

ACTA UNIVERSITATIS STOCKHOLMIENSIS

Jani Turunen

Stockholm University Demography Unit – Dissertation Series 8





# Stepfamily Dynamics in Sweden

Essays on family structure and children's well-being

Jani Turunen

©Jani Turunen, Stockholm University 2013

ISSN 1404-2304

ISBN (print) 978-91-87235-50-4

ISBN (digital) 978-91-87235-49-8

Printed in Sweden by US-AB, Stockholm 2013

Distributor: Stockholm University Library

Cover photo: Daniel Ojanlatva

Isän muistolle.  
In memory of my father.



# Contents

List of studies .....	9
Acknowledgements.....	11
Sammanfattning.....	13
Introduction .....	15
Defining stepfamilies.....	16
Stepfamilies from a child perspective here-and-now.....	17
Stepfamily research .....	19
Explaining stepfamily dynamics .....	21
Future directions .....	27
Summary of the empirical studies .....	31
Study I: Entering a stepfamily: Children’s experience of family reconstitution in Sweden 1970-2000.....	31
Study II: Family structure, gender and adolescent emotional well-being ..	32
Study III: Adolescent Educational Outcomes in Blended Families – Evidence from Swedish Register Data 1998-2007.....	34
References .....	36



# List of studies

1. Turunen, Jani (2011). Entering a stepfamily: Children's experience of family reconstitution in Sweden 1970-2000. *Zeitschrift für Familienforschung / Journal of Family Research*, 23(2): 154-172.

Reprinted with kind permission of Verlag Barbara Budrich.

2. Turunen, Jani (2013). Family Structure, Gender, and Adolescent Emotional Well-Being. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, 54(6): 476-504.

Reprinted with kind permission of Taylor & Francis Group.

3. Turunen, Jani (2013). Adolescent Educational Outcomes in Blended Families – Evidence from Swedish Register Data 1998-2007.

Submitted manuscript.



# Acknowledgements

Writing a doctoral dissertation is often said to be a lonely task, but even though I am sure there have been a time of two when I have felt alone during these past few years I cannot actually recall any of them now. Instead I remember plenty of times when I have received generous help and support from people around me. I hope I have shown them my gratitude at the time but would still like to take the opportunity to thank some of them in print.

First and foremost I would like to thank my advisor Elizabeth Thomson without whom I would probably never have entered the PhD- program and certainly would not have finished it. It has been a great privilege to have her read drafts of this work and give the kind of insightful comments that only she can give. I am grateful for her enormous generosity, commitment, encouragement and steadfast support. I would also like to thank my second advisor Livia Oláh for tirelessly reading and commenting on numerous drafts, for supporting and encouraging me when I needed it the most and for including me in her professional networks. I look forward to our future collaborations. I am also deeply appreciative of the constructive comments offered by Michael Gähler at my final seminar.

The data used in this dissertation is from several different data sets and getting to know their ins and outs felt challenging in the beginning. I could however always turn to people who had used them before me and who were willing to offer guidance. For help with these datasets I am thankful to Sheela Kennedy, Sara Brolin Låftman and Helen Eriksson.

I am grateful to my past and present colleagues at the department of Sociology and the Demography Unit at Stockholm University. You are too many to all be named but I hope you know who you are. In particular I would like to thank my office mates in the “demography lab”, Maria Brandén and Sofi Ohlsson-Wijk for letting me disturb them with endless questions and comments, for their help, encouragement and support and for all the laughs. It is a privilege to work with you. I would like to thank Gunnar Andersson for reading drafts and for encouraging me over the years. I am also grateful for to Sara Thalberg, Béatrice Daumerie, Lina Eklund, Susanne Fahlén, Jenny Torssander and Jennifer Holland for making life fun both on and off

campus. I would also like to thank the participants at the SUDA colloquium where I have presented parts of this, and other, work and where I have had the opportunity to learn from other presenters.

The process of writing a doctoral dissertation does not end when leaving the university campus. The worries of variable construction, the stress of conference presentations or the irritation of reviewer misunderstandings are carried home and unloaded on friends and family. I am thankful for having a great group of friends that have stood by me not just during the years in the PhD-program but for a very long time. Again, I cannot name you all but would in particular like to thank Sofia Gunillasson who has been there for me every day since I started the program, Daniel Ojanlatva and Jan Falk who has stood by me since childhood and John Gräsvik who knows the troubles of a doctoral student and is always up for a talk. Thank you all!

I am also thankful for the tireless support of my family. I am grateful to Annaklara for lovingly standing by me, for being supportive in tough times and for cheering me on when things again have looked brighter. I would also like to thank my brother Jukka for his support and encouragement. Finally I am eternally grateful to my parents. I would like to thank my mother for supporting me during the PhD-program and other educational choices over the years. I would also have liked to thank my father for his support and encouragement and for passing on his passion for books and love for libraries to me. Instead I dedicate this thesis to his memory.

Jani Turunen

Stockholm, September 9, 2013.

