

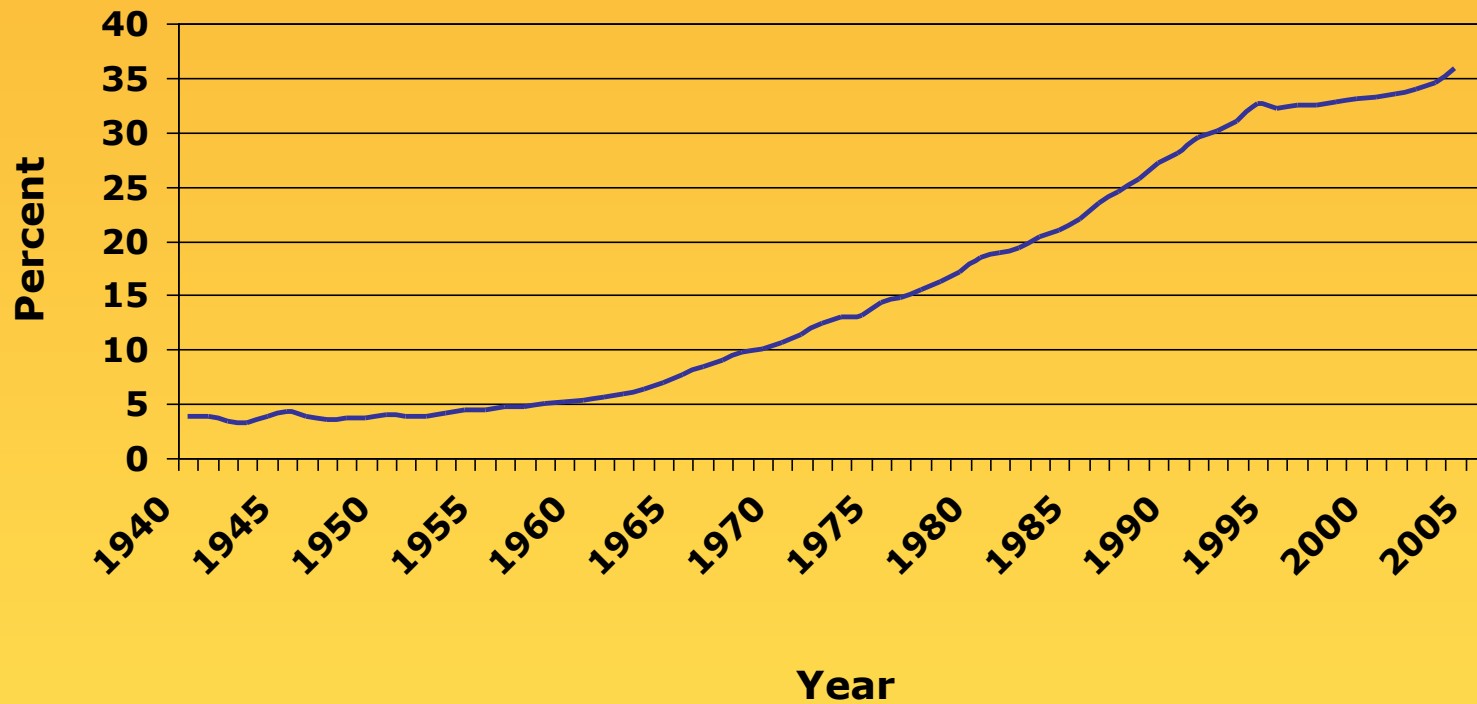


Today's Families: An Unstable and Complex Picture

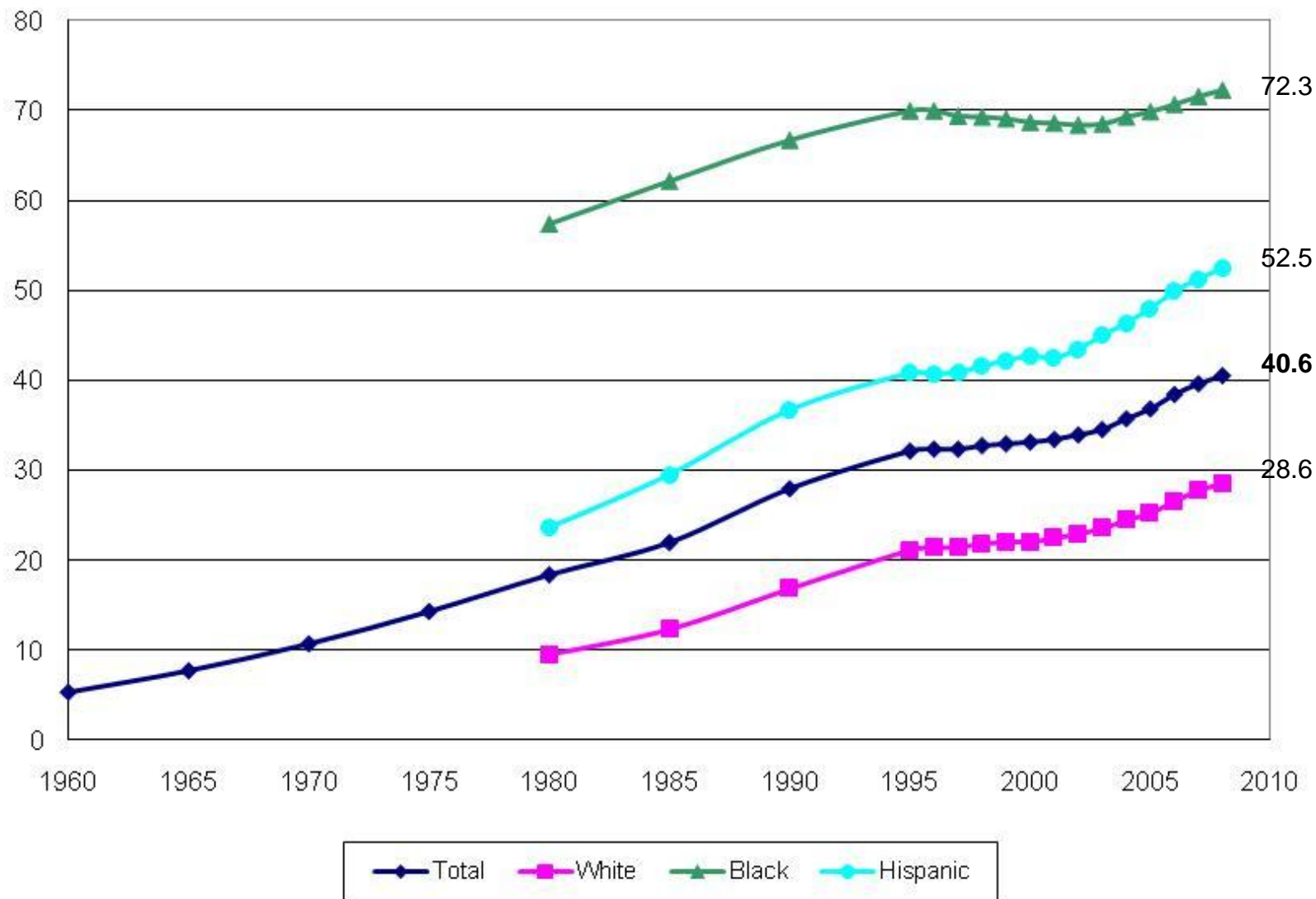
Jeanne Brooks-Gunn

October 18, 2010

Births to Unmarried Mothers, U.S.



