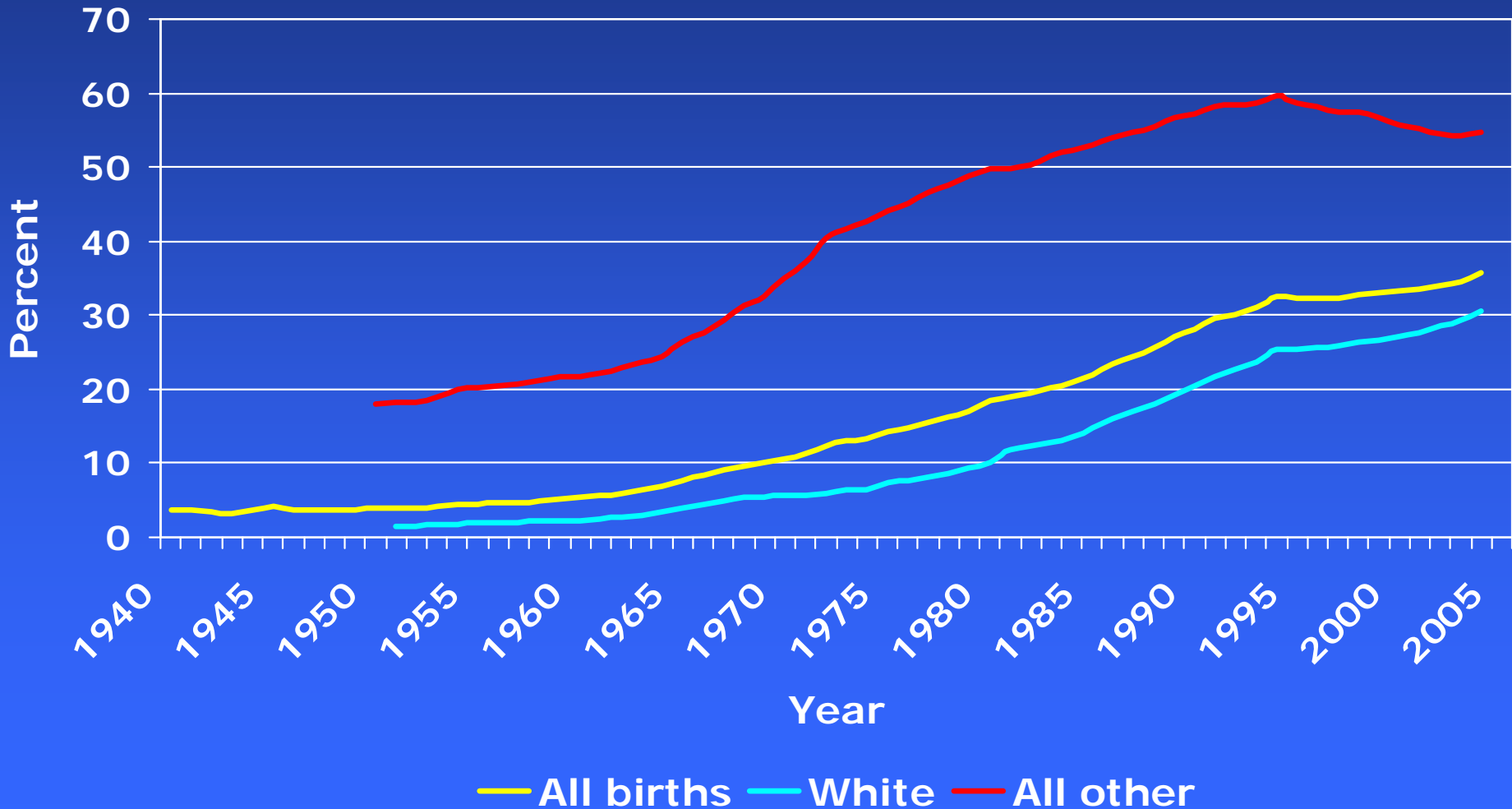


**The Fragile Families and
Child Well-being Study:
A Multi-site Birth Cohort
9-year Study of Mothers,
Fathers and Their Children**

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Births to Unmarried Mothers, U.S.



