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Family Structure and Social Mobility*

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Abstract

Different types of family structures experienced during childhood have varying effects on men's socioeconomic attainment and social mobility. Holding origin occupational characteristics constant, men (both white and African American) from a mother-headed family structure do as well as men from two-biological-parent families. In contrast, there is a negative effect of other types of family structures (father-headed, stepfamily) on socioeconomic attainment. Also, intergenerational occupational inheritance — from male family head to son or from female family head to son — is strongest when the mother is present, weakest when the mother is absent. The farther alternative family structures take sons away from their mothers, the more the intergenerational transmission process breaks down.

Family Structure and Social Mobility

Do children from alternative family structures experience different patterns of socioeconomic attainment and social mobility than children from two-biological parent families? The types of family structures in which children are raised (combinations of numbers of parents, genders of parents, and roles of parents) have been linked to variables — like economic status, residential mobility, and neighborhood quality — that affect children's socioeconomic attainments (McLanahan 1985; McLanahan & Booth 1989; McLanahan & Sandefur 1994). Family structure has also been linked to dimensions of parent/child relationships — like parental values, control, and support for children (Astone

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& McLanahan 1991; Hetherington, Cox & Cox 1982; Thomson, McLanahan & Curtin 1992) — that affect not only children's socioeconomic attainments, but also the intergenerational transmission of values and statuses as well.

Biblarz and Raftery (1993) found that family structure had two effects on children's occupational outcomes. First, children who did not spend most of their childhood with two biological parents had significantly lower socioeconomic attainments than children who did. Second, the strength of the association between socioeconomic origins and destinations was dependent on family structure. Intergenerational occupational resemblance was weaker among children from "nonintact" family backgrounds than among children from "intact" family backgrounds. Based on the second finding, Biblarz and Raftery (1993) speculate that the growth of nontraditional family structures may produce higher levels of social mobility, or a new kind of "universalism."

Biblarz and Raftery (1993) treat children from a variety of alternative family forms as a single, nonintact group. However, socioeconomic attainments may not be uniformly lower for children from alternative family structures. Intergenerational occupational resemblance may not be uniformly weaker. These effects may depend on the type of alternative family structure children were raised in, but because they gave respondents from any kind of alternative family structure the same score on their family-background variable, Biblarz and Raftery (1993) could not detect such differences.

This article extends the work of Biblarz and Raftery (1993) by specifying the effects of different types of family backgrounds on the two outcomes of interest: occupational attainment and intergenerational occupational resemblance. We use the same data as Biblarz and Raftery (1993), but make use of all the information contained in the data about childhood family structure to elaborate the original findings and assess the degree to which they are spurious or incomplete.¹

Links between Family Structure and Social Mobility

We survey four perspectives, or hypotheses, on the effect of alternative family structures on children. These hypotheses are not necessarily competing or mutually exclusive, but each emphasizes the importance of a different dimension of family structure in affecting children -- such as parental gender composition and biological/nonbiological relation to the child.

THE FEMALE VERSUS MALE FAMILY HEAD HYPOTHESIS

In much social mobility research, the occupational (or socioeconomic) position of an adult offspring has been compared with the occupational position of one parent (usually the father) deemed "household head," or "family head," or "primary breadwinner" in order to assess the degree of socioeconomic inheritance and social mobility experienced by the offspring generation. Until

recently, major surveys asked questions only about the father's occupation (e.g., Occupational Changes in a Generation Survey, General Social Survey), unless adult respondents experienced some kind of family disruption during childhood, in which case these surveys asked about the occupation of whomever respondents claim as their family head during most of their childhood.

The gender of the household head claimed by respondents who did not spend most of their childhood living with two biological parents, rather than a "nonintact" family structure per se, may have been the primary determinant of children's outcomes in Biblarz and Raftery (1993). The "female versus male family head" model predicts that female-head-to-son occupational inheritance is significantly lower than male-head-to-son occupational inheritance. Gender-role expectations, and one of their manifestations—the gender typing of occupations — works against female-head-to-son inheritance. Female heads have significantly greater odds of working in female-typed occupations (like clerical and service) (Roos 1985; Treiman & Roos 1983), but their male offspring would have greater odds of ending up in male-typed occupations, because of gender-based employment practices and gender-specific selection criteria (Baron & Bielby 1985).

Male offspring are more likely to develop their occupational aspirations based on a male role model than a female role model; social learning theory emphasizes the prominence of same-sex role modeling in parent/child relations (Downey & Powell 1993). Sons following in their father's occupational footsteps is a well-known and well-documented phenomenon (Blau & Duncan 1967). Mother/daughter occupational resemblance (and father/daughter occupational resemblance) has also been observed (Goldthorpe 1980; Rosenfeld 1978). We know much less about sons following in their mother's occupational footsteps. Although we suspect the force of traditional gender roles and gender role socialization to work against it, some research suggests that, among two-biological-parent families, mother's occupation is associated with the attainments of both daughters and sons (Kalmijn 1994).

This model also predicts that coming from an alternative, female-headed household reduces attainment (Dawson 1991; McLanahan 1985; McLanahan & Booth 1989), but that children from alternative, male-headed households do as well as children from two-biological-parent family backgrounds. Men receive greater incomes in the labor market than women (Marini 1989), even within the same occupation (Treiman & Roos 1983), so male-headed households will, on average, have more economic resources available to invest in children than female-headed households (Burkhauser et al. 1991; DaVanzo & Rahman 1993; Meyer & Garasky 1993). If parents' economic resources (or "economic hardship") are the primary determinants of children's socioeconomic attainment, children from father-only or stepfather-headed families will do better than children from female-headed families. This hypothesis has been developed, but not strongly supported, in Amato 1993, Amato & Booth 1991, and Amato & Keith 1991b.²

Even though male household heads will, on average, have greater incomes than female household heads, the degree to which male heads are willing to spend money on children varies by their parental role. Given the same level of economic resources, stepfathers, for example, may invest less in their stepchildren than biological parents invest in their biological children (Goldscheider & Goldscheider 1989, 1991; White & Booth 1985). If so, a gender-based model may fit less well than one based on parental role.

