or both parents place a higher value on father involvement with sons than with daughters, and that this increases the perceived value of marriage, relative to divorce.

The same factors that affect the stability and functioning of marriages may affect the stability and functioning of nonmarital relationships. In particular, we would expect that having a nonmarital son would lead to a greater likelihood of marriage than having a nonmarital daughter. Moreover, a child's gender may affect the likelihood that a single mother marries a man other than her child's father in one of two ways. First, boys may increase the perceived value of marriage relative to single parenthood more than girls. This implies that mothers of boys have a stronger demand for a husband, either because they feel that their child needs a male role model, or because mothers of daughters expect a stepfather to have a more negative impact on their child.⁵ Alternatively, a girl may provide greater companionship to her mother, and therefore reduce her demand for a husband.⁶ In the context of the marital search model in the previous section, this means that mothers of boys will have a lower reservation husband quality than mothers of girls (i.e. they are willing to settle for less) and the expected wait until an acceptable mate arrives will be shorter.

Second, mothers of sons may face a greater supply of husbands than women with daughters if men find it easier to form a bond with a family that includes a boy. In the context of the marital search model, boys may have a less negative effect on their mother's marriageability, and therefore on the quality of the pool of potential husbands than girls do. This will increase

⁵ While boys tend to fare worse than girls subsequent to divorce, girls are more adversely, or less positively, affected by a parent's remarriage (Hetherington et al 1985).

⁶ We are indebted to Daniel Lichter for this suggestion.

the probability that a “draw” from this pool will be above the woman’s reservation quality level, and reduce the expected duration of single motherhood.

If the birth of a son rather than a daughter increases the perceived value of marriage to his mother, or affects her attractiveness as a wife, then the transition rate to marriage should be higher for mothers of boys than for mothers of girls. The effects of children per se on the marriage prospects of never-married and divorced women have been extensively studied but, to our knowledge, no one has addressed the question of how a child’s gender affects family formation. One interesting feature of this analysis is that the selection and reverse causality issues that are so important when studying the effects of children on marriage do not arise when estimating the effects of child gender. For the sample of never-married women, the birth of a boy rather than a girl can reasonably be regarded as exogenous with respect to other determinants of her marriage prospects.

DATA

Our analysis uses data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID). The PSID is a longitudinal data set that began in 1968 and has been updated annually through 1999, though 1993 was the latest survey available when this study was undertaken. In 1985 two supplementary files, the Marriage History File (MHF) and the Childbirth and Adoption History File (CAHF), were added to the PSID. These files contain retrospective histories of marriage and parenthood for all adults living in PSID households in 1985, and have been updated annually. Our initial sample consists of all women who were in the PSID sample between 1985

and 1993 (for whom CAHF and MHF files were available), and all births reported by these women prior to 1993.

Data from the main PSID files were merged with the data from the marriage and fertility histories to include additional characteristics associated with the likelihood of subsequent marriage. These include: mother's year of birth, race, education, and age at the time the child was born. Means and standard deviations of the variables used in the analysis are reported in Table 1.

For the analysis of transitions to first marriage subsequent to a premarital birth, the dependent variable is the duration from the date of birth until the date of the mother's marriage—or the child's age at her marriage.⁷ There were a total of 4899 births to women reported on the CAHF and 600 of these could be identified as having occurred before the woman's first marriage. Because of incomplete or inconsistent histories, 104 births could not be identified as marital or nonmarital, and observations associated with these births were excluded from the analysis. We have also excluded 133 nonmarital births that occurred between marriages. Marriages to the biological father of the child were identified by matching child ID numbers in the mother's CAHF with reported biological children in the CAHFs of male respondents in the PSID survey.⁸

⁷ Cohabitation provides a potentially important alternative to marriage, and an analysis of the effects of child gender on transitions to cohabitation, or from cohabitation to marriage, would be of great interest. However, the PSID marriage history file does not include the start and end dates of cohabiting unions. Cohabitation as of the survey date can be identified from the relationship file, but not the month in which the woman's union status changed.

