Introduction to the
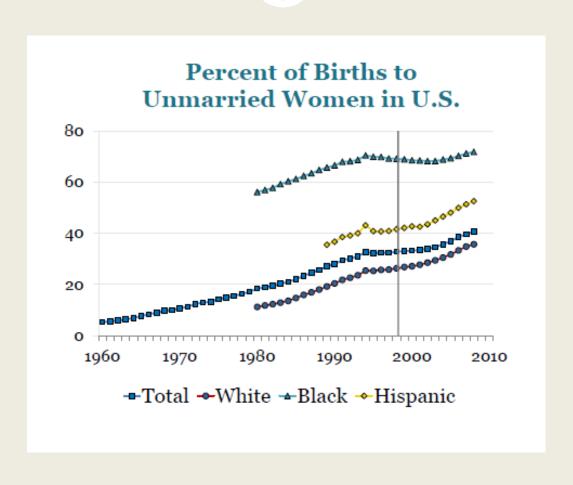# Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study

Overview

- Study background
- Data collection and content
- Working with the data
- The Fragile Families Challenge

Study Background

The Context – The late 1990s

Percent of Births to Unmarried Women in U.S.

Fragile Families & Child Wellbeing Study

Principal Investigators:

- At Princeton University: **Sara McLanahan**, Kathy Edin
- At Columbia University: **Irv Garfinkel, Ron Mincy**, Jane Waldfogel, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Julien Teitler
- Other Universities: Paula England (NYU), Nancy Reichman (Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and Princeton), Christina Paxson (Brown)

Funders: Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health & Human Development (NICHD), Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and a consortium of public agencies and private non-profits and foundations.

Survey Subcontractors: Baseline – NORC/MPR ; **Years 1, 3, and 5** – Mathematica Policy Research; **Years 9 and 15** – Westat, Inc.

Original Aims of Core Study

- What are the capabilities of unmarried parents, especially fathers?

- What is the nature of parental relationships, and how stable are relationships?

- How do children fare and how does family structure and stability affect child wellbeing?

- How do social policies affect family dynamics and child wellbeing?

Evolving Aims of Study

- How do **children's** early family experiences impact their later adolescence development and adult outcomes?

- How do **adolescents'** school, peer, and community environments affect their health, learning and wellbeing?

- How do **genetic** characteristics interact with social environments to influence child and adolescent wellbeing?

- What are the social environmental effects on variable genetic characteristics, such as telomere lengths and DNA methylation?

Study Design in Brief

- Birth cohort
  - Follows cohort of children (~5,000) from birth to age 15
  - Started in 1998-2000 & Latest data collection 2014-2017
  - Waiting on funding decision for age 22 follow-up

- Multi-method
  - Surveys (phone, in-person, self-administered)
  - Interviewer observations
  - Cognitive assessments
  - Height/weight measurements

Sampling Design in Brief

- Sample of 4,898 births from 20 large U.S. cities (populations of 200,000 or more)
  - Cities also sampled to cover different policy contexts
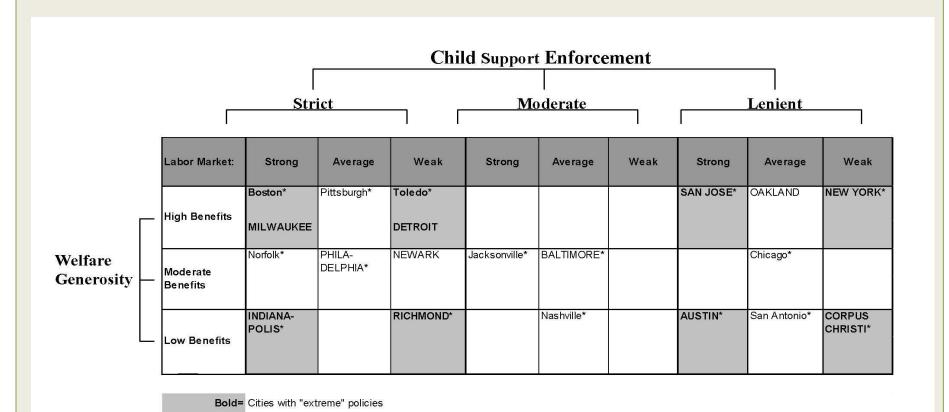 - Cities → Hospitals within cities → Mothers within hospitals

- Oversample of non-marital births
  - 3,711 unmarried mothers; 1,187 married mothers (3:1)