Motivation

- Growth in non-marital childbearing, from 6% of births in 1960 to 40% of births today; increase in *fragile families*
- Many unanswered questions:
 - parents' capabilities & relationships at birth
 - stability of relationships
 - parent and child wellbeing
 - the role of welfare state transfers
- Very little information about fathers ("missing fathers problem"); very little information about parental relationships

Fragile Families Study Design

- Probability sample of 4900+ new births (1998-2000)
 - 20 cities (200,000 or more people)
 - 75 hospitals
 - Approximately 3700 non-marital births; 1200 marital births
- Data are representative of births in large cities
- Interviews conducted with both parents
- Follow-up interviews conducted at 1, 3, and 5 years after birth; child assessments at 3 and 5 years;
- 9 year interviews are underway
- Public use data are available for all four waves
- Summer workshops

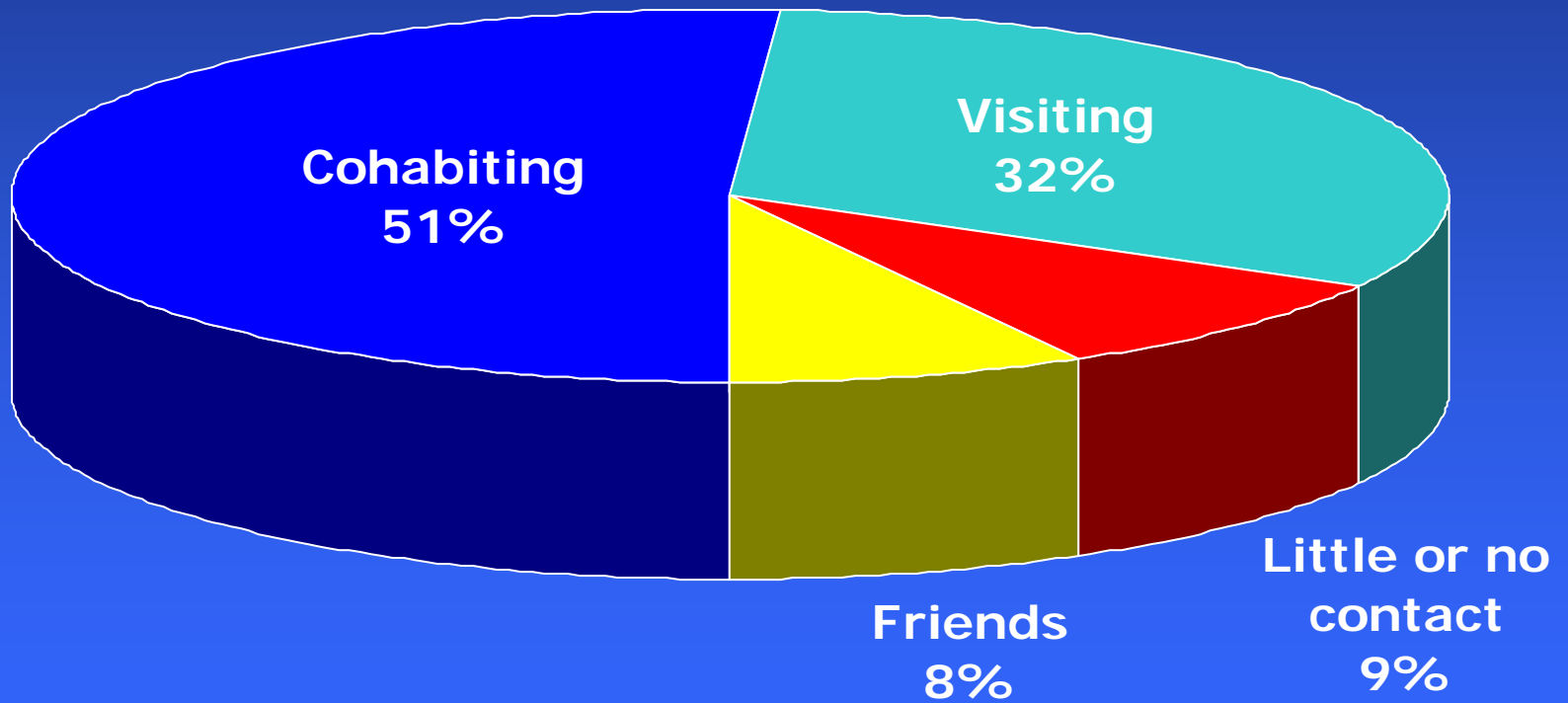
Special Features

- Large sample of 'high risk children' (naturally occurring)
- High response rates
 - 88% of unmarried mothers at birth
 - 75% of unmarried fathers (60% at the hospital, 85% at least once)
 - 85% of mothers at year 5
 - 70%-75% at year 9
- Mixed methods
 - Phone and in-person surveys
 - Interviews with childcare providers and teachers (Brooks-Gunn)
 - Qualitative interviews in 4 cities (Waller, Edin)
 - Medical records data (Reichman and Teitler)
 - Bio markers at year 9

Parental Relationships and Capabilities

- Background and Questions: What is the nature of parental relationships? What are parents' capabilities?
Multiple stories
 - Scandinavian model
 - Poor-man's marriage
 - Casual unions
 - Murphy Brown
- Findings – High Hopes and Low Capabilities

