# The Demand for Sons or the Demand for Fathers?

# Understanding the Effects of Child Gender on Marriage and Divorce Rates

**October 2006**

**[VERY PRELIMINARY: PLEASE DO NOT CITE]**

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*Abstract*: We use data from the Fragile Families & Child Wellbeing Study to explore the causes of an empirical regularity documented in several studies—that parents of boys are more likely to be married than parents of girls. We find that parents of boys are significantly less likely to divorce within three years of the baby's birth. We also find evidence that conceiving a boy raises the probability of "shot gun" marriage. We test four hypotheses regarding why parents of boys are less likely to divorce: (1) they are happier with their marriages; (2) they believe more strongly that staying married will improve their baby's welfare; (3) fathers of sons prefer spending time with their children; (4) mothers of sons benefit from improved "father quality"/paternal involvement. Our results suggest that the positive effect of sons on marital stability is driven by an increase in "father quality" as reported by the mother.

*Acknowledgements*: We received helpful comments from participants of the Labor and Applied Microeconomics Workshop at the University of Miami. The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study was supported by Grant Number R01HD36916 from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. The contents of the paper are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

This study uses data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FFCWS) to explore the underlying causes of an empirical regularity documented in several recent studies—namely, that parents of boys are significantly more likely to be married than are parents of girls.[1] Recent research on U.S. data has found that divorce and separation rates are higher among parents with girls than among parents with boys (Dahl & Moretti, 2004; Lundberg, et al., 2005); and that among unwed mothers, those with boys are more likely to marry (Lundberg & Rose, 2003; Dahl & Moretti, 2004). These findings all suggest that the *joint* benefits of marriage are greater when there is a son. However, the reasons for these differential benefits are not well understood. And there is little evidence regarding whether sons raise the benefits of marriage to mothers, to fathers, or to both parents.

There are several possible explanations for this observed "child gender effect." First, it is possible that parents of boys get along better—perhaps because boys are easier to raise, or because boys make parents more satisfied with their marriage. Second, parents may believe that paternal involvement is more important for boys than it is for girls. Hence having a son may increase a mother's demand for a husband or live-in father for her child, or may cause either parent to stay in an unhappy marriage out of consideration for the child. A third possibility is that there is a gender bias the father's desire to spend time with his child. Because fathers are less likely to get child custody in the event of divorce, they may benefit more from marriage to the mother when the child is a boy.[2] Fourth, if fathers spend more time with sons, it may be the *mother* who benefits—for example, due to increased leisure time or satisfaction with the father's

[1] Lundberg (2005) provides an extensive review of the literature on child gender effects on parental behavior in developed and less developed countries.

[2] Though paternal custody rates have risen recently (from 5% in 1960 to 23% in 2000), they are still low. Dahl and Moretti find that boys increase the probability of paternal custody—a pattern that is, again, consistent with either (i) fathers' biases toward boys or (ii) a belief (by mothers, fathers, or judges) that living with one's father is especially important for boys. Dahl & Moretti (2004) favor the father bias interpretation—hence the title of their paper, "The Demand for Sons." However, they cannot rule other interpretations.

parenting skills. Of course, these possible explanations are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive.

**Literature Review**

Studies documenting the relationship between child gender and marriage probabilities include:

- Bedard and Deschene (2005) find significant effects of child gender on divorce probabilities using the 1980 U.S. Census PUMS. Specifically, they find that for first-time parents, having a girl raises the probability that the marriage ends in divorce by 4 percent.
- Dahl & Morretti (2005) find significant but very small effects on divorce rates using Census data. They also find that a first-born son has a positive effect (2.6) percent on the probability that the mother has ever been married. And, using data on birth certificates of first-time mothers from the California Birth Statistical Master File for 1989-1994, they find that mothers of girls who had an ultrasound during pregnancy are .3 percentage points less likely to be married at birth than are mothers of boys who also had the test. Using an imputed probability that the mother was unmarried at conception, they interpret this as a child gender difference of about four percent in the probability that an unmarried, pregnant woman married before the birth.
- Lundberg and Rose (2003), using the PSID, estimate that among women who had non-marital births, those with sons were more likely to marry, and married more quickly, than those who had daughters.
- Lundberg, McLanahan, and Rose (2006), using the first two waves of the FFCWS, find that child gender has no effect of on marriage or cohabitation rates for mothers who are

unwed at birth, but that sons born to married couples are more likely to live with their fathers one year later.

