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Mothers' Repartnering after a Nonmarital Birth

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Abstract

This paper examines the prevalence, predictors and outcomes of unmarried mothers' repartnering patterns following a nonmarital birth. Results indicate that, within five years after a birth, approximately two-thirds of unmarried mothers ended their relationship with the focal child's biological father, and over half of these mothers entered new partnerships. Among those who repartnered, 60 percent of mothers formed unions with men with higher economic capabilities than their former partners, 20 percent formed unions with men with similar capabilities, and 20 percent formed unions with men with lower capabilities. This pattern holds for both nonresidential and coresidential unions. Our findings are consistent with marriage market, learning, and evolutionary biology theories about union formation, and they provide support for qualitative evidence that unmarried mothers have high standards for new partners. While many mothers are able to successfully find new partners with better economic capabilities, many other mothers remain unpartnered, likely due (at least in part) to the limited pool of potential partners with relatively high levels of economic capabilities.

Introduction

The dramatic increase in nonmarital childbearing over the past four decades represents an important change in family demography. Rather than signaling a decline in the importance of marriage, however, the trend is believed to represent a shift—at least for some groups—in the sequencing of family formation patterns, from one in which marriage comes first and children follow to one in which children come first and marriage follows (Bumpass 1990). This change in the ordering of family formation patterns is most pronounced among lower socioeconomic groups and has been fueled by (1) declines in men's employment and earnings (Wilson 1996), (2) increases in the social acceptance of single motherhood (Axinn & Thornton 2000), and (3) rising expectations about what is required for a successful marriage (Cherlin 2009; Edin and Kefalas 2005; Gibson, Edin and McLanahan 2005).

Although some unmarried parents are able to establish stable unions, the majority breaks up within only a few years after a baby's birth and begins to search for new partners. Consequently, children born to unmarried parents are likely to live with new father figures during their formative years, with potentially important consequences for their home environments and wellbeing. Exactly what these family formation patterns mean for children is unclear. On the one hand, a large literature suggests that remarriage is stressful for mothers and their children (Amato, 1994; Hetherington & Jodl, 1994), and that family instability during early childhood may be especially detrimental for children (Cavanagh &

Huston 2008). Studies also indicate that, on average, stepfathers are less altruistic toward their children than biological fathers (Daly & Wilson 2000). On the other hand, if mothers are able to form high quality, long-lasting partnerships with men who are good providers, the consequences for mothers and their children may be positive (Williams, Sassler & Nicholson 2008; Ananat & Michaels 2008). Recent cross-sectional studies suggest that unmarried mothers' new partners are often highly involved with their stepchildren and that children benefit from their involvement (Berger et al. 2008, Bzostek 2008).

To date, no study (to our knowledge) has examined the repartnering patterns of unmarried mothers overall or compared the characteristics of unmarried mothers' original partners to those of their new partners. This paper aims to fill this gap. Using longitudinal data from a recent cohort of nonmarital births in large U.S. cities, we examine the proportion of unmarried mothers who repartner after breaking up with their children's biological fathers, the economic capabilities of mothers' new partners (as compared to their former partners), and the factors that predict these outcomes.

Theoretical Background

Our analysis is guided by three theoretical perspectives: evolutionary biology theory, marriage market theory and learning theory. Evolutionary biology theory tells us that in species where one sex devotes more energy to parental investment than the other (most often, but not always, the female in mammals), that sex will place a high value on prospective partners' ability to provide resources as a way of maximizing their chances of survival (Trivers 1972, Daly & Wilson 2000). This pattern can be found among humans (as well as many other species) and suggests that mothers will seek partners with high levels of resources both before and after a child is born. The ability to search for and find a suitable mate, however, is limited by a number of personal and contextual factors (Hrdy 1999). For example, evolutionary theory also tells us that men will prefer to partner with women who are fertile, i.e. young and healthy.

Whereas evolutionary theory tells us that women will prefer to partner with men who are good providers, marriage market theory reminds us that the supply of partners with high capabilities is limited, and that mothers will have to compete for the best partners (Becker, Landes & Michael 1977; England & Farkas 1986; Oppenheimer 1988). In combination with evolutionary theory, marriage market theory implies that if *all* (eligible) unmarried mothers were to form new partnerships, the average quality of new partners would decline (since the pool of men stays the same, but the mothers become less attractive as they grow older).

Marriage market theory, however, is ambiguous with respect to the quality of new partners at any point in time, since the outcome depends on how long a mother is willing to search and the extent to which she is willing to lower her standards for a mate. Just as job seekers bring certain skills and experiences to the labor market and have a minimum acceptable wage (so-called "reservation wage") (McCall 1970; Stigler 1961), "mate seekers" have qualities that make them more or less attractive on the marriage market and minimum standards regarding the characteristics of partners with whom they are willing to form a partnership. Continuing to search for a suitable mate has costs – both in terms of the time and energy invested in the search process, as well as the opportunity costs of continued searching – which will be higher for those who have a strong need or preference to be partnered (England & Farkas 1986).

The outcome may also depend on whether the new partnership is a coresident relationship or a dating relationship. We would expect the standards for a dating relationship to be lower than the standards for a cohabiting union or a marriage. Coresident relationships likely involve higher levels of relationship commitment and greater investment in shared economic

and social resources, and mothers with young children may be particularly concerned about the attributes of a potential partner if he is going to share a household with her child(ren).

Finally, learning theory suggests that individuals learn from their past experiences about the importance of selecting a partner with high capabilities, and this knowledge raises their minimum standards for a partner (Gelissen 2004). Since the pool of potential partners does not change very much over time, and since mothers' attractiveness on the marriage market declines over time, learning theory, in conjunction with evolutionary and marriage market theory, implies that a substantial proportion of mothers will not repartner (will continue to search) and that those who do repartner will do so with men of higher capabilities than their previous partner.¹

With respect to *which* mothers are the most likely to find men with high capabilities (or less likely to settle for partners with low capabilities), four sets of (sometimes overlapping) characteristics are likely to be important: 1) factors that affect mothers' attractiveness to potential partners (such as youth and mental/physical health); 2) factors that increase mothers' opportunities to meet men with desirable attributes (such as being in school, working or attending religious services); 3) factors that increase mothers' ability to continue searching for a partner (such as being employed, having relatively high education, having fewer children, having children without health or behavioral problems, and living in a city with generous welfare benefits and strict child support enforcement); and 4) factors that affect mothers' attitudes or preferences for being in a relationship (such as traditional orientations toward family structure, disapproval of single motherhood, trust of the opposite sex, having a male child and hence greater impetus to find a father-figure, and becoming pregnant/having a child with a new partner).

Previous Empirical Research

Ethnographic studies suggest that many unwed mothers continue searching for new partners after breaking up with their children's fathers, and many have quite high standards for these new partners (Edin & Kefalas 2005; Gibson-Davis et al. 2005). Although no quantitative study to date has looked specifically at the predictors and outcomes of unwed mothers' repartnering over time, related studies are suggestive regarding what we might expect to find in our analyses.