⁸ This procedure will identify all biological fathers who were married to, or in an extended cohabitation with, the mothers in our sample between 1985 and 1993. Some fathers who married the mothers of their children and left the PSID sample before 1985 may be misclassified as stepfathers.

The sex ratio (number of males/number of females) for the 600 premarital births is 1.069, which is similar to the biologically expected sex ratio at birth of 1.055 (Johanssen and Nyggren, 1991). This suggests that there is no systematic tendency for mothers to over-or under report births of sons.⁹

For the analysis of transitions to remarriage, the dependent variable is the duration from the end of one marriage (by divorce or widowhood) until the beginning of the next one. Our sample includes 488 women whose marriages ended within the sample period. Because mothers of boys are both more likely to marry subsequent to a premarital birth and less likely to divorce subsequent to a marital birth, we would expect the sex ratio for this sample of previously-married single mothers to be lower than that of the population as a whole. In fact, the ratio of sons to daughters for the entire sample is very close to one, but for women with only one child, 53.7 percent have a daughter while 46.2 percent have a son.

THE TRANSITION TO MARRIAGE SUBSEQUENT TO PREMARITAL BIRTH

Table 2 shows that a higher proportion of boys born premaritally experience a transition to a married-couple family: 57 percent of premarital births of boys, relative to 51 percent of premarital births of girls, are followed by a marriage within the PSID sample frame. However, the hypothesis that child's gender and the mother's likelihood of marriage are independent can be rejected at only a modest level of significance ($p=.16$).

⁹ If mothers were, for example, more likely to give up daughters for adoption and fail to report their births, then child gender would be endogenous in our analysis. The implications of endogenous child gender are discussed in Rose (1999,2000).

When we disaggregate marriage into two categories – marriage to the baby’s father, and marriage to another man, differences are clearer. The mothers of 21.6 percent of the boys, but only 15.2 percent of the girls, marry the father, and the difference is statistically significant ($p=.04$). However, there is no significant difference between the probability that a mother marries a man other than the father if she has a boy (35.2 percent) and if she has a girl (35.9 percent).

Given that the mother marries, does child gender affect the timing of that marriage? The average duration until marriage is significantly higher when the woman has a daughter: 4.6 years, vs. 3.4 years for sons. Average durations until marriage to the father are virtually identical – 2.0 years for mothers of boys, and 1.9 years for mothers of girls. However, women who marry a stepfather marry sooner if they have a son (4.2 years) than if they have a daughter (5.7 years).

Survivor Functions

The effects of child gender on the duration of single parenthood are illustrated by the inverse survivor functions in Figures 1-3. Figure 1 shows the proportion of single parenthood spells ended by marriage by time since the birth (i.e., by the child’s age), and by the child’s gender. The sample size and p-value from a log-rank test for equality of the survivor functions are reported in parentheses on the diagram. This test rejects equality: mothers of boys are more likely to marry than mothers of girls. Also, the line is (weakly) steeper for mothers of boys than mothers of girls in the first 10 years, and the gap is greatest at age 8 through 10.

The inverse survivor functions in Figures 2 and 3 show that marriages to the child’s

biological father follow a different pattern than other marriages. Figure 2 shows the proportion of spells ended by marriage to the child's father. Here also, mothers of boys are significantly more likely to have married than mothers of girls. The gap widens between ages 2 and 5, and is roughly constant from this age. Figure 3 shows the proportion of single parenthood spells that have been ended by marriage to a man *other* than the father at each duration. Mothers of boys are more likely to be married than mothers of girls, and the gap appears to widen between ages 5 and 8, but the log-rank test fails to reject equality of the survivor functions.

These tables and figures suggest that mothers of boys are more likely to marry subsequent to a premarital birth than mothers of girls. We now turn to a series of hazard models to test whether the apparent differences in marriage transition rates for mothers of sons and daughters are significant.

Hazard Models

We employ the Cox proportional hazard model (Cox 1972, 1975) in which the instantaneous hazard rate into marriage subsequent to a premarital birth is specified for individual i , t years subsequent to the birth, conditional on having remaining single until time t , as:

$$h(t, x_i) = I_0(t) \exp(\mathbf{b} x_i)$$

The baseline hazard, $I_0(t)$ is a non-parametric, time-varying function, x_i is a vector of regressors that includes a dummy variable indicating whether the child was a boy, and \mathbf{b} is the vector of coefficients to be estimated.