Relationships at Birth



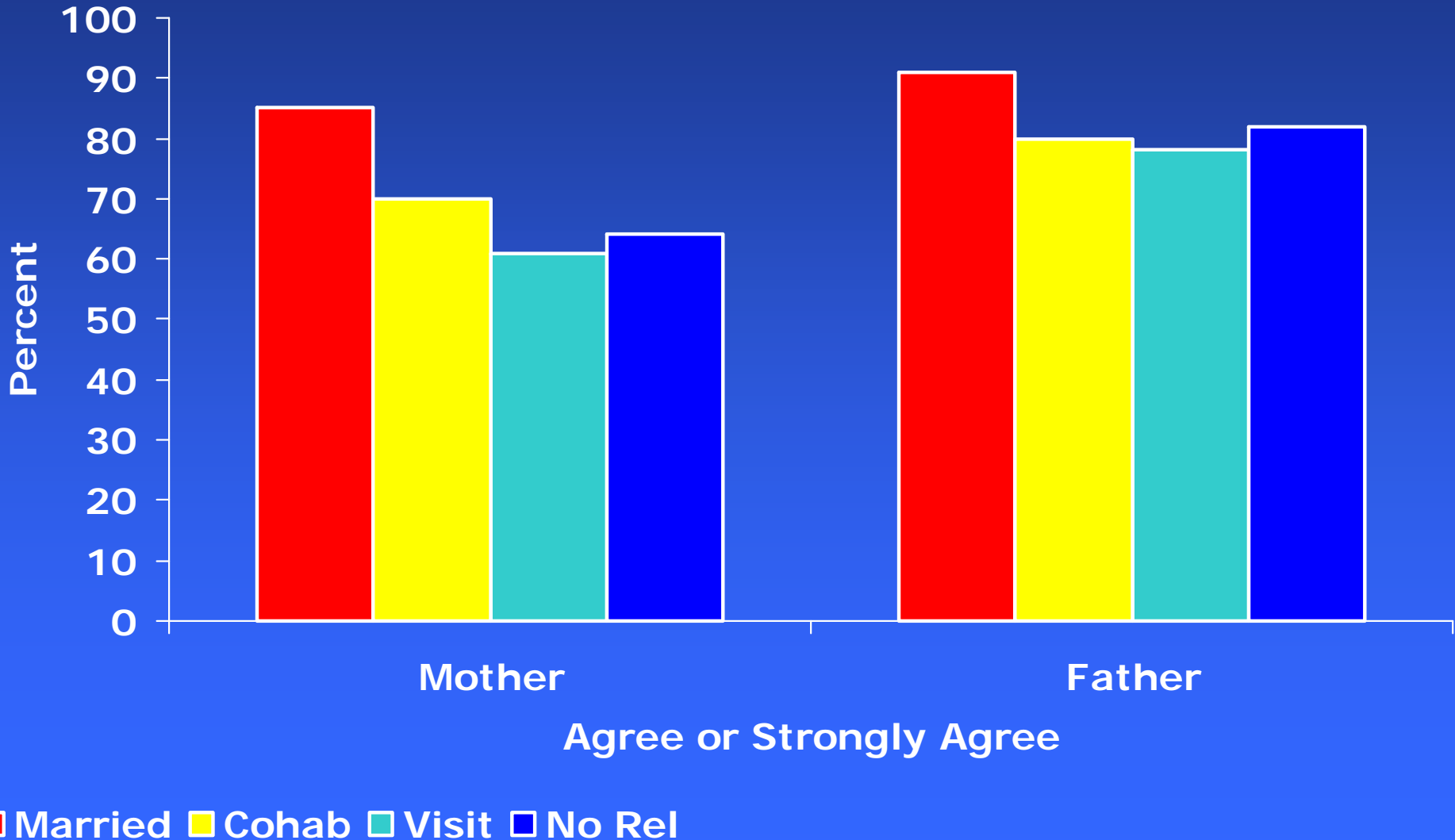
Father Involvement at Birth