THE BIOLOGICAL VERSUS NONBIOLOGICAL FAMILY HEAD HYPOTHESIS

A second alternative would be one that distinguishes between parental roles when analyzing the effect of family structure on intergenerational transmission and socioeconomic attainment. In this formulation, the parental role — stepparent as opposed to biological parent — of the family head of respondents from alternative family structures is viewed as a primary determinant of children's outcomes.

The "biological versus nonbiological family head" model predicts that intergenerational transmission of status and occupation (and of the values and economic resources that facilitate it) is more effective among parents and their biological offspring than among nonbiological parents and children. High levels of parent-child communication and closeness facilitate the intergenerational transmission of parental values (Weinstein & Thornton 1989). Stepparent/child relationships have lower levels of communication and closeness than biological parent/child relationships (Thomson, McLanahan & Curtin 1992). Therefore, children are less likely to use a stepparent as a role model than a biological parent. As a consequence, the transmission of occupational values, and occupations, from stepparents to children is less successful than it is from biological parents to children.

This model also predicts that a stepfamily structure will negatively affect children's attainment because when offspring are biological, parents devote more time, money, and attention to them than when they are stepchildren. Stepparent/child relations are, on average, characterized by greater emotional distance and uncertainty, higher levels of conflict, and lower levels of parent-to-child wealth flows than biological parent/child relations (Demo & Acock 1993; Goldscheider & Goldscheider 1989, 1991; Kurdek & Fine 1991; Schwebel, Fine & Renner 1991; Thomson, McLanahan & Curtin 1992; White & Booth 1985). Sociobiologists would say that stepchildren get less from parents than biological children because stepchildren do not continue parents' genes (van den Berghe 1979); others propose that roles, obligations, and expectations in stepparent/stepchild relations are less defined, and less institutionalized, than they are in biological parent/child relations (Cherlin 1978).

THE MOTHER-ABSENT VERSUS MOTHER-PRESENT HYPOTHESIS

The "mother absent" model predicts that children from alternative family structures who are separated from their mothers have lower attainments than

those who stay with their mothers. Mothers are typically the primary caregivers and nurturers of children. In general, mothers more than fathers give children a sense of security and significance — psychological assets that contribute to children's attainments. There is also a cultural expectation that children will have (and live with) a mother, and children without a residential biological mother may face social penalties and stigma. A mother's presence in the household facilitates intergenerational transmission as well.

At first glance, these predictions appear to be at odds with the many studies that show negative outcomes for children from a mother-only (or mother and stepfather) family structure (e.g., Dawson 1991; Mauldon 1990; McLanahan & Booth 1989). Variables that partly explain the relationship between mother-headed family structures and children's attainment include economic status (McLanahan 1985), stress (see Amato 1993), parental supervision, control, and affection/support of children (Hetherington, Cox & Cox 1982; Kline, Johnston & Tschann 1991; Thomson, McLanahan and Curtin 1992), the amount of time parents spend with children in activities that can enhance children's human (and cultural) capital (Acock & Demo 1994; Astone & McLanahan 1991), the amount of family and household responsibility parents place on children (the "earlier maturation" expectation in Thornton 1991), and, particularly for boys, the loss of a male role model and father figure (Downey & Powell 1993). When other factors (like economic status and residential mobility) are taken into account, the effect on child outcomes of a mother-headed family structure is greatly reduced (Amato & Booth 1991; Haveman, Wolfe & Spaulding 1991; McLanahan 1985; Menaghan & Parcel 1991; Wu & Martinson 1993).

In many studies, children from mother-headed backgrounds are compared with children from two-biological parent families. A different question would be, are children who experience family disruption better off with their mothers than without them, even in light of the "problems" associated with mother-headed households?

Children from alternative, father-headed family structures do not have significantly greater attainments than children from alternative, mother-headed family structures, even though they were raised in more economically prosperous households (Amato & Booth 1991). In fact the reverse may be more likely (Amato & Keith 1991b). Children living with fathers and stepmothers have lower well-being than children living with mothers and stepfathers (Fine & Kurdek 1992). Residing with the father may be an indication that the mother had serious problems or was less involved with her children prior to disruption (Maccoby & Mnookin 1992).

On average, mothers tend to sustain a high level of emotional investment in children amidst spousal conflict and marital disruption, whereas fathers' relations with children diminishes as fathers' relations with spouses diminish (Belsky et al. 1991). Fathers tend to relate to their children through the mother and, for a variety of reasons (including their own experience of gender-based socialization), may have a more difficult time or be less skilled at playing a direct role in raising their children, that is, a role that is unmediated by the

other parent (Furstenberg & Cherlin 1991). One legacy is that, even if parental divorce occurs after offspring have moved out of the parental household, father/child attachments are weaker than mother/child attachments over the life course (Booth & Amato 1994; Cooney 1994; Lawton, Silverstein & Bengtson 1994).

Given an alternative family structure, this hypothesis predicts that residing with the mother will be associated with enhanced attainments; not residing with the mother will reduce attainments. The mother's presence may also increase the family's ability to transmit values and statuses to children, because of the high level of attachment between mothers and children.

The presence or absence of the biological father will have less of an effect on children's socioeconomic attainments than that of the biological mother, once income differences are taken into account. In one study of young children, the presence or absence of the biological father (or of a nonbiological father figure) made no difference to children's psychosocial functioning (Hawkins & Eggebeen 1991). Other studies have shown that children in single-parent families do as well with opposite-sex biological parents as with same-sex biological parents (Amato & Keith 1991a; Downey & Powell 1993; McLanahan 1985), undermining the idea that residing with the father would be especially important to the healthy development of boys.

THE FAMILY DISRUPTION HYPOTHESIS

The implicit model guiding Biblarz and Raftery (1993) can be termed a *family disruption model* — that any kind of alternative family structure has the same negative effect on offspring's attainment and leads to the same level of weakening in intergenerational occupational inheritance. Having been raised by two biological parents, or not, is the crucial determinant. Supporting this assumption is research showing that children from single-female-headed households (resulting from out-of-wedlock childbearing, divorce, or the death of the father), stepfamilies, and other alternative family structures have more problems and lower attainments (e.g., Dawson 1991).