Unmarried Births as a Percent of All U.S. Births



Questions

- What are the capabilities and circumstances of unmarried parents?
- What is the nature of parental relationships at birth, and how do relationships change over time?
- How do family structure and stability affect parental resources and investments?
- How do family structure and stability affect child wellbeing?
- What are the implications for education?

The Fragile Families Study

Longitudinal, birth cohort study of approximately 5000 children and their parents (1998-2000)

- Sampled drawn from 20 cities and 75 hospitals, with large oversample of non-marital births (3700)
- Follow-up interviews when children were 1, 3, 5 and 9 years after birth
- Supplemental data: in-depth interviews, medical records, city/state characteristics and policies

What are the capabilities and
circumstances of unmarried parents?

Capabilities are Low Mothers

	<i>Married</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>
Age (mean)	29.3	23.6
Teen parent*	3.7 (7.5)	26.0 (44.2)
Child with other partner†	11.7 (17.7)	36.7 (66.6)
White, non-Hispanic	48.9	21.9
Black, non-Hispanic	11.7	39.2
Hispanic	28.6	35.5
Other	10.8	3.4
Two parents growing up	61.9	40.3

* () = Conditional on first births † () = Conditional on higher order birth

Mother Capabilities cont'd

	<i>Married</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>
<i>Education</i>		
Less than high school	17.8	44.9
High school or equivalent	25.5	36.7
Some college	21.1	15.8
College or higher	35.7	2.4
Earnings (\$ mean)	25,618.9	11,114.2
Poverty status	14.0	42.8
Not working at birth	--	--
<i>Health</i>		
Poor/fair health	10.4	15.8
Health limitations	7.1	10.1
Depression	13.2	15.9
Heavy drinking	2.0	7.8
Illegal drugs	0.3	2.4
Father incarcerated	--	--

Capabilities are Low Fathers

	<i>Married</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>
Age (mean)	31.8	26.8
Teen parent*	0.1 (0.4)	14.2 (25.2)
Child with other partner†	17.8 (27.1)	39.7 (68.2)
White, non-Hispanic	50.6	17.8
Black, non-Hispanic	13.8	43.0
Hispanic	29.4	35.0
Other	6.1	4.3
Two parents growing up	68.1	42.8

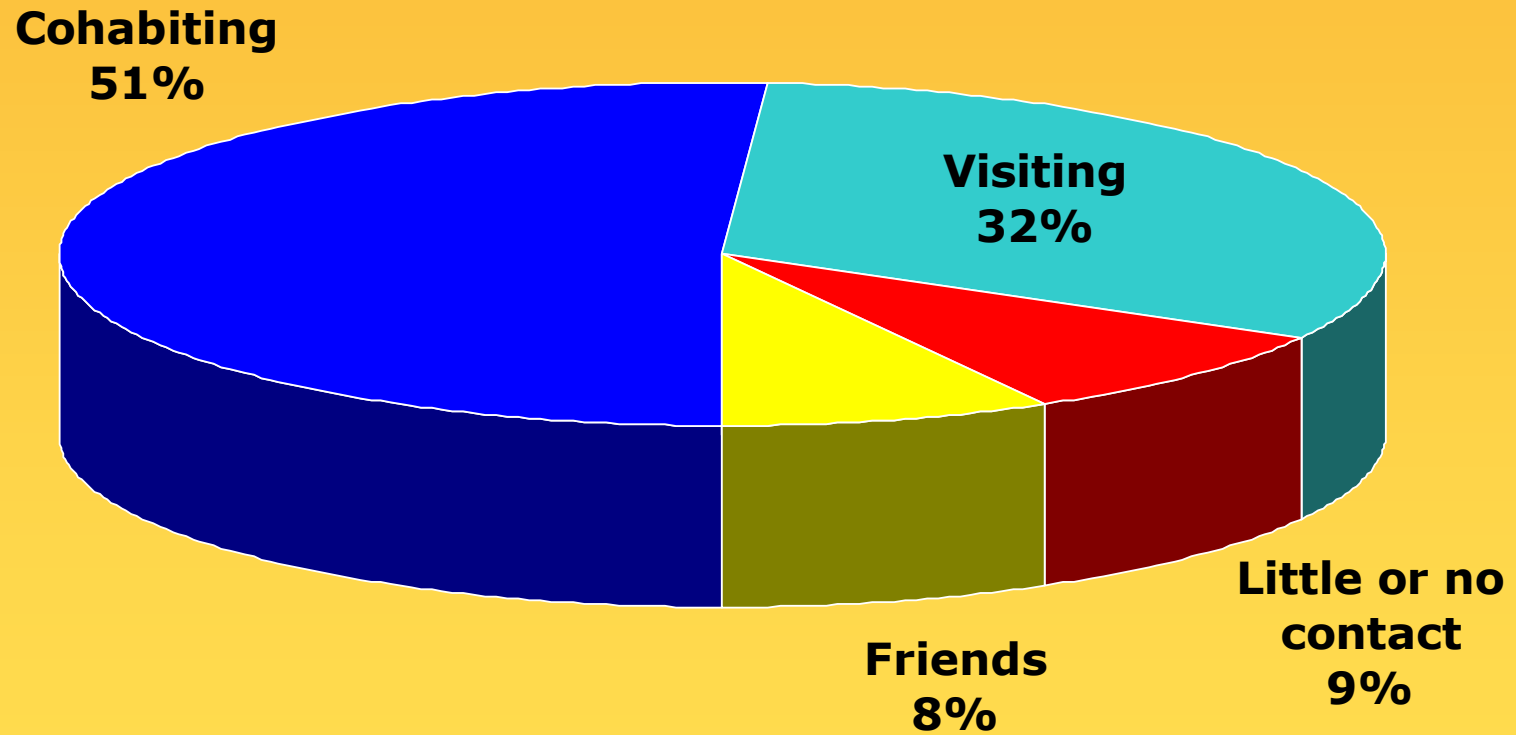
* () = Conditional on first births † () = Conditional on higher order birth

Father Capabilities cont'd

	<i>Married</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>
<i>Education</i>		
Less than high school	18.8	41.3
High school or equivalent	21.4	37.6
Some college	30.3	17.4
College or higher	29.5	3.7
Earnings (\$ mean)	38,568.5	18,801.5
Poverty status	13.2	33.9
Not working at birth	5.7	23.7
<i>Health</i>		
Poor/fair health	8.1	14.3
Health limitations	5.4	12.1
Depression	8.1	13.1
Heavy drinking	25.1	27.2
Illegal drugs	1.6	8.8
Father incarcerated	7.3	36.4

What is the nature of parental
relationships at birth?