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

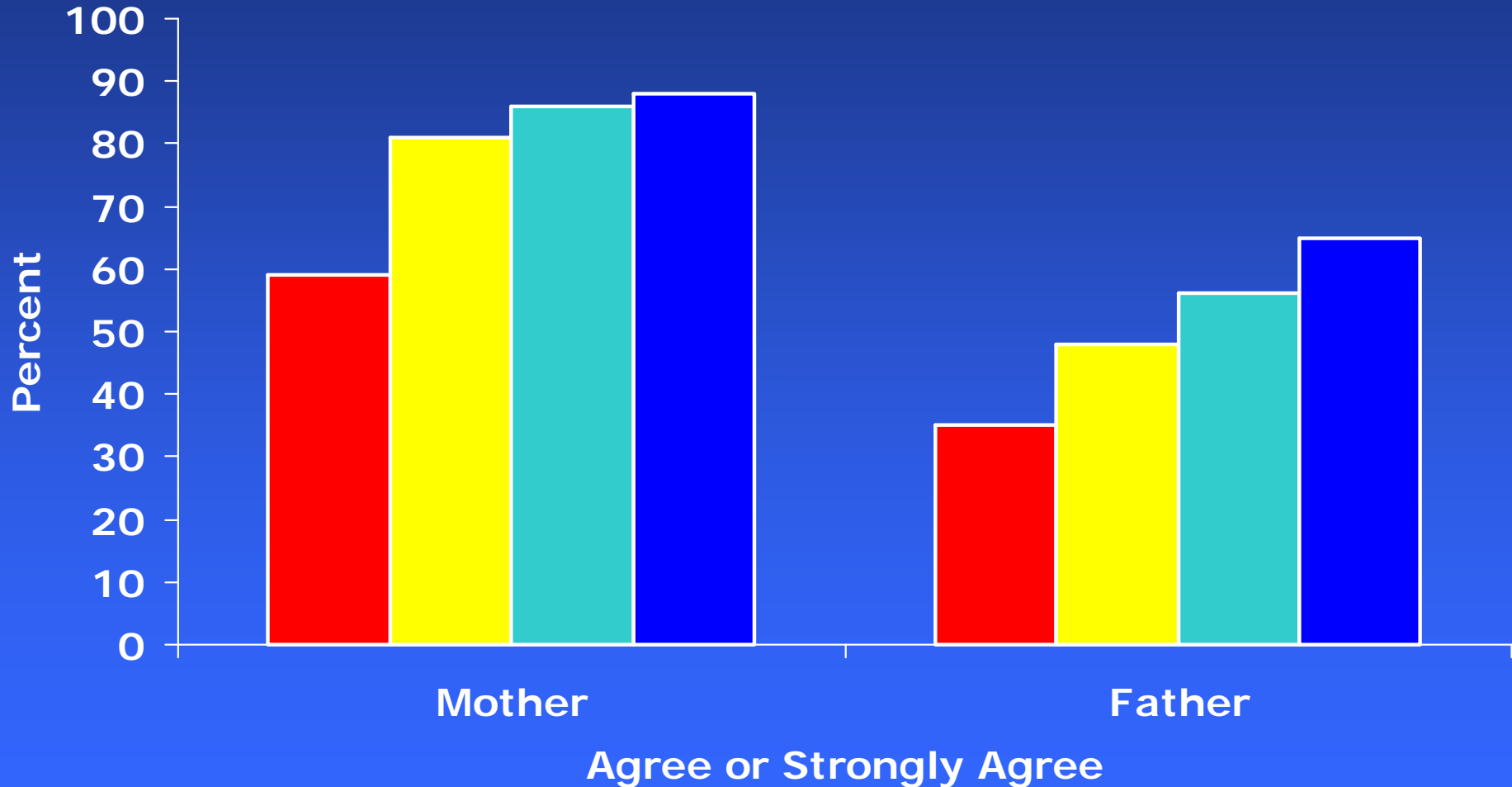
"Chances of Marriage are..."