A handful of longitudinal studies have compared the occupational status of remarried women's first and subsequent husbands over time (Jacobs & Furstenberg 1986; Mueller & Pope 1980; Ni Brolchain 1988). Taken together, these studies offer little evidence that remarried women tend to trade up or down, on average, in husbands' socioeconomic status when they remarry.² Jacobs & Furstenberg (1986) did find, however, that having children from a previous marriage was a significant predictor of lower socioeconomic status in the women's second husbands, providing some empirical support for the idea that women become less attractive to potential partners and less able to search for a better partner after having a child. Although helpful in providing longitudinal, within-woman comparisons over time, these studies all use older data, and they provide very little information about repartnering among *mothers* specifically and no information about mothers with nonmarital births (who are likely to repartner through dating or cohabitation rather than marriage).

¹These hypotheses are also consistent with expectations derived from social exchange theory (Blau 1964, Cook & Emerson 1978, Thibaut & Kelley 1959), which emphasizes that the formation and dissolution of human relationships is based on one's subjective assessment of costs, benefits, and the comparison of available alternatives.

²Although Mueller and Pope (1980) concluded that remarried women's second husbands had higher occupational statuses, on average, than their previous husbands, Jacobs & Furstenberg (1986) subsequently found that this was no longer the case after adjusting for the career trajectories of the original husbands.

Although there is more recent evidence that having had a nonmarital birth is associated with lower levels of partners' educational attainment (Graefe & Lichter 2007, Qian et al. 2005), this finding tells us more about the disadvantage conferred on mothers by having a nonmarital birth, rather than the predictors and outcomes of repartnering *among* unwed mothers.

The few previous studies that focus exclusively on the partners of mothers (rather than of women) are all based on cross-sectional data. These comparisons suggest that, for the most part, married biological fathers have higher socioeconomic capabilities than mothers' new co-residential partners, providing further evidence for the marriage market hypothesis that mothers may become less attractive to potential partners over time. For example, Hofferth and her colleagues found that—without controlling for any other factors—married biological fathers had higher levels of education than married stepfathers and that married biological fathers worked more hours per week than cohabiting stepfathers (Hofferth 2006; Hofferth & Anderson 2003). Married biological fathers also had significantly higher earnings than stepfathers (Hofferth 2006). On the other hand, Hofferth (2006) also found that cohabiting biological fathers had lower levels of education than cohabiting and married stepfathers, and as previously mentioned, ethnographic studies have found that many unwed mothers continue searching for new partners and describe having high standards for new partners (Edin & Kefalas 2005; Gibson-Davis et al. 2005).

To summarize, previous empirical research provides some support for the hypotheses derived from evolutionary theory, marriage market theory and learning theory. Yet, the existing studies in this area are limited by the use of cross-sectional and/or older data, and few studies focus on mothers in particular and even fewer on mothers with unmarried births.

Predictors of repartnering

Only a few studies to date have looked at the predictors of repartnering among mothers in particular (and none, to our knowledge, has simultaneously predicted both whether and with whom mothers will repartner). These studies generally confirm findings from the larger body of research about women's (mostly post-divorce) repartnering, suggesting that characteristics that tend to increase a mothers' attractiveness to potential mates are related to higher rates of repartnering. For example, studies of women in general (Bramlett & Mosher 2002; Bumpass, Sweet & Martin 1990; Sweeney 1997; Wu 1994) and studies of mothers in particular (Buckle, Gallup & Rodd 1996, Lundberg & Rose 2003) have both found that younger women are more likely to remarry or cohabit after a divorce.

Overall, most studies comparing women with and without children have also found that mothers are less likely to remarry or cohabit after divorce (Bramlett & Mosher 2002; Buckle et al. 1996; Wu 1994, although see Wu & Schimmele 2005 for an exception based on Canadian data). There are, however, some caveats in this finding with respect to the child's age (Sweeney 1997) and the mother's availability to participate in work and leisure-time activities (De Graaf & Kalmijn 2003), suggesting that having very young children and little opportunity to meet potential mates through work and leisure-time activities (both of which would increase mothers' search costs) may be particularly important in reducing mothers' rates of remarriage. Bennett, Bloom & Miller (1995), however, find that net of other factors, unmarried mothers do not devote less time than women without children to work or social activities through which they might meet potential partners. Higher birth parity has also been associated with lower rates of remarriage among divorced mothers (Buckle et al. 1996).

Mothers' socioeconomic status (most commonly proxied in previous research by educational attainment) is hypothesized to simultaneously increase their attractiveness to

potential partners and decrease their financial need to be in a partnership. Although the empirical evidence regarding the role of women's socioeconomic status in predicting post-dissolution repartnering is mixed in the case of all women (Bramlett & Mosher 2002; De Graaf & Kalmijn 2003; Smock 1990; Sweeney 1997; Wu 1994; Wu & Balakrishnan 1994), research about remarriage among mothers in particular suggests that higher levels of socioeconomic status may be associated with higher rates of repartnering (Buckle et al. 1996, Lundberg & Rose 2003).

Taken together, these findings suggest that mothers' attractiveness to potential mates may play more of a role than financial necessity in predicting which mothers repartner, at least among divorced mothers. These findings may be different, however, for a more disadvantaged sample of mothers with nonmarital births who are likely to repartner through cohabitation (or dating) versus marriage. Very little research has focused on the predictors of mothers' repartnering after a nonmarital birth (rather than post-divorce); to our knowledge, only one study has identified the predictors of entering a relationship with a new partner (vs. the child's biological father) after an unwed birth, and this study focused specifically on marriage (and was unable to identify new cohabiting unions) (Lundberg & Rose 2003). This study confirmed the findings discussed previously that younger age and having more education were associated with higher rates of marriage. The authors also found that mothers of sons (who may feel more need to repartner and find a father figure for their child) were somewhat more likely to marry than mothers of daughters. In contrast with the finding among divorced mothers described above, these authors did not find an association between birth parity and the likelihood of marrying a new partner after a nonmarital birth (Lundberg & Rose 2003). These findings might differ considerably in an analysis including cohabiting and dating relationships in addition to marriage. Most importantly, none of the studies described above provides evidence regarding which mothers are the most likely to "trade up" or "trade down" if and when they do repartner.

In addition to the evidence described above, research on union formation and dissolution in general provides empirical evidence for several other factors that are expected to influence mothers' repartnering (and hence are important to include as covariates in our models). Having a child in poor health is negatively associated with union stability (Reichman, Corman & Noonan 2004), and individuals in poor physical health are less likely to marry than those in good health (Lillard & Panis 1996). Mothers' poor mental health also deters marriage after a nonmarital birth (Teitler & Reichman 2008). The idea that poor physical/mental health is associated with lower levels of partnership formation and stability is consistent with the idea that being healthy (or having healthy children) both makes individuals more attractive to potential partners and also may reduce their need for being in a partnership and/or allow them to search longer for potential partners.