Financial support: The Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research. Grant number: 2004-1975. The Gålö Foundation. Jan Wallander's and Tom Hedelius' Foundation.

# Sammanfattning

Denna avhandling undersöker olika aspekter av barns familjestruktur och välmående i Sverige utifrån ett barnperspektiv. Den är indelad i tre separata studier som analyserar olika, men relaterade, aspekter av barns familjestruktur med särskild vikt på styvfamiljer. Första studien rör styvfamiljebildningsprocessen, den andra barns emotionella välmående i olika familjetyper och den tredje barns skolutfall i familjer med komplexa syskonstrukturer, det vill säga familjer med halvsyskon.

Studierna bygger på statistisk analys av såväl nationellt representativa urvalsundersökningar, med uppgifter samlade från både barn och föräldrar, som befolkningsregister omfattande samtliga svenska niondeklassare under åren 1998 till 2007 länkade till sina föräldrar och syskon.

Resultaten visar inte några socioekonomiska skillnader i styvfamiljebildningsprocessen även om barn vars föräldrar har låg utbildningsnivå har högre sannolikhet att tillhöra gruppen under risk för styvfamiljebildning, det vill säga de vars föräldrar är frånskilda eller som fötts till en ensamstående moder. Det finns dock könsskillnader i vilka barn som får en styvförälder. Flickor, särskilt de yngre, har högre sannolikhet att ingå i en styvfamilj än pojkar. Barn har högre sannolikhet att få en styvmor än en styvfar då fäder är mer benägna att skaffa en ny partner efter en separation än mödrar. Könsskillnader kan även ses i sambandet mellan familjestruktur och barns emotionella välmående såväl som deras skolresultat. Flickor har något mer psykiska och psykosomatiska besvär än pojkar och något större negativ effekt på skolbetygen än pojkar även om flickor överlag har bättre skolresultat.

Liksom tidigare internationell, främst amerikansk, forskning visar resultaten i denna avhandling att barn i styvfamiljer har lägre välbefinnande än de barn som bor med båda sina föräldrar. Skillnaderna är dock i allmänhet små och bör inte ses som allarmerande. Likheten med resultat från andra länder med såväl lika som olika upplägg av social välfärd tyder på att de problem som barn upplever i olika familjetyper till stor del är oberoende av samhällstyp. Den huvudsakliga skillnaden mot tidigare internationell styvfamiljeforskning består i avsaknaden av socioekonomiska skillnader i styvfamiljebildandet och

att de negativa utfallen för barn i såväl styvfamiljer som de med ensamstående föräldrar i huvudsak kan förklaras av kvaliteten i relationen mellan barn och förälder snarare än av ekonomiska svårigheter.

# Introduction

This dissertation deals with Swedish children's experience of family structure changes and associated emotional and educational well-being. It has a special emphasis on children's experience of stepfamily dynamics, including stepfamily formation and birth of a half-sibling in a stepfamily. Research on stepfamily dynamics has grown tremendously during the past few decades, especially in the United States. Stepfamily research, especially population based, is however a rather unexplored field in Sweden and the other Nordic countries where only a handful of studies can be found. The ongoing expansion of the field of stepfamily research to encompass more than the liberal welfare states is of importance to better explain and understand the underlying mechanisms determining stepfamily dynamics and children's well-being.

The research is set in the context of Sweden, a country famous for having a generous welfare state with high levels of economic equality as well as high gender equality with respect to post-separation incomes. Sweden has for a long time had family policies designed to minimize the economic differentials across family forms. The extensive social policies directed towards parents and children include long paid parental leave; monthly child allowance; housing allowance; free education (including tertiary); subsidized, high quality and widely available child care and after-school activities for primary school children, among other things. All these benefits are independent of the parent's union status and with the exception of the housing allowance not means-tested (Andress et al. 2006; Oláh & Bernhardt 2008; Sundström 1991). All of these measures may reduce differences in the family behavior of different social groups and thereby reduce some of the negative outcomes associated with family structure changes, in comparison with countries where family policies are less extensive. Furthermore, Sweden is characterized by a wide acceptance for different family forms (Trost, 1996), thus reducing some of the stigma and stress children may experience in non-traditional families. All of these conditions, combined with a prevalence of family disruption and reconstitution closely following that of the United States (Andersson, 2002), makes Sweden a theoretically important contrast to the previous mostly U.S. based research.

This dissertation is based on three different nationally representative Swedish data sets and it aims to analyze three aspects of stepfamilies in Sweden:

First: who forms stepfamilies? Are there socioeconomic or gender differences in the stepfamily formation process?

Second: how is adolescents' emotional well-being related to living in a stepfamily compared to other family structures?

Third: how are adolescents' school results associated with living in blended families where the stepfamily couple has had a shared child (half-sibling)?

Each study aims to add to the theoretical understanding of stepfamily processes, in some cases with direct observations of the characteristics and behavior of stepfamilies and in others by implicit comparisons to the more extensive research in the United States.