Sampling: Cities by Policy Regime

| | Child Support Enforcement | | | | | | | | |
| | Strict | | | Moderate | | | Lenient | | |
Labor Market:	Strong	Average	Weak	Strong	Average	Weak	Strong	Average	Weak
High Benefits	Boston* MILWAUKEE	Pittsburgh*	Toledo* DETROIT				SAN JOSE*	OAKLAND	NEW YORK*
Moderate Benefits	Norfolk*	PHILA-DELPHIA*	NEWARK	Jacksonville*	BALTIMORE*			Chicago*	
Low Benefits	INDIANA-POLIS*		RICHMOND*		Nashville*		AUSTIN*	San Antonio*	CORPUS CHRISTI*

Welfare Generosity (row grouping on left)

Bold= Cities with "extreme" policies
UPPER CASE= Large sample cities (325 births)
Lower case= Small sample cities (100 births)
*= City is in national sample

Sample Cities

What do you think?

- What kinds of questions are we not able to answer based on the sample?

- What might these data work better for?
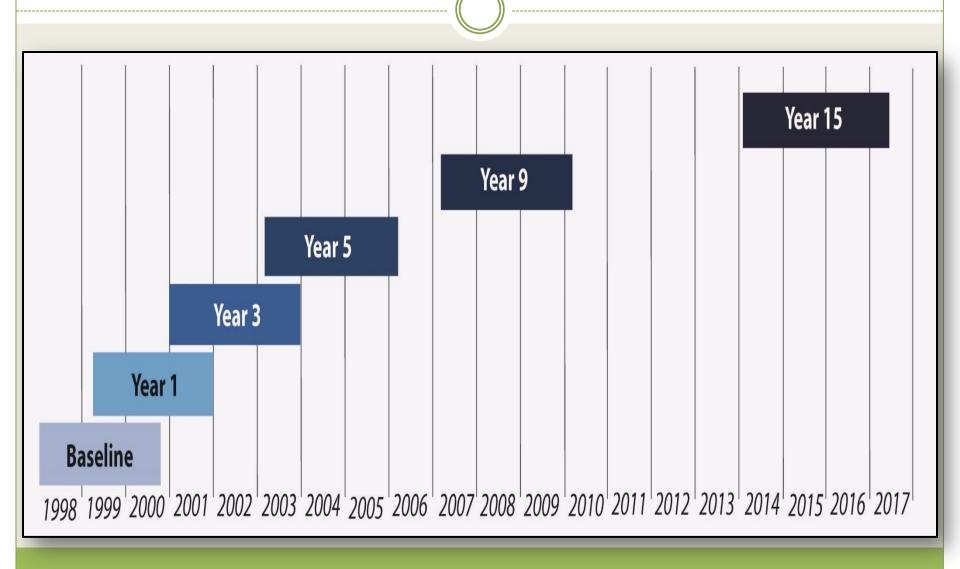
Use of Data and Dissemination of Findings

- Use of data
  - Data publicly available to researchers: ~7,000 users

- Dissemination of findings
  - >700 journal articles published
  - 40 books/book chapters
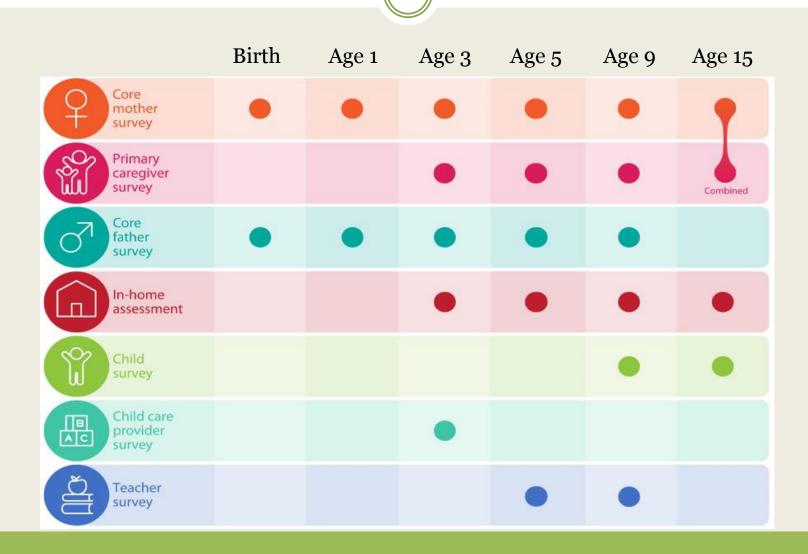
Data Collection and Content