	Mothers (%)	Fathers (%)
Almost certain	37	50
Good	22	25
Fifty/fifty	16	15
Not so good	9	5
No chance	17	5

"Marriage is better for kids..."



"A single mother can raise a child alone"



■ Married ■ Cohab ■ Visit ■ No Rel

Parental Capabilities

	Mothers		Fathers	
	Married	Unmarried	Married	Unmarried
Age (mean)	29.6	23.3	31.9	26.7
Teen parent (%)	4	25*	0	13*
Murphy Brown	na	<1	na	na
Child with other partner - MPF (%)	14	42*	16	43*
Education (%)				
Less than HS	18	45	19	38
High school	25	38	21	40
Some college	21	16	27	18
College	36	1	34	4
Non-white (%)	49	81	48	82
Immigrant (%)	31	19		
Earnings (mean)	\$17,107	\$7,997	\$40,499	\$20,962

Capabilities, cont'd

	Mothers		Fathers	
	Married (%)	Unmarried (%)	Married (%)	Unmarried (%)
Depression	13	16	7	11
Heavy drinking	3	7	22	27
Illegal drug use	1	2	4	8
Either has problem	42	52	-	-
Both have problem	6	10	-	-
Father incarcerated	-	-	6	40

Relationship Trajectories

- Background and Questions
- Different stories have different scenarios about the stability of relationships among unmarried parents
 - Scandinavian model - stable
 - Poor-man's marriage – stable
 - Casual unions – unstable
- Which story fits the data?
- Findings: Instability and Complexity

Relationship Transitions

(birth and year 5)