Other studies have examined the hypothesis that "fathers prefer boys" by looking at the effects of child gender on various measures of paternal involvement. Some of the findings are:

- Lundberg, McLanahan, and Rose (2006), using the first two waves of the FFCWS, find that sons born to unmarried parents are more likely than daughters to receive the father's surname, but no more likely to live with the father one year later.
- Lundberg, Pabilonia, and Ward-Batts (2006) use the Child Development Supplement of the Panel of Incomes Dynamics (PSID-CDS) and the American Time-Use Survey (ATUS) to examine differences in investments of parental time in sons and daughters. They find greater time investments in young sons than in young daughters—particularly by fathers.

**Data and Methods**

The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FFCWS) is a longitudinal survey following nearly 5,000 children born in the U.S. between 1998-2000 and their parents. The survey over-samples births to unmarried parents and, when weighted, is representative of births in large U.S. cities (population >200,000). Because it is designed to facilitate research on union formation and dissolution, the FFCWS provides a rich set of variables aimed at understanding each parent's decision to marry, cohabit, divorce or separate.

I analyze data from FFCWS's baseline surveys (conducted shortly after the child's birth) of both mothers and fathers, and from the one-year and three-year follow-up surveys of mothers. The sample (when restricted to mothers who completed the follow-up surveys) consists of roughly 2,250 mothers who were unwed at the time of birth and 750 who were initially married.

Baseline father interviews are available for roughly 79% of the non-marital birth sample and 92% of the marital sample.[3]

### *A. Child Gender and Marriage Probabilities in the FFCWS*

I begin by estimating the effect that a new baby's gender has on the probability that the parents (1) are married at the time the baby is born, (2) become married within three years of the baby's birth, or (3) stay married for three years following the baby's birth. Because child gender is exogenous to other factors that affect the decision to marry, this analysis can be performed with a simple comparison of means.[4] I use the FFCWS's national sampling weights in all of the analysis, so that the estimates are representative of births in large cities. Table 1 shows these results.

(1) First, mothers of boys are significantly more likely to be married at the time the baby is born (row 1). The effect is much stronger among mothers who knew the father for less than one year before becoming pregnant (row 2). Because this sub-group is much less likely to have been married at the time the baby was conceived, this finding suggests (consistent with Dahl and Moretti) that child gender affects the probability of a "shot-gun" marriage.[5] That is, unmarried couples who become pregnant are more likely to marry *before* the baby is born if they discover that the baby is a boy.

(2) Rows 3-6 tell us more about the effect of child gender on shot-gun marriages. First,

[3] Roughly 65 percent of the births in this sample are the mother's first. I experimented with restricting the analysis to first-born babies; however, in most cases this reduced the precision of the estimates without substantially affecting their magnitudes.

[4] There is some medical evidence that the mother's age is correlated with the probability of having a boy because age is correlated with the probability of miscarriage and male fetuses are more likely to be miscarried. However, I find no evidence of this in the data.

[5] Unfortunately, the baseline interview asked only how long the parents had known each other when the mother got pregnant—*not* how long they had been married (if ever). Date of marriage was asked in the one-year follow-up interview, but there are many missing observations, and some values that appear inconsistent—especially among the sub-sample of couples who knew each other for less than one year. In the future, I hope to use what data I have to impute the date of marriage for the missing observations to construct a better proxy for martial status at the time of the baby's *conception*. Hopefully, conditioning on this variable will improve the precision of my estimates in general.

the effect on martial status at birth is smaller among mothers who participate in the three-year follow-up interview (compare rows 1 and 2 to rows 3 and 4). This suggests that the couples who are most likely to marry when they discover they are pregnant with a boy are also more difficult to track down three years later. Second, a comparison of rows 4 and 6 suggests that for couples who knew each other less than one year before becoming pregnant, the effect of child gender on marriage is short-lived. For this group, the effect of child gender on the probability of being married *three years later* is very close to zero (row 6).