There is also evidence that mothers' attitudes toward marriage and men are associated with union formation and stability: Carlson, McLanahan & England (2004), for example, found that positive attitudes toward marriage were positively related to marriage after a nonmarital birth, while mothers' distrust of men diminished the chances of marriage. We would expect to find, therefore, that mothers with traditional orientations toward family structure, those who do not believe single mothers can raise children as well as two parents, and mothers with low levels of distrust toward men would all have a higher preference for repartnering. Carlson et al. (2004) also found that mothers' frequent religious attendance (which could both signal more traditional orientations toward family structure and increase mothers' opportunities to meet potential partners) appeared to encourage marriage. Those who did not grow up with both parents are less likely to marry (South 2001). There is also some evidence for the marriage market-driven hypothesis that state policies such as welfare generosity and child support enforcement affect union formation and stability by allowing mothers to spend

more time searching for a suitable partner (Knab et al., 2009). Finally, previous empirical research about union formation and repartnering consistently suggests that African Americans are less likely to repartner (including remarry) than whites (Lundberg & Rose 2003; McNamee & Raley 2011; Smock 1990), and that both U.S.-born and foreign-born Hispanic women are less likely to repartner than whites (McNamee & Raley 2011).

Although (to our knowledge) previous research has not tested this hypothesis, becoming pregnant with a new partner's child is expected to encourage mothers to remain in that partnership, both because of the greater financial need created by the child (related to the marriage market theory) and/or because the mother has a stronger emotional tie to the new partner (related to mothers' preferences and the learning theory). In some cases (particularly if the pregnancy was unplanned), this may increase the chances that a mother will "settle" for a partner with lower economic capabilities. Alternatively, mothers may choose to have additional children only with partners with particularly desirable economic capabilities.

Based on the theories and empirical evidence described above, we hypothesize that: (1) a substantial proportion of mothers who break up with their child's father will not repartner (i.e., will continue to search for a high-quality partner); (2) among mothers who do form new partnerships, the economic capabilities of the new partners will be higher, on average, than those of the previous partner (the focal child's biological father); and (3) mothers with more resources will be less likely to partner with men of lower economic capability than the child's biological father (i.e., to "trade down").

Method

Data

We use data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, a longitudinal survey of 4,898 children born (3,710 to unwed parents) in 20 large U.S. cities between 1998 and 2000. The survey interviewed children's biological mothers and fathers at the time of the child's birth and approximately one, three, and five years later. When weighted, the data are nationally representative of all births as well as all unmarried births in large cities between 1998 and 2000. (See Reichman et al. [2001] for more information about the survey design). See Appendix Table 1 for a detailed description of the samples used in the various analyses.

Measures

New partnership status was measured using mothers' reports about their romantic relationships and living arrangements at each of the post-birth waves. We distinguish between mothers in coresidential and nonresidential partnerships. Among those who were eligible for repartnering (i.e., those not living with the child's biological father, consistent with the criterion used in the survey for determining which mothers would be asked about new partnerships), mothers who reported being involved in a romantic relationship with someone other than the child's father were considered to be in a new partnership. Mothers who reported living with their new partner "all or most of the time" were considered to be in coresident partnerships (and could be either cohabiting or married).

Because the data about mothers' partnerships were gathered at three snapshots in time after the child's birth rather than through exhaustive partnership histories, our analyses likely miss some short-lived partnerships that formed and dissolved between the survey waves. As a result, our estimates represent a lower bound of the percentage of mothers who ever repartnered during the first five years after a nonmarital birth. However, there is reason to believe we are capturing the vast majority of mothers' new partnerships. Questions at the five-year interview indicate that of mothers who were not in relationships at the three- and five-year interviews, less than one percent had lived with more than one new partner since

the previous interview, and about twelve percent had been in romantic relationships (lasting at least one month) with more than one new partner since the previous interview.

We use four variables to measure a partner's economic capabilities: whether he completed high school, whether he attended any college, whether he worked during the past week, and whether he had ever been incarcerated. We focus specifically on economic capabilities because of the importance of material resources and, more pragmatically, because these variables are more accurately measured in the data than are partners' psycho-social attributes. Education is the most fundamental measure of economic capabilities and is strongly linked with earnings and earnings capabilities (Becker 1964). Current labor force attachment is strongly linked to earnings and income. We consider incarceration history to be a measure of partners' economic capabilities given its strong association with subsequent employment opportunities (particularly for minority populations), even net of the typically low education and skills of incarcerated men (Pager 2003).

For each mother, we construct summary measures for biological fathers' capabilities and new partners' capabilities (range=0-4), and then compare the scores to determine whether a mother "traded up," "traded down," or stayed the same. In comparing partners' characteristics, mothers were considered to have "traded up" if the mother's new partner had a higher score than the child's biological father on our average measure of economic capabilities. Similarly, mothers were considered to have "traded down" if the new partner had a lower score than the child's father on the measure of economic capabilities. Note that trading up on this summary measure of partners' economic capabilities does not necessarily mean that mothers traded up on *all* of the indicators of men's economic capabilities used to construct the overall measure. For example, mothers who traded up on three out of the four measures included in the overall score but traded down on one measure would still be coded as having traded up overall. And mothers who traded up on two of the measures and down on the other two measures would be coded as repartnering with a man with the same level of economic capabilities as the child's biological father. By comparing the partners of the same mother over time, we can avoid the potential selection bias that occurs when researchers make cross-sectional comparisons across different groups of mothers (Graefe & Lichter 2007; Qian et al. 2005; Whyte 1990).

Both biological fathers' and new partners' economic capabilities were measured using mothers' reports. This was necessary to achieve reporter consistency, since new partners were not interviewed in the survey. In most cases, biological fathers' economic capabilities were measured using the mother's report at the time of the child's birth. We also used biological fathers' own reports about additional schooling obtained after the focal child's birth because mothers were not asked about fathers' post-birth education. Robustness checks (results available upon request) using mothers' reports at the time they were first observed with a new partner, as well as biological fathers' own time-of-birth and subsequent reports, produced similar results. New partners' economic capabilities were measured using mothers' reports from the survey wave when they were first observed in a new partnership.

Thirty mothers who did not report any information about biological fathers' and/or new partners' economic capabilities were excluded from the analyses of partners' characteristics (but not the estimates of repartnering prevalence). Mothers were not asked about new partners' employment status at the one-year interview, but this information was available through the household roster for approximately three-quarters of mothers in new coresidential partnerships at the one year survey. Because the survey did not ask mothers about new partners' education and non-resident partners' employment status at the one-year interview, we use imputed data in these cases, rather than dropping all of these mothers from the analysis. The data were imputed through multiple regression techniques using the *Proc*

MI command in SAS (with five imputations). We also estimated models that excluded the mothers who repartnered at one year, and the results were similar to those presented here.