Data

We begin by replicating Biblarz and Raftery's (1993) 17 x 17 x 2 x 2 mobility tables of origin occupation by current occupation by race (white/black) by family structure (intact/nonintact) ($N = 22,761$), from the 1973 Occupational Changes in a Generation Survey (OCG) (see Featherman & Hauser 1978 for a comprehensive discussion of OCG survey data).³

By following Biblarz and Raftery (1993) and including only respondents who have origin occupations and current occupations, we risk selection bias (selecting only respondents from "successful" alternative families) that would likely result in the underestimation of the negative effects of alternative family

structures. Single mothers, for example, are more likely than male heads to be unemployed or not in the paid labor force, and their children are more likely to be "idle" in early adulthood (McLanahan & Sandefur 1994). We therefore add an 18th origin and destination occupational category representing "no origin occupation reported" and "currently unemployed," respectively.

We then make full use of the information contained in the data to stratify the tables by family background. Childhood family structure has five categories: (1) two-biological-parent family background (respondents "lived with both parents most of the time up to age 16") (84% of the sample); (2) alternative family structure (respondents did not live with both parents most of the time up to age 16) — respondents report *mother* as family head (9% of the sample; 54% of all respondents from alternative family structures); (3) alternative family structure — respondents report *father* as family head (3% of the sample; 18% of all respondents from alternative family structures); (4) alternative family structure — respondents report *other male* as family head (3% of the sample; 21% of all respondents from alternative family structures); and (5) alternative family structure — respondents report *other female* as family head (1% of the sample; 7% of all respondents from alternative family structures).

Respondents from two-biological-parent family backgrounds reported father's occupation; intergenerational occupational inheritance/mobility is from father to son. Respondents from alternative family backgrounds who report a mother as family head spent some to all of their childhood to age 16 living in one of two types of family structures: a single-parent, female-headed household or a household where the mother had a partner/spouse (not the respondent's biological father), but the mother was the main breadwinner. (The single-parent, female-headed households resulted because the mother was never married, experienced the death of a spouse, or experienced divorce; see Biblarz & Raftery 1993). These respondents reported mother's occupation; intergenerational occupation inheritance/mobility is from mother to son.

Respondents from alternative family backgrounds who report a father as family head spent most of their childhood living only with their father, and/or their father and a stepmother, with the father as primary breadwinner. These respondents reported father's occupation; intergenerational occupational inheritance/mobility is from father to son.

Respondents from alternative family backgrounds who report an "other male" family head in most cases lived with their mother and a stepfather (see Wojtkiewicz 1992). These respondents reported the stepfather's occupation; intergenerational occupational inheritance/mobility is from stepfather to son.

Respondents from alternative family backgrounds who report an "other female" family head spent the better part of their childhood in family structures that are uncommon, including living with a stepmother and biological father, a grandmother, an aunt, other relatives, and foster homes, where a woman was the family head. These respondents reported the female head's occupation; intergenerational occupational inheritance/mobility is from nonbiological-mother female head to son.

THE MATHEMATICAL MODEL

The original model (slightly modified) in Biblarz and Raftery (1993) was a generalization of Hout's (1984) status, autonomy, and training (SAT) model:

$$\begin{aligned} \log(F_{ijkl'}) = & a + a_{1(i)} + a_{2(j)} + a_{3(k)} + a_{4(l)} + a_{13(ik)} + a_{23(jk)} + a_{14(il)} + a_{34(kl)} + \gamma ZS_j \\ & + b_1S_iS_j + b_2A_iA_j + d_1D_{ij}S_i^2 + d_2D_{ij}A_i^2 + d_3D_{ij}T_i \\ & + \delta Z \{b_1S_iS_j + b_2A_iA_j + d_1D_{ij}S_i^2 + d_2D_{ij}A_i^2 + d_3D_{ij}T_i\}, \end{aligned}$$

where $Z = 1$ for sons from any kind of alternative family structure and $Z = 0$ for sons from two-biological-parent families, S_i , A_i and T_i are the status, autonomy and training scores respectively for occupation i , and $D_{ij} = 1$ if $i = j$ and 0 if not.

The model says that the expected cell frequency, $F_{ijkl'}$ of father's (or other household head's) occupation by son's occupation by race by family structure is a function of the main effects of father's (or other household head's) occupation ($a_{1(i)}$), son's occupation ($a_{2(j)}$), race ($a_{3(k)}$), and family structure ($a_{4(l)}$), the interaction between race and father's (or other household head's) occupation ($a_{13(ik)}$), the interaction between race and current occupation ($a_{23(jk)}$), the interaction between family structure and father's (or other household head's) occupation ($a_{14(il)}$), the interaction between family structure and race ($a_{34(kl)}$), the effect (γ) of family structure (Z) on the status dimension of son's occupational destinations (S_j), the overall and diagonal-specific interactions between the status, autonomy and training ($b_1S_iS_j$, $b_2A_iA_j$, $d_1D_{ij}S_i^2$, $d_2D_{ij}A_i^2$, $d_3D_{ij}T_i$) characteristics of the father's (or other household head's) and son's occupation (from Hout 1984; 1988), and the effect (δ) of family structure (Z) on the overall association between occupational origins and destinations ($\{b_1S_iS_j + b_2A_iA_j + d_1D_{ij}S_i^2 + d_2D_{ij}A_i^2 + d_3D_{ij}T_i\}$).⁴

The 18th category of occupational origins and destinations — no origin occupation reported and currently unemployed, respectively — was assigned average status, autonomy, and training scores. Then dummy variables for "no occupational origins" (= 1, else 0) and "currently unemployed" (= 1, else 0) were created. Where the SAT model significantly mispredicts cells involving the 18th categories, interactions between the dummy variables and the relevant other variables in the model are included to better the fit, and to show how unemployed origins or destinations lead to deviations from the average.

In Biblarz and Raftery (1993), Z in equation 1 was a single dummy variable, because family structure was collapsed into two categories (intact/nonintact) in the contingency table analyzed. In the present study, Z is viewed as a general term that stands for types of alternative family structures, and now represents from one to four dummy variables depending on how the effect of family structure is modeled. Correspondingly, each of γ and δ is a vector with an element for each dummy variable in Z .

The most straightforward way is to treat Z as four dummy variables, one for each type of alternative family structure. The term ZS_j would correspond to

the hypothesis that each type of alternative family structure has a unique (and probably negative) effect on socioeconomic destinations. The term $Z\{b_1S_iS_j + b_2A_iA_j + d_1D_{ij}S_i^2 + d_2D_{ij}A_i^2 + d_3D_{ij}T_i\}$ would represent the hypothesis that intergenerational occupational resemblance is different for each type of family structure. The argument would be that each combination of the household head's gender and role produces a distinct outcome for children. We call this the *full model*.