Unmarried Parents' Relationships at Birth



Unmarried Fathers are Involved at Birth

	Total (%)
Gave money/bought things for child	80
Helped in another way	76
Visited baby's mother in hospital	88
Child will take father's surname	92
Father's name is on birth certificate	84
Mother says father wants to be involved	95
Mother wants father to be involved	94

Attitudes and Relationships are Mostly Positive at Birth

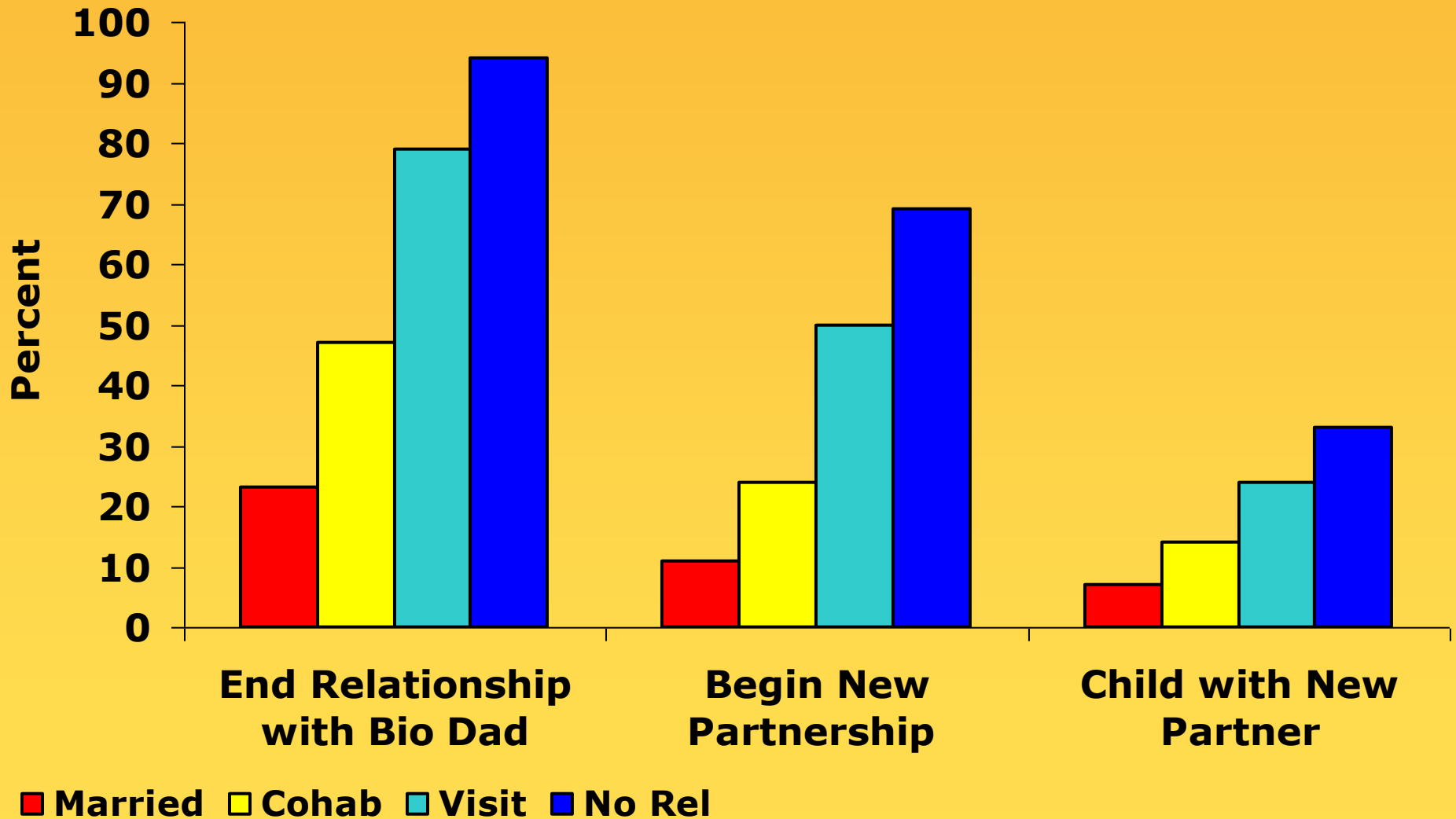
	Mothers		Fathers	
	<i>Married</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>
Chances of marriage	--	75.0	--	80.0
Marriage is better for kids	83.4	64.6	90.5	78.3
Supportiveness scale	2.7	2.6	2.7	2.6
Any violence*	4.5	7.3	--	--
Single mother can raise child alone	59.5	84.3	33.8	51.9
Men/women cannot be trusted to be faithful	10.4	25.7	4.5	15.8
Men/women are out to take advantage	11.6	19.1	5.1	17.5