Covariates

Our models include a set of covariates that either theory or previous empirical research suggest are likely to affect mothers' attractiveness to potential mates, their opportunities for meeting potential partners, their ability to continue searching for a suitable partner, or their attitudes/preferences for being in a relationship. A number of covariates fall into more than one of these categories. To avoid potential problems with reverse-causality, covariates were measured at the time of the child's birth or at the survey wave immediately preceding the wave in which the outcome was measured. Dummy variables were used to measure the number of waves a mother was eligible for repartnering (one, two or three waves). Note that although many mothers did not live with the child's biological father at the time of the child's birth, risk of repartnering was assumed to begin one year after the child's birth because mothers were not asked about new partnerships in the baseline survey.

Mothers' age was measured in years at the time of the child's birth. Mother's race/ethnicity was represented by a set of dummy variables for non-Hispanic white or other (mostly Asian), non-Hispanic black and Hispanic. Nativity status was measured as whether or not the mother was born outside the US. Mothers' health was measured as a dummy variable for whether her health was "fair or poor" versus "excellent, very good, or good."

Child characteristics included indicators for the child being male, born at a low/very low birth weight (less than 2500g), whether the focal child was the mother's first birth, and a measure of the child's shy/temperamental behavior at age one (continuously measured with a range from 1 to 5). The latter measure is based on the Emotionality and Shyness scales taken from the EAS (Emotionality, Activity, and Sociability) Temperament Survey for Children (Mathieson & Tambs, 1999).

Grandmothers' symptoms of depression were derived from the National Co-morbidity Survey (NCS), based on an adaptation by Ronald Kessler to the Composite International Diagnostic Interview (Kessler et al. 1998). We used grandmothers' mental health rather than mothers' own mental health because the latter may be endogenous to mothers' repartnering decisions and because measures of mothers' own mental health were not available from the baseline survey. Grandparents' mental health has been used as a proxy for mothers' mental health in other studies using these data (e.g., Cooper et al. 2009, Cooper et al. 2010).

Pregnancy/birth with a new partner since the last survey wave is measured in slightly different ways at each of the survey waves. In the one-year interview, mothers were asked about new pregnancies (including miscarriages and abortions) since the child's birth, but not about the father of these pregnancies/births. The child's biological father was assumed to be the father of the new birth/pregnancy if the mother reported an increase in the number of biological children with the child's father between the baseline and one year interview and no children with other men. Otherwise, we assumed that the mother had a pregnancy/birth with a new partner. Sensitivity tests using different assumptions about new births yielded no differences in results. In the three-year interview, mothers were asked both if they had a new baby/pregnancy with someone other than the child's father since the last survey wave, and (for mothers in relationships with new partners) if they were the biological mother of any of that partner's biological children. In the five-year interview, mothers who reported being in a romantic relationship lasting at least one month with someone other than the focal child's father since the last survey wave were asked if they became pregnant in any of those relationships, and mothers in current relationships were asked if they were the biological mother of any of the new partner's children. At both three and five years, mothers who

reported no new pregnancy/birth since the previous wave, and mothers who repartnered and reported a new child but said they were not the biological mothers of their new partner's child(ren) (or that the partner had no biological children) were coded as not having had a pregnancy/birth with a new partner.

Measures of mothers' attitudes include whether the mother strongly agreed or agreed with the statements that "single mothers can raise children as well as two parents" and "men cannot be trusted to be faithful" (measured at the time of child's birth). Religiosity was measured as whether the mother attended religious services at least monthly (measured at the previous survey wave), and family structure background was measured as whether the mother lived with both of her biological parents at age 15. Mothers' economic characteristics included educational attainment (measured at the time of child's birth), an indicator for whether the mother obtained additional schooling after the child's birth, and whether the mother was employed in the preceding survey wave. Finally, state-level welfare generosity and child support enforcement were coded as high, moderate, or low. See Reichman et al. (2001) for more information about these definitions and the Fragile Families sampling design.

Missing information about covariates used in the regression models (21 percent of the potential sample) was imputed using regression-based multiple imputation, with the *Proc MI* command in SAS (with five imputations). Results using complete case analyses (not shown) yielded very similar findings to our reported results.

Analytic strategy

After describing mothers' living arrangements and repartnering patterns (Tables 1 and 2), we compare the economic capabilities of mothers' new and former partners (Table 3), and then we estimate mothers' repartnering behaviors as a function of mother, child and contextual characteristics (Table 4).

Because it is unclear from the available information how many mothers who report being in relationships with new partners in consecutive waves were with the same new partners at more than one wave—and how many formed one new partnership and then broke up with that partner and formed another partnership, our analyses of mothers' repartnering (all tables except Table 1 which describes overall prevalence) focus exclusively on the *first* time a mother was observed in a new coresidential or nonresidential partnership after a nonmarital birth.

Our regression modeling strategy is based on the theoretical assumption that mothers simultaneously decide whether and with whom to repartner. Our model uses the series of covariates described above to predict which mothers fall into one of three possible outcomes: repartnered and traded up (versus not repartnering); repartnered and traded down (versus not repartnering); and repartnered with a man with the same level of economic capabilities as the focal child's biological father (versus not repartnering). We obtain separate coefficients (exponentiated into relative risk ratios) for each covariate for each of these three possible outcomes. Coefficients that are similar in direction and magnitude across the three outcomes are interpreted as relating to mothers' chances of repartnering overall, and coefficients that differ across the three outcome categories are interpreted as relating to the chances of a mother trading up/trading down (or staying the same) when she repartners.

We use a multinomial, discrete-time version of McFadden's conditional logistic regression model (using Stata's "asclogit" command), which is quite similar to a discrete-time multinomial logit model (McFadden 1974). The multinomial discrete-time logit model has

been used in previous research about assortative mating in remarriage (see, e.g., Shafer 2009), and it is similar to a hazard analysis in which cases can “die” from multiple causes. (See Yamaguchi [1990] for a detailed discussion of the discrete-time multinomial model.) The multinomial case of the McFadden conditional logistic regression model allows us to include all mothers eligible for repartnering, even those whose original partners had all positive characteristics and hence could not “trade up,” and those whose original partners had no positive characteristics and hence could not “trade down.” Mothers only contribute to the estimates for the outcomes they could potentially experience. Although we do not have the data necessary to conduct a continuous-time analysis, the discrete-time modeling strategy enables us to include mothers in the sample who were not interviewed in all survey waves and to incorporate mothers’ duration of eligibility, as well as time-varying covariates.

The data for our regression analyses were transformed into person-waves, with mothers contributing one observation each survey wave they were at-risk of forming a first new partnership (i.e., were not living with the focal child’s biological father and had not previously repartnered). Our sample of 2,388 individual mothers contributes a total of 4,056 person-wave observations. The standard errors in all models were adjusted for the city clustering in the Fragile Families data

Results

Table 1 provides weighted estimates of mothers’ partnership status at the time of the focal child’s birth and five years later. At the time of the child’s birth, slightly over half of all unmarried mothers were living with the child’s father, around 30 percent were dating the child’s father, and just under one-fifth were not romantically involved with the child’s father. Five years later, 38 percent of mothers were living with the focal child’s father (about 55 percent of those who were cohabiting at birth still lived together), and just over 30 percent were romantically involved with a new partner (nine percent were dating, and 22 percent were living together).