## Defining stepfamilies

Traditionally stepfamilies have been defined as remarried unions with children (Bumpass & Raley, 1995). With the increasing commonality of cohabitation, a wider definition has been used – a family setting with at least one child who has a biological (or adoptive) parent living with a partner who is neither the biological nor the adoptive parent of the child (Sweeney, 2010). The more contemporary definition is used in the dissertation, fitting the Swedish context in which parental cohabitation is more common than in any other country (Andersson 2002).

Dealing with co-residence adds further complexity to the term. Most previous research only includes children and parents who are co-residing but one should also acknowledge the importance of family relationships that are not co-residential or where the child lives in a stepfamily setting part of the time. This is especially important in the Swedish case where shared physical custody after a union dissolution, with children alternating between two parental households, is increasingly common (Lundström, 2009). A child may live with a single

parent one week and with a parent and a stepparent the next or in two different stepfamilies. A child may also live with a single parent full-, or near full, time but have a non co-residential stepfamily. Studies I and III include stepfamilies defined in terms of nonresident as well as coresident step-parents.

Siblings add even more complexity to stepfamily life. A stepparent may have children from a previous union, i.e., provide step-siblings to the new stepchild. Mothers usually bring such children to the stepfamily household. If a biological parent and a stepparent have a common child it will be the half-sibling of the stepchild. This child will be living with both of its biological parents whereas the older half-sibling is living with a biological parent and a stepparent. These family settings are hereafter referred to as blended families (Study III). The term stepfamily does not include foster children, that is children living in a household under care of adults who are neither his nor her biological nor adopted parents.

Stepfamily formation can follow either a parental union dissolution (divorce or separation) or a child being born to a mother who is not living in a union with the father of the child. Parental separations have increased during the second half of the 20th century whereas the share of non-union births has been rather stable over time in Sweden (Thomson & Eriksson, 2010).

## Stepfamilies from a child perspective here-and-now

All the empirical studies in this dissertation use the child as the unit of analysis. This is in the tradition of Jens Qvortrup (1990) who argued for letting children be heard and be represented by themselves in statistics and social analysis. Today many statistical offices, including Statistics Sweden, publish statistics at the child level and family structure changes are increasingly analyzed with the child as the unit of analysis (see for example Andersson 2002). Another example of collecting research data from children and acknowledging them as “experts on their own conditions” (Jonsson & Östberg, 2010, p. 48) is the Swedish Child Level of Living Study (Child-LNU) directed by the

Swedish Institute for Social Research that combines a wide range of measures of well-being collected from both parents and children (see Jonsson & Östberg, 2010). Parts of the data for Study II come from this project.

Studying children is a long tradition within family sociology but until the 1980's and 1990's the focus was mainly on childhood as a precursor to adulthood. With an emphasis on socialization and development, events and experiences in childhood were analyzed as influences on later life outcomes. The focus of the studies in this dissertation is on the here-and-now dimension of children's experiences of stepfamily life rather than how these are associated with later adult life, consistent with the ideas of the above-mentioned Child-LNU project. Such a perspective by no means implies that the long-term perspective of the socialization- and developmental approaches are not important or cannot contribute to the understanding of stepfamily dynamics.

# Stepfamily research

The field of stepfamily sociology has seen a tremendous growth since Cherlin's (1978) seminal article describing the stepfamily as an "incomplete institution", without clearly defined roles, or Furstenberg's (1979) on the "recycled family" and the emerging complexity of kinship in America. While increasing in the 1980's (Coleman & Ganong, 1990) the growth of stepfamily research really took off during the next decade (Coleman et al., 2000) when many of what today are the standard references were produced (for example Booth & Dunn, 1994; Bumpass, Raley & Sweet, 1995; Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1994; Ganong & Coleman, 1994; Kiernan, 1992; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Thomson, Hanson & McLanahan 1994). The quality of both analysis and data increased, especially through the use of longitudinal designs that better capture the time varying nature of stepfamily dynamics.

The level of sophistication of both methods and data collection have further increased since, giving us better estimates of children's experience of family structure changes as well as the outcomes thereof. The previous focus on children of divorce and those in remarried simple stepfamilies has also shifted to acknowledge the diversity when it comes to stepfamily structures, processes and outcomes. This increased focus on stepfamily complexity was one of the main points highlighted by Sweeney (2010) in her review of stepfamily research during the last decade. But even though the body of scholarly work on stepfamily dynamics has grown considerably, most studies by far focus on divorce (Amato 2001; Amato & Keith 1991).