Modeling the rate of transition into marriage allows us to examine both the likelihood of

marriage and the duration until marriage within a single model. The hazard framework also allows for the right censoring of observations in which no marriage occurs by the end of the PSID sample period. By controlling for mother's characteristics, we can use this parametric form to increase the precision of the estimates.¹⁰

Table 3 presents the results from three sets of hazard models of the transition to marriage subsequent to premarital birth. In the first two columns, we estimate the effects of child gender on the transition rate into any marriage – either to the father, or to a stepfather. In the first of the two columns we control for the mother's age when the child was born, her years of education, the year of the child's birth,¹¹ whether it was her first child, and whether she is white. In the second of the two columns we measure age, education, and year of the child's birth by using a series of dummy variables in order to allow for non-linear effects.

In both cases we find that the transition to marriage is substantially and significantly faster for mothers of boys than for mothers of girls. The odds ratios of 1.35 ($z=2.5$) and 1.40 ($z=2.7$) indicate that mothers of boys are 35 to 40 percent more likely to marry than mothers of girls at each age. Also, the results in the first column indicate that younger and more-educated mothers, first-time mothers,¹² mothers having their children in earlier years, and white mothers are more likely to marry. These results are generally consistent with previous research: the mother's race is a strong predictor of marriage in all studies, and Lichter and Graefe [2001] also

¹⁰ In this specification, we do not exploit the fact that some women in our sample have more than one premarital birth (i.e. by allowing the transition rate into marriage to depend upon the gender composition of multiple premarital children or the probability of a second premarital child to depend upon the gender of the first), but the standard errors of all estimates are adjusted to account for multiple observations for some women.

¹¹ Cohort effects in the behavior of never-married mothers in the PSID sample will be captured by the year of the child's birth.

¹² The effect of 'first child' will include the effects of differences in subsequent nonmarital fertility between

find that women who have a premarital birth before 1975 are more likely to marry than later cohorts. The results in the second column indicate that the effects of mother's characteristics are highly non-linear. The age effect is only significant for women age 25 and over relative to younger women, and the period effects for the 1970s and 1980s are not individually significant. Having at least 12 years of education does improve a woman's likelihood of marriage, although having at least 16 years of education has no significant effect.

We then perform a competing risks analysis that allows for two ways to exit single motherhood—marriage to the child's biological father or to a stepfather. Columns (3) and (4) report the same pair of specifications as columns (1) and (2), but the outcome is marriage to the father only. Observations for which women marry someone other than the father are treated as having been censored at the point of that marriage.

The effect of child gender on the rate of marriage to the biological fathers is very large. Both specifications indicate that mothers of boys are nearly 60 percent more likely to marry at any time than mothers of girls. The only other significant predictors of the likelihood of marriage to the father are mother's race and parity; white mothers and first-time mothers marry more quickly. These results suggest that the mother's attractiveness in the marriage market, as measured by her age and education, are relatively unimportant in determining the probability of marriage with the father of her child, but the gender of the child is very important.

In the last two columns we present the results for transitions into marriage to a stepfather. Here, we find smaller positive effects of a male child that are marginally significant in the nonlinear specification. In contrast to the determinants of marriage to the biological father,

first-time mothers and the rest of the sample.

marriages to a stepfather are hastened by the education and delayed by the age of the mother, and the first-child effect is no longer significant.

CHILD GENDER AND THE TRANSITION TO REMARRIAGE

In this section we explore the relationship between the gender composition of a woman's offspring and the transition to marriage subsequent to the end of a marriage, either because of divorce or husband's death. Table 4 presents some descriptive statistics relating to this transition, with the sample of divorced or widowed women disaggregated by the number and gender of children at the end of the marriage. In general, the differences in the proportion that remarry and the duration until remarriage between women with only sons and only daughters are not statistically significant. Women whose marriages end with only one child are more likely to marry if they have a son (though the effect is significant only at the 12 percent level). Among women who have more than one child, mothers of only sons marry later than mothers of only daughters, but the samples are quite small.