Table 2 describes first repartnering patterns among mothers who were eligible for repartnering in at least one of the post-birth survey waves—69 percent of all unwed mothers; note that this figure is higher than the 62 percent living away from the biological father at five years, since some couples living apart at the time of the focal child’s birth subsequently moved in together. Recall that these (and all subsequent) analyses focus exclusively on the *first* time a mother was observed in a new coresidential or nonresidential partnership after a nonmarital birth. The results presented in Table 2 indicate that among mothers who were ever eligible for a new partnership, 55 percent repartnered within five years of the child’s birth. Fifteen percent of these mothers repartnered during the first year after the child’s birth, 17 percent repartnered between the first and third year, and 23 percent repartnered between the third and fifth year. Slightly over half of the mothers who repartnered were first observed in a coresidential relationship. It should be noted that presumably all of the coresidential relationships we observe were preceded by dating relationships that we do not observe because they had progressed to coresidence by the time of the mother’s interview. The findings reported in Table 2 are consistent with our first hypothesis, namely, that a substantial proportion of eligible mothers will not repartner during the first five years after their child’s birth because they have not received an offer they are willing to accept.

New partners’ economic capabilities

Our second hypothesis stated that among those who do repartner, mothers would be more likely to “trade up” than “trade down” in terms of partners’ economic characteristics. Table 3 focuses on the sample of 2,388 mothers eligible for forming a first new partnership and

presents the percentage of mothers trading up, trading down, repartnering with a man with the same level of economic capability as their child's biological father, or not repartnering at all. We first present results for all first new partnerships, and then separately for coresidential and nonresidential new partnerships.³ The findings in Table 3 demonstrate that among those who repartnered, mothers' new partners compared favorably with their former partners.

Overall, 32 percent of mothers who were eligible to repartner traded up, 10 percent traded down, 11 percent repartnered with a man with the same level of economic capabilities as the focal child's father, and 47 percent did not repartner at all. In other words, among those who did repartner, about three-fifths traded up, while about one-fifth traded down and about one-fifth repartnered with a man with the same level of economic capabilities as the focal child's biological father. The results were remarkably similar for mothers whose first new partnerships were coresidential and those whose first new partnerships were nonresidential: in all cases, trading up was far more common than trading down.

The findings reported in Table 3 are consistent with learning theory and with our second hypothesis, which stated that, among mothers who do form new partnerships, the economic capabilities of the new partners will be higher, on average, than those of the previous partner (the focal child's biological father).

Predicting mothers' repartnering and trading up/trading down

Finally, we examine which factors predicted whether a mother repartnered and whether she traded up or traded down if she repartnered. Table 4 displays relative risk ratios (RRRs) from our discrete-time multinomial McFadden conditional logistic regression models predicting trading up, trading down, or repartnering with a man with the same level of economic capabilities, versus not repartnering (see Appendix Table 2 for sample descriptive statistics). The first model predicts any first new partnership, the second predicts any coresidential first new partnership, and the third predicts any nonresidential first new partnership. Recall that RRRs that are consistent in magnitude and direction across all three columns indicate that a particular covariate was related to the likelihood of repartnering at all, but RRRs that vary substantially across columns suggest that a particular covariate differentially affected mothers' trading up, trading down, or staying the same (versus not repartnering at all).

The results from the first model, which predicts any type of new partnership, suggest that several characteristics were associated with lower levels of repartnering overall. In particular, older mothers, minority mothers, and mothers for whom the focal child was the first birth were generally less likely to repartner than other mothers (although the results were not always statistically significant). These results are consistent with the argument that older mothers are less attractive on the marriage market but are unwilling to settle for men with lower economic capabilities; also, the pool of black and Hispanic potential partners is less socioeconomically advantaged (compared to whites), yielding fewer opportunities to trade up for minority mothers. The finding that mothers with first births were less likely to repartner is consistent with the marriage market idea that mothers with fewer financial obligations may take advantage of their relative security to prolong their search for new partners. Also, women who searched longer (particularly over three survey waves) were more likely to repartner in any fashion.

³Note that the overall percentage of mothers who did not repartner presented in Table 3 is unweighted and, hence, slightly different from the weighted estimate presented in Table 2.

Other characteristics were more strongly associated with trading up or down in partners' characteristics (versus not repartnering). Having a pregnancy/birth with a new partner since the previous wave was significantly associated with higher rates of trading down (versus not repartnering), but was not significantly related to trading up (although the RRRs for trading up and trading down were not significantly different from each other). The finding that mothers who have a child with a new partner are more likely to trade down (versus not repartner) is consistent with the idea that having a child with a new partner may lead both to stronger ties to the partner and to more financial pressure to be in a partnership, possibly leading mothers to "settle" for partners they might not otherwise have chosen, particularly if the birth was not planned (although we cannot determine whether a new birth was planned or unplanned).

Consistent with our hypothesis regarding financial independence, we found that employed mothers were marginally more likely to trade up rather than remain single (and less likely to trade down, in magnitude but not statistical significance). We did not find, however, that mothers with more education or those living in cities with higher welfare generosity and stricter child support enforcement were less likely to trade down. In fact, mothers who attended at least some college were more likely to trade down than those with less education; we suspect this is because those at the low end were partnered with similarly-educated men and hence had less room to move down. We also found little support for the notion that mothers with greater potential opportunities to meet suitable partners (proxied by factors like returning to school after the focal child's birth and religious attendance) were less likely to trade down, as these variables were not statistically significant.

Mothers who were born in the United States, those with a family history of mental illness, and those who believed that men could not be trusted to be faithful were significantly more likely to trade down rather than not repartner at all. The finding that a family history of mental health problems was associated with higher rates of trading down is consistent with the marriage market-driven hypothesis that health problems may make mothers both less attractive to potential partners and less willing to search for a better partner, leading to higher rates of trading down. The finding that mothers who did not trust men to be faithful were also more likely to trade down, however, is counter to our expectation that such mothers would prefer not to repartner rather than to do so with a man with less desirable attributes. It is possible that the positive association between these variables is due to something (unmeasured) about the mother that is leading her to partner with less trustworthy men. Finally, we found that mothers who lived with both parents at age 15 were less likely to trade down, suggesting that such mothers may have higher standards for the relationships they will enter.

The second two models presented in Table 4 separately predicted mothers' first repartnering through coresident relationships and mothers' first repartnering through nonresidential dating relationships (versus not repartnering). Although some associations (such as those with duration of eligibility and maternal age) were relatively consistent across the models, others varied quite a bit.

Some factors appeared to affect coresidential repartnering decisions more than nonresidential repartnering decisions. For example, the associations observed between mothers' race/ethnicity and repartnering were only relevant in the case of coresident new partnerships (with black and Hispanic mothers less likely to enter such partnerships, especially while trading up). Also, mothers with first births were less likely than those with higher-parity births to have moved in with a new partner (rather than not repartner)—but were no more or less likely to have formed new dating partnerships. Having a family history of mental illness was also significantly related to repartnering through coresidence but not

through dating. Mothers' nativity status, on the other hand, was significantly related to mothers' repartnering through dating but not coresidential relationships.