Alternatively, to fit the *female versus male family head model* discussed earlier, Z may be treated as two dummy variables — one when the alternative family head is female ("mother," or "other female head" reported), and one when the alternative family head is male ("father," or "other male head" reported). When both dummy variables are included in the same model, the hypothesis behind the ZS_j term would be that children from alternative, female-headed households have lower occupational status attainments than children from alternative, male-headed households, but that children from both types have lower attainments than those from two-biological-parent families. If only the "female head" dummy variable is included, the hypothesis is that coming from an alternative, female-headed household reduces attainment, but that children from alternative, male-headed households do as well as children from two-biological-parent family backgrounds. The term $Z\{b_1S_iS_j + b_2A_iA_j + d_1D_{ij}S_i^2 + d_2D_{ij}A_i^2 + d_3D_{ij}T_i\}$ represents the hypothesis that female head to son occupational inheritance would be significantly lower than male head to son occupational inheritance.

To fit the *biological versus nonbiological family head model*, Z is two dummy variables — the first, "biological family head," equals 1 when "mother" or "father" was reported as family head by respondents from alternative family backgrounds; the second, "nonbiological family head," equals 1 when respondents from alternative family backgrounds reported an "other male" or "other female" head.

To fit the *mother absent model*, the first dummy variable (respondent from alternative family structure lived with mother) equals 1 when the family head reported was "mother" or "other male." The second — respondent from alternative family structure did not live with mother — would be equal to 1 when the family head reported was "father" or "other female."

In the *family disruption model*, Z is a single dummy variable, equal to 0 for a two-biological-parent family background and 1 for any kind of alternative family background. This would be the most parsimonious way to model the effects of family structure.

The goal of our statistical analysis is to find the combination of dummy variables that best represents the $a_{14(ii)}$ ZS_j , and $Z\{b_1S_iS_j + b_2A_iA_j + d_1D_{ij}S_i^2 + d_2D_{ij}A_i^2 + d_3D_{ij}T_i\}$ interactions, among the following theoretically reasonable possibilities, some of which are mutually exclusive, others of which are not:

Two-Biological-Parent Family Background (reference category)

Full Model

Alternative family structure

- (1) Mother head = 1, else 0
- (2) Father head = 1, else 0
- (3) Stepfather head = 1, else 0
- (4) Other female head = 1, else 0

Male versus Female Family-Head Model

Alternative family structure

- (5) Mother or other female head = 1, else 0
- (6) Father or stepfather head = 1, else 0

Mother-Present versus Mother-Absent Model

Alternative Family Structure

- (7) Mother or stepfather head = 1, else 0
- (8) Father or other female head = 1, else 0

Biological- versus Nonbiological-Parent Model

Alternative Family Structure

- (9) Mother or father head = 1, else 0
- (10) Stepfather or other female head = 1, else 0

Family Disruption Model

Alternative Family Structure

- (11) Mother, father, stepfather, or other female head = 1, else 0

Each one of these can be applied to the three interactions above.

Results

Table 1 shows parameter estimates and goodness of fit statistics for four models of current occupation. Differences between models are pointed out below. The BIC statistic is the criterion for model selection ($BIC = L^2 - df[\log N]$, where N is the total sample size) (Raftery 1986a, 1986b, 1995). Model 4 in Table 1 is the BIC-best model for the OCG data.⁵

Model 1 includes all the important two-way interactions. The coefficients for "Occupational Origins x Race" show that African Americans have greater odds than whites of coming from farm, laborer, and service origins, and substantially lower odds of coming from skilled manual and all nonmanual origins.

The coefficients for "Occupational Destinations x Race" show that African American men have significantly greater odds than white men of currently occupying lower manual occupations (service, operative, laborer) and clerical occupations, and lower odds of currently holding managerial, nonretail sales, and proprietor occupations. Also, relative to whites, African Americans had

2.4 ($\exp(.89)$) times greater odds of being currently unemployed. The reference category chosen (craftsmen, manufacturing destinations) is one where the proportion of African Americans is roughly equal to the proportion of African Americans in the sample.

The coefficients for "Family Structure x Race" show that relative to whites, African-Americans have 6 times greater odds of having been raised in a family where a woman (but not the mother) was family head; 2.5 times greater odds of having been raised in a mother-headed household; 2.7 times greater odds of having been raised in a stepfather-headed family; and twice the odds of having been raised in an alternative, father-headed family. Averaging across family types shows that African Americans are about 2.6 times more likely than whites to have spent most of their childhood in an alternative family structure.

The remaining sets of two-way interactions involve family structure, occupational origins, and occupational destinations. For $a_{14(ij)}$, the interaction between family structure and occupational origins, the solution was very simple: a model that proposed that the occupational origin distribution of respondents from alternative, *female*-headed households (dummy variable 5 above) was significantly different than the occupational origin distribution of respondents from male-headed households (two-biological-parent or not) fit best. The "occupational origins x family structure" interactions show that respondents from female-headed family backgrounds are more likely to report female-typed occupations as their origins — clerical, retail sales, service, and less likely to report male-typed occupations — craftsmen, laborers, farm, and high strata occupations like managers in which women have traditionally been underrepresented. Thus the model used was: $a_{14(ij)} = \{C_i \text{ if alternative, female-headed family structure, } 0 \text{ if not}\}$, where C_i represents the extent to which the origin parameter for occupation at i is increased for alternative, female-headed origins.