Figure 4 shows the proportion of women with only one child at the end of her marriage who have remarried by years since the end of the previous marriage, and whether she has a son or a daughter. Mothers of sons appear somewhat *more* likely to have remarried than mothers of daughters, but the difference is not statistically significant.

Table 5 shows remarriage hazard ratio estimates with specifications that are similar to those reported in Table 3. Here, the duration is the time from the end of a marriage until the beginning of a subsequent marriage; i.e., remarriage. We use three measures of the gender composition of a woman's offspring: whether her only child is a boy, the number of sons

(daughters) she has, and whether she has at least one son (daughter). Other regressors in columns (1) and (3) include the year the previous marriage ended, the mother's age when the previous marriage ended, her education, and whether she is white; columns (2) and (4) reports results of comparable non-linear specifications.

There are no apparent differences in the effects of sons and daughters in any of the specifications; all p-values for tests of equality of the respective boy and girl coefficients are well above .5. Mothers who were younger at the time of the end of the first marriage, mothers with 12 or more years of education, and white mothers make more rapid transitions to remarriage.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Women who bear children out-of-wedlock are more likely to marry if they have a son than if they have a daughter and, when they do marry, they tend to marry sooner. This child gender effect is large and significant when the outcome is marriage to the child's biological father; we find weaker effects of child gender on the likelihood of first marriage to a stepfather and no significant effect on remarriage. In the absence of widespread sex-selective abortion, the birth of a boy rather than a girl to an unmarried woman is a random event, so it seems reasonable to interpret the association between sons and subsequent marriage as a causal one. However, our results are consistent with differential effects of sons and daughters on either the supply side of the marriage market or the demand side (or both). If men prefer to marry women with sons, then the supply of potential husbands to the mother of a son will be greater than the supply of husbands to the mother of a daughter. On the other hand, if women believe that a father will make a more important contribution to parenting a son than a daughter, then

she may be willing to search more intensively (or settle more readily) for a father or stepfather for her son. In both cases, we expect father involvement with sons born nonmaritally to be greater than father involvement with daughters. Lundberg, McLanahan, and Rose [2003] find that unmarried fathers engage in play and caretaking activities more frequently with one-year-old sons than with daughters.

Why would child gender affect the likelihood of marriage subsequent to a premarital birth, but not remarriage subsequent to the end of marriage? The interaction between gender preference and biological fatherhood seems to be important here. We find that the positive effect of a son on transitions to marriage to the child's biological father is larger than the effect on marriage to a stepfather. This suggests either that a man's preference for co-residence with a biological son (rather than a daughter) is stronger than his preference for a male stepchild, or that a mother's desire to provide her child with a co-resident biological father is relatively stronger if she has a son. The child's biological father is very likely to be in the pool of potential husbands when the birth is premarital, but quite unlikely to be in the marriage pool if the mother is divorced. So the absence of son-daughter effects on remarriage and the attenuation of these effects on first marriages to stepfathers are consistent with child gender preferences that are strongly associated with biological fatherhood.

We also find that the child gender differences in transitions to marriage to the biological father appear very early in the child's life, while gender differences in marriage to stepfathers are strongest for children between 8 and 12 years of age. This suggests that stepson preference may be more dependent upon the enjoyment of joint activities than is biological son preference. If this is true, then the absence of a significant child gender gap in transitions to remarriage may

reflect the fact that most fathers continue to play an important social and recreational role in their sons' lives after divorce. Alternatively, our estimates of child gender effects in the transition to remarriage may be contaminated by selection bias, as child gender may influence divorce (entry into the single mother pool), while the estimates for the transition to first marriage are not.

Overall, recent research suggests that child gender has wide-ranging and surprisingly large effects on parental and spousal behavior within marriage. Boys and girls inhabit families that are, on average, different, and these differences may have implications for gender differences in well-being. Fathers of sons earn more than fathers of daughters, and are more engaged with their families. Mothers of sons have happier, more stable, and more traditional marriages than mothers of daughters. Our results reinforce other findings that suggest issues of gender equity arise here as well, since the financial and emotional resources associated with growing up in a two-parent household (see McLanahan and Sandefur 1994) are more likely to be conferred on sons than on daughters. Further investigation into the sources of these differences may increase our understanding of what factors contribute to stable, well-functioning families and involved fathers.

