Child well-being in interethnic families*

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Rates of racial and ethnic intermarriage in the United States have been increasing considerably. Although the percentage of marriages that are interracial is still relatively low, it has risen from less than 1% in 1970 to over 5% in 2000, with the number of interracial couples increasing tenfold during this time period to more than 3 million in 2000 (Fu & Heaton, 2008; Lee & Edmonston, 2005). These patterns are linked to corresponding changes in children's lives, with 6.4% of all children (over 3 million) living with interracially married parents in 2000, up from 1.5% in 1970 (Lee & Edmonston, 2005). The vast majority of children living with interracially married parents are the biological offspring of both parents, but even where this is not the case, these parents play a key role in shaping children's racial identity, adjustment, and well-being (Lee & Edmonston, 2005). Nevertheless, we know relatively little about how such children are faring. There is some concern that these children face greater difficulties and experience lower levels of well-being than children living with same race/ethnic parents (Cooney & Radina, 2000). Only a few studies have empirically tested this proposition, however, and most suffer from reliance on small, nonrepresentative samples, examine a narrow age range of children, and focus on a limited number of child outcomes (Shih & Sanchez, 2005).

This study seeks to provide a better understanding of child well-being among children living with married parents who are of different races/ethnicities. In this paper, the term "interethnic" is used to describe marriages in which partners differ in their racial or ethnic identification and "same-ethnic" is used to describe couples who share their racial or ethnic identification, similar to Hohmann-Marriott & Amato (2008) who note that the term interethnic can include both interracial and interethnic marriages. This study considers marriages between major U.S. racial/ethnic groups including whites (non-Hispanic), blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans.

The first aim of this study is to examine whether child well-being differs between children living with interethnic and same-ethnic parents. To go beyond some of the limitations of much existing work, we use nationally representative data from the first wave of the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH). We focus on a broad age range of children, from 5 to 18 years old, and consider four different indicators of child well-being including positive affect, negative affect, global well-being, and behavioral problems.

A second aim of this study is to assess whether other family characteristics and processes that differ by interethnic status explain any differences that are found in child well-being. In addition to controlling for demographic and family characteristics, two potential explanatory factors are considered: level of marital tensions and parenting quality. Both marital tensions and poor parenting practices negatively influence child well-being (e.g., Gerard, Krishnakumar, & Buehler, 2006), and some prior research suggests differences exist between interethnic and same-ethnic couples on these factors (e.g., Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008; Shih & Sanchez, 2005), but prior studies have not tested the extent to which differences in marital tensions or parenting quality can account for differences in child outcomes between interethnic and same-ethnic families. We consider several indicators of marital tensions (marital conflict, nonshared values, lack of social support) and parenting quality (parental monitoring, parental warmth and harsh discipline, and having difficult and enjoyable times with children).

Background

A few early scholars suggested that children in interethnic families were at greater risk of negative outcomes than children in same-ethnic families, but provided little empirical evidence to support their conclusions. Results were often based on nonrepresentative samples (e.g., Gordon, 1964; McDermott & Fukunaga, 1977; Porterfield, 1978), and interethnic families were not always directly compared to same-ethnic families (e.g., Gordon, 1964; Porterfield, 1978). In

particular, it was suggested that children with interethnic parents were at greater risk for lower levels of self-esteem, trust, and feelings of acceptance (Gordon, 1964; Mann & Waldron, 1977; Porterfield, 1978), and exhibited greater levels of anxiety, restlessness, aggressiveness, and withdrawal (McDermott & Fukunaga, 1977). Even some of these early studies, however, provided mixed findings or suggested no differences. For example, one study using data from the Hawaii Family Study of Cognition found that offspring with interethnic parents did not appear to be at greater risk of developing internal or social adjustment problems than offspring with same-ethnic parents, and few differences in personality traits existed between the two groups (Johnson & Nagoshi, 1986).

