Like Mother, Like Daughter: How Marriage Matters for Girls Too

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When it comes to incarceration, schooling, and employment, boys seem to be affected more than girls by retreat from marriage.  

(Autor & Wasserman 2013; Autor et al. 2015; Chetty & Hendren 2016)
Marriage, Gender, & Education
(Autor et al. 2015)

Figure: Boy–Girl Gaps in Kindergarten Readiness, School Absences, and Math Scores by Family Structure
Marriage, Gender, & Employment
(Chetty et al. 2016)

B. Married Parents

A. Single Parents

Male–Female Difference
- Parent p10: 3.2%
- Parent p50: 5.4%
- Parent p90: 3.3%

Male–Female Difference
- Parent p10: −4.5%
- Parent p50: −1.3%
- Parent p90: −0.1%

Percent Employed

Parent Household Income Percentile

Male
Female
Boys esp. vulnerable to externalizing:
- “Boys particularly seem to benefit more from being in a married household or committed household — with the time, attention and income that brings.”

Boys may benefit from male role model:
- “If children aim to emulate the adult roles of their same-sex parent, then girls may increasingly expect to fully support both themselves and their children whereas, conversely, males may come to anticipate a less central or more transient role.”
Marriage, Gender, & Relationship Trouble
(BYU/Deseret News 2016)

Relationship in Trouble,
Controlling for Age, Race & Education

- **Mother Continuously married**
- **Mother Not Continuously Married**

**Men**
- 32%

**Women**
- 44%
- 30%

(Chart showing percentages of men and women in relationship trouble, differentiated by whether the mother was continuously married or not.)
Marriage, Gender, & Economic Crisis
(BYU/Deseret News 2016)

Economic Crisis,
Controlling for Age, Race & Education

- Mother Continuously married
- Mother Not Continuously Married

Men: 33% (Mother Continuously married) vs. 40% (Mother Not Continuously Married)
Women: 36% (Mother Continuously married) vs. 50% (Mother Not Continuously Married)
Why? 2 Hypotheses

- Young women may benefit from female role model in navigating relationships:
  - Without a good role model, may pick less ideal mate.
- Young women from non-intact family may be:
  - More likely to end up as single mothers, incurring a bigger motherhood penalty and less financial support for their family.
Extend Marriage to the Masses

Children living in a single-parent home

In 2012, 65 percent of children whose mothers never made it past high school spent at least part of their early childhood in a single-parent household, up from 20 percent in 1953.

Sources: Robert Putnam and U.S. Census Bureau
For More Information:
www.family-studies.org
@WilcoxNMP