(3) Further, I find no evidence that child gender affects the probability of marriage among couples who are not already married by the time the baby is born (rows 7 & 8). This result stands in contrast to the finding of Lundberg & Rose (2005) using the PSID. However, it is consistent with Lundberg, McLanahan, and Rose's (2006) study of the FFCWS.

(4) Finally, rows 9-11 suggest that among couples who are married at the time the baby is born, those with boys are more likely to remain married three years later. A comparison of rows 9, 10 and 11 shows that the effect is much stronger for couples who had known each other longer before becoming pregnant. I suspect that this is because such couples are more likely to have been married before becoming pregnant. In other words, restricting the sample to married couples who have known each other at least five (or ten) years is a crude way to eliminate the "shot-gun" marriages from the sample, and focus solely on the effect that having a boy has on the longevity of pre-existing marriages. In the future, I hope to construct a more precise measure of marital status at the time of conception (see footnote 6).

***B. Analysis of Child Gender Effects on the Probability of Staying Married***

In the remainder of the analysis, I examine possible explanations for the effect of child gender on the probability of staying married. This analysis focuses on the subset of mothers

who are married to the baby's father at the time the baby is born, who knew the father for at least five years before becoming pregnant, whose husband participated in the baseline survey, and who are also interviewed in the three-year follow-up survey.

Because not all fathers participate in the study, and because not all mothers are interviewed at the three-year follow-up, sample attrition bias is a potential concern. Fortunately, neither the father participation rate nor the follow-up participation rate is correlated with the gender of the child (Table 1, rows 12-14). However, as noted above, the estimated effect of child gender on the probability of marriage at time of birth is somewhat smaller and less precise among mothers who were interviewed at the three-year follow-up (compare rows 1&2 to rows 3&4).

The analysis is guided by the four general hypotheses listed above: (1) parents of sons are happier with their marriage; (2) paternal involvement is viewed as more important for the welfare of boys; (3) fathers prefer spending time with boys, and (4) mothers benefit from an increase in paternal involvement or father quality when they have boys.

To test the first two hypotheses, I use the baseline surveys of both mothers and fathers to construct measures of the parents' initial degree of satisfaction with their marriage, and of their attitudes towards the importance of marriage when children are present. In particular, I use responses to the following questions:

(1) "Please tell me how you think your life might be different if you were not married to [BABY'S FATHER] now. Would you say that your overall happiness would be: [much worse, somewhat worse, the same, somewhat better, much better, don't know]." This question is used to create an indicator variable for each parent that is equal to one if the parent responds that their overall happiness would be "much worse" or "somewhat worse" if they were not currently married.

Thus, a value of one indicates that the individual is happier being married than they would be if not married.

(2) "Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement: 'When there are children in the family, parents should stay together even if they do not get along.'" This question is used to create an indicator variable for each parent that is equal to one if the parent agrees or strongly agrees with the statement.

In the one-year follow-up survey, mothers are asked questions regarding the father's participation in various child-rearing activities. I use responses to these questions to construct measures of the father's involvement, and measures of father "quality" (from the mother's point of view). In particular, I focus on the following questions:

(1) "How many days a week does the father . . .

a) play games like peek-a-boo or gotcha with child?
b) read stories to child?
c) tell stories to child?
d) play inside with child (e.g. blocks or legos)
e) change the child's diaper
f) feed of give a bottle to the child?
g) put the child to bed?"

From these seven questions, I constructed the average number of days per week that the father performed this set of child-rearing activities.

(2) "How often [often, sometimes, rarely, never] does the baby's father watch the child when the mother needs to do things?" This question was used to create an indicator that is equal to one if the mother's response is "often" and zero otherwise.

(3) "How often [always, sometimes, rarely], when with the child, does the father act like the father you want for your child?" This question was used to create an indicator that is equal to one if the mother's response is "often" and zero otherwise.