More recent research has focused on adolescent well-being and multiracial offspring in particular, with a few studies based on nationally representative data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health (Add Health). Findings from these studies provide some limited evidence for a negative relationship between parents' interethnic status and some adolescent outcomes. Specifically, these studies found some evidence that adolescents with interethnic parents had greater involvement in risky and antisocial behavior (Fryer, Kahn, Levitt, & Spenkuch, 2008), and higher rates of depression, counseling, and academic problems (Campbell & Eggerling-Boeck, 2006; Cooney & Radina, 2000; Harris & Thomas, 2002; Milan & Keiley, 2000) than adolescents with same-ethnic parents. A study of middle school students in Seattle found that multiracial students exhibited greater levels of physical violence and were more likely to try cigarettes or alcohol than single race/ethnic students (Choi, Harachi, Gillmore, & Catalano, 2006).

One study of university students, however, found no difference between mixed heritage students and same heritage students on levels of self esteem, feelings of alienation, or stress

(Stephan & Stephan, 1991). In a recent review of the literature on multiracial individuals and psychological well-being, Shih and Sanchez (2005) concluded that the evidence for poorer adjustment among multiracial individuals was decidedly mixed, with support for negative psychological adjustment depending on the outcomes examined and the specific monoracial population to which the multiracial population was being compared. Overall, the limited and mixed findings of previous research provide no clear or strong pattern regarding whether children in interethnic families are fairing more poorly than their peers living in same-ethnic families.

Conceptual Model

In this study, the effect of parents' ethnic heterogamy on child well-being is tested as a mediation model based on the spillover hypothesis. Empirical research has shown support for the spillover hypothesis, which suggests that tensions from the marital relationship can carry over into the parent-child relationship (Engfer, 1988; Erel & Burman, 1995). Interethnic couples may experience greater marital tensions, which stem from experiencing more conflict, having fewer shared values, and receiving less social support than same-ethnic couples. These negative factors that affect the couple's relationship may lead to poorer quality parenting and weaker parent-child ties. Problematic parenting, in turn, could negatively affect children's well-being and development. A simple conceptual model would take the form:

parents' interethnic status → parents' marital tensions → quality of parenting → child well-being

Prior research provides some support for the link between interethnic status and marital tensions. Greater marital heterogamy, particularly age and racial heterogamy, is associated with reports of lower marital quality and lower marital happiness (Amato, Johnson, Booth, & Rogers, 2003). A recent study found that the lower relationship quality reported by partners in interethnic unions stemmed from these couples receiving less social support, having fewer shared values, and more complex relationship histories than same-ethnic couples (Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008). One study focusing on adolescents in married two-parent households, however, found no differences in parental reports of marital quality by whether the adolescent identified as multiracial (Cooney & Radina, 2000).

Greater marital tensions have been linked to poorer quality parenting, including harsh and less favorable discipline techniques (Krishnakumar & Buehler, 2000), greater parental withdrawal and less emotional support to children (Lindahl & Malik, 1999), and tenser parent-child relations (Almeida, Wethington, Chandler, 1999). A higher level of marital tension has also been associated with negative outcomes for children including greater externalizing problems (Fauber, Forehand, Thomas, & Wierson, 1990; Gerard et al., 2006; Jenkins, 2000), internalizing problems (Davies & Cummings, 1994; Du Rocher Schudlich & Cummings, 2003; Katz & Gottman, 1996; Schoppe-Sullivan, Schermerhorn, & Cummings, 2007) and overall poorer child adjustment (Buehler & Gerard, 2002; Erel & Burman, 1995).

Prior research has also demonstrated an association between poor quality parenting and negative child outcomes (Demo & Cox, 2000). Some research has further suggested that poor quality parenting is a mediator in the link between marital conflict and child internalizing and externalizing problems (Buehler & Gerard, 2002; Gerard et al., 2006; Katz & Gottman, 1996). With regard to a direct link between interethnic status and parenting quality, there is some

suggestion that parenting quality may be lower in interethnic families, but the evidence is more limited and mixed (Cooney & Radina, 2000; Shih & Sanchez, 2005). One study using nationally representative data from Add Health found no differences in adolescent reports of relationship quality with mothers or fathers by the adolescent's interethnic status (Milan & Keiley, 2000).