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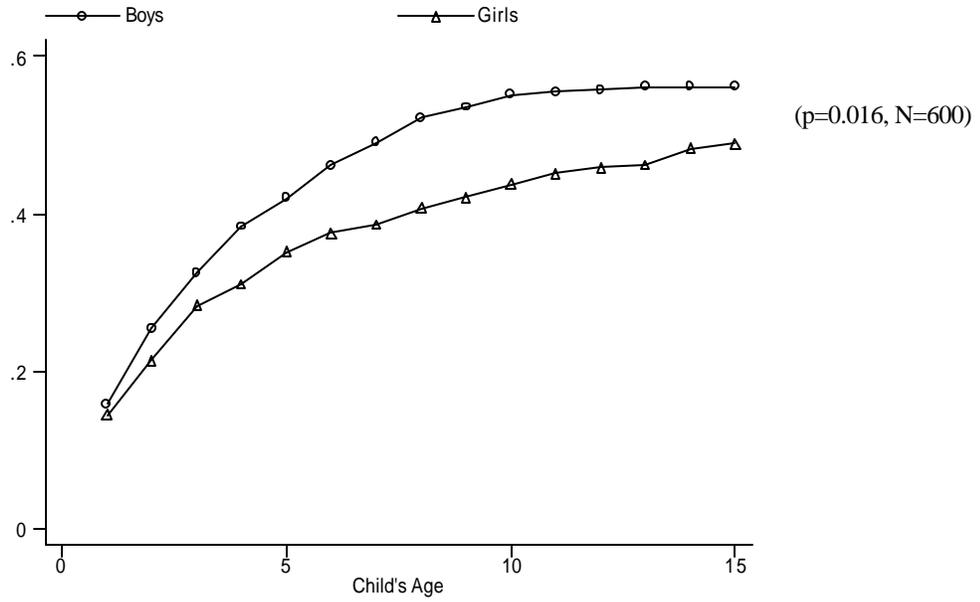


Figure 1
Proportion of Premarital Children whose Mothers Married
By Age and Gender of Child

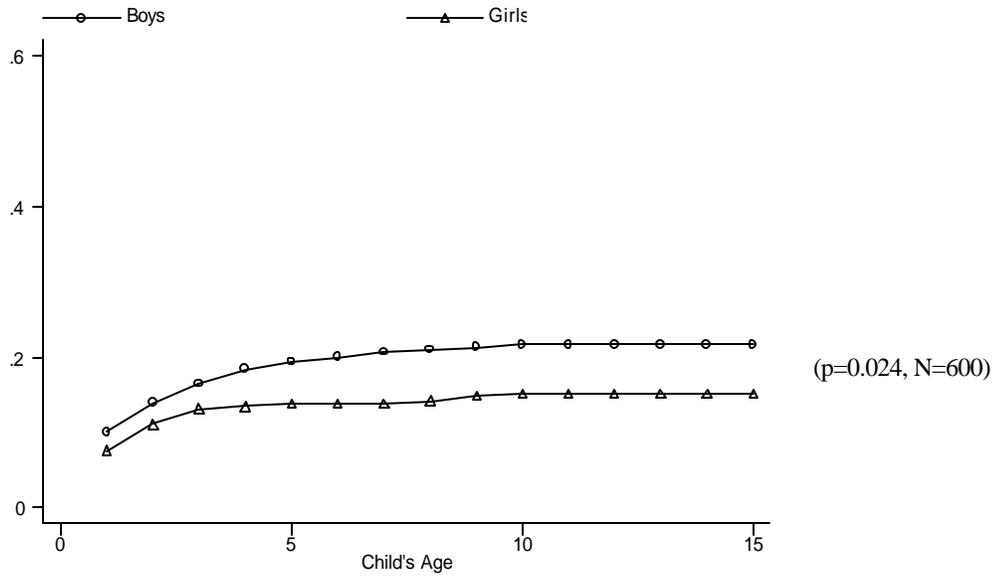
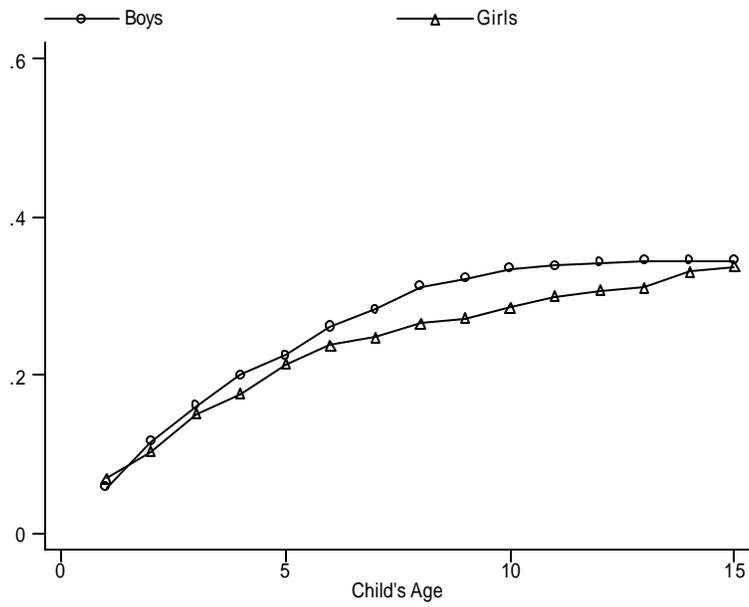