I use these constructed variables to perform two types of test. First, I ask whether marriage quality, attitudes toward marriage with children, and/or intensity of the father's involvement in childrearing are themselves correlated with the baby's gender, and if so, whether the correlations can explain the link between child gender and relationship outcomes. I begin, again, by comparing the means of these variables for parents of boys and parents of girls. I then use a linear probability model to estimate equations of the form:

(1) *Prob* (mother *i* is married to baby's father at 3 yrs.) = $\alpha + \beta\ boy_i + \gamma X_i + \varepsilon_i$

where *boy* is a dummy variable equal to one if the focal baby is a boy, and $X_i$ is a vector of the potential "mediating" variables that are correlated with child gender. When examining the effects of variables that are based on the one-year follow-up interview, I restrict this analysis to couples who were married at the baby's birth *and are still married* one year later.

The second type of test asks whether the effect of child gender on marital stability differs, depending either on the quality of the parents' marriage (as it is viewed by the father, mother, or both), or on their attitudes toward the importance of marriage for children. Splitting the sample based on marital happiness provides a test of the hypotheses that sons create additional (unmeasured) benefits of marriage either for fathers, mothers, or both. For example, if boys reduce the probability of divorce especially among couples in which in the father (mother) is unhappy in the marriage, this would suggest that boys raise the unmeasured benefits of marriage to fathers (mothers), causing them to stay in marriages that are otherwise undesirable. Similarly, splitting the sample based on attitudes toward marriage with children provides a test of the

hypothesis that concern for child welfare is the reason parents of boys stay together. Specifically, it allows a test of the prediction that sons have a greater effect on the marital stability of parents who believe that staying together is important for the children.

**Preliminary Results**

***1. Do sons increase parents' satisfaction from their marriage?***

Table 2a and Table 2b show the means, by child gender, of the variables measuring marriage quality, attitudes toward marriage with children, and/or intensity of the father's involvement in childrearing. The estimates in Table 2a, rows 1 and 2, show that mothers of boys are somewhat *less* likely to report being relatively happy married to the baby's father, but that fathers of boys are somewhat *more* likely to be happy in the marriage. These differences are not significant, however. Further, in a regression predicting the probability of remaining married, the inclusion of mother and father happiness variables as controls does not affect that coefficient on child gender (not shown). Hence, there is no evidence that sons reduce the probability of divorce through a direct effect on marital satisfaction.

The results in Table 3a show the estimated effects of child gender on marital stability for sub-groups of couples, defined by their baseline satisfaction with their marriage. The estimates here suggest that although boys do not make parents happier with their marriage on average, they do increase the returns to marriage for both parents. First, the effect of having a boy is large (13.5 percentage points) and statistically significant for marriages in which one or both parents reported being unhappy (Table 3a, row 5). In contrast, there is no significant gender effect on marriages in which both parents were initially happy. Hence, parents of boys are more likely to stay in unhappy relationships, but no more likely to stay in happy ones. Second, a comparison of rows (2) and (3) suggests that boys are equally likely to compensate for maternal unhappiness as

they are to compensate for paternal unhappiness. Furthermore, the boy effect is largest in cases where *both* parents are unhappy.[6]

***2. Are parent of boys more likely stay together for the sake of the child?***

One reason unhappy couples might stay together is out of a belief that it is better for their childrens' well-being. Rows 3 and 4 of Table 2a show the relationship between child gender and the parents' views on whether parents should stay together, even if they do not get along. Interestingly, the estimates suggest that parents of boys are somewhat *less* likely to believe that unhappy parents should stay together for the sake of the child. Thus, the effect that sons have on marital stability cannot be attributed to differential beliefs in the importance of marriage for children.

Can the son effect be attributed to an increase in the tendency to act on such beliefs? The estimates in Table 3b suggest not. Indeed, the effect of boys on martial stability is larger among couples who do *not* agree with the statement that parents should stay together even if they do not get along.

***3. Are parents of boys more likely to stay together due to increased paternal involvement in child-rearing?***

Previous studies have found that fathers are more involved in child-rearing activities when their children are boys. There are two ways in which this pattern could be related to the effect that boys have on marital stability. First, if fathers prefer to spend time with sons, then fathers of sons may be more likely to stay in unhappy marriages in order to spend time with their children. Second, if fathers spend more time caring for sons than they do for daughters, then

[6] Due to small sample sizes, differences in the child gender effect across the four sub-samples are not statistically significant.

mothers of sons may be more likely to stay in unhappy marriages in order to capture the benefits of father involvement in child-rearing.