We also found that some associations ran in opposite directions for the models predicting coresident and nonresident first new partnerships. For instance, mothers who had children with new partners since the last wave were far more likely to have moved in with a new partner. The RRRs for mothers having children with new partners in the model predicting nonresidential repartnering, however, ran in the opposite direction, i.e. mothers with a new pregnancy/baby were *less* likely to be in a dating relationship.

Comparing results from the models separately predicting coresident and nonresident first new partnerships also provides stronger support for our hypothesis regarding mothers' financial independence than we found in the first model predicting any repartnering. We found that mothers who obtained additional education were less likely to have moved in with new partners rather than not repartner, but these mothers were *more* likely than other mothers to have formed dating relationships. Similarly, employed mothers were significantly less likely to have traded down in a coresidential relationship, but were marginally more likely to have traded up in a dating relationship. And mothers in cities with more generous welfare benefits were less likely to have moved in with a new partner but more likely to be dating a new partner. These findings provide some support for the hypothesis that mothers may take advantage of relative financial independence to prolong their searches for partners with better economic capabilities, and suggest that mothers may choose to date rather than coreside until/unless they are able to find such partners. We return to these findings in the Discussion section below.

Discussion

The dramatic increase in nonmarital childbearing in recent decades signifies a shift in the sequence of family formation patterns for many individuals—particularly those in minority and lower socioeconomic groups—from marriage followed by childbearing to having children first and then continuing to search for a partner/spouse (Bumpass 1990; Cherlin 2009; Ellwood & Jencks 2004). Rising rates of maternal employment and increased normative acceptance of single motherhood have reduced some of the costs and stigma associated with single motherhood. At the same time, unwed mothers' opportunities for repartnering may be constrained by increasing employment instability and declining wages at the bottom of the male wage distribution (Blank 1997; Oppenheimer 1998, 2000; Wilson 1987), which have likely reduced the pool of men that single mothers deem “good partners.” Research also suggests that nonmarital births disadvantage mothers on the relationship market (Qian et al. 2005; Graefe & Lichter 2007).

Previous empirical research provides relatively little information about mothers' repartnering behaviors after a nonmarital birth. This paper used longitudinal data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study to document the prevalence of mothers' new partnerships, to compare the economic capabilities of mothers' new and former partners, and to predict which mothers are the most likely to repartner and which are likely to “trade up” or “trade down” (or stay the same) in partners' economic capabilities when they do. We found that 69 percent of unwed mothers ended their relationship with their child's biological father in the five years following the birth and that 55 percent of these mothers repartnered during that period. Our research draws on several theories that are relevant for understanding women's decisions in selecting a partner. Consistent with theory from evolutionary biology, we find that unmarried mothers seek to partner with men who are good providers. Consistent with learning theory and the ethnographic work of Edin and colleagues (Edin & Kefalas 2005; Gibson-Davis et al. 2005) which shows that unwed

mothers have high standards for their new partners, we find that standards for “suitable” mates increase over time such that most mothers either partner with a man with more resources or they continue to search for a partner. Finally, consistent with marriage market theory, we find that mothers who are more attractive on the market are more likely to partner with more advantaged men.

Our results also indicate that mothers with more financial independence (those with only one child, those who went back to school, those who are employed, and those living in cities with generous welfare benefits) are less likely than other women to be in new coresident partnerships. This finding is consistent with marriage market theory, which suggests that greater financial independence allows mothers to prolong their search for suitable partners rather than “settling” for a new partner who may not meet their standards (Oppenheimer 1988, 2000), perhaps choosing to date rather than coreside until/unless they are able to find partners who meet their criteria for coresident partnerships. At the same time, we recognize that dating and cohabiting are not necessarily discrete relationship categories, as some research suggests that couples “slide” into cohabitation gradually and without an intentional decision (Manning and Smock 2005). Mothers who have had a pregnancy/child with a new partner are far more likely to be living with a new partner but are less likely to be dating a new partner. This suggests that having a child creates, initially at least, a strong bond that often ties parents together and encourages them to coreside, even if they might not have otherwise done so.

At a broader level, our results about unmarried mothers’ repartnering patterns suggest that although a mother’s prospects may be more limited due, at least in part, to aging and a nonmarital birth (Qian et al. 2005), increased standards (due to learning) following a nonmarital birth may lead to a situation in which fewer women repartner overall, and those who do repartner are more likely to trade up than to trade down. The fact that many of the mothers “at risk” for repartnering did not form a new (particularly coresidential) partnership in the five years after the focal child’s birth is almost certainly related to the limited pool of potentially-eligible partners with sufficient economic capabilities that are “available” to this largely urban, socioeconomically disadvantaged population of mothers (Wilson 1987). Thus, although when women *do* repartner by the child’s fifth year, they tend to do so with men of higher capabilities, overall only a minority of all unwed mothers ‘trade up’ after breaking up with the focal children’s fathers (approximately 32 percent across their children’s first five years).

Limitations

There are several limitations to this research. Our results clearly demonstrate that the mothers who repartner after a nonmarital birth tend to do so with relatively attractive men (in terms of their economic capabilities, at least). However, because all of the information about their partners was, by necessity, taken from mothers who were in relationships with these new partners, it is not possible to draw broader conclusions about how the mothers who did *not* repartner would have fared in terms of partners’ economic capabilities had they repartnered. Additionally, partners’ economic capabilities are just one of a number of factors likely related to successful and long-lasting partnerships. Although we were unable to examine the longevity of mothers’ new partnerships and partners’ non-economic characteristics, it will be important for future research about unwed mothers’ repartnering to focus on these topics.

The relative advantage of new partners’ economic capabilities could conceivably result from new partners being older than the biological fathers were at the time of partnership formation and having had, as a result, more time to complete their education and obtain employment (Jacobs & Furstenberg 1986). Although it is true that mothers’ new partners

were, on average, older than the children's biological fathers were at the time of the child's birth, this is not a likely explanation for the finding that new partners' economic capabilities were often better than those of the children's fathers. Sensitivity analyses (not shown) using the biological fathers' own reports about their economic capabilities at the time of the mothers' repartnering still favored the new partners.

It is also possible that Table 3 "compares apples and oranges," since we were comparing the economic capabilities of coresident and nonresident new partners with those of biological fathers, regardless of whether the fathers ever lived with the child's mother. If mothers are particularly selective in choosing coresidential mates, then a more appropriate comparison might be between mothers' new coresident partners and formerly-coresident biological fathers. Results from such comparisons (available upon request) were quite similar to those presented here. Additionally, we did not find evidence here that new coresident partners have higher economic capabilities than nonresident first new partners (although we do find that mothers with more financial freedom may choose to date rather than coreside with new partners).