*Uses questions from 1 year

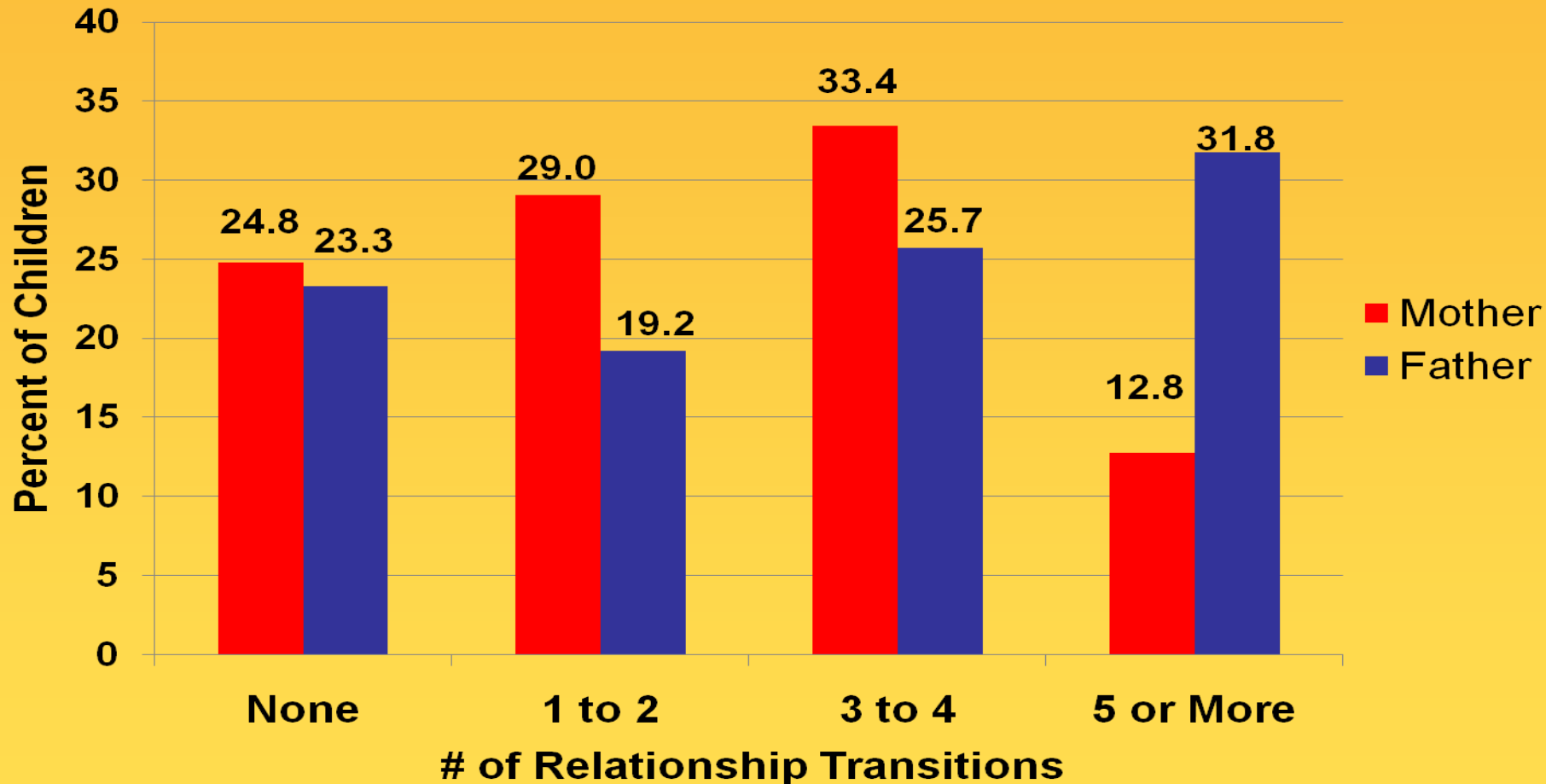
How do parental relationships change
over time?

Instability and New Partnerships

(by year 5)



Number of Transitions by Year 5 (Unmarried Parents)



How do family structure and stability
affect parental resources and
investments?

Instability and Mothers' Parenting (year 5)

	Maternal stress	Harsh parenting	Literacy activities
Total Transitions Changes	.18***	.11*	-.04
Residential Transitions	.13*	.19*	.05
Dating Transitions	.21*	.08+	-.02
Recent Transitions	.28*	.30*	-.03

† p < .10 * p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

Source: Beck, Cooper, McLanahan and Brooks-Gunn

Instability and Father Involvement

	Year 1 (%)	Year 3 (%)	Year 5 (%)
All fathers			
Lives with child	51	42	36
Non-resident fathers			
Saw child in past year	88	78	72
Saw child in past month	63	55	51

Complexity and Father Involvement (year 5)

**Number of days father has seen
child in past month**

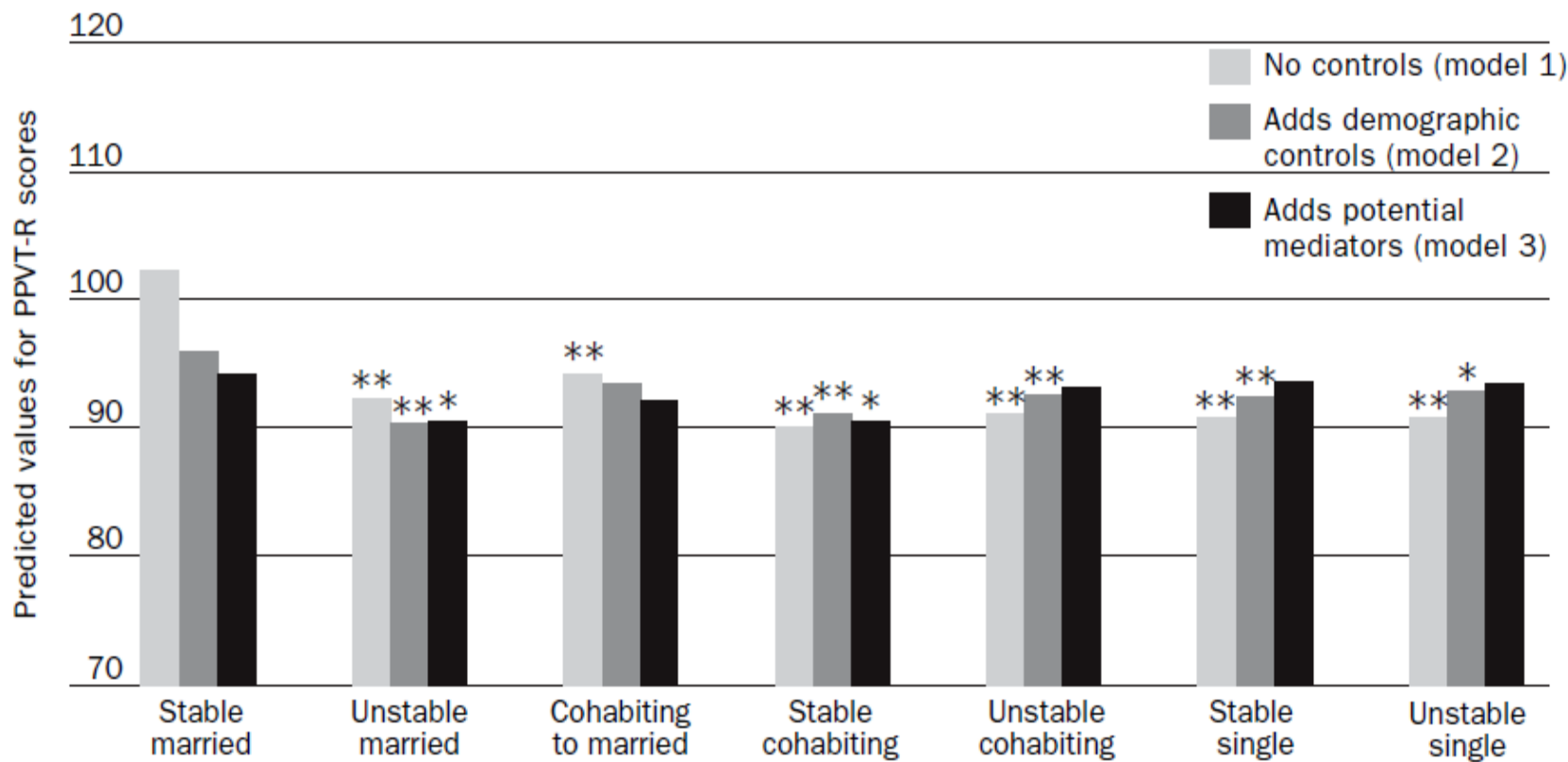
# Bio kids with mom	.75**
Dad has MPF	-2.45**
Mom has MPF	.27
Dad has new partner	-1.54**
Mom has new partner	-2.76**