These last two hypotheses are tested in Table 2b and in Table 4. Table 2b shows the means of the father involvement variables by child gender, and Table 4 shows the effect of controlling for these variables when estimating the effect of child gender on the probability of staying married.

I consider first the hypothesis that fathers prefer to spend time with boys. This hypothesis is supported by the estimates in Table 2b, row (1), which suggests that fathers do indeed spend more time taking care of sons at one year of age. However, the estimates in Table 4, column 1 suggest that this is *not* a factor in the probability of staying married until the third year. Hence, there is no evidence that fathers with boys tend to stay married in order to spend time with their sons. One possible interpretation of this finding is that fathers who are more involved in raising their sons are also more likely to get custody of them in the event of divorce.

Finally, I consider the hypothesis that father involvement provides a benefit to the mother. Here, I focus on the mother's report on how often the father watches the baby *when she needs to do things*, and on her response regarding whether the father acts like the father she wants for her child. Responses to both questions are highly correlated with child gender. Fathers are about 18 percent more likely to help watch the baby if the baby is a boy, and are also about 18 percent more likely to act like the kind of father the mother wants for her baby.

Moreover, the results in Table 4 suggest that both of these variables help explain why parents of sons are more likely to stay married. Indeed, when both variables are included as controls, the estimated effect of having a boy on the probability of staying married falls from 9.7

percentage points to 1.7. Of these two variables, the father's willingness to watch the baby when the mother needs help has slightly more explanatory power.

**(Tentative) Conclusion**

In sum, the evidence presented here suggests that parents of boys are more likely to stay married, but not because they are happier with their marriage or because they believe, generally, that staying married is important for the welfare of their sons. I also find no evidence that fathers of boys tend to stay married in order to spend time with their sons. Instead, the effect of child gender on marriage stability appears to be driven by the increase in father "quality" as perceived by the mother, including, especially, his willingness to help her watch the baby.

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**TABLE 1. MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE PROBABILITIES BY CHILD GENDER**

| | N | Baby's Gender Boy | Girl | Diff | F (prob>F) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Prob. (Married to baby's father at time of baby's birth)** | | | | | |
| **(1)** Full Sample (Mother in Wave 1) | 3454 | 58.6 | 53.1 | 5.5** | 4.51 |
| | | *1.7* | *1.9* | *2.6* | *0.034* |
| **(2)** & Knew each other less than one year before pregnant | 517 | 28.9 | 12.2 | 16.7** | 5.58 |
| | | *5.7* | *4.2* | *7.1* | *0.018* |
| **(3)** Est. Sample (Mother in Wave 1 & Mother in Wave 3) | 2978 | 58.6 | 54.9 | 3.7 | 1.84 |
| | | *1.8* | *2.1* | *2.8* | *0.175* |
| **(4)** & Knew each other less than one year before pregnant | 433 | 24.1 | 14.7 | 9.5 | 1.56 |
| | | *5.7* | *5.0* | *7.6* | *0.212* |
| **Prob. (Married to baby's father 3 years after baby's birth)** | | | | | |
| **(5)** Est. Sample (Mother in W1; Mother in Wave 3) | 2978 | 58.9 | 55.8 | 3.1 | 1.21 |
| | | *1.9* | *2.1* | *2.8* | *0.272* |
| **(6)** & Knew each other less than one year before pregnant | 433 | 25.4 | 25.5 | -0.1 | 0.00 |
| | | *4.9* | *5.3* | *7.3* | *0.987* |
| **Prob. (Married baby's father within 3 years after baby's birth)** | | | | | |
| Est. Sample (Mother in Wave 1; Mother in Wave 3) | | | | | |
| **(7)** Unmarried & Not Cohabiting at time of baby's birth | 1111 | 7.5 | 9.3 | -1.9 | 0.44 |
| | | *2.0* | *2.0* | *2.8* | *0.508* |
| **(8)** Unmarried & Cohabiting at time of baby's birth | 1114 | 25.2 | 26.6 | -1.4 | 0.10 |
| | | *3.1* | *3.2* | *4.4* | *0.753* |
| **Prob. (Still married to baby's father 3 years after baby's birth)** | | | | | |
| Est. Sample (Mother in Wave 1; Mother in Wave 3) | | | | | |
| **(9)** Married at time of baby's birth | 734 | 88.7 | 86.4 | 2.3 | 0.60 |
| | | *1.9* | *2.2* | *3.0* | *0.440* |
| **(10)** Married at time of baby's birth & knew each other > 5 years | 446 | 94.2 | 86.3 | 7.9** | 4.97 |
| | | *1.9* | *3.0* | *3.5* | *0.026* |
| **(11)** Married at time of baby's birth & knew each other > 10 years | 168 | 97.3 | 82.6 | 14.7*** | 6.87 |
| | | *2.7* | *4.9* | *5.6* | *0.009* |
| **Sample attrition bias: (Baseline=Mother in Wave 1)** | | | | | |
| **(12)** Prob. (Mother & Father both in Wave 1) | 3454 | 84.2 | 84.3 | -0.1 | 0.00 |
| | | *1.3* | *1.4* | *1.9* | *0.955* |
| **(13)** Prob. (Mother in Wave 1 & Mother in Wave 3) | 3454 | 88.2 | 87.3 | 0.9 | 0.26 |
| | | *1.2* | *1.3* | *1.7* | *0.609* |
| **(14)** Prob. (Mother & Father both in Wave 1 & Mother in Wave 3) | 3454 | 77.1 | 76.6 | 0.5 | 0.05 |
| | | *1.5* | *1.6* | *2.2* | *0.815* |