The field is still dominated by U.S.-based research but studies from other Western countries have confirmed previous findings of adverse outcomes for children with divorced or separated parents as well as those living in a stepfamily setting. This literature is however much more limited in quantity compared to that on divorce outcomes (for overviews and cross country comparisons see for example: Amato & James, 2010; Amato & Boyd, Forthcoming; Bjarnason et al. 2012; Bjarnason, Anderson et al. 2003; Bjarnason, Davidaviciene et al. 2003; Låftman, 2010). Although often included in cross-country

comparisons, there are to date only a handful of published studies on child outcomes of divorce and stepfamily life in Sweden (Bernhardt et al., 2005; Björklund et al., 2007; Björklund & Sundström, 2006; Jonsson & Gähler, 2007; Gähler & Garriga, 2013; Låftman & Östberg, 2006).

In their study of family structure and nest leaving Bernhardt and colleagues (2005) confirm previous findings from the United States (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1998) as well as Britain (Kiernan, 1992) showing that adolescents and young adults living in a stepfamily leave home earlier than those living with two original parents. Unlike previous studies they did not find an especially strong effect for girls. Jonsson and Gähler (1997) found in both their cross-sectional as well longitudinal analyses of Swedish register data a small negative effect of union disruption and living in a stepfamily on educational attainment, net of socioeconomic background. They also found that losing the parent with the highest socioeconomic position is especially harmful leading to downward social mobility.

Björklund and colleagues (Björklund et al., 2007; Björklund & Sundström, 2006) also used Swedish registers and found a negative association between living in non-nuclear family settings and educational attainment in adulthood. The association was not significant when using sibling fixed effects models leading them to doubt any causal interpretations between family structure and educational outcomes (see further discussion below). Låftman and Östberg (2006) found that children from disrupted as well as reconstituted families had lower emotional well-being and poorer social relationships than children in intact families. Finally a recent study by Gähler & Garriga (2013) found a persistent negative association between parental union disruption and adverse psychological outcomes in young adulthood over several decades, despite divorce having become more common and less stigmatizing.

Similarities in outcomes across countries suggest that associations between family structure and child well-being are independent of national context. The volume of research is not, however, sufficient to claim that the family processes and outcomes are universal. Further research from countries with different systems of social welfare, legal systems and cultural norms regarding families, is needed to disentangle the mechanisms behind the association between family structure and child well-being.

## Explaining stepfamily dynamics

In their review of theory use in stepfamily research in the 1990's Robila and Taylor (2001) noted that less than half of the studies had an explicit theoretical framework as a foundation for the analysis. A follow-up study of the next decade's research showed a slight increase in theory guided research (Taylor et al., 2013). The theories used in stepfamily research are usually of the middle range (Stewart, 2007). Taylor and colleagues' review included family systems theory, social capital and social exchange theory, evolutionary-, attachment-, symbolic interactionism, conflict-, stress and resiliency- and parenting theories (Taylor et al., 2012). Symbolic interactionism is mainly used to explain how roles and relationships are negotiated and created within stepfamilies whereas the other theoretical perspectives are usually used to explain differences in outcomes. The theoretical explanations are not mutually exclusive but may operate at the same time and aspects of stepfamily outcomes can be explained by many of the theoretical perspectives or with combinations of them.

When it comes to the process of stepfamily formation most studies have used rational choice or social exchange theories with a strong emphasis on resources, usually measured as educational attainment or income, and how this interacts with the gender of the parent. Marriage or marriage-like partnerships are assumed to be something desirable that provides the individual with a range of benefits that he or she does not have access to outside of a relationship. These could for example be emotional and material support or personal intimacy. One's desire for a partner as well as one's desirability on the repartnering market is assumed to vary by the level of resources one has access to and pre-existing children are usually regarded as a obstacle for finding a partner.

In their study of remarriage in the Netherlands de Graaf and Kalmijn (2003) presented a more nuanced general theory of repartnering based on the three concepts of need, attractiveness and opportunity, the theoretical framework used in Study I.

As argued above the concept of need means that people form unions because they have a need for something that the union can bring. It can be emotional, social, sexual or economic. It can also be a need to have children. A new partner can bring support, companionship, intimacy and financial security as well as a chance to form a family

even though the need to have children is likely to be smaller when repartnering and forming a stepfamily than in first union formation when very few have children. The greater the need for these is the more likely one is to form a union.

But the likelihood of repartnering depends on how attractive a person is. Attractiveness can of course be physical but also social and economic. A person with a stable and well-paying job may be viewed, on the partnership market, as more attractive than an unemployed person and a highly educated person more attractive than someone with only basic education. Having children may also affect a person's attractiveness. Children from previous relationships can make a person less attractive because a potential partner can expect the child to be a financial burden and a competitor for attention and affection from the parent-partner. The child may also bring other complications like increased contact with the previous partner who is the child's parent, or diffuse roles within the new stepfamily.