The odds of reporting no occupational origins also varies substantially by family structure. While sons from all types of alternative family structures were more likely than sons from two-biological-parent families not to report an occupation for their family head, sons from alternative female-headed households had roughly 10 times greater odds of reporting no occupational origins ($\exp[2.21] = 9.1$ for mother-headed households and $\exp[2.51] = 12.3$ for other-female-headed households). Sons from stepfather-headed families had 2.3 times greater odds ($\exp[.84]$), and sons from alternative father-headed families had 1.7 times greater odds.⁶

Finding the best form for ZS_j (the interaction between family structure and socioeconomic status destinations) was more difficult. In estimating the variety of models discussed above, one feature of the data emerged very clearly: holding race and origin occupation constant, an alternative, mother-headed family background had no effect on respondents' socioeconomic status destinations. The destinations of these respondents were not significantly different from the destinations of respondents from two-biological-parent families (e.g., the $-.09$ coefficient for the "alternative family structure/mother head x destination

TABLE 1: Parameter Estimates for Selected Models of the Relationship between Occupational Origins, Occupational Destinations, Race, and Family Structure: U.S. Men Ages 20-64, Occupational Changes in a Generation Survey, 1973

Interaction Term	Estimate			
	1	2	3	4
<i>Marginal Interactions</i>				
<i>Occupational Origins x Race (a_{13(ik)})(African American = 1)</i>				
Professional, self-employed origins x African American	-.90*	-.90*	-.91*	-.91*
Professional, salaried origins x African American	-.48*	-.48*	-.47*	-.47*
Manager origins x African American	-1.57*	-1.57*	-1.57*	-1.57*
Salesmen, nonretail origins x African American	-2.03*	-2.03*	-2.03*	-2.03*
Proprietor origins x African American	-1.23*	-1.23*	-1.23*	-1.23*
Clerk origins x African American	-.53*	-.53*	-.53*	-.53*
Salesmen, retail origins x African American	-1.77*	-1.77*	-1.78*	-1.77*
Craftsmen, manufacturing origins x African American	-.94*	-.94*	-.94*	-.94*
Craftsmen, other origins x African American	-.39*	-.39*	-.39*	-.39*
Craftsmen, construction origins x African American	-.36*	-.36*	-.36*	-.36*
Service worker origins x African American	.78*	.78*	.78*	.78*
Operative, nonmanufacturing origins x African American	—	—	—	—
Operative, manufacturing origins x African American	-.22	-.22	-.21	-.21
Laborer, manufacturing origins x African American	1.05*	1.05*	1.04*	1.04*
Laborer, nonmanufacturing origins x African American	1.02*	1.02*	1.01*	1.01*
Farmer/farm manager origins x African American	.45*	.45*	.44*	.44*
Farm laborer origins x African American	1.01*	1.01*	1.00*	1.00*
No occupational origins x African American	.01	.01	.01	.01
<i>Occupational Destinations x Race (a_{23(jk)})</i>				
Professional, self-employed destinations x African American	-.48	-.49	-.49	-.49
Professional, salaried destinations x African American	-.11	-.12	-.11	-.11
Manager destinations x African American	-.80*	-.81*	-.81*	-.81*
Salesmen, nonretail destinations x African American	-1.36*	-1.37*	-1.37*	-1.37*
Proprietor destinations x African American	-.67*	-.68*	-.68*	-.68*
Clerk destinations x African American	.74*	.74*	.74*	.74*
Salesmen, retail destinations x African American	-.38	-.38	-.39	-.39
Craftsmen, manufacturing destinations x African American	—	—	—	—
Craftsmen, other destinations x African American	-.12	-.11	-.12	-.12
Craftsmen, construction destinations x African American	-.11	-.10	-.11	-.11
Service worker destinations x African American	.92*	.92*	.92*	.92*
Operative, nonmanufacturing destinations x African American	.72*	.72*	.72*	.72*
Operative, manufacturing destinations x African American	.80*	.81*	.81*	.81*
Laborer, manufacturing destinations x African American	1.13*	1.14*	1.13*	1.13*
Laborer, nonmanufacturing destinations x African American	1.29*	1.30*	1.29*	1.29*
Farmer/farm manager destinations x African American	-1.21*	-1.21*	-1.19*	-1.19*
Farm laborer destinations x African American	.71*	.72*	.72*	.72*
No occupational destinations x African American	.89*	.89*	.89*	.89*
<i>Family Structure x Race (a_{34(kl)})</i>				
Alternative-family structure/mother head x African American	.92*	.93*	.91*	.91*
Alternative-family structure/stepfather head x African American	.98*	.98*	.95*	.95*
Alternative-family structure/father head x African American	.64*	.64*	.58*	.57*
Alternative-family structure/other female head x African American	1.82*	1.87*	1.77*	1.77*

^a The origin SES x destination SES coefficients were multiplied by 1,000; the origin autonomy x destination autonomy coefficients were multiplied by 100; coefficients involving socioeconomic status destinations were multiplied by 100.

* p < .01

TABLE 1: Parameter Estimates for Selected Models (Continued)