Notes: All figures weighted by national sampling weights. Standard errors in italics; * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%;
*** significant at 1%

**TABLE 2A. PARENTS' BASELINE ATTITUDES TOWARD MARRIAGE & CHILDREN, BY CHILD GENDER**

| | | Baby's Gender | | | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | Boy | Girl | Diff | (prob>F) |
| **(1)** Mother is happier married to baby's father (vs. not married to him) | 427 | 73.9 | 79.4 | -5.5 | 1.26 |
| | | *3.5* | *3.4* | *4.9* | *0.262* |
| **(2)** Father is happier married to baby's mother (vs. not married to her) | 427 | 78.5 | 71.4 | 7.1 | 1.92 |
| | | *3.1* | *4.0* | *5.1* | *0.166* |
| **(3)** Mother agrees parents should stay together when there are kids, even if parents don't get along | 427 | 34.8 | 38.6 | -3.8 | 0.47 |
| | | *3.6* | *4.2* | *5.6* | *0.495* |
| **(4)** Father agrees parents should stay together if there are kids, even if parents don't get along | 427 | 41.8 | 51.5 | -9.7* | 2.97 |
| | | *3.8* | *4.2* | *5.7* | *0.086* |

Notes: Estimates based on all couples who were married at the time of the baby's birth and knew each other at least five years before becoming pregnant. Attitude variables are measured within 1-2 months of the baby's birth. All figures weighted by national sampling weights. Standard errors in italics; * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

**TABLE 2B. FATHER INVOLVEMENT MEASURES AT YEAR 1, BY CHILD GENDER**

| | | Baby's Gender | | | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | Boy | Girl | Diff | (prob>F) |
| **(1)** Time father spent with baby at one year (Avg. # days/wk. read, tell stories, play, change, feed, put to bed) | 390 | 4.93 | 4.69 | 0.24 | 2.16 |
| | | *0.11* | *0.12* | *0.16* | *0.143* |
| **(2)** Mother says father often watches baby when she needs help | 356 | 90.6 | 77.1 | 13.5*** | 8.20 |
| | | *2.2* | *4.2* | *4.7* | *0.004* |
| **(3)** Mother says father acts like the father she wants for her child | 356 | 83.8 | 71.0 | 12.7** | 5.63 |
| | | *3.1* | *4.4* | *5.4* | *0.018* |
| **(4)** Mother had another baby (&/or is again pregnant) with baby's father *(measured at 3rd year)* | 374 | 30.1 | 25.6 | 4.4 | 0.69 |
| | | *3.6* | *3.9* | *5.4* | *0.407* |