Despite some research suggesting that differences exist between interethnic and same-ethnic couples in levels of marital tensions and parenting quality, and the large body of research linking marital tensions and parenting quality to child well-being, prior research has not tested the extent to which differences in marital tensions or parenting quality can account for differences in child outcomes between interethnic and same-ethnic families. In addition to considering the role of marital tensions and parenting quality, we also control for several background and family characteristics that may be associated with interethnic status and child well-being. Controls include the parent respondent's gender and race/ethnicity, the child's gender and age, parental education and income, length of the parental marriage, the number of children in the household and the presence of any blended children in the household.

For example, compared to same-ethnic couples, interethnic couples are more likely to be in marriages of shorter duration (and therefore have a younger focal child), have children from prior relationships in their household, and have less education and income (Bratter & King, 2008; Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008). Higher levels of parental education and income tend to be associated with higher levels of child well-being (Bornstein & Bradley, 2003), whereas child well-being may be compromised in families with a large number of children (Blake, 1981) or for children living in blended families (Stewart, 2007). Younger and older children often exhibit different levels of well-being, with problem behaviors tending to increase during adolescence (Kann et al., 2000). Girls are more likely to exhibit internalizing problems and boys

are more likely to exhibit externalizing problems (Avison & McAlpine, 1992). The parent respondent's race/ethnicity is included in the analyses to estimate the effects of being in an interethnic family separately from the effects of the parent's own race/ethnicity (Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008). Parent's gender is also included because it may be related to their reports of family processes and child outcomes (Thompson & Walker, 1989).

METHOD

Data

Data come from the first wave of the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), a nationally representative probability sample of 13,007 adults in U.S. households in 1987-1988. The response rate was approximately 74%. The sampling design oversampled several groups including minorities, recently married persons, single parents, and cohabiters. A self-administered questionnaire was also given to the spouse (response rate of 83%) or cohabiting partner (response rate of 77%) of the primary respondent (see Sweet, Bumpass, & Call, 1988 for a detailed description of the data). Descriptive results will be presented using the sample weight to allow for national representativeness. Regression results will be presented with unweighted data. Some have argued that using weights in multiple regression analysis is unnecessary or can lead to inaccurate results if independent variables in the models (e.g., race) are similar to variables used to create the sample weight (e.g., Winship & Radbill, 1994). Nevertheless, we tested the regression models with and without sample weights and the results did not yield substantively different conclusions.

Since the focus of the present study is on married couples with children, we selected only married respondents, reducing the original sample of main respondents (n = 13,007) to 6,877. Given that most of the child outcome measures were only available for children five or older, only married couples with a focal child ages five to 18 were included, reducing the sample to

2,446. Next, we eliminated respondents who did not have a completed spousal questionnaire, reducing the sample to 1,986. The spousal questionnaire was crucial for several key measures including nonshared values, education, and determining the spouse's race/ethnicity. Cases where either the main respondent or spouse did not answer the racial/ethnic identification questions were also excluded, resulting in a final analysis sample of 1,936 families. Of the 1,936 main respondents, 102 were in interethnic marriages.

Measures

Parent's interethnic status. Each parent was asked which of nine categories best described their racial/ethnic identity: White (not of Hispanic origin), Black, Mexican American (or Chicano or Mexicano), Puerto Rican, Cuban, other Hispanic, Asian, American Indian, or other (only one main respondent and two spouses chose this last response). We combined responses of Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and other Hispanic into a single Hispanic category, reducing the number of categories to six. Parents were defined as being in an interethnic marriage if each partner reported a different racial/ethnic identification (1 = *yes*, 0 = *no*) based on this final six category identification. We realize that broad identifications can mask important subgroup differences, but data limitations and small sample sizes for some subgroups preclude a more detailed analysis of ethnic categories (see Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008 for a similar strategy and discussion of this issue).

Child well-being. Four measures of child well-being are examined: global well-being, positive affect, negative affect, and behavior problems. All items in these measures come from the main respondent and are in reference to a focal child in the household. Global well-being is a single-item measure rating how well the focal child's life has been going overall (1 = *not well at all*; 4 = *very well*).