Interaction Term	Estimate			
	1	2	3	4
<i>Marginal interactions (continued)</i>				
<i>Occupational Origins x Family Structure ($a_{14(i)} = C_i$ if female headed, else 0)</i>				
Professional-self-employed origins x alt. family structure/female head	-.68	-.71	-.38	-.43
Professional-salaried origins x alt. family structure/female head	.00	-.02	.31	.26
Manager origins x alternative family structure/female head	-1.21*	-1.24*	-.95*	-.99*
Salesmen-nonretail origins x alternative family structure/female head	-.84*	-.86*	-.63	-.67*
Proprietor origins x alternative family structure/female head	-.42*	-.44*	-.28	-.30
Clerk origins x alternative family structure/female head	1.07*	1.05*	1.25*	1.22*
Salesmen-retail origins x alternative family structure/female head	.79*	.77*	.89*	.88*
Craftsmen-manufacturing origins x alt. family structure/female head	-1.73*	-1.74*	-1.56*	-1.58*
Craftsmen-other origins x alternative family structure/female head	-1.38*	-1.39*	-1.28*	-1.30*
Craftsmen-construction origins x alt. family structure/female head	-2.08*	-2.09*	-2.02*	-2.03*
Service worker origins x alternative family structure/female head	1.78*	1.77*	1.84*	1.84*
Operative-nonmanufac.origins x alt. family structure/female head	-.22	-.23	-.16	-.17
Operative-manufacturing origins x alt. family structure/female head	.32*	.31*	.42*	.40*
Laborer manufacturing origins x alt. family structure/female head	-1.17*	-1.18*	-1.14*	-1.14*
Laborer nonmanufac. origins x alt. family structure/female head	-1.61*	-1.61*	-1.59*	-1.60*
Farmer/farm manager origins x alt. family structure/female head	-.81*	-.81*	-.80*	-.80*
Farm laborer origins x alternative family structure/female head	—	—	—	—
No occupational origins x alternative family structure/mother head	2.21*	2.21*	2.31*	2.30*
No occupational origins x alternative family structure/stepfather head	.84*	.84*	.86*	.86*
No occupational origins x alternative family structure/father head	.53*	.53*	.55*	.55*
No occupational origins x alt. family structure/other female head	2.51*	2.51*	2.63*	2.61*
<i>Family Structure x Socioeconomic Status Destinations (ZS_j)</i>				
Alternative family structure/mother head x dest. socioeconomic status	-.09			
Alternative family structure/stepfather head x dest. socioecon. status	-.91*			
Alternative family structure/father head x dest. socioeconomic status	-.90*			
Alt. family structure/other female head x dest. socioeconomic status	-.48			
Alt. family structure/male head x destination socioeconomic status		-.89*	-.37	-.37*
<i>Covariates</i>				
Origin SES x destination SES	.52*	.53*	.53*	.53*
Origin autonomy x destination autonomy	.33*	.33*	.34*	.34*
Origin SES x destination SES, if on diagonal	-.12*	-.12*	-.12*	-.12*
Origin autonomy x destination autonomy, if on diagonal	.12*	.12*	.12*	.12*
Origin training x destination training, if on diagonal	.14*	.14*	.14*	.14*
No occupational origins x destination socioeconomic status	-1.19*	-1.24*	-1.12*	-1.13*
<i>Interactions involving farm cells</i>				
Farm with upper nonmanual origins or destinations = 1	-1.10*	-1.10*	-1.10*	-1.10*
Farm with lower nonmanual origins or destinations = 1	-1.03*	-1.03*	-1.03*	-1.03*
Farm with upper manual origins or destinations = 1	-.72*	-.72*	-.72*	-.72*
Farm with lower manual origins or destinations = 1	-.77*	-.77*	-.77*	-.77*
Farm with unemployed origins or destinations = 1	-1.11*	-1.11*	-1.12*	-1.12*
<i>Interaction between family structure and SAT association</i>				
Alt. family structure/mother head x SAT origin/destination score			-.14*	
Alt. family structure/stepfather head x SAT origin/destination score			-.25*	
Alt. family structure/father head x SAT origin/destination score			-.32*	
Alt. family structure/other female head x SAT origin/destination score			-.47*	
Distance from mother scale x SAT origin/destination score				-.12*
L ²	2,441	2,443	2,398	2,398
Degrees of freedom	3,127	3,130	3,126	3,129
BIC	-28,932	-28,959	-28,965	-28,995

socioeconomic status" interaction in model 1). Hence, all models with dummy variables for the Z in the ZS_j term that included "mother head" (dummy variables 1, 5, 7, 9, 11 above) fit less well than models without them. The effect of "other female head" on status destinations was negative (-.48) but, like the effect of "mother head," not statistically significant.

The two alternative family structure types that were male headed each had a negative effect on the socioeconomic dimension of son's occupational destinations (-.90 and -.91). Model 2 shows that the BIC-best way to model this interaction is to treat these effects as equal (alternative family structure that is father headed or stepfather headed = 1, else 0 — dummy variable 6 above). The -.89 coefficient for the "alternative family structure/male head x destination socioeconomic status" interaction says that children from alternative family backgrounds who did not live in a mother- (or female-) headed family structure have almost twice the odds of currently occupying the lowest occupational stratum (as against the highest) as children from alternative family backgrounds raised by mother and other female heads, and children who lived with two biological parents.⁷

The "Covariates" coefficients for the occupational status, autonomy, and training origins/destinations interactions, and the interactions involving farm cells show high levels of intergenerational occupational resemblance, and high levels of immobility in farm occupations. These effects have been described in detail in Hout (1984, 1988). Mobility from farming origins into unemployed destinations, and from unemployed origins into farm destinations, is also less likely than predicted by the SAT model (-1.11).

In assigning the average status, autonomy, and training score to the "no occupational" origins and destinations categories, the SAT model underestimates the negative effect on occupational destinations of coming from no occupational origins (or underestimates the extent to which "no occupational origins" takes respondents below the average occupational destination). Residuals for cells involving "no occupational origins" and the occupational destination categories were large. To improve the fit, we added the interaction "no occupational origins (= 1, else 0) x destination socioeconomic status (S_j)." The coefficient -1.24 from model 2 says that respondents who report no occupation for their family head while they were growing up have 2.4 times greater odds of currently working in the lowest occupational stratum (as against the highest), relative to respondents who report an occupation for their family head.⁸

Model 3 adds to model 2 the three-way interaction between family structure and SAT association. Many of the dummy variables discussed above, when used in the three-way interaction term ($Z\{b_1S_jS_j + b_2A_iA_j + d_1D_{ij}S_j^2 + d_2D_{ij}A_i^2 + d_3D_{ij}T_i\}$), fit the data well — particularly those that did not score the alternative family structure/mother head as 1. In fact, a model that fits best is one saying that intergenerational occupational resemblance was weaker for children from any non-mother-headed family structure than for children from two-biological-parent and alternative-mother-headed family backgrounds.

However, in almost every model that included a three-way interaction between each type of alternative family structure and the association between origins and destinations, the resulting parameter estimates fell in the following order: alternative family structure/mother head had the weakest effect on the association between origins and destinations, followed by alternative family structure/stepfather head, alternative family structure/father head, and alternative family structure/other female head, which had the greatest effect. In model 3, the coefficients for the interactions between family structure and the SAT association change from $-.14$ (the effect of alternative family structure/mother head), to $-.25$ (the effect of alternative family structure /stepfather), to $-.32$ (the effect of alternative family structure/father head), to $-.47$ (the effect of alternative family structure/other female head).

In model 4, we attempt to capture this ordered feature of the data by treating Z as a scale, equal to 0 for two-biological-parent background, 1 for alternative family structure/mother head background, 2 for alternative family structure/stepfather head background, 3 for alternative family structure/father head background, and 4 for alternative family structure/other female head background. We call this the "distance from mother scale" in Table 1. This method of modeling the three-way interaction fit the data better than any of the other possibilities. The coefficient $-.12$ says that, relative to a two-biological-parent family background, an alternative mother-headed family background reduces intergenerational occupational inheritance by a factor of $\exp(-.12) = .89$, i.e., by 11%; an alternative stepfather-headed family background reduces occupational inheritance by a factor of $\exp(2 \times [-.12]) = .79$, i.e., by 21%; an alternative father-headed family background reduces occupational inheritance by 30%; and an alternative other-female headed family background reduces occupational inheritance by 38%.