Notes: Estimates based on all couples married at baby's birth, who knew each other at least five years before becoming pregnant *and* were still married one year after the baby's birth. Father involvement variables measured at approximately one year following the baby's birth. All figures weighted by national sampling weights. Standard errors in italics; * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

**TABLE 3A. CHILD GENDER EFFECTS ON MARITAL STABILITY BY MARTIAL HAPPINESS**

| Prob. (Still married after 3 years) if: | N | Baby's Gender Boy | Baby's Gender Girl | Diff | F (prob>F) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **(1)** Both Parents are happier married to each other (at baseline) | 263 | 96.3 | 93.6 | 2.8 | 0.65 |
| | | *2.1* | *2.7* | *3.4* | *0.420* |
| **(2)** Mother is happier married; Father is not | 49 | 94.3 | 86.3 | 8.1 | 0.38 |
| | | *5.4* | *12.0* | *13.4* | *0.540* |
| **(3)** Father is happier married; Mother is not | 49 | 93.5 | 84.2 | 9.4 | 0.93 |
| | | *4.6* | *8.5* | *9.9* | *0.335* |
| **(4)** Both parents would be happy or happier if *not* married to each other | 37 | 85.1 | 64.0 | 21.1 | 1.62 |
| | | *9.8* | *13.4* | *17.1* | *0.204* |
| **(5)** At least one parent would be happy or happier if *not* married to other | 135 | 91.8 | 78.3 | 13.5* | 3.17 |
| | | *3.8* | *6.6* | *7.6* | *0.076* |

*Notes:* Estimates based on couples who were married at the time of the baby's birth and knew each other at least five years before becoming pregnant. Marital attitudes measured within 1-2 months of the baby's birth. Figures weighted by national sampling weights. Standard errors in italics; * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

**TABLE 3B. CHILD GENDER EFFECTS ON MARITAL STABILITY BY ATTITUDES ON MARRIAGE WITH CHILDREN**

| Prob. (Still married after 3 years) if: | N | Baby's Gender Boy | Baby's Gender Girl | Diff | F (prob>F) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **(1)** Both parents agree parents with children should stay together, even if parents don't get along | 29 | 94.6 | 91.6 | 3.0 | 0.10 |
| | | *5.3* | *8.1* | *10.0* | *0.756* |
| **(2)** At least one disagrees parents with children should stay together, even if parents don't get along | 106 | 91.0 | 73.0 | 18.0* | 3.58 |
| | | *4.6* | *8.3* | *9.6* | *0.059* |

*Notes:* Estimates based on couples who were married at the time of the baby's birth, who knew each other at least five years before becoming pregnant, and in which at least one parent would be happy or happier if not married to other (at baseline). All marital attitudes measured within 1-2 months of the baby's birth. Figures weighted by national sampling weights. Standard errors in italics;
* significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

**TABLE 4. FATHER INVOLVEMENT AT ONE YEAR AND PROBABILITY OF STAYING MARRIED THREE YEARS**

| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Baby is a boy** | **0.097** | **0.094** | **0.042** | **0.059** | **0.017** |
| | *(0.070)* | *(0.061)* | *(0.057)* | *(0.068)* | *(0.058)* |
| Time father spent with baby at one year | | 0.006 | | | |
| | | *(0.033)* | | | |
| Mother says father often watches baby when she needs help | | | 0.169* | | 0.143* |
| | | | *(0.092)* | | *(0.086)* |
| Mother says father is the kind of dad she wants for her child | | | | 0.189 | 0.151 |
| | | | | *(0.143)* | *(0.132)* |
| Constant | 0.842*** | 0.815*** | 0.739*** | 0.692*** | 0.643*** |
| | *(0.059)* | *(0.182)* | *(0.102)* | *(0.141)* | *(0.146)* |
| Observations | 123 | 123 | 114 | 114 | 114 |
| R-squared | 0.02 | 0.03 | 0.07 | 0.06 | 0.10 |

Notes: Estimates based on all couples married at baby's birth, who knew each other at least five years before becoming pregnant, were *still married one year after* the baby's birth, and in which at least one parent would have been happy or happier if *not* married to other (at baseline). Father involvement variables are measured at approximately one year following the baby's birth. All figures weighted by national sampling weights. Standard errors in parentheses; * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%