

The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study changed its name to The Future of Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FFCWS). Due to the issue date of this document, FFCWS will be referenced by its former name. Any further reference to FFCWS should kindly observe this name change.

Multipartnered Fertility and Children's Behavioral Outcomes Among Urban U.S. Families

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ABSTRACT

At the nexus of changing marital and fertility behavior is a new reality of contemporary family life—the fact that a significant fraction of adults today (will) have biological children by more than one partner, sometimes called ‘multi-partnered fertility.’ Multi-partnered fertility may have important implications for children’s wellbeing because it affects family roles, relationships and kinship networks, particularly concerning the rearing and socialization of children. In this paper, we provide new evidence about how multi-partnered fertility is related to children’s behavioral outcomes (both externalizing and internalizing), comparing children whose mothers and/or fathers have a child by another partner to children with only full siblings. Using data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, we evaluate children’s behavior over a 12-year period (ages 3, 5, 9 and 15). This research has important implications for understanding the role of contemporary families in rearing children and for public policy designed to strengthen families.