Discussion

THE DISTANCE FROM MOTHER SCALE

What does the effect of this "distance from mother" scale on intergenerational occupational inheritance mean? Our interpretation is that mothers are important to the intergenerational transmission process — from male heads to sons or from female heads to sons, and that the farther alternative family structures take children away from mothers, the more the intergenerational transmission process breaks down. The result is less intergenerational inheritance and resemblance.

When the mother is present, in the case of two-biological-parent families, father -to-son occupational inheritance is high. In the absence of the mother, sons will be less likely to attain an occupation resembling that of their fathers, even when their biological fathers are the head of their families. The presence of mothers in some way makes possible or conditions father-to-son inheritance,

and more generally male-to-male intergenerational inheritance. In fact, sons from stepfamilies are as or more likely to inherit their stepfathers' occupations than sons from alternative, father-headed families are to inherit their biological fathers' occupations. One factor that differentiates the two cases is the presence or absence of the mother.

The findings also suggest that sons in mother-headed households may model their occupational orientations on their mothers' occupations; that sons can inherit not only characteristics of their fathers' occupations, but those of their mothers' occupations as well. Of the four alternative-family structure types, mother-headed families produced a level of intergenerational occupational resemblance that was closest to that between fathers and sons from two-biological-parent families.

AN EVOLUTIONARY RATIONALE

Our main finding seems consistent with an evolutionary view of parental investment. For a recent review of the relevant literature see Wright (1994). Assume that it is mainly the custodial (biological) parent(s) that contribute resources to the child. The evolutionary argument implies that mothers contribute more of their resources to their offspring than do fathers, because more of the mother's potential reproductive investment is tied up in any one child (Trivers 1972). Denote the ratio of father's to mother's average resource contribution by α ; α will be less than 1, but not much less than 1 because humans have high male parental investment.

Let us now attempt to quantify in a very rough way the flow of resources to the child in each kind of family considered. In a two-biological-parent family with 2 children, this will be $\frac{1+\alpha}{2}$ units of adult resource contribution. In a mother-headed family with 2 children, this will be $\frac{1}{2}$ unit. In a stepfather-headed family, the mother will be present but there will probably be other children. If there are 2 other children, the resource flow would be $\frac{1}{4}$ unit.⁹ In a father-headed family with 2 additional children, it would be $\frac{\alpha}{4}$ units. And, finally, the "other female" household head is likely to be an aunt or a grandmother and to have children of her own. Inclusive fitness theory (Hamilton 1964) predicts investment in relatives to be proportional to the degree of relatedness, which is $\frac{1}{2}$ for a parent, but $\frac{1}{4}$ for an aunt or a grandmother. An aunt with 2 children of her own and 2 nephews or nieces in her household would thus be predicted to invest $\frac{1}{2} \div (2 + \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2}) = \frac{1}{6}$ of a unit in a nephew or niece. A grandmother with one child present, one child absent, and 4 grandchildren, would also invest $\frac{1}{2} \div (1 + 4 \times \frac{1}{2}) = \frac{1}{6}$ of a unit in a grandchild.

Thus, as long as $\frac{2}{3} < \alpha < 1$, we have $\frac{1+\alpha}{2} > \frac{1}{2} > \frac{1}{4} > \frac{\alpha}{4} > \frac{1}{6}$, so that the expected flow of resources to the child by type of family satisfies:

intact > mother-headed > stepfather-headed > father-headed > other female-headed.

This is precisely the order of the size of the interactions between family structure and SAT association in Table 1. Thus the types of family with strongest origin-destination occupational association are also those with the highest expected flow of resources towards the child.

THE DIRECT EFFECT OF FAMILY STRUCTURE

We also found that a mother-headed family structure had no independent effect on offspring's socioeconomic destinations. The finding is somewhat surprising because the mother heads of OCG respondents almost certainly had, on average, lower incomes than the father heads of children from two-biological-parent families, and than the father or stepfather heads of the children from other types of alternative family structures, even holding constant household heads' occupational distributions. Yet the offspring of mother heads had higher socioeconomic achievements than the children from other types of alternative family structures — achievements that approximated those of children from two-biological-parent families (holding origin and race constant). Without controlling for other variables, the bivariate relationship between a mother-headed family structure and socioeconomic destinations is statistically significant and negative ($-.48$, $t = 4.81$, compared to $-.09$ with controls), but this effect is still less than half as great as the bivariate effect of the other alternative family types (father-headed: -1.06 , $t = 5.57$; stepfather-headed: -1.20 , $t = 6.75$; other female-headed: -1.33 , $t = 4.47$, results not shown in Table 1).

This result differs from other studies that find negative effects of single motherhood on child outcomes. Holding constant parents' education, occupational status, family size, and other variables, McLanahan and Sandefur (1994) found that a single-mother family structure had a direct, negative effect on children's probability of achieving a high school diploma. While the dependent variables differ (current occupational status here, and the odds of not getting a high school diploma in McLanahan and Sandefur 1994), and our data include only males, we would expect educational differences by family structure to produce differences in occupational attainment, and the effects of family structure on education are roughly the same for boys and girls (McLanahan and Sandefur 1994). Hence these differences probably do not explain the discrepant findings.

A second explanation is that a greater proportion of respondents from alternative mother-headed families in the OCG arrived at that family state through the death of a parent as opposed to divorce, relative to the respondents in the more recent surveys analyzed by McLanahan and Sandefur (1994). We estimate that approximately 40% of OCG respondents from mother-headed families experienced the death of a father (see Biblarz & Raftery 1993); for the National Survey of Families and Households cohorts 1 and 2 analyzed by McLanahan and Sandefur, the figures are roughly 20% and 30%, respectively. Single-motherhood produced by divorce (or out-of-wedlock childbearing) may have more negative consequences than single-motherhood produced by the

death of a parent (Acock & Kiecolt 1989; Amato & Keith 1991b; McLanahan & Sandefur 1994), probably because widowed mothers and their children will have greater access than divorced mothers to social and economic resources.