† p < .10 * p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

Source: Carlson, Furstenberg and McLanahan 2009

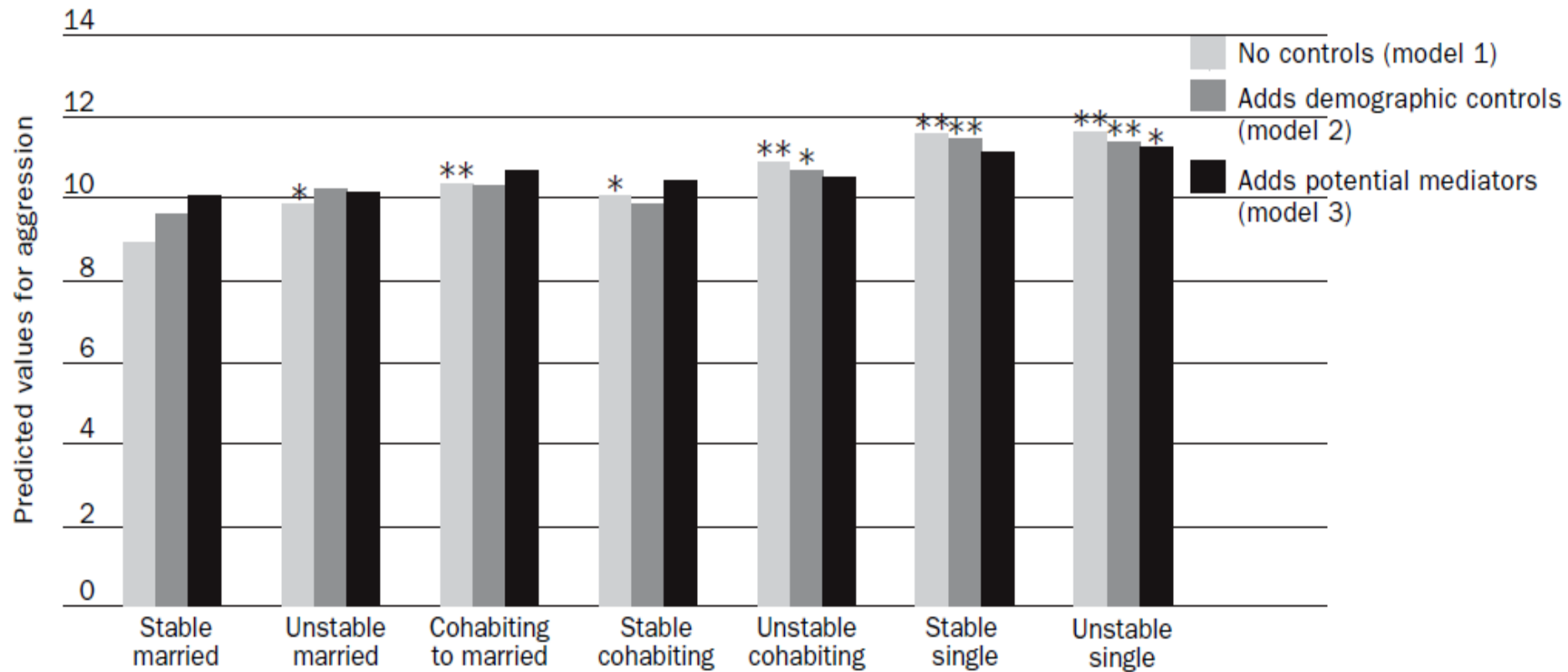
How do family structure and stability
affect child wellbeing?

Figure 1. Variation in Predicted Values for Scores on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test–Revised, by Family Type



* p<0.05, ** p<0.01
Asterisks indicate that each group is statistically significantly different from the stable married group (the reference category).

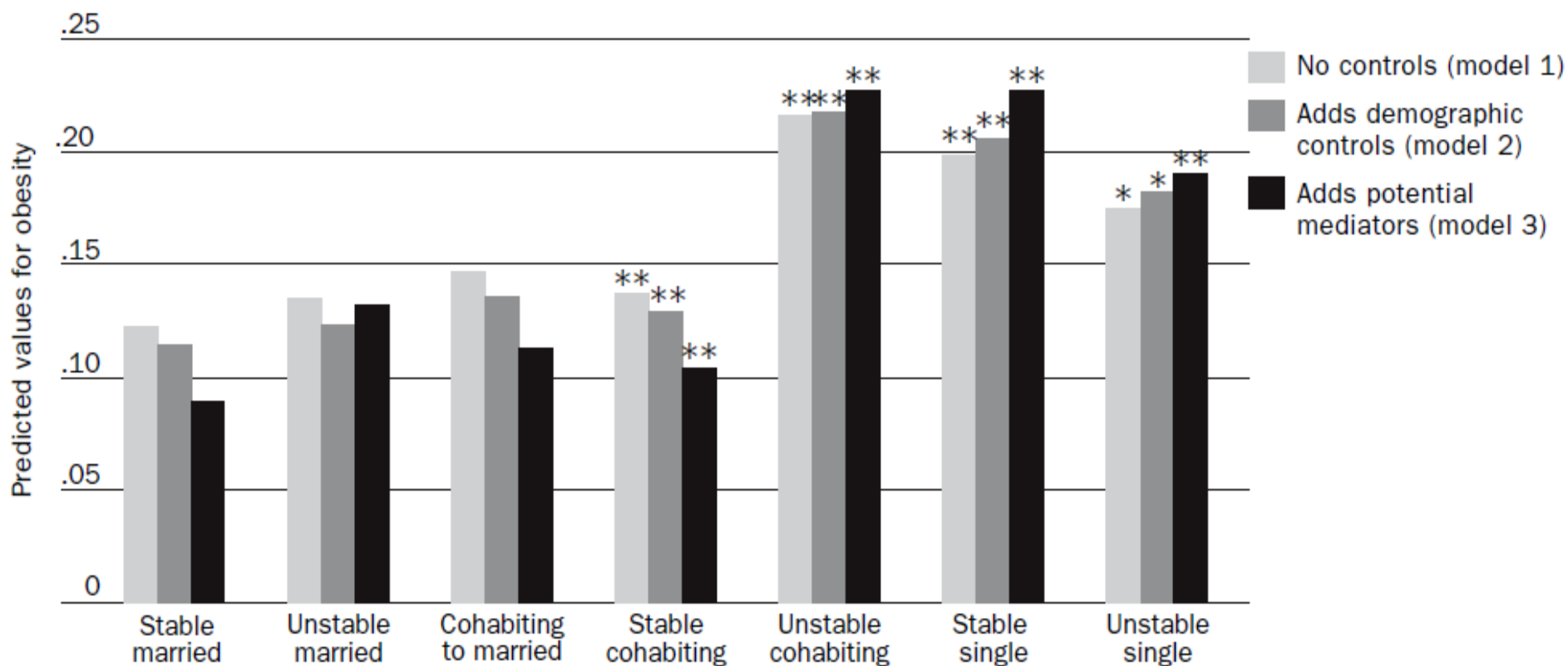
Figure 2. Variation in Predicted Values for Aggression, by Family Type



* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Asterisks indicate that each group is statistically significantly different from the stable married group (the reference category).

Figure 3. Variation in Predicted Values for Obesity, by Family Type



* p<0.05, ** p<0.01

Asterisks indicate that each group is statistically significantly different from the stable married group (the reference category).

Intervention Strategies for Reducing School Readiness Gaps

- Socio-economic
 - Income Supplementation
 - Parental Education
 - Marriage Promotion
- Health
 - Prevention of low birth weight
 - Health Care

Intervention Strategies for Reducing School Readiness Gaps (cont.)

- Parenting
 - Home Visiting Programs
 - Center-based Programs with Parenting Component
 - Parental Language and Literacy Programs
 - Parent Behavior Training Programs
- Preschool Programs
 - Expanding Access
 - Expanding Quality
 - Pre-Kindergarten Programs
 - Head Start
 - Subsidies

Education Strategies Likely to Reduce Gaps Modestly

- Access to quality early education programs
- Parenting component focusing on literacy and reading for low-literate mothers
- Parenting component for mothers of children with moderate behavior problems

Long-run Economic Impacts of Early Childhood Programs

- **Outcome** in adulthood
 - Life-time earnings based on completing high school or some college
- **Inputs** in early childhood
 - Health (reduction of low birth weight)
 - Achievement (increase in achievement test scores)
 - Attention (increase in attention)
 - Parenting (increase in HOME scores)

Estimating Effects of Inputs on Adults' Wages

- **Two-step process**
 - Estimate of our inputs to adolescent achievement
 - Estimate of adolescent achievement to labor market earnings
- **Assumptions**
 - Present value in 2006 dollars (March 2006 CPS)
 - Earnings-age profile for workers ages 20 to 65
 - Workers and non-workers
 - Fringe rate of 20 percent
 - No adjustment for expected mortality
 - Estimates separate for birth and age 5
 - Estimates for high school education and some college
(Might under-estimate program effects)

Increasing Early Math and Reading Skills

- One SD increase in academic skills in adolescent is associated with 15% to 20% increase in LTE
- One SD increase in academic skills at ages 5-6 is associated with **.16** (reading) & **.22** (math) SD increase in youth achievement
- One SD increase in math and reading at ages 5-6 is associated with a **.38** SD increase in youth achievement
- Close to the 80% fade-out of preschool program benefits (or, if both math & reading influenced, 60% fade-out)

Value of Increase in Early Skills

If one SD increase in early skills, assuming a 15% or 20% effect of youth achievement on LTE:

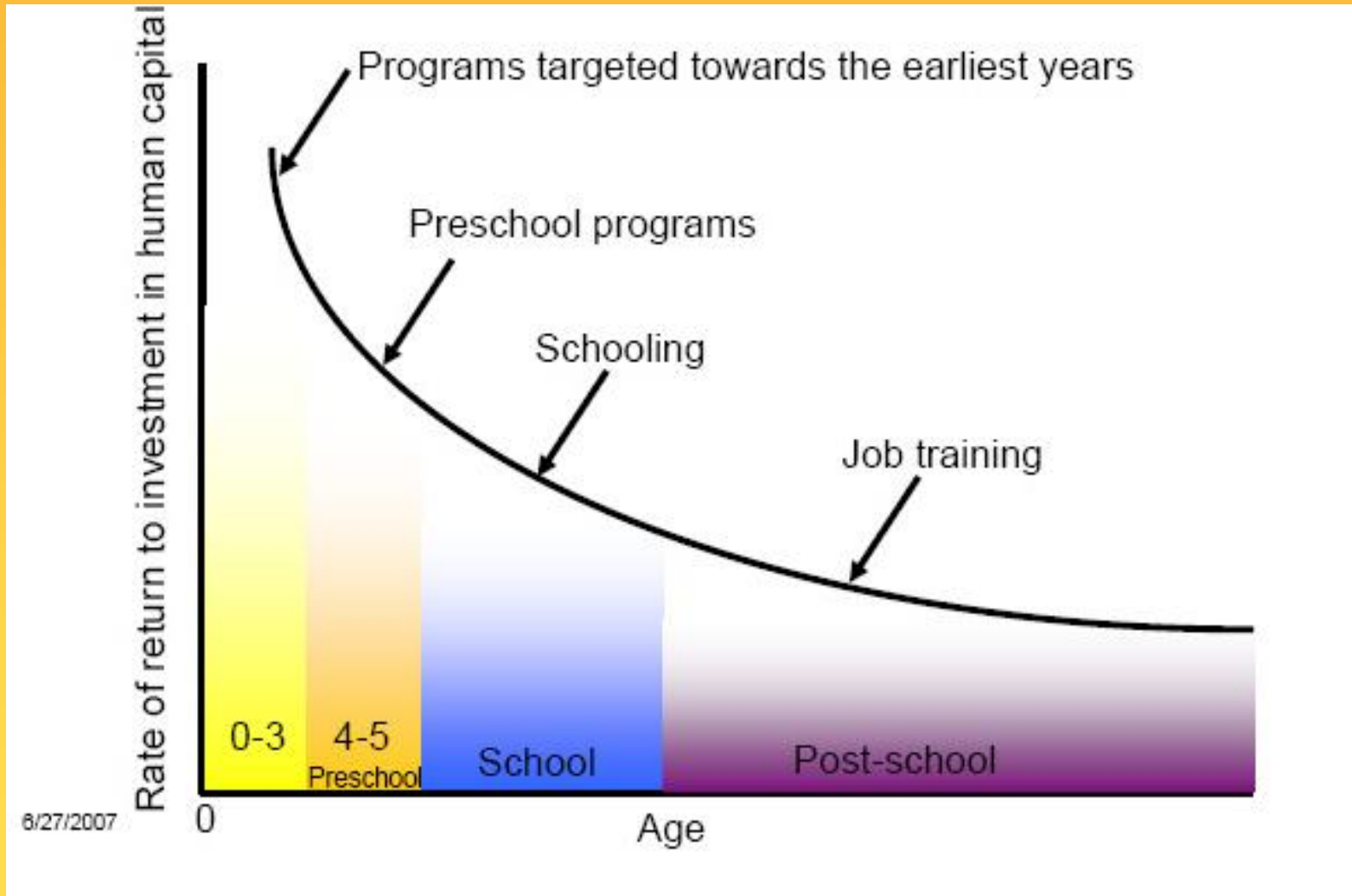
- **\$16,569** for reading skills & 15% effect & 80% fade-out
- **\$22,092** for math skills & 15% effect & 80% fade-out
- **\$33,138** if math & reading skills at 15% effect & 60% fade-out
- **\$44,184** if reading & math skills & 20% effect & 60% fade-out