Standardized scales were created through factor analyses to signify positive and negative child affect. Positive affect is a six-item scale rating how often the focal child is willing to try new thing, keeps self busy, is cheerful and happy, does what the parent asks, gets along well with others, and carries out responsibilities on own ($\alpha = .62$). Negative affect is a four-item scale rating how often the focal child is unhappy, sad, or depressed; bullies or is cruel or mean to others; is fearful or anxious; and loses temper easily ($\alpha = .55$). Responses for each question ranged from 1 = *not true* to 3 = *often true*, and coded so that the scales measure a high level of positive affect and a high level of negative affect.

Behavior problems is the final measure of child well-being. Respondents were asked if (1=*yes*, 0=*no*) they had to meet with a teacher or principal in the past year due to the child's behavior problems, if the child has ever been suspended or expelled from school, if the child has ever run away from home for one or more nights, if the child has ever been involved with the police, if the focal child has ever seen a doctor or therapist about any emotional or behavioral problems, and if the child was particularly difficult to raise. The two questions regarding suspension/expulsion from school, and meeting with a teacher/principal, were not applicable for the few children who were not attending school ($n = 92$), so we based the behavior problems measure on only the remaining four questions for this subgroup of children. We took the average of the four or six items to make an overall measure of behavior problems ($\alpha = .76$), with scores ranging from 0 = *did not experience any of the four or six behavior problem*s to 1 = *experienced all four or six of the problems*.

Marital tensions. Three distinct measures were used to reflect factors that may negatively impact the couple's relationship quality. The first is a constructed variable that measures the extent to which the couple has nonshared values. Both the main respondent and

spouse were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the following series of ten statements: “It is better for everyone if the man earns the main living”, “It is better for a person to get married than to go through life being single”, “Parents ought to help their children with college expenses”, “Marriage should never be ended except under extreme circumstances”, “Preschool children are likely to suffer if their mother is employed”, “Parents should provide financial help to their adult children when they are having difficulty”, “It is alright for an unmarried couple to live together even if they have no interest in considering marriage”, “Parents should encourage just as much independence in their daughters as in their sons”, “Children ought to let aging parents live with them” and “In successful marriages, partners must have freedom to do what they want individually.” Response choices ranged from 1 = *strongly agree* to 5 = *strongly disagree*. We computed the absolute difference between the main respondent’s and spouse’s responses to each item, and then computed the mean absolute difference as an overall measure of nonshared values. A higher score indicates a greater discrepancy between the main respondent and their spouse.

The second measure of marital tensions is low social support. Main respondents were asked whether or not they had received help from friends/neighbors, sons/daughters, parents, brothers/sisters, other relatives, or “no one” in the past month with regard to five different sources of support: babysitting, transportation, repairs, work around the house, and advice/emotional support. We assigned a score of 1 for each situation that the respondent reported having received help from “no one”. By adding across the five items, this measure is a count of the number of domains in which the main respondent received no help from anyone.

A three item, standardized scale created through a factor analysis was created to assess marital conflict ($\alpha = .63$), the third indicator of marital tensions. The first item comes from a

single question asked of the main respondent, "taking all things together, how would you describe your marriage?" Responses ranged from 1 = *very happy* to 7 = *very unhappy*. The second item comes from the question, "what do you think the chances are that you and your husband/wife will eventually separate or divorce?" Responses ranged from 1 = *very low* to 5 = *very high*. Level of disagreement is the third item, represented as a scale ($\alpha = .77$) created from seven questions asked of main respondents regarding how often in the last year they had arguments with their spouse about household tasks, money, spending time together, sex, having another child, in-laws, and the current children. Responses ranged from 1 = *never* to 6 = *almost every day*.

Quality of parenting. Quality of parenting taps three general domains, each represented by two measures. The first two measures assess parental monitoring. Monitored at home is a scale comprised of five items ($\alpha = .91$). Main respondents were asked if the focal child would be allowed to be at home alone in five situations: in the morning before school, in the afternoon after school, all day when there is no school, at night, and overnight (1 = *yes*, 2 = *sometimes/depends*, 3 = *no*). Monitored when away comes from a single item asking the parent whether they knew whom the child is with when away from home. Responses ranged from 1 = *hardly ever* to 4 = *all the time*.