Regardless of one's need for a partner and one's attractiveness on the repartnering market it is necessary to actually have the opportunity to find a person to form a union with. Meeting, dating and getting to know someone well enough to form a union with him or her requires time. The more opportunities to meet new partners one has, the higher the likelihood of forming a new union. Childrearing requires time and limits one's possibilities to take part in typical activities where one might meet potential partners. The opportunity argument probably plays a larger role in repartnering than in first union formation, especially when having children from previous unions. People forming stepfamilies are generally older and less active in typical partnering market activities like schools. The repartnering market is also likely to be less effective because there are fewer single people at higher ages. Other factors affecting one's opportunities to meet a new partner include family size and market work. Working increases one's social network and daily contact with other adults so the opportunity to find a partner should arguably be greater for someone who works than for a homemaker or an unemployed person. Working of course reduces one's financial need so paid work is likely to affect repartnering likelihood in both directions. Family size should have a negative relationship with repartnering opportunity for the simple reason that more children require more time.

Need, attractiveness and opportunity to re-partner should arguably vary between countries with different systems of social welfare. Social

policies and financial transfers, directed towards single parents in particular but also parents in general, primarily help to reduce the financial need of single parents. Laws regulating post-divorce alimony and especially child-support are other cross-country differences that may reduce the financial need for repartnering.

While most studies of stepfamily formation have focused on characteristics of the parent some have looked at how partner characteristics like attitudes affect the likelihood of entering a relationship with someone who has children from a previous union (Goldscheider & Kaufman, 2006; Goldscheider et al., 2009; Goldscheider & Sessler, 2006). Goldscheider and colleagues have studied how family oriented attitudes (Goldscheider & Kaufman, 2006) or attitudes towards marrying someone with children (Goldscheider et al., 2009) is related to forming a stepfamily. They have applied social learning theory to explain why people who have experience of previous marriages, have children of their own or have grown up in a nontraditional family form have more positive attitudes towards being a stepparent and are more likely to form a union with someone who has children (Goldscheider & Kaufman, 2006).

Although accused of being poor in theory (Robila & Taylor, 2001; Taylor et al., 2012) stepfamily research is not, however, lacking in hypotheses about the mechanisms explaining associations with child outcomes. Amato (1993) outlined and tested the main hypotheses explaining why children of divorced parents fared worse than those living with continuously married ones in a review of research on children's outcomes of divorce in 1993. The categorization of the hypotheses differs somewhat but they are in many ways the same mechanisms as the four main hypotheses explaining the association between stepfamilies and adverse child outcomes presented by Sweeney (2010) in her review of stepfamily research almost twenty years later.

The first three are causal processes in which family structure influences economic resources, parental engagement, and stress arising from the instability that produces different family structures. In turn, economic resources, parental engagement and stress influence children's well-being. Besides these causal explanations the association between family structure and child outcomes may result from selection on unobserved characteristics that simultaneously influence family structure, economic resources, parental engagement, stress, and child well-being.

The economic resource explanation highlights the importance of family income for children's well-being. Families with two biological

parents have a higher economic well-being than do both single parent families and stepfamilies (Manning & Brown 2006) and economic distress is related to negative outcomes for children. Stepfamily formation is associated with increased family income in comparison to living with a single parent, due to another income-earning adult in the household (Holden & Smock, 1991; McLanahan and Sandefur, 1994). Economic resources of children living in stepfamilies are between those of children in original two-parent families and single parent families, but closer to the former. It has been argued from an evolutionary perspective that parents would be less motivated to invest in stepchildren than biological children (Case, Lin & McLanahan, 2001) leading to less access to economic resources leading to adverse outcomes for children in stepfamilies. The economic resource explanation for differences in outcomes by family structure has been tested and supported by several studies that has shown economy to mostly account for differences in single-parent families (see for example Sweeney, 2007; Thomson et al. 1994).

The parenting, socialization or parental resource explanation highlights the importance of differences in parenting and parental investment for understanding child outcomes. Stepfamily formation may improve child well-being after parental union dissolution because a new adult in the household can take over responsibilities and help the parent with everyday tasks thus giving the parent more time to interact with the child. A stepparent can also help with child supervision (Thomson et al., 1992) and offer emotional support to the child as well as support and help to the biological parent in difficult decisions regarding the child. However Furstenberg and Cherlin (1991) have pointed to the fact that a stepparent's "license to parent" is limited, meaning that they do not have the same authority as a co-resident biological parent does. Furthermore Thomson and colleagues (2001) have shown that stepfamily formation does not increase child care time.

It can also be argued that a new adult in the household may produce feelings of jealousy and exclusion as well as competition for the parent's affection and attention (Crosbie-Bumett and Ahrons, 1985; Öberg & Öberg, 2004) thus reducing parental investment and child well-being. In a qualitative study of divorced and reconstituted families Öberg and Öberg (2004) showed that feelings of jealousy and exclusion are more common among younger children; teenagers, who have their own networks of friends and are less dependent on their

parents, can more easily identify with the parent, be more concerned for his or her happiness and be more understanding about a new partner.