Figure 2
Proportion of Premarital Children whose Mothers Married their Fathers
By Age and Gender of Child



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Figure 3
Proportion of Premarital Children whose Mothers Married Stepfathers
By Age and Gender of Child

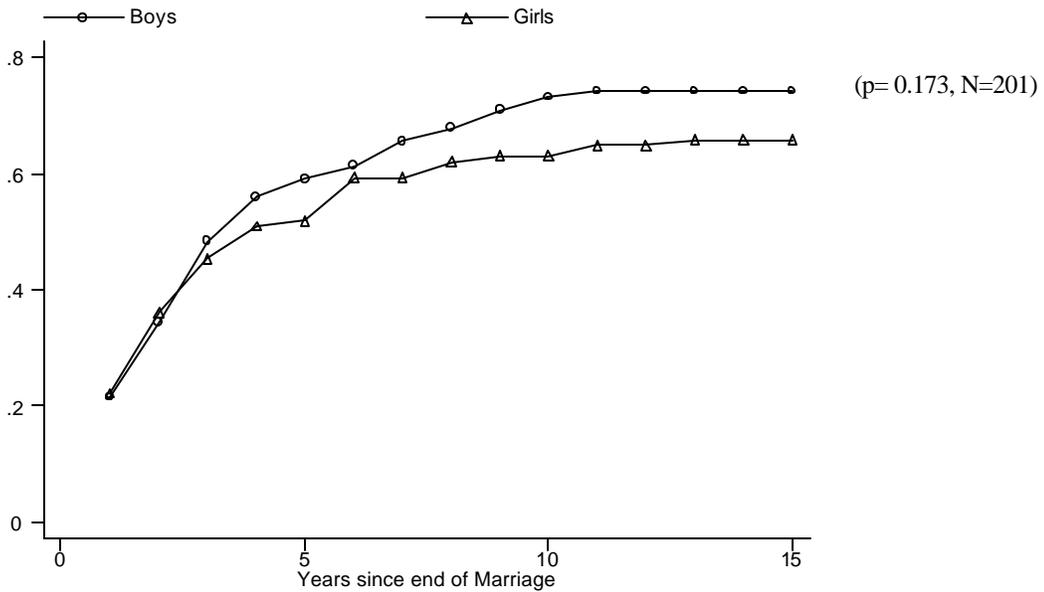


Figure 4
Proportion of Only Children whose Mother Remarried

By Gender of Child and Years since End of Marriage

Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations of Key Variables

| Transition to Marriage Subsequent to Premarital Birth | | Transition to Remarriage Subsequent to End of First Marriage | |
|--|---------------|---|----------------|
| Variables that Vary by Mother (N=381) | | All Variables Vary by Mother Only (N=488) | |
| Mother White | 0.62 | Mother White | 0.87 |
| Mother's Years of Education (N=407) | 11.9 (1.7) | Mother's Years of Education | 12.6 (2.1) |
| Mother's Year of Birth (- 1900) | 60.3 (7.6) | Mother's Year of Birth (- 1900) | 53.3 (6.9) |
| Variables that Vary by Child/Birth (N=600) | | | |
| If Mother Marries Subsequent to Birth | 0.54 | If Mother Remarries | 0.64 |
| Years Until Marriage, if Married Subsequent to Birth | 3.9 (4.1) | Years Between Marriages, if Remarries | 3.4 (3.6) |
| Mother's Age at Child's Birth | 21.4 (4.5) | Mother's Age When Marriage Ended | 29.8 (6.9) |
| Child is Boy | 0.517 | Only One Son (N=312 Marriages with One Child) | 0.487 |
| Parity = 1 | 0.64 | Only One Daughter (N=312 Marriages with One Child) | 0.513 |
| | | Number of Sons When Marriage Ended | 0.91 (0.83) |
| | | Number of Daughters When Marriage Ended | 0.92 (0.80) |
| | | Any Sons When Marriage Ended | 0.67 |
| | | Any Daughters When Marriage Ended | 0.69 |

Table 2
Marriage Subsequent to Premarital Birth within the PSID Sample Frame, and
Duration Until Marriage, By Child's Gender

| | Boys | Girls | Total/ Combined | p- value |
|--|--------------|--------------|----------------------------|---------------------|
| Mother Marries | 176 | 148 | 324 | |