The second domain reflects the quality of the parent-child relationship. Both measures come from single items, one regarding how often the main respondent had enjoyable times with the focal child in the past month, and the second regarding how often the main respondent had difficulty dealing with the focal child in the past month (1 = *never*; 6 = *almost every day*).

The final two aspects of parenting quality are a measure of warmth and a measure of harsh discipline. Unlike previous questions that are asked in reference to the focal child, items

used in these measures are asked in reference to all children in the household, and therefore reflect parenting quality at a more general level. Warmth and harsh discipline are both two-item scales. Main respondents were asked how often they praise, hug, yell at, and spank or slap their children (1 = *never*; 4 = *very often*). Praise and hug (α = .58) were used to measure warmth; yell and spank/slap (α = .46) were used to measure harsh discipline.

Controls. Main respondent gender and focal child gender are both dichotomous variables (1 = *female*, 0 = *male*). Race/ethnicity of the main respondent, when used as a control, is measured as a set of dummy variables: White (omitted reference group), Black, Hispanic, and all others. Couple's level of education was constructed by averaging each partner's education score together (0 = *less than high school*; 1 = *completion of high school or GED*; 2 = *more than high school but less than a Bachelor's Degree*; 3 = *received a Bachelor's Degree or beyond*). Income reflects the couple's combined income in thousands of dollars. The log of income is used in the regression analysis to minimize skewness. Age of the focal child is a continuous variable ranging from five to 18 years.

The number of children in the household under 19 years of age was created from information contained in the household roster. Length of the marriage was constructed by subtracting the date of the marriage from the date of when the interview took place, and is represented in years. The presence of any blended children in the household (i.e. stepchildren) is a dichotomous variable (1 = *yes*, 0 = *no*).[1]

Factor analysis demonstrated that all scales were uni-dimensional. Correlations between control variables were all below .42 except for the correlation between length of marriage and the presence of any blended children (r=-.61). Correlations between the marital tension measures, and correlations between the parenting quality measures, were all below .34. Fewer

than 2% of the cases were missing on the child well-being measures. For the parenting quality measures, fewer than 5% of the cases were missing. Low social support, nonshared values, and marital conflict had approximately 6%, 11%, and 16% missing, respectively. All control variables had 2% or less missing cases, except for income where approximately 11% of the cases were missing. To deal with missing data, multiple imputation (five imputations) was conducted using the ICE program in Stata (Stata Corporation, 2003).

Analytic Strategy

We begin by comparing differences between interethnic and same-ethnic families on all of the study variables. Mean levels are reported for continuous measures, with tests of statistical significance based on t-tests. Percentages are reported for categorical measures, and tests of significance are based on the chi-square test. Then we examine the relationship between parent's interethnic status and child well-being in a bivariate and multivariate ordinary least squares regression framework. We estimate four models for each of the four child outcomes. The bivariate relationship between parent's interethnic status and child well-being is estimated in the first model. The second model adds in all controls for background and family characteristics (i.e. age of focal child, gender of focal child and respondent, respondent's race/ethnicity, couple's level of education, income, length of marriage, presence of blended children in the household, and number of children under 19 years old). The three measures of marital tensions are added in the third model, and then the six parenting quality measures are added in a fourth model, in order to test whether they mediate the effect of parent's interethnic status on child well-being.

RESULTS

The interethnic families in our study differed significantly from same-ethnic families on several background and family characteristics (Table 1). Focal children with interethnic parents

were somewhat younger, on average, than those with same-ethnic parents, by about one year. The majority of main respondents (and therefore, couples) in same-ethnic families were White whereas Whites and Hispanics made up the majority of main respondents in the interethnic group (and White-Hispanic marriages were the most common). Interethnic parents had lower income and were in marriages of shorter duration.

--- Table 1 about here ---

With regard to marital tensions or factors that could negatively influence the parent's relationship, only one significant difference was apparent. Interethnic parents reported a greater dissimilarity in values than same-ethnic parents, but they did not differ much in levels of marital conflict or in receiving social support from others. There is no evidence that parenting quality differed between interethnic and same-ethnic families, based on the six indicators examined here.