5 Years

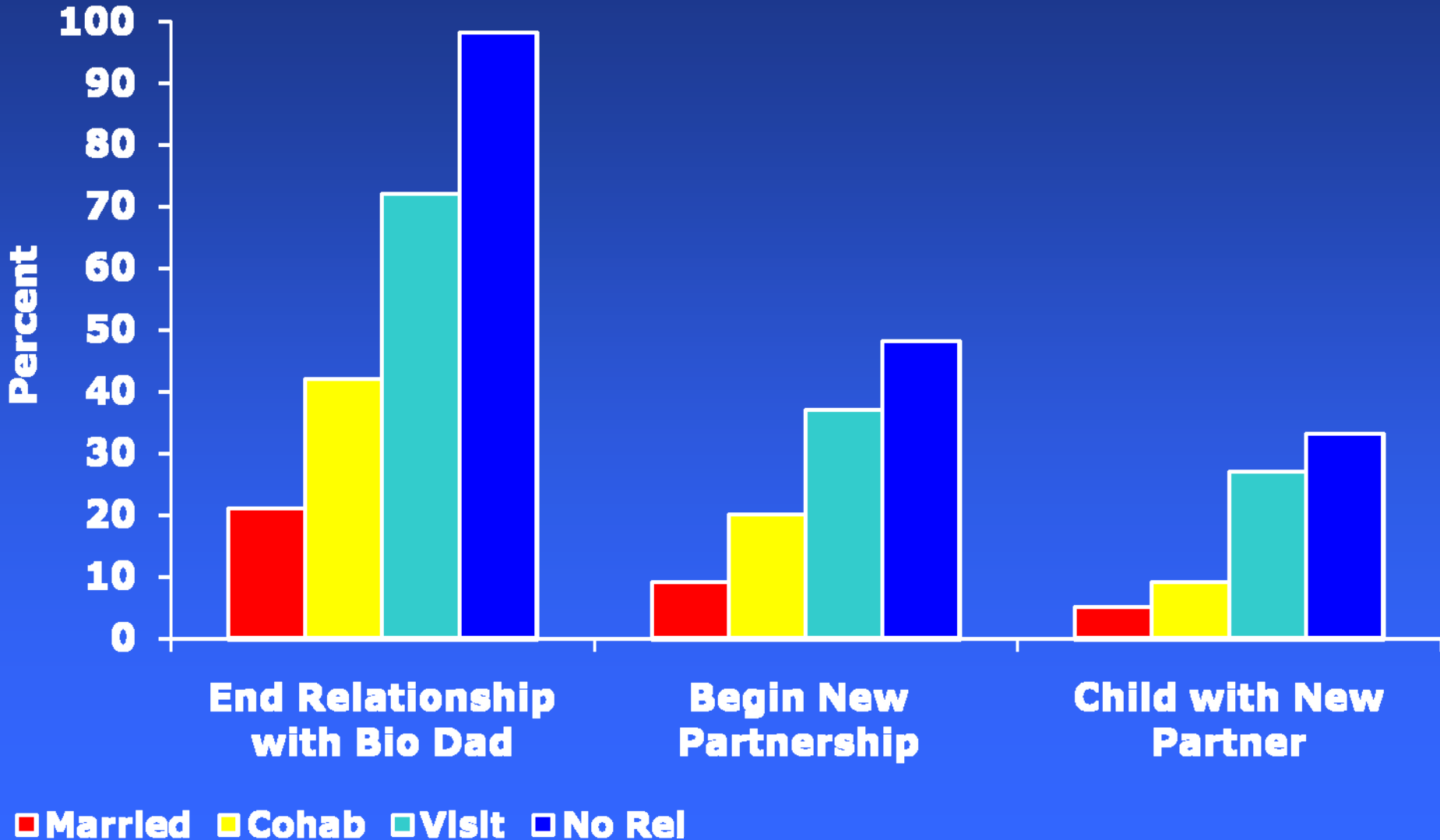
	Married	Cohab	Visit	Nonrel	Total
	%	%	%	%	%
<i>At Birth</i>					
Cohabiting	26	26	3	45	100
Visiting	7	11	10	72	100
None	4	7	2	88	101
All	16	18	5	61	100

Predictors of Marriage

(by year 3)

Earnings	+ (fathers)
Education	+ (mothers)
Child with other partner	- (fathers)
Gender distrust	- (mothers)
Supportiveness	+ (both parents)
Pro-marriage attitudes	+ (both parents)

Relationships thru Age 5



Trajectories in Parental Resources

- Background: Large literature shows that marriage increases earnings and health whereas divorce reduces both outcomes
- Questions: Do these associations extend to unmarried parents? Are the associations causal?
- Findings: Marriage after a non-marital birth increases fathers' earnings and mothers' income and health; Union dissolution reduces both outcomes (Some evidence of causal effects)