| Mother Marries Father | 67 | 44 | 111 | |
| Mother Marries Stepfather | 109 | 104 | 213 | |
| Mother Does not Marry | 134 | 142 | 276 | |
| Total | 310 | 290 | 600 | |
| Percent of Boys' (Girls'/Combined) Mothers that Marry | 56.8 | 51.0 | 54.0 | .16 |
| Percent of Boys' (Girls'/Combined) Mothers that Marry Father | 21.6 | 15.2 | 18.5 | .04 |
| Percent of Boys' (Girls'/Combined) Mothers that Marry Stepfather | 35.2 | 35.9 | 35.5 | .86 |
| Mean Years Until Marriage – If Marries (s.d.) | 3.4 (.40) | 4.6 (.25) | 3.9 (.23) | .01 |
| Mean Years Until Marriage – If Marries Father (s.d.) | 2.0 (.27) | 1.9 (.36) | 1.9 (.22) | .86 |
| Years Until Marriage – If Marries Stepfather (s.d.) | 4.2 (.34) | 5.7 (.52) | 4.9 (.31) | .02 |

Table 3
Determinants of Transition Rate into Marriage following Premarital Birth
Hazard Ratios from Cox Proportional Hazard Model

| | Marriage to Father or Stepfather | | Marriage to Father Only | | Marriage to Stepfather Only | |
|--|--|----------------|----------------------------|----------------|--------------------------------|----------------|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| Boy | 1.35*** | 1.40*** | 1.59** | 1.58** | 1.24 | 1.30* |
| Mother's Age When Child Born | 0.95*** | | 1.01 | | 0.91*** | |
| Mother Age 18 or Over When Child Born | | 0.86 | | 1.31 | | 0.74* |
| Mother Age 20 or Over When Child Born | | 0.89 | | 1.26 | | 0.73* |
| Mother Age 25 or Over When Child Born | | 0.62** | | 0.69 | | 0.54** |
| Mother's Years of Education | 1.08 | | 0.95 | | 1.15*** | |
| Mother 12 + Years of Education | | 1.57** | | 1.05 | | 1.93*** |
| Mother 16 + Years of Education | | 0.72 | | 0.48 | | 0.94 |
| Year of Child's Birth | 0.98* | | 1.00 | | 0.97** | |
| Child Born 1970 or Later | | 0.79 | | 0.58 | | 0.89 |
| Child Born 1980 or Later | | 0.90 | | 1.40 | | 0.71* |
| If First Child | 1.27* | 1.22 | 1.65** | 1.62** | 1.08 | 1.05 |
| Mother White | 2.62*** | 2.57*** | 2.10*** | 2.04*** | 2.92*** | 2.93*** |
| -Log likelihood | 1810 | 1804 | 660 | 656 | 1140 | 1136 |

