

Not living in an intact, first marriage family during adolescence affects the life chances of children in complex ways (Kuo and Hauser 1995). Currently, cohabitation rates are higher than ever before and the number of single-parent households formed from births parallels the number of single-parent households formed from divorce (Bumpass and Musick 1998). The rapid transformation of families over the last two decades, from a two-parent biological family to more complicated and transitory arrangements, point to potentially more challenging formative years for children.

Families provide a variety of contexts for children that can affect their life chances. Social stratification and family research have long established that the resources a family provides have significant effects on a variety of child outcomes (Fischer and Kmec 2004). Beyond such resources as time and money, parents also provide the key environments of a child's youth; family, neighborhoods, and schools (peers) which also contribute to a child's development and future life chances (Sampson, Morenoff, and Gannon-Rowley 2002). For example, family structure research has consistently shown that children from an intact marriage have better educational, emotional, and behavioral outcomes on average than children from families that differ from this structure (Ganong and Coleman 2004, Pong 1997, Thomson, Hanson, and McLanahan 1994).

Substantial literatures exist on both the impact of family structures on a variety of child outcomes, and on the impact of neighborhood contexts on child outcomes, but a dynamic and comprehensive look at family structure, neighborhood effects, and educational attainment has received little attention (Crowder and Teachman 2004). For example, neighborhood research has generally operationalized family structure as a dichotomous variable (intact or not), which does not address the heterogeneity that exists in family structures (Burton and Jarrett 2000). This paper bridges this gap in the research by providing a disaggregated measure of family structure while taking into account neighborhood characteristics that affect child outcomes. Because family configurations are becoming increasingly more complex, disaggregating family measures are not only more representative of families today, they are also important for furthering our knowledge about variation in child outcomes.

In this analysis, we focused on two educational outcomes: high school graduation and college attendance. The examination of educational attainment is important for many reasons. Educational attainment is linked to future occupational attainment where those obtaining a higher degree are more likely to have better occupational outcomes than those who do not. Because an unprecedented number of today's youth are graduating from high school and pursuing higher education, finishing high school and attending college are imperative for future success (Raley, Frisco, and Wildsmith 2005). Additionally, failing to graduate from high school is associated with an increased likelihood of experiencing unemployment and obtaining lower paying less desirable jobs (Fischer and Kmec 2004).

In order to examine the relationship between families and neighborhoods, we will use data from the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH). This is a nationally representative sample of households in 1987. Households were resurveyed in 1992–94 and again in 2001–02. We will use data from the base-year and first follow-up surveys.

In this paper, we will accomplish two tasks. We will first estimate the effects of family structure on educational attainment by utilizing a sibling fixed-effects model. The strength of this approach is that it allows us to account for unobserved shared

characteristics within the family, thereby attenuating confounding influences (e.g. economic resources, parenting styles, and genetics) that affect educational attainment. A main limitation of this approach, however, is that we are unable to estimate factors that do not vary across siblings. As a consequence of the data—where there is no variation in neighborhood information across siblings—we are unable to estimate neighborhood effects. Subsequently, we will also estimate a model which enables us to capture important neighborhood characteristics that influences educational attainment. By using NSFH, a longitudinal data set that contains detailed retrospective union histories, matched with 1990 census data, we can better answer the question: How do childhood family configurations and neighborhoods influence educational attainment?

Table 1 presents results from a preliminary analysis we conducted examining the effects of family structure and neighborhood characteristics on high school graduation. The results were derived from the focal child sample from NSFH. An issue that arrived from using the focal child sample was that there were a limited number of respondents in each family structure indicator. In subsequent analyses, we will use data from the main respondent sample of NSFH which allows for a much larger number of respondents.