Increasing Quality of the HOME

- One SD increase in HOME in early childhood is associated with **.10** to **.28** increase in youth achievement:
- **\$ 9,941** if **.12** improvement in youth achievement & 15% effect
- **\$13,255** if **.12** improvement in youth achievement & 20% effect
- **\$21,125** if **.255** improvement in youth achievement & 15% effect

Rates of Return to Human Capital Investment

(Return to an extra dollar at various ages)



Heckman, J. "Investing in Disadvantaged Young Children Is Good Economics and Good Public Policy,"
Testimony before the Joint Economic Committee, Washington D.C., June 27, 2007

Mothers' Median Age

(US Census)

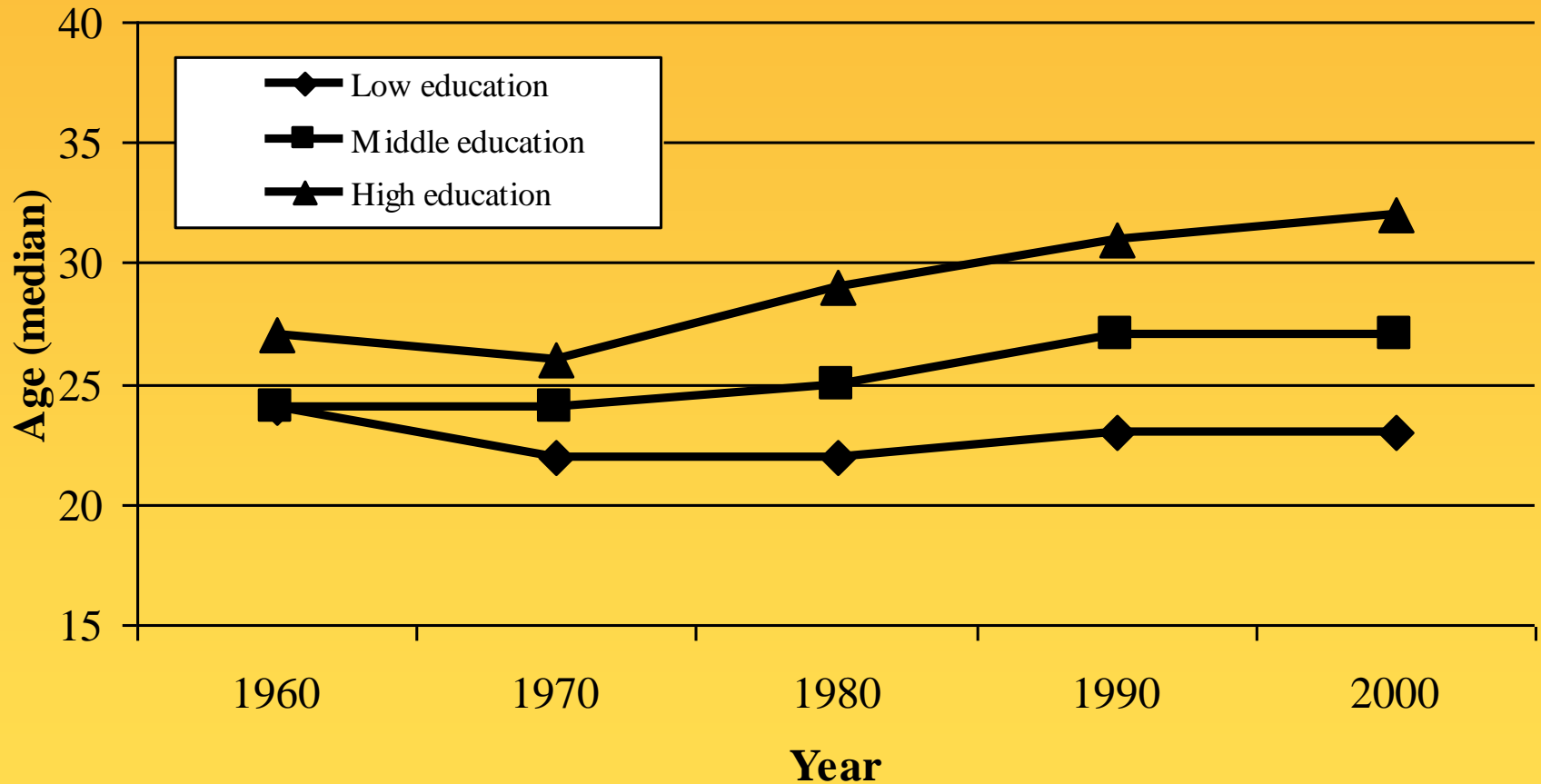


Figure 1, McLanahan, 2004

Single Mothers (US Census)