In addition, the occupational distributions of household heads across family types are more fully taken into account here than in other studies, including McLanahan and Sandefur's (1994). While we found that a mother-headed family structure had no direct effect on son's occupational attainment, it did have an indirect, negative effect, by way of origin occupation and employment. Female household heads are overrepresented in clerical, service, and retail sales occupational sectors and underrepresented in managerial and other sectors. These occupational differences between male family heads and female family heads are not fully captured by the socioeconomic index — to model them adequately required our inclusion of interactions between gender of family head and each of the 18 occupational strata. The often gender-typed occupations that these mother heads held are of the sort that, if anything, exacerbate work-family conflicts rather than reduce them (Glass & Camarigg 1992), and they are lower-paying (Treiman & Hartmann 1981). Mother heads are also more likely than male heads to be unemployed. And we find that unemployed origins negatively affect occupational attainment.

Thus family structure is linked in complex ways to family head's occupational location, in part via gender. Family head's occupational location is in turn linked to offspring's achievements. In the present study, holding constant family head's occupational location and employment status reduces the impact of mother headship on children's outcomes to insignificance. This suggests that the differential attainment of offspring from female-headed households may be explained, at least in part, on the basis of family structure's covariation with the family head's position in the social structure.¹⁰

The same is not true of the differential attainment of offspring from alternative, male-headed households. Holding origin occupation and race constant, children from alternative families who lived with their fathers, as well as children from stepfamilies, have greater odds of occupying lower socioeconomic locations than children from alternative female-headed and two-biological-parent family backgrounds.

That children from alternative father-headed families have lower attainments, and that mother-presence facilitates intergenerational transmission, does not necessarily suggest that fathers are less able than mothers to care for their children. Living without a mother may be indicative of situations where the mother was uninvolved with her children prior to family disruption, lacked basic parenting skills, or was neglectful (Maccoby & Mnookin 1992). In other words, the finding may be more reflective of a mother effect than a father effect. This interpretation is consistent with our "distance from mother" concept. A stepfather-headed family structure too may interject some "distance from mother" that is not beneficial for children.

THE EFFECT OF RACE

The interactions involving race showed that African Americans experience four distinct types of disadvantage: (1) race has a direct negative effect on occupational destinations, independent of all the other variables in the model; (2) African Americans are more likely to come from lower occupational origins than whites, and occupational origins positively affect occupational destinations; (3) African Americans are more likely to come from alternative, male-headed (and female-headed) family structures, and alternative, male-headed family structures reduce occupational status destinations; and (4) African Americans are more likely to come from alternative family structures; respondents from alternative family structures are more likely to report no occupational origins, and having no occupational origins reduces occupational status destinations. However, race did not condition any of the effects of family structure.

Notes

1. The current study is restricted conceptually to industrialized societies which the neolocal nuclear family is or was normative, and uses data only from the U.S. Most of the other family structures that we consider result from the "breakdown" of this normative form. However, most pre-industrial societies have had different family structures in which a core nuclear family resides with a patrilocal or matrilocal extended family (van den Berghe 1979). We do not consider the effects of such family structures on social mobility, although it would be an interesting topic and has not yet been studied, as far as we know.

2. A more elaborate specification would be that offspring who spend most of their childhoods in a two-biological parent or stepfamily structure will have the highest attainments, because these kinds of family structures have the highest average incomes; children with prolonged exposure to an alternative, father-headed family structure will have the second highest attainments (father-only families average just over half the income of two-parent families); and children who grow up in an alternative, mother-headed family structure will have the lowest attainments (mother-headed families average less than a third the income of two-parent families, and about half the income of father-headed families) (DaVanzo & Rahman 1993; Meyer & Garasky 1993).

3. Data were made available by the Data and Program Library Service at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The data for *Occupational Changes in a Generation — Replicate Master File, 1962 and 1973* were originally collected by the U.S. Bureau of the Census under grants from the National Science Foundation to Peter M. Blau and Otis Dudley Duncan, at the University of Chicago, and to David L. Featherman and Robert M. Hauser, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The Bureau of the Census, National Science Foundation, principal investigators, and DPLS do not bear any responsibility for the analyses or interpretations presented.

4. ZA , the interaction between family structure and the autonomy dimension of son's occupational destinations, was not included in the model. The interaction was not significant in Biblarz and Raftery (1993), nor in preliminary analyses here.
5. The statistical analysis of respondent's current occupation was also conducted on respondent's first occupation, with the unemployment categories omitted. The effects of family structure were nearly the same, as in Biblarz and Raftery (1993) (not shown).
6. That mother-heads are less likely to be in the paid labor force than the father heads of sons from two-biological parent families reflects in part women's lower rate of labor force participation in general. The labor force participation rates of single-mothers are roughly the same as married mothers (McLanahan & Sandefur 1994), but lower than married or single fathers.
7. In other words, $\exp(-.009 \times 73) = .52 = 1/1.93$, where 73 is the range of scores on the socioeconomic index.
8. See note 7.
9. This assumes that additional children "dilute" the amount of resources that any one child receives from a fixed total of parental resources. While some parental resources (money) may be more fixed (and diluted by additional children) than others (love), the resource dilution hypothesis in general has received considerable support (Blake 1986; Powell & Steelman 1993; Steelman & Powell 1989). The argument also assumes that alternative family structures (except single mother) increase the likelihood that a given child will be brought into competition with additional children. This is based on evidence, for example, that a large proportion of remarried couple households with children under age 18 have a mix of children from previous marriages, and/or children from previous marriages and the present union (Cherlin & McCarthy 1985). While we assume two additional children, the argument (and ordering) holds for any number of additional children greater than or equal to 1.
10. To further understand how the effect of a single mother-headed family structure may have changed over time, we are currently analyzing nationally representative data from the 1960s (OCGI), 1970s (OCGII), 1980s (Survey of Income Program Participation — SIPP), and 1990s (wave 2 of the National Survey of Families and Households). One preliminary finding of interest in the present context is that while 27% of 1973 OCGII respondents from alternative mother-headed families do not report an occupation for their mother, 42% of 1986-88 SIPP respondents from alternative mother-headed families either do not report an occupation for their mother, or explicitly state that their mother did not have a paying job.

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