Study Timeline

Surveys and Assessments

- Mother & Father surveys

- Child / teen survey

- Primary caregiver (PCG) survey
  - If mother lives with child, then mother; else, father; else, other caregiver

- In-home assessments

- Childcare provider / teacher surveys

Surveys and Assessments at Each Wave

	Birth	Age 1	Age 3	Age 5	Age 9	Age 15
Core mother survey	●	●	●	●	●	● (Combined)
Primary caregiver survey			●	●	●	● (Combined)
Core father survey	●	●	●	●	●	
In-home assessment			●	●	●	●
Child survey					●	●
Child care provider survey			●			
Teacher survey				●	●	

Examples of Survey Content – About the parents

- **Parents' relationships** (with each other & new partner)
- **Health and health behavior** (incl. physical and mental health; alcohol, tobacco, other drug use)
- **Education, employment, and income**
- **Parenting** (incl. supervision, discipline, relationship)
- **Finances** (incl. public and private assistance, child support, material hardship/Great Recession)

Examples of Survey Content – About the home

- Household composition
- Family characteristics and history
  - Grandparents
  - Siblings (residential and non-residential)
- Home/neighborhood environments
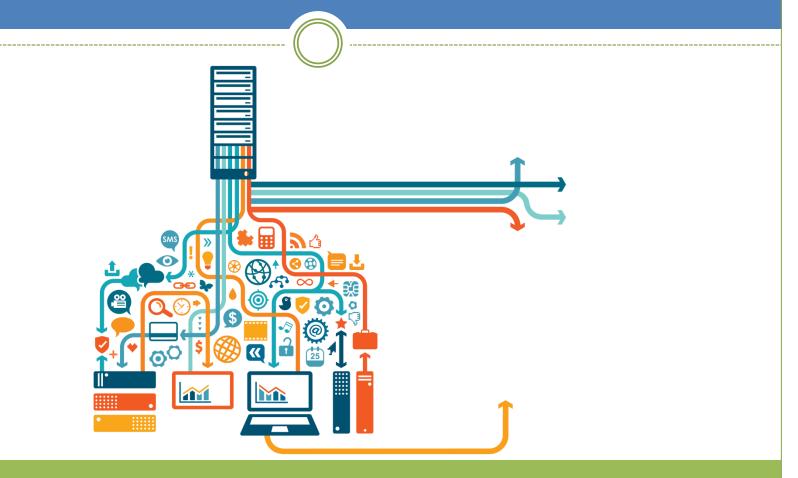- Neighborhood safety and connectedness

Examples of Survey Content – About the kids

- Health: physical, mental, child development
- Education and school experiences
- Height/weight
- Cognitive assessments (eg. attention, vocabulary)
- Behavior and early delinquent behavior

Working with the data

Remember, it's not just data. These are real people.

- Why is this important?
  - Your work can have a real impact on the world!
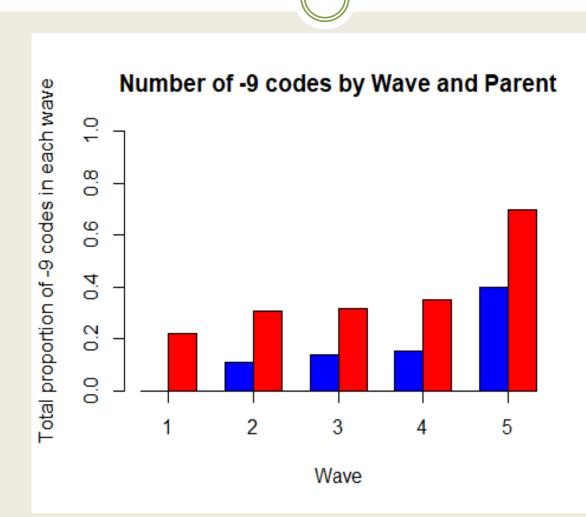 - We also need to respect our participants' confidentiality and time.