Family Structure/stability and Parenting

- Background: Large literature shows that divorce reduces fathers' investments of time and money; another literature shows that divorce (and remarriage) reduce the quality of mothers' parenting
- Questions: Do these findings extend to parents in fragile families? How important are family structure and stability? Are the associations causal?
- Findings: Family structure is critical for father involvement; Family structure and stability are both important for mothers' parenting. (Some evidence of causal effects)

Bio-Father Involvement

(over time)

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

Instability and Mothers' Parenting (age 5)

	Maternal stress	Harsh parenting	Literacy activities
# Residential Changes	.18*	.24*	.04
- Early chg	-.06	.10	.10+
- Recent chg	.33*	.38*	.03
# Dating changes	.21*	.10*	.02
Not married to Bio Dad (Year 5)	-.15	-.38	-.31*

† p < .10 * p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .01, two-tailed tests

Family Structure/stability and Child Wellbeing

- Background: Large literature shows that divorce (and remarriage) have negative effects on child wellbeing
- Questions: Do these findings extend to children in fragile families? How important is family structure/stability? Are the associations causal?
- Findings: Family structure and instability are both important; Some evidence of causal effects, especially for behavior problems

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Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Birth Cohort (ECLS-B)

ECLS-B: Major Foci

- The cognitive and non-cognitive development of young children, from birth to school entry
- Young children's transitions from parental care to the range of non-parental care options, early education programs, and kindergarten
- Children's school readiness

ECLS-B Study Design

- Data collected at multiple time-points, from multiple sources, using multiple methods
- Nationally representative of all children born in the United States in 2001
- Approximately 14,000 birth certificates were sampled
- Certain special populations were over-sampled

ECLS-B Study Design

Wave	Year Collected	Sample Size
9 months	2001	10,700
2 years	2003	9,800
Preschool (4 years)	2005	8,900
Kindergarten	2006	Not available
Kindergarten (late entry)	2007	Not available

ECLS-B Study Design

9 months	2 Years	Preschool
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child assessments • Parent interview • Parent-child video • Resident and non-resident father questionnaire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child assessments • Parent interview • Parent-child video • Resident and non-resident father questionnaire • Early care and education provider interview • Early care and education observation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child assessments • Parent interview • Parent-child video • Resident father questionnaire • Early care and education provider interview • Early care and education observation

ECLS-B Study Design

Kindergarten, 2006	Kindergarten, 2007 (late entry)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Child assessments•Parent interview•Teacher questionnaire•Early care provider interviews•Wrap around care provider questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Child assessments•Parent interview (abbreviated)•Teacher questionnaire•Early care provider interviews•Wrap around care provider questionnaire

ECLS-B Measures: Child Assessments

- Physical Health, Physical Activity, and Nutrition
 - Height, weight, middle upper arm circumference (MUCA), head circumference, fine and gross motor
- Cognitive Development
 - Bayley Short Form
- Language/Communication Development
 - Language, literacy, numeracy
- Socioemotional Development
 - Nursing Child Assessment Teaching Scale (NCATS), Two Bags Task, TAS-45, parent/early care and education provider/teacher report

ECLS-B Measures: Parent Interview

- Family demographics
 - Parental employment and education, household composition, marital history and relationships
- Household economic characteristics
 - Household income, assets, food security, welfare, public assistance
- Family health variables
 - Pre- and perinatal health of mother and sample child, maternal mental health
- Child care participation
- Social and community support and neighborhood quality
- Home learning environment

ECLS-B Measures: Early Care and Education Provider

- Phone interview with care provider
 - Sample child's development, development of other children in care, caregiver's characteristics and beliefs, relationship with child, parent involvement, characteristics of the setting/learning environment
- Observation of child care setting for a sub-sample of families
 - Counts of adults and children, Environment Rating Scales (ITERS/ECERS/FDCRS), Arnett Scale of Caregiver Sensitivity
- Center director self-administered questionnaire (for center-based settings)