There is only limited evidence that child well-being is lower among children living with interethnic parents. Compared with children in same-ethnic families, children living with interethnic parents exhibited higher levels of negative affect. There were no differences, however, in global well-being, positive affect, or behavior problems. We turn next to further explore differences in child well-being in a multivariate regression framework, but it is worth noting that results thus far suggest rather limited differences between children living with interethnic parents and those living with same-ethnic parents, particularly with regard to experiencing parents' marital tensions, parenting quality, or child well-being.

Results from the regression analysis (Table 2) reinforce previous findings. The bivariate models replicate the findings from Table 1, and the addition of controls and mediating factors had little influence on the effect of interethnic status on child well-being. Negative affect was the only child outcome significantly associated with parents' interethnic status, with a moderate

effect size of .24.[2] Children living with interethnic parents exhibited higher levels of negative affect than children in same-ethnic families, and this association was not explained by differences in background or family characteristics, marital tensions, or parenting quality.

--- Table 2 about here ---

Given that there were few differences in marital tensions or parenting quality by interethnic status, it is not surprising that these factors did not help explain the association between interethnic status and negative affect. These factors were, however, significantly associated with child well-being. In particular, marital conflict was associated with lower levels of child well-being, whereas parental warmth and a positive parent-child relationship (more enjoyable and less difficult) were associated with higher levels of child well-being.[3] The magnitude of the marital conflict coefficient was reduced with the addition of the parenting quality measures (model 3 to model 4), but still remained highly significant for three of the outcomes. Many of the background and family characteristics were also associated with child outcomes in expected ways. For example, child well-being tended to be higher for girls and younger children, and in families with higher income, fewer children, and marriages of longer duration.

DISCUSSION

An increasing number of U.S. children are living with interethnic parents, yet we know relatively little about how they are faring. This study examined differences in child well-being between children living with interethnic parents and those living with same-ethnic parents, drawing upon nationally representative data and focusing on a broad age range of children and four indicators of child well-being. Results provide only limited evidence that child well-being is lower among children living with interethnic parents. Compared with children in same-ethnic

families, children living with interethnic parents exhibited higher levels of negative affect. At the same time, however, no differences were found in global well-being, positive affect, or behavior problems. We conclude that children living with interethnic parents may face some greater difficulties that warrant concern, but they do not appear to face pervasive disadvantages. We concur with Cooney and Radina's (2000) assessment that prior literature has overstated the extent and range of problems faced by children living in interethnic families, who as a group do not fit the typical portrayal of being fairly troubled youth.

With a moderate effect size, the finding that children with interethnic parents had higher levels of negative affect than children with same-ethnic parents warrants further research into better understanding the mechanisms that lead to such a difference. Our finding is consistent with recent research on adolescents, which reports higher levels of antisocial behavior and higher rates of depression and counseling among interracial offspring than same-race offspring (Campbell & Eggerling-Boeck; 2006; Cooney and Radina, 2000; Fryer et al., 2008; Harris & Thomas, 2002), as our measure of negative affect taps related domains. Our study also suggests that this difference may start to appear before adolescence.

Our study was unable to account for the difference in negative affect between children living with interethnic and same-ethnic parents, and our initial conceptual model was not supported. Although we found some significant differences between the two groups on background and family characteristics that tend to be associated with child well-being (e.g., income, marital duration), controlling for these factors had little influence. Our study also suggests that the differences in negative affect are not due to differences in marital tensions or parenting quality. Consistent with much prior research (Demo & Cox, 2000), marital tensions (particularly marital conflict) and parenting quality (especially parental warmth, and an

enjoyable and less difficult parent-child relationship) were themselves associated with child outcomes. With the exception of nonshared values, which were more common among interethnic parents, we found few differences in levels of marital tensions or parenting quality between interethnic and same-ethnic families. Although some prior research suggested that interethnic couples experience greater marital tensions and more problematic parenting (e.g., Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008; Shih & Sanchez, 2005), other studies report few differences (e.g., Cooney & Radina, 2000; Milan & Keiley, 2000). Given the limited and often mixed findings of prior research, future research would benefit from greater attention to better understanding marital relationships and parenting practices in interethnic families. As with prior research on child well-being, this may be another area where differences between interethnic and same-ethnic families have been overstated.