The stress and instability explanation asserts that changes in family structure create stress that leads to conflicts within the family and may interrupt effective parenting behaviors. A period of 5 to 7 years after a stepfamily formation is reported to be especially destabilizing and stressful for children. The period is shorter if the child was young at the time of stepfamily formation and longer in complex stepfamilies where step- or half-siblings are involved (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). The adaptation period to a stepfamily formation has been reported to be twice as long as the adaptation to a parental divorce (Hetherington et al., 1999). When the child has experienced a stressful and highly conflictual parental separation the family reconstitution may lead to fear of new conflicts in the home (Öberg & Öberg, 2004). The child may also dislike the change in behavior of a parent who is in love and acting “silly” and the parent and stepparent may be too preoccupied with their newfound love and their own life transition to notice that the child does not share their positive feelings (Öberg & Öberg, 2004).

A new partner moving in with one’s parent may also be the final deathblow to the child’s wishes for parental reunification, something that he or she may harbor hopes for when living with a single parent (Öberg & Öberg, 2004). This feeling may be even more pronounced when one of the parents has a child with the new partner, especially if it is the non-residential parent who can be viewed by the child as forming a new family unit. Previous studies do report especially strained family relations in cases with stepsiblings or half-siblings (Sweeney, 2010). Children may also experience feelings of guilt towards the absent parent for not seeing him or her often enough and be worried about the parent’s well-being (Öberg & Öberg, 2004).

Results from some studies suggest that it is cumulative number of family structure changes and the their timing that is the source of poor outcomes for children rather than the resulting family structures themselves (Bzostek & Beck, 2011; Cavanagh & Huston, 2006; Fomby & Cherlin, 2007; Fomby & Sennott, 2013; Hill et al., 2001; Osborne & McLanahan, 2008; Wu, 1996).

Finally the selection explanation argues that children and parents in stepfamilies are different from those in nuclear families and that there are some factors that affect both the likelihood of living in a

stepfamily and child well-being creating a spurious association between these. For example Furstenberg and Spanier (1984) hypothesized that the reason why stepfamilies have higher separation risk than first marriages is not because they are “incompletely institutionalized” as argued by Cherlin (1978) but that the new partners are more divorce prone. Possible confounders affecting both family structure and well-being can be low education, income, parental age at birth or age at marriage that have shown to be related with separation (Cherlin, 2005; Halpern-Meekin & Tach, 2008). Although the findings are mixed some studies suggest that women with little education and low economic resources are more likely to form stepfamily. Study I investigates some of these factors for Swedish children. Factors like high alcohol consumption, aggressiveness and low interpersonal skills also predict divorce and are therefore more prevalent among the people in the risk pool for stepfamily formation (Hetherington et al. 1999). All these characteristics are also related to the well-being of children so most studies attempt to control for as many of the potentially confounding factors as the data allow.

There may also be unobserved or unobservable factors that influence both family structure and the well-being of both children and adults, again creating a spurious association. An increasingly popular way of trying to account for these unobservable factors is using various fixed effects models. Björklund and colleagues (Björklund et al., 2007; Björklund & Sundström, 2006) showed that when comparing siblings in families where one experienced divorce before and one after an educational outcome was measured, no differences could be found, suggesting that divorce is not a causal factor in attainment.. To draw such conclusions from sibling fixed-effects models, one must assume that family effects are sibling-invariant, i.e., that siblings are affected the same way by family structure changes. It also assumes that family structure changes are events rather than processes where the stress causing the negative outcome can begin years before the actual divorce. The fact that siblings usually are relatively close in age to each other means that both are likely to experience the stress during the divorce process, so the divorce “effect” is not limited to the sibling whose outcome is observed after the divorce.

Another way to deal with the problem of selection is to use child fixed effects models where the outcome is measure before and after the family transition and each child is his or her own control. In this way children who experienced the family transition are not compared

to those who did not, but to themselves before and after the transition. The results from child fixed effect models seem to reduce the magnitude of the association but show a remaining negative association between divorce and child well-being (Amato, 2012). Again, however, the child's outcome may have been influenced by the divorce process well before the event occurred, thus biasing downward the observed difference before and after divorce. The question of causation or selection is far from being solved when it comes to child outcomes after divorce and even more remains to be investigated when it comes to the causal effect of subsequent family structure transitions.

## Future directions

While the question of causality is debated, the associations between divorce and negative child outcomes (Amato, 2001; Amato & Keith, 1991) as well as living in a stepfamily and faring poorly (Amato & Keith, 1991; Sweeney, 2010) are well established. One can hardly say that the associations found in previous research and in the present volume are alarming. Although rather consistent over countries and time the effect sizes are quite weak. Even though living in a stepfamily means a somewhat higher risk of poor outcomes, most children in stepfamilies are doing just fine. As Amato (1994) shows there is considerable overlap in outcomes between children in nuclear families and those in stepfamilies meaning that there are children in nuclear families doing poorly and children in stepfamilies doing well and the difference between them is quite small.