In model 1, we included family structure and background characteristics. We found that all non-intact family structures had a negative effect on high school graduation. In model 2, the addition of family-level social capital variables substantially mediates the negative effects of living in a step-parent household as well as living in a single-parent household who had undergone at least one family structure transition. Model 3, which included neighborhood-level variables, shows a positive effect of neighborhood stability on high school graduation. Model 3 also shows that both cohabitation and living in a single-parent family (with no transitions) continue to have negative effects on high school graduation. Model 4 includes the interaction between family structure and degree of neighborhood poverty. Children from poor neighborhoods experience an additional disadvantage if they reside in a cohabiting family as compared to similar students from two-parent households. From previous studies (e.g. Wilson 1987), we would expect to find that single-parent households experience an additional negative impact of living in a poor neighborhood. However, our results indicate that children from single-parent households do not experience this added disadvantage.

Table 1. Logistic Regression Models Predicting High School Graduation

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Age (LT 10 yr)	0.226 (0.283)	0.337 (0.276)	0.301 (0.272)	0.291 (0.278)
Age (16 to 18)	0.391 (0.358)	0.368 (0.378)	0.292 (0.361)	0.287 (0.357)
Household Income (ln)	0.18 (0.118)	0.089 (0.116)	0.095 (0.107)	0.159 (0.110)
Black	-0.068 (0.262)	-0.312 (0.293)	0.307 (0.471)	0.534 (0.484)

Model 1. Continued.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Other (race/ ethnicity)	-0.317 '(0.480)	-0.627 '(0.470)	-0.431 '(0.488)	-0.437 '(0.554)
Child's Gender: Male	-0.766** (0.283)	-0.762** (0.288)	-0.812** (0.282)	-0.804** (0.286)
Parent Gender: Male	-0.333 (0.253)	-0.291 (0.278)	-0.323 (0.282)	-0.326 (0.270)
Highest Parent Education Level	0.107 (0.059)	-0.004 (0.061)	-0.010 (0.058)	-0.002 (0.062)
SEI	0.028* (0.011)	0.024* (0.011)	0.027* (0.011)	0.027** (0.010)
# of Children in the Household	-0.077 '(0.107)	-0.078 '(0.112)	-0.066 '(0.113)	-0.094 '(0.110)
Single-parent zero transitions	-1.263** '(0.421)	-1.008** '(0.377)	-0.898* '(0.394)	-0.154 '(0.583)
Single-parent one or more transitions	-0.810* '(0.381)	-0.562 '(0.355)	-0.395 '(0.389)	-0.232 '(0.505)
Step-parent family	-0.628* '(0.291)	-0.316 '(0.346)	-0.327 '(0.327)	-0.823 '(0.515)
Cohabiting family	- 2.411*** '(0.452)	-2.140*** (0.537)	-2.149*** (0.511)	-0.427 (0.839)
Expect Child to Attend College or Higher		1.685*** '(0.274)	1.729*** '(0.271)	1.820*** '(0.280)
Talk to Neighbors		-0.193 (0.129)	-0.191 (0.118)	-0.189 (0.116)
Parent Time Spent with Child		-0.046 '(0.198)	-0.122 '(0.194)	-0.041 '(0.186)
Family History of Residential Mobility		-0.171* '(0.087)	-0.154 '(0.079)	-0.154 '(0.077)
Residential Stability			3.413** (1.241)	3.709** (1.230)
% Black			-1.576 (0.822)	-1.590 (0.847)
Poor Neighborhood			-0.005 '(0.013)	0.009 '(0.018)

Model 1. Continued.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Single (0 transitions) X Poor Neighborhood				-0.038 '(0.025)
Single (1+ transitions) X Poor Neighborhood				-0.010 '(0.032)
Step X Poor Neighborhood				0.042 '(0.031)
Cohabiting X Poor Neighborhood				-0.101** '(0.033)
Deviance	4036.745	3981.605	3962.82	3946.771
Chi-square		55.14	18.785	16.049
P-value		0	0.001	0.003
DOF		6	3	4

*p < .05 **p < .01 ***p
<.001

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