Alternatively, these mixed findings may result at least in part from differences in the groups studied. For example, differences in marital conflict by interethnic status may be more apparent in samples of couples regardless of whether they have children (e.g., Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008) than in samples of long married couples with adolescent offspring (e.g., Cooney & Radina, 2000), as the latter group is likely more selective of higher quality marriages. Our study is also selective in examining families where the parents are married and at least one child in the household is five or older. Thus the focal children may be relatively well-adjusted and have parents with relatively good relationships and parenting skills.

A limitation of the current study is the modest sample size of interethnic families, which can hinder the ability to detect smaller group differences that may exist in the population (i.e., lower statistical power makes rejecting the null hypothesis of no difference less likely). At the same time, more confidence can be put in the significant differences that were found. The

modest sample of interethnic families also precluded an examination of specific ethnic subgroup differences. Although our main aim was to compare children living with interethnic parents to children living with same-ethnic parents, there is diversity within these groups as well that may further influence child well-being. For example, there is some suggestion that Black-White couples may experience more challenges and stressors than Hispanic-White couples (Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008), which could lead to corresponding differences in child outcomes.

Future research would benefit from considering children of all ages and following them over time. Relatively little is known regarding how family relationships unfold over time in interethnic families, or whether any risks that children in these families face appear early in childhood or manifest themselves during key developmental periods, such as adolescence.

Given that the number of children living with interethnic families is likely to continue to rise, a better understanding of how these children are faring, and the challenges that their families face, is of utmost importance, and a necessary first step on the way to helping such families confront any difficulties they may encounter. Our study suggests that children living with interethnic parents may face greater difficulties in some domains that warrant concern and attention, even though they do not appear to face pervasive disadvantages.

Notes

1. We also tested substituting a measure of whether the focal child was a blended child (i.e., the stepchild of one of the parents), but results are similar regardless of which measure is used.

2. Because the level of behavior problems was skewed, an additional set of analyses were conducted on this dependent variable using Poisson regression. Results from the Poisson regressions also suggested that interethnic status is not associated with child behavior problems. To further check the lack of association between interethnic status and child outcomes, we examined the association between interethnic status and each of the individual items that made up the three outcome scales (global well-being is an individual item). Similar to results for the outcome scales in Table 2, none of the individual items from behavior problems or positive affect were associated with interethnic status. With regard to negative affect, interethnic status was most strongly associated with the two items assessing how often the focal child bullies or is cruel or mean to others, and how often the focal child is fearful or anxious.

3. Contrary to expectations, less monitoring at home was found to be associated with greater levels of global well-being and positive affect, while more monitoring at home was associated with more behavior problems. Although parental monitoring can be a positive parenting practice in terms of being one way to keep children out of trouble (Bersamin et al., 2008), levels of parental monitoring may be in part a reaction to the child's behavior. Parents may monitor their children less if they are well adjusted and exhibit few problems, but increase their monitoring behavior if children start displaying negative behaviors.

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Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for all Study Variables by Interethnic Status: Weighted Means (Standard Errors) or Percentages

	Interethnic (*n* = 102)	Same-ethnic (*n* = 1834)	Difference[a]
Child's age	10.52 (*.40*)	11.62 (*.11*)	*
Child's gender %			
Male	50	51	
Female	50	49	
Parent gender %			
Male	54	53	
Female	46	47	
Parent race/ethnicity %			***
White	49	84	
Black	6	8	
Hispanic	36	7	
Other	9	1	
Couple education	1.39 (*.10*)	1.58 (*.02*)	
Income	39,209 (*3,450*)	44,832 (*1,420*)	*
Any blended children %			
Yes	22	14	
No	78	86	
Length of marriage	11.65 (*.74*)	15.52 (*.20*)	***
Number of children < 19 years old	2.17 (*.12*)	2.09 (*.03*)	
Marital tensions			
Low social support	2.80 (*.18*)	3.05 (*.04*)	
Nonshared values	.94 (*.04*)	.85 (*.01*)	*
Marital conflict	.11 (*.11*)	-.02 (*.03*)	
Parenting quality			
Difficulty dealing with the child	3.05 (*.17*)	2.78 (*.04*)	
Enjoyable times with the child	4.96 (*.13*)	4.77 (*.04*)	
Warmth	.02 (*.10*)	-.02 (*.03*)	
Harsh discipline	.02 (*.12*)	-.04 (*.03*)	
Monitored at home	.20 (*.10*)	-.08 (*.03*)	
Monitored when away	3.77 (*.05*)	3.83 (*.01*)	
Child well-being			
Global well-being	3.48 (*.07*)	3.59 (*.01*)	
Positive affect	-.07 (*.09*)	.04 (*.03*)	
Negative affect	.25 (*.09*)	-.03 (*.03*)	*
Behavior problems	.05 (*.02*)	.04 (*.00*)	