With the exception of the biological father's education, our primary analyses rely on mothers' reports about both the biological fathers' and new partners' economic capabilities. Although not ideal, this approach was necessary since new partners were not interviewed directly in the Fragile Families Study. Sensitivity analyses (not shown) suggest that the substantive conclusions drawn do not depend on the reporter. Because mothers' reports about the biological fathers tend to worsen over time (possibly due to under-reporting of negative capabilities at the initial interview, new knowledge gained after the biological parents broke up, or to acrimony in the dissolution process), the analyses presented in this paper used mothers' reports about the biological father from the earliest survey wave possible to minimize the risk of negative maternal reporting bias.

Finally, as noted earlier, our measure of mothers' pregnancies/births with new partners since the previous survey wave is limited insofar as we cannot determine with certainty—particularly at the one-year interview—whether the father of that new baby was the same as the mother's current partner. We believe, however, that this assumption is reasonable (particularly in cases of coresident partnerships). Even if our assumption is not (always) correct, our measure still provides important information about changes in the mothers' circumstances that could significantly impact their repartnering decisions. Although we are unable to tell whether a pregnancy came before or after a coresidence, we gain useful information about mothers' decision-making after the pregnancy/birth (i.e., even if mothers moved in with the partner before becoming pregnant, they are still making a decision regarding whether to remain in the partnership).

Despite these limitations, our analyses represent an important step forward in understanding unwed mothers' post-birth repartnering behavior. The results confirm qualitative evidence suggesting that unmarried mothers care a great deal about finding a good mate for themselves and a potential father-figure for their children (Edin & Kefalas 2005), and that many mothers who break up with their children's biological fathers are willing to remain single unless or until they find a partner who meets their high standards. Future waves of data collection will provide important new information about how many of the mothers who remained single will eventually repartner, and the economic capabilities of such men. For the mothers who did repartner, higher levels of economic capabilities among their partners may translate into greater economic security and perhaps better outcomes for themselves and their children. On the other hand, even though the mothers' new partners generally have higher economic capabilities than the children's biological fathers, the average levels of economic capabilities in this population remain low and may not be high enough to translate

into financial stability and improved wellbeing for families. Although we did not have the data necessary to examine the stability of mothers' new partnerships in this analysis, it will be important to use future waves of data to assess whether these new partnerships are characterized by the high rates of instability that previous research has documented among relatively disadvantaged populations.

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Appendix

Appendix:

Table 1

Description of samples used in tables

Sample	Weighted/unweighted	Description
Sample 1 Weighted N = 1,899 Unweighted N = 2,999	Weighted	All unmarried mothers who were living with their child at least half-time at year 5. (Used in Tables 1 & 2)
Sample 2 N = 2,388 (individual cases) N = 4,056 (person years)	Unweighted	Unmarried mothers who were eligible for repartnering in at least one post-birth wave and had valid information about biological fathers' characteristics (and new partners' characteristics, for mothers who repartnered). (Used in Tables 3 & 4)

Note: Weighted data are based on national sampling weights.

Appendix:

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Sample of Mothers Ever Eligible for Forming First New Partnership, N = 2,388

Number of waves 'eligible' for first new partnership (living away from biological father)	
One survey wave	49.6
Two survey waves	31.0
Three survey waves	19.4
Pregnancy/new baby with new partner between survey waves	11.3
Mother and child's socio-demographic and background characteristics	
Mother's age (in years) at child's birth	23.6
Mother's race/ethnicity	
Non-Hispanic white and other	15.1
Non-Hispanic black	62.9
Hispanic	22.1

Mother born in the United States	91.6
Focal child is male	53.3
Focal child born at low/very low birth weight	11.9
Focal child temperamental/shy behavior at one year of age (mean, range=1-5)	2.6
Focal child is mother's first birth	40.1
Mother reported fair/poor health at child's birth	10.6
Focal child's grandmother exhibited symptoms of depression/anxiety	28.7
Mother's attitudinal and cultural factors	
Believes single mothers can raise children as well as two parents	85.8
Believes men cannot be trusted to be faithful	25.8
Attended religious services at least monthly at time of child's birth	39.1
Lived with both biological parents at age 15	32.4
Mother's economic characteristics	
Educational attainment at child's birth	
<HS/GED	46.7
High school diploma	27.6
Some college or more	25.7
Obtained additional schooling since child's birth (measured at preceding wave)	35.6
Employed in the year preceding child's birth	70.0
City-level contextual factors	
Welfare generosity	
High benefits	38.2
Moderate benefits	29.7
Low benefits	32.0
Child support enforcement	
Strict	53.6
Moderate	12.4
Lenient	34.1

Note: The sample is limited to mothers who were living with the focal child and were eligible for a first new partnership at one, three and/or five-years. All characteristics were measured at the time of the child's birth, except for the number of waves the mother was eligible for a new partnership, whether the mother had a new pregnancy/birth between waves, the child's temperament at age 1, and whether the mother returned to school. The sample includes imputed data for missing covariates. See text for more details about the imputation process used.

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Table 1
Unwed mothers' relationship status at the time of the focal child's birth and five years later

Relationship status at child's birth	Relationship status five years after child's birth				Total
	Living with child's father	Dating child's father	No partner	Dating new partner	Living with new partner
Living with child's father (51.7%)	55.1	1.6	26.6	3.4	13.4
Dating child's father (30.2%)	23.1	5.1	34.5	14.4	23.0
Not romantically involved with child's father ^a (18.1%)	12.1	1.2	26.4	18.0	42.4
Total (100%)	37.6	2.6	28.9	9.4	21.6
Unweighted N = 2,999; Weighted N = 1,899					

Note: The sample includes all mothers who were unmarried at the time of the child's birth, live half-time or more with the focal child at the five-year interview, and have valid relationship status information. Estimates are weighted using the five-year national sampling weights.

^a At the baseline interview, it is not possible to distinguish whether this group of mothers was living with a new partner, dating a new partner, or without any romantic partner.

Table 2

Patterns of first new partnership formation among unwed mothers during focal child's first five years

Weighted percent of all unmarried mothers ever eligible for new partnership (living apart from focal child's biological father in at least one post-birth wave)	69.2
New partnership formation patterns, among mothers ever eligible for new partnerships (%)	
Ever repartnered	55.1
First repartnered at one year	15.2
Coresident first new partner	6.0
Nonresident first new partner	9.2
First repartnered at three years	17.3
Coresident first new partner	9.4
Nonresident first new partner	7.9
First repartnered at five years	22.7
Coresident first new partner	14.2
Nonresident first new partner	8.5
Never repartnered	44.9
Total	100.0
Unweighted N = 2,999; Weighted = 1,899	

Note: The sample includes all mothers who were unmarried at the time of the child's birth, live half-time or more with the focal child at the five-year interview and have valid relationship status information at the follow-up waves. Estimates are weighted using the five-year national sampling weights.

