In this paper, ‘fragile families’ is defined as those families in which the parents are unmarried at the time of their child’s birth. The authors, Robert A. Hummer, professor in the Department of Sociology and Population Research at the University of Texas – Austin, and Erin Hamilton, assistant professor of sociology at the University of California – Davis, examine the extent to which parental resources differ by race and ethnicity within fragile families, i.e., the difficult socioeconomic circumstances faced by most unmarried black, Mexican American, and Mexican immigrant mothers. They argue that socioeconomic differences are by far the biggest driver of racial and ethnic differences in marriage and family stability, and they support reforms to strengthen parents’ economic security. Because children from most racial and ethnic minority groups are much more likely than white and Asian American children to be born to unmarried parents and children of unmarried parents are substantially disadvantaged relative to those in married households, family structure is a key mechanism through which racial and ethnic inequality persists across generations.

Intended User: Parent educators, teachers and other family professionals

Suitable for use with the following delivery methods:

Individual study, parent programs, community lessons


Submitted by: Marion Gibson, KSU SKY Families