[a]t-test or chi-square test finds a significant difference between interethnic and same-ethnic families at *$p < .05$ or ***$p < .001$; tests based on unweighted data.

Table 2: Unstandardized Coefficients from Regressions Predicting Child Well-Being

	High Global Well-Being				Positive Affect			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Parent's interethnic status	-.08	-.07	-.08	-.08	-.07	.01	-.01	-.01
Background/family characteristics								
Child's age		-.04***	-.04***	-.04***		-.03***	-.03***	-.06***
Female child		.11***	.11***	.09***		.09	.09	.07
Female parent		.04	.04	.01		.03	.03	-.02
Hispanic parent[a]		.10*	.09	.04		.01	-.01	-.14
Black parent[a]		.11**	.13***	.06		.32***	.34***	.20**
Other parent[a]		.05	.06	.02		-.13	-.13	-.21
Couple education		.02	.02	.01		.03	.03	.00
Income (log)		.04*	.03	.03		.11***	.10**	.09***
Any blended children		-.03	-.05	-.04		-.05	-.07	-.09
Length of marriage		.01***	.01***	.01***		.02***	.02***	.01*
Number of children < 19 years old		-.03*	-.03**	-.03*		-.03	-.03	-.00
Marital tensions								
Low social support			-.01	-.01			-.02	-.02
Nonshared values			.02	.03			.09	.11
Marital conflict			-.11***	-.07***			-.15***	-.06**
Parenting quality								
Difficulty dealing with child				-.08***				-.17***
Enjoyable times with child				.08***				.18***
Warmth				.08***				.14***
Harsh discipline				.01				-.03
Monitored at home				-.05*				-.22***
Monitored when away				-.01				.08
_constant	3.58***	3.38***	3.50***	3.45***	.00	-1.14***	-.99**	-1.21**

[a] White is reference category. *$p < .05$ **$p <. 01$ ***$p < .001$

Table 2, continued

	Negative Affect				Behavior Problems			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Parent's interethnic status	.24*	.30**	.29**	.24*	-.01	-.01	-.01	-.01
Background/family characteristics								
Child's age		.01	.01*	.01		.00**	.00**	.01***
Female child		-.05	-.04	-.00		-.04***	-.04***	-.04***
Female parent		-.04	-.06	-.10*		.02*	.02*	.01
Hispanic parent[a]		-.48***	-.46***	-.22**		.01	.01	.01
Black parent[a]		-.21**	-.27***	-.09		.03*	.02	.03*
Other parent[a]		-.07	-.12	.02		-.00	-.01	-.00
Couple education		-.05	-.06	-.04		.00	.00	.00
Income (log)		-.01	-.01	-.01		-.00	-.00	-.00
Any blended children		-.01	.02	.06		.01	.02	.02
Length of marriage		-.02***	-.02***	-.01		-.00*	-.00	-.00
Number of children < 19 years old		.10***	.10***	.06**		.01	.01	.00
Marital tensions								
Low social support			-.05**	-.03*			-.00	-.00
Nonshared values			.10	.07			.02*	.02
Marital conflict			.18***	.09***			.01**	.01
Parenting quality								
Difficulty dealing with child				.21***				.01***
Enjoyable times with child				-.13***				-.01
Warmth				-.05*				-.00
Harsh discipline				.13***				.00
Monitored at home				.01				.02**
Monitored when away				-.03				.01
_constant	-.01	.28	.21	.26	.05***	.07	.05	-.03

[a] White is reference category. *$p < .05$ **$p < .01$ *** $p < .001$