* $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$

Table 4
Likelihood that a Divorced or Widowed Mother
Remarries within the PSID Sample Frame,
and Duration Until Remarriage
By Gender Composition of Her Children at End of First Marriage

| | Mothers with Only One Child | | | Mothers with More Than One Child | | | | All Mothers | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|--------------|-------|----------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | Boy | Girl | Total | At Least One of Each | Only Boy(s) | Only Girl(s) | Total | At Least One of Each | Only Boy(s) | Only Girl(s) | Total |
| Remarries | 72 | 73 | 145 | 105 | 33 | 31 | 169 | 105 | 105 | 104 | 314 |
| Doesn't Remarry | 21 | 35 | 56 | 71 | 26 | 21 | 118 | 71 | 47 | 56 | 174 |
| Total | 93 | 108 | 201 | 176 | 59 | 52 | 287 | 176 | 152 | 160 | 488 |
| Percent that Remarry | 77.4 | 67.6 | 72.1 | 59.7 | 55.9 | 59.6 | 58.9 | 59.7 | 69.1 | 65.0 | 64.3 |
| (p) | .12 | | | | .70 | | | | .20 | | |
| Duration until Remarriage, If Remarries | 3.6 (4.2) | 3.3 (3.8) | | 3.1 (3.2) | 4.5 (3.4) | 2.7 (2.1) | 3.3 (3.2) | 3.1 (3.2) | 3.9 (4.0) | 3.1 (3.4) | 3.4 (3.6) |
| (p) | .56 | | | | .01 | | | | .11 | | |
| Total Number of Children | | | | 2.6 (.84) | 2.2 (.53) | 2.2 (.44) | 2.4 (.75) | 2.6 (.84) | 1.5 (.66) | 1.4 (.61) | 1.8 (.81) |

Table 5
Determinants of Mothers' Transition Rate into Remarriage
By Gender of Her Children

| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
|--|------|--------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| One Son | 1.21 | 1.18 | | | | |
| Number of Sons | | | 1.00 | 0.94 | | |
| Number of Daughters | | | 0.99 | 0.94 | | |
| <i>p</i> (Number of Sons = Number of Daughters) | | | 0.90 | 0.90 | | |
| Any Sons | | | | | 1.20 | 1.11 |
| Any Daughters | | | | | 1.12 | 1.07 |
| <i>p</i> (Any Sons = Any Daughters) | | | | | 0.64 | 0.81 |
| Year When Marriage Ended | 1.00 | | 1.00 | | 1.01 | |
| Marriage Ended 1970 or Later | | 0.46 | | 0.57 | | 0.61 |
| Marriage Ended 1980 or Later | | 1.15 | | 1.02 | | 1.03 |
| Mother's Age When Marriage Ended | 0.99 | | 0.96*** | | 0.96*** | |
| Mother Age 20 + When Marriage Ended | | 0.91 | | 1.07 | | 1.03 |
| Mother Age 25 + When Marriage Ended | | 0.99 | | 0.87 | | 0.83 |
| Mother Age 30 + When Marriage Ended | | 0.97* | | 0.84 | | 0.81 |
| Mother's Education | 1.06 | | 1.04 | | 1.04 | |
| Mother Has 12 + Years of Education | | 1.65 | | 1.42** | | 1.45** |
| Mother Has 16 + Years of Education | | 1.17 | | 0.93 | | 0.94 |
| White | 1.61 | 1.68* | 1.86*** | 1.79*** | 1.87*** | 1.82*** |
| N | 201 | 201 | 488 | 488 | 488 | 488 |
| -Log Likelihood | 648 | 644 | 1693 | 1693 | 1692 | 1693 |

* $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$