Table 3

Within-mother comparisons of new partners' and biological fathers' economic capabilities^a, total and by residential status

	Traded up	Traded down	Same as BF	Did not repartner	Total (%)
Any First New Partner					
Total (N = 2388)	31.8	10.3	10.8	47.1	100.0
Bio. father had none of the positive capacities (n = 344)	56.7	-	2.3	41.0	100.0
Bio. father had some, not all positive capacities (n = 1,634)	34.5	8.0	10.8	46.7	100.0
Bio. father had all of the positive capacities (n = 410)	-	28.2	18.0	53.9	100.0
First Repartnered Through Coreidence					
Total (N = 2388)	15.4	5.4	4.9	74.3	100.0
Bio. father had none of the positive capacities	28.6	-	1.3	70.1	100.0
Bio. father had some, not all positive capacities	16.5	4.2	5.1	74.2	100.0
Bio. father had all of the positive capacities	-	14.5	6.9	78.5	100.0
First Repartnered Through Dating					
Total (N = 2388)	16.4	4.9	5.9	72.8	100.0
Bio. father had none of the positive capacities	28.1	-	1.0	70.9	100.0
Bio. father had some, not all positive capacities	18.0	3.8	5.7	72.5	100.0
Bio. father had all of the positive capacities	-	13.6	11.0	75.4	100.0

Note: The sample is limited to mothers observed in a first new partnership 1, 3 or 5 years after the focal child's birth with information about biological fathers' (and new partners', where relevant) characteristics. Estimates are unweighted.

^aThis is measured by comparing the biological father and new partners' average economic capacities (whether they were employed, had never been incarcerated, had at least a high school diploma/GED, and had attended any college). Current partners' characteristics are measured at the time of repartnering, and biological fathers' characteristics--with the exception of education--were measured at the time of the child's birth. Biological fathers' education is updated using the fathers' own reports from the time of repartnering when possible. See text for more details regarding the measurement of these variables.

Relative risk ratios from discrete-time multinomial McFadden conditional logistic regression models predicting first repartnering and trading up/down (vs. not repartnering)

Table 4

	All new partners (vs. no partner)			Repartnering through coresidence (vs. no partner)			Repartnering through dating (vs. no partner)		
	Traded Up	Traded Down	Same as BF	Traded Up	Traded Down	Same as BF	Traded Up	Traded Down	Same as BF
New pregnancy/baby since last survey wave^a	1.18	1.68 *	1.04	1.90 **	2.44 **	1.86 *	0.59 **	0.93	0.46 **
Duration of eligibility (vs. 1 survey wave)									
Two survey waves	1.31 **	1.00	1.86 **	1.26 ^	0.90	1.53	1.22 ^	1.02	1.99 **
Three survey waves	1.42 *	1.47 *	2.77 **	1.52	1.35	2.51 **	1.09	1.34	2.52 **
Mother and child's characteristics									
Mother's age at focal child's birth	0.93 **	0.94 **	0.93 **	0.92 **	0.93 **	0.92 **	0.96 **	0.97 *	0.96
Mother's race/ethnicity (vs. white and other, non-Hisp.)									
Black, non-Hispanic	0.86	0.79	0.92	0.69 **	0.61 ^	0.74	1.13	1.15	1.16
Hispanic	0.77 *	0.84	0.99	0.61 *	0.78	0.82	1.05	1.04	1.22
Mother born in United states	0.94	2.74 **	0.94	0.82	1.93	0.68	1.08	4.15 *	1.25
Child is male	1.11	1.04	1.44 *	1.00	0.96	1.31	1.16	1.05	1.49 ^
Child was low/very low birth weight	1.24 *	0.89	1.17	1.17	0.67	1.39	1.23	1.09	0.96
Child is mother's first birth	0.76 *	0.83	0.86	0.65 **	0.64 **	0.70	0.95	1.20	1.10
Child temperamental/shy at age one	1.05	1.04	1.02	1.04	1.02	0.85	1.03	1.03	1.16 ^
Mother reported fair/poor health (preceding wave)	0.99	0.84	0.98	1.11	0.67	1.36 ^	0.90	1.04	0.71
Child's grandmother exhibited symptoms of depr./anxiety	0.97	1.79 **	1.14	0.85 ^	2.22 **	0.96	1.05	1.32	1.26
Mother's attitudinal and cultural factors									
Believes single moms can raise children as well as two parents	0.92	0.86	0.94	1.04	0.97	1.36	0.85	0.80	0.75
Believes men cannot be trusted to be faithful	1.04	1.30 *	0.67 **	0.96	1.22	0.65	1.13	1.37	0.69 *
Attended religious services at least monthly (prec. wave)	0.90	0.80	0.92	0.96	0.67 ^	0.89	0.89	1.01	0.99
Lived with both biological parents at age 15	0.92	0.75 *	1.27	0.91	0.78	1.34	0.94	0.73	1.22
Mother's economic characteristics									
Educational attainment at child's birth (vs. some college+)									

	All new partners (vs. no partner)			Repartnering through coresidence (vs. no partner)			Repartnering through dating (vs. no partner)		
	Traded Up	Traded Down	Same as BF	Traded Up	Traded Down	Same as BF	Traded Up	Traded Down	Same as BF
<HS/GED	0.91	0.71 ^	0.82	1.10	0.65 ^	1.15	0.80	0.78	0.66 *
High school diploma	0.84	0.72 *	0.87	0.89	0.72	1.27	0.85	0.76	0.67
Obtained additional schooling since child's birth (prec. wave)	0.96	0.95	0.89	0.74 **	0.81	0.70 ^	1.24 *	1.16	1.10
Employed (preceding wave)	1.13 ^	0.89	1.07	0.97	0.69 **	1.25	1.28 ^	1.16	0.93
City-level contextual factors									
Welfare generosity (vs. low benefits)									
High benefits	0.99	0.83	1.03	0.72 *	0.56 ^	0.87	1.32 ^	1.27	1.22
Moderate benefits	1.03	0.90	1.67 *	1.05	0.74	1.31	0.97	1.11	1.99 **
Child support enforcement (vs. lenient)									
Strict	1.01	1.11	1.03	0.95	1.22	1.12	1.07	1.01	0.96
Moderate	0.98	1.42	0.92	0.93	1.89 *	0.84	1.01	1.01	0.96
N (person waves)		4056			4056			4056	
N (actual individual cases)		2388			2388			2388	

Note: The sample is limited to mothers who were living with the focal child and were eligible for a first new partnership at one, three and/or five-years. Individual mothers contributed one observation to the dataset each survey wave they were eligible. Standard errors are adjusted for city-level clustering.

p<.1

* p<.05

** p<.01.

^aThis variable indicates whether mothers reported getting pregnant/having a new baby with someone other than the child's biological father since the last survey wave. At one year, mothers were considered to have had a new pregnancy/baby with a new partner if they reported any pregnancy/birth between the baseline and one-year interviews, and the number of biological children the mother reported having with the child's biological father did not increase between the baseline and one-year interview. Sensitivity analyses suggest that variations in this assumption make very little difference in the results. See text for more details about how this variable is measured.