Whether the differences between children in stepfamilies and those in intact families is large or small, knowing about the problems that occur in stepfamilies and the mechanisms behind them can be of use not just to parents but also health practitioners and school personnel as long as they are aware of the relatively limited implication of stepfamily life for the well-being of an individual child. Amato (1994) argues further that studying stepfamilies can improve the theoretical understanding of family dynamics and develop family sociology in general. Issues that can be examined by analyzing stepfamilies include the interplay between child and parent gender, ties between

children and stepparents or between extended kin. We can also learn more about the selection process into different family types as well as the dissolution of different kinds of families. All this improve our understanding of family as a social institution.

What are the next challenges for stepfamily research? Besides further efforts to answer the question of causality by improved longitudinal data and the use of statistical methods like child fixed effects models or quasi-experimental study designs, an increased emphasis on family complexity would be a fruitful endeavor. Stepfamily networks become increasingly complex after each new transition and the relationships between stepsiblings, half-siblings, non- and co-residential family etc. is an area where relatively little research has been done. Families with shared physical custody of children, meaning divorced or separated families where children reside alternately in both the maternal and the paternal household, also warrant more attention. Alternate living is an increasingly common phenomenon in Sweden and the experience of up to a third of all children in post-separation families (Lundström, 2009). Children in this kind of residential setting may live with a single parent one week and in a stepfamily the next or in two different stepfamilies. They may also live with any combination of stepsiblings, full siblings and half-siblings in both households. A recent Swedish study has shown that non-residential parent's socioeconomic status has almost the same influence on children's educational success as the co-residential parent's (Låftman et al., 2009) which may perhaps be an effect of the commonality of shared physical custody and high level of parent-child contact after a separation.

The role of the non-resident parent, who has or has not formed a new family, is in need of further study. Amato and Gilbreth (1999) have for example shown that rather than the frequency of contact it is the quality of the non-resident parent-child relationship that is related to children's adjustment. This fits well with recent findings showing that Swedish children in shared physical custody settings, where a qualitative parenting style is easier to maintain than in a setting with weekend or holiday visits, have higher well-being than those living mainly with one parent (Bergström, 2012).

The findings on how children's outcomes vary by gender are so far mixed (including the findings in the present volume). Some previous studies have shown that girls experience lower psychological well-being after divorce (Barret & Turner, 2005; Låftman & Östberg, 2006;

Mokrue et al. 2012; Rodgers, 1994) and have lower educational outcomes in complex family structures (Tillman, 2008), in comparison to boys. Others have shown that boys may fare worse, especially when it comes to externalizing behaviors (Cooper et al., 2011). Continued focus on the interplay of child gender and the gender of the parent and stepparent may help us understand more of the differential effects of family transitions and family forms.

Further focus on the complex and diverse processes of family structure change and stepfamily formation, including the question of cumulative instability and timing of transitions (Bzostek & Beck, 2011; Cavanagh & Huston, 2006; Fomby & Cherlin, 2007; Fomby & Sennott, 2013; Hill et al., 2001; Osborne & McLanahan, 2008; Wu, 1996), especially from other countries than the United States, would further benefit our understanding of stepfamily dynamics. We also need to disentangle the mechanisms underlying re-partnering and stepfamily formation, as well as the selection into the risk pool, in order to fully understand the nature of stepfamilies and their effects on children. Continued effort to map and understand the differences in children's pathways into different family forms as well as how, and why, these pathways may affect them differently (Tillman, 2007) should also be on the research agenda.

As mentioned above a continuing expansion of the field of stepfamily research to other country contexts would help us further understand how and under what circumstances children are affected by living in different family forms. Most of the recent research on child well-being, both single country studies (Jonsson & Gähler, 1997; Låftman & Östberg, 2006; Breivik & Olweus, 2006a) as well as cross-national comparisons (Amato & James, 2010; Bjarnason et al. 2010; Låftman, 2010), have found a great deal of similarity in the links between family structure and outcomes. Future research on countries and cultural contexts such as Japan – where divorce rates (Ono, 2006) and stepfamily formation (Nozawa, 2008) have increased recently -- will help us further understand the mechanisms linking family forms to differentials in well-being and life outcomes of children as well as parents.

Sweden offers a good setting for future stepfamily research not just because of its welfare state model and gender equality but also for the access to very high quality data. The Swedish population registers have hitherto not had information on cohabiting unions without shared children with the exception of the census which was last con-

ducted in 1990. Cohabiting stepfamilies have therefore been invisible in the register data (see for example Jonsson & Gähler, 1997) unless they are blended families with a common child, or half-sibling (see Study III). Since 2010 Sweden is in the process of implementing a dwelling register of the same kind that already exists in Denmark, Finland and Norway in which it will be possible to link cohabiting partners who do not have common children. The longitudinal nature and large size of these register datasets, encompassing the whole Swedish population, will give good opportunities to study many of the complexities of stepfamily dynamics for which we so far have not had large enough samples. They offer a good data source especially for the structural aspects of family studies. Administrative registers do not, of course, have many of the variables we need to fully understand family functioning, including relationship quality, feelings, conflicts, emotions etc. For this reason further investment in survey research as well as qualitative studies of stepfamilies in Sweden is necessary.