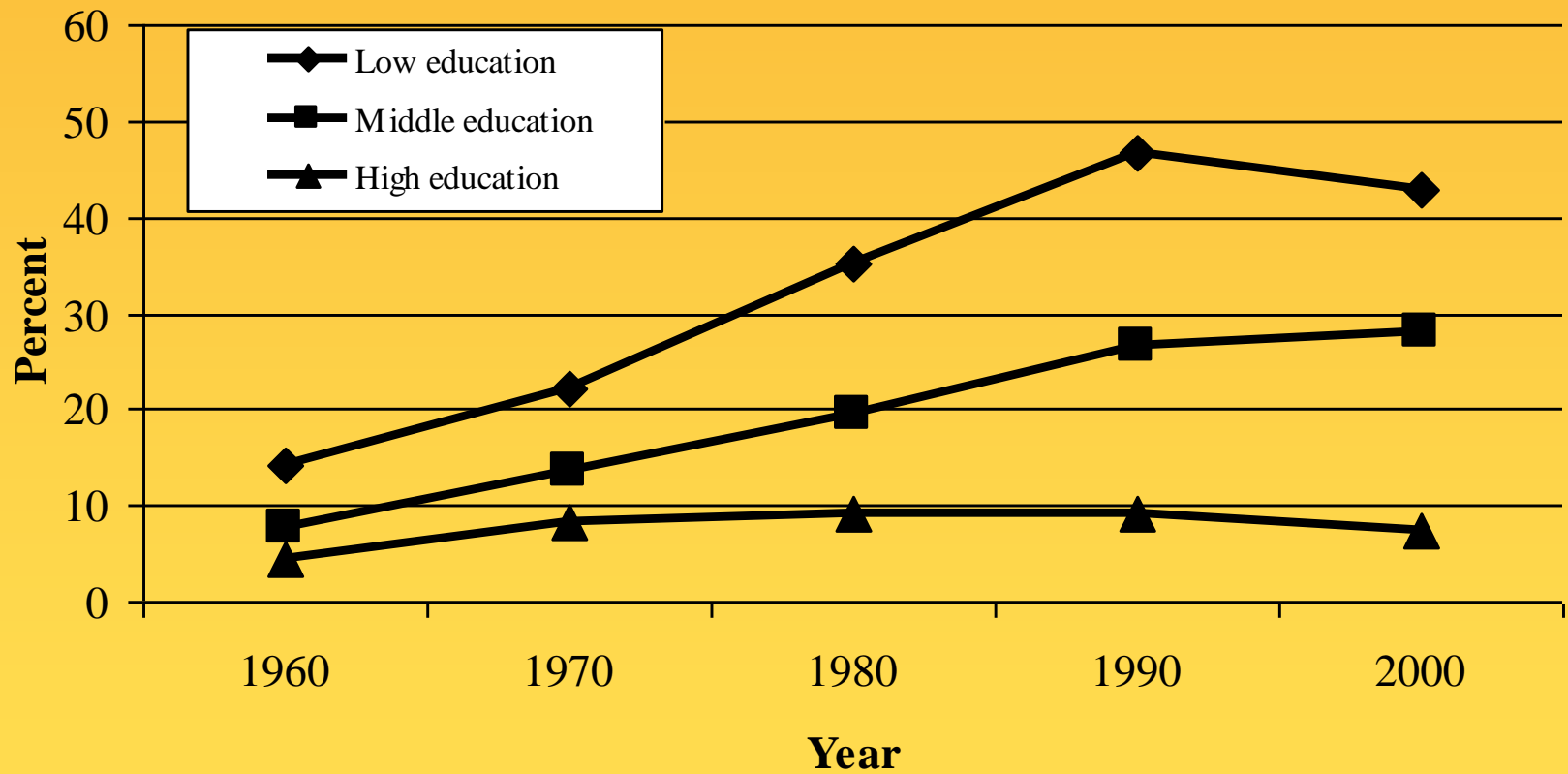


Figure 3, McLanahan, 2004

Median Family Income (US Census)

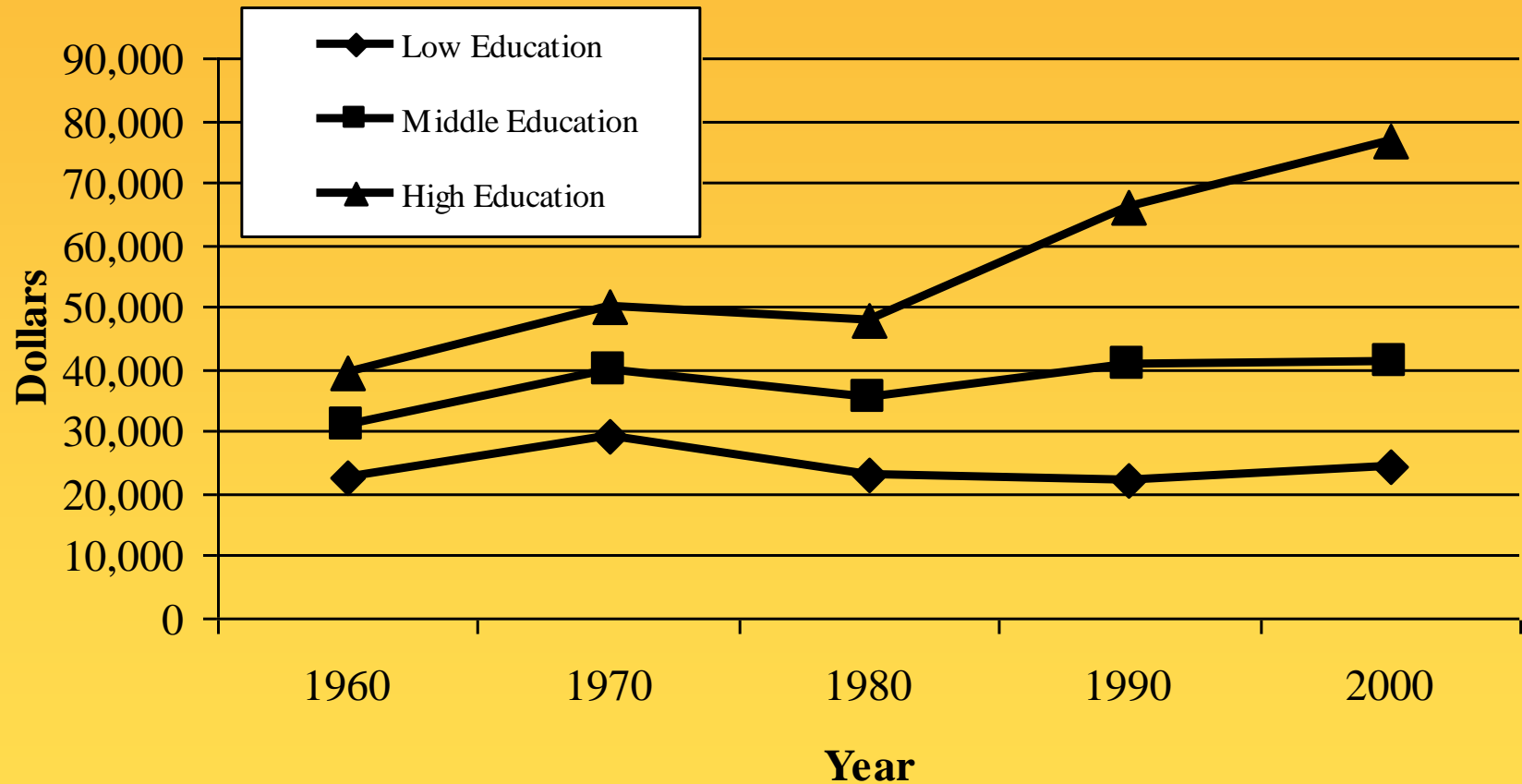


Figure 6, McLanahan, 2004

Thank You

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