Sample size (% of baseline sample)

	Baseline	1-year	3-year	5-year	9-year	15-year
Mother "core" survey	4,898 (100%)	4,364 (89%)	4,231 (86%)	4,139 (85%)	3,515 (72%)	*
Father "core" survey	3,830 (78%)	3,379 (69%)	3,299 (67%)	3,159 (64%)	2,652 (54%)	*
Primary caregiver survey	*	*	3,258 (67%)	2,981 (61%)	3,630 (74%)	3,580 (73%)
In-home assessment	*	*	2,618 (53%)	2,376 (49%)	3,392 (69%)	1,090
Child survey	*	*	*	*	3,377 (69%)	3,444 (70%)
Childcare provider survey	*	*	810	*	*	*
Teacher survey	*	*	*	1,039	2,254 (46%)	*

Missing Data Codes

- **-9 Not in wave** – *Did not participate in survey/data collection component*

- **-8 Out of range** – *Response not possible; rarely used*

- **-7 Not applicable** (also -10/-14) – *Rarely used for survey questions*

- **-6 Skipped** "Valid skip" – *Intentionally not asked question; question does not apply to respondent or response known based on prior information.*

- **-5 Not asked** "Invalid skip" – *Respondent not asked question in the version of the survey they received (present in two "pilot" cities).*

- **-3 Missing** – *Data is missing due to some other reason*

- **-2 Don't know** – *Respondent asked question; Responded "Don't Know".*

- **-1 Refuse** – *Respondent asked question; Refused to answer question.*

Missing Data: −9 Not in Wave

Number of -9 codes by Wave and Parent

Key
Mothers
Fathers

Variable Naming Conventions

	Baseline	Year 1	Year 3	Year 5	Year 9	Year 15
Mother core	m1	m2	m3	m4	m5	NA
Father core	f1	f2	f3	f4	f5	NA
Home assessments	NA	NA	hv3	hv4	hv5	hv6
Interviewer observations	NA	NA	hv3	hv4	o5	o6
Primary caregiver survey	NA	NA	hv3	hv4	p5	p6
Child survey	NA	NA	NA	NA	k5	k6
Childcare provider survey	NA	NA	ffcc	NA	NA	NA
Teacher survey	NA	NA		kind	t5	NA

Constructed variables have a "c" in front of this prefix.

Learn More about the FFCWS

Publications Database

https://ffpubs.princeton.edu/

- Text search of title and abstract and/or search by author
- Filter by publication type and/or keyword
- Contains journal articles, books, book chapters, and working papers

Documentation Page

http://fragilefamilies.princeton.edu/documentation

- Questionnaires
- Codebooks (tabulations of all variables)
- Guides to the public use files
- Other technical documentation

The Fragile Families Challenge

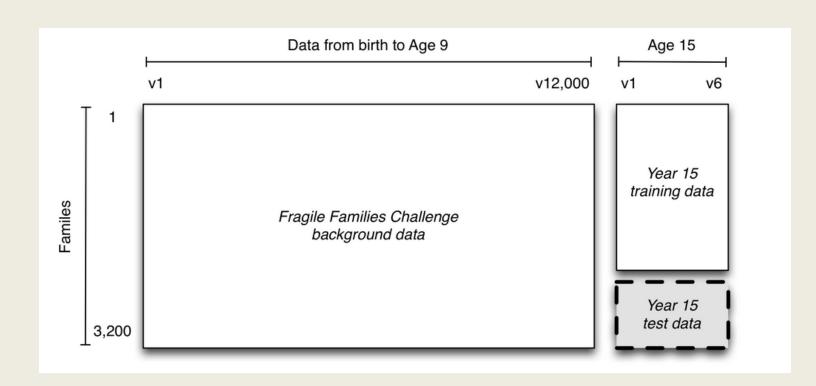# The Fragile Families Challenge

What would happen if hundreds of social scientists and data scientists worked together on a scientific challenge to improve the lives of disadvantaged children in the United States?

A mass collaboration combining:
- Predictive modeling
- Causal inference
- In-depth interviews

http://www.fragilefamilieschallenge.org/

The Fragile Families Challenge

The FFChallenge Outcomes

- Teens' GPA
- Teens' grit

- Household material hardship
- Household eviction

- PCGs' layoff
- PCGs' job training

Learn More about the FFCWS and FFChallenge

Study website:
www.fragilefamilies.princeton.edu

Search FFCWS metadata:
http://metadata.fragilefamilies.princeton.edu/

Learn about the FF Challenge:
http://www.fragilefamilieschallenge.org/

Email questions to: ffdata@princeton.edu

Follow us on twitter @FFCWS