# Summary of the empirical studies

## Study I: Entering a stepfamily: Children's experience of family reconstitution in Sweden 1970-2000

Study I analyzes educational differentials in stepfamily formation. The pool of children under risk of stepfamily formation has grown in the past decades due to increased separation and divorce. Educational differentials in family dissolution and in the birth of children to lone mothers have become firmly established during the same time (Hoem 1997; Kennedy & Thomson 2010). In the paper, I study differentials in stepfamily formation from the child perspective. Stepfamily formation is analyzed by using event history analysis on the retrospective birth- and union histories in the Level of Living Studies (LNU) from 1991 and 2000 (n: 1277). The results show no differences by parental education or employment status in the formation of a child's first stepfamily. As other studies have shown, parent's education is inversely associated with the probability that a child is at risk of stepfamily formation, i.e., born to a lone mother or experiencing parental separation. The lack of educational differentials in the family reconstitution process is surprising given the earlier research showing educational differences in family dynamics in Sweden.

The main differences in children's chances of stepfamily entry are gender-based. Boys have much lower odds of entering a stepfamily than girls, even though this is different at different ages with the youngest girls having the highest odds and boys catching up at higher ages. The fathers of children born out of union have a higher likelihood of partnering than fathers of children born in marriage or cohabiting unions, whereas the lone mothers are less likely to form a union. This difference can be explained by the fact men who father children outside a stable union are less likely to have the same kind of engagement with the child as are men who have lived with the child

and been part of the daily life of childrearing. Fathers with boys are, however, less likely to form new unions than fathers with girls, which might suggest that they take a more active role in rearing male children and are for that reason less attractive partners or less interested in finding new partners. The likelihood of forming a stepfamily seems to be unaffected by family size, possibly related to the relatively low per-child costs in a system with universal child allowance and heavily subsidized high quality child care. In conclusion, one can say that there is evidence from previous research, as well as from my model for selection into the risk pool, for a “Diverging Destinies” scenario in Sweden, albeit of less magnitude than in the United States (McLanahan 2004; Kennedy and Thomson 2010). But, conditional on parents’ separation or divorce, there are no educational differences in children’s access to a two-adult household with one biological parent and one stepparent in Sweden.

## Study II: Family structure, gender and adolescent emotional well-being

Study II analyzes the association between children’s psychological and psychosomatic well-being and access to economic and parental resources by both family structure and parent’s sex.

Both Swedish and international research on children’s emotional well-being show an association between low level of well-being and living in single-parent and stepfamily households. The reasons may however differ by family type. Two of the main theoretical explanations for the difference in child well-being between family types have been linked to differences in economic resources and parental socialization (Thomson, Hanson & McLanahan 1994; Sweeney 2010). Children’s access to both financial and parental resources can however vary not just depending on whether the child lives with a single parent or in a stepfamily setting but also depending on the sex of the child as well as that of the resident parent. I use data from the child supplements of the Level of Living Survey of year 2000 and the Surveys of Living Conditions (ULF) from 2001, 2002 and 2003 in combination with the data collected from the primary parental respondents in

these surveys to get information from both the child and the parent (n: 5340).

The results show some, albeit mostly small, differences in the well-being of Swedish children living in different family settings. Only limited support was found for the economic deprivation hypothesis that predicts lower well-being in family settings with a single financial provider. Only for girls in their early to mid-teens are lower levels of well-being accounted for by economic circumstances. Lower well-being in other family types and for younger girls and all boys living with lone mothers is to some extent accounted for by differences in parent-child relationships. This points in a different direction than for example findings by Thomson and colleagues (1994) or Sweeney (2007) who demonstrated that in the United States negative outcomes are mediated by financial conditions in single mother families and parenting in stepfamilies. Instead the main mediator of adverse emotional outcomes for boys and girls in both single mother families as well as stepfamilies seems to be the relationship between the parent and the child.

Despite the fact that children in single-father and father-stepmother families experience more strained relations with adults in the household, only one difference in well-being was found. Among girls age 13-15, those living with single fathers reported lower psychosomatic well-being than their peers in other family types. The fact that children in these types of families do not report lower well-being can be because men on average earn more than women and therefore experience less financial hardship when raising children alone or with stepmothers. Previous research has shown that single fathers are better off than single mothers when it comes to income and employment and also outside support (e.g., Biblarz & Raftery, 1999; Bramlett & Blumberg 2007; Clarke-Stewart & Hayward, 1996; Hoffmann & Johnson, 1998). The findings are also in line with previous research showing that children in single father families do not show higher risk of emotional health problems (Bramlett and Blumberg, 2007; Clarke-Stewart & Hayward, 1996). Surprisingly the youngest boys actually show higher levels of well-being in single father families compared to their age mates living with two parents. This could perhaps be explained by positive selection of men who become single fathers of small children. Research has however shown that while children in single father families do not report an increased risk of internalizing behavior they have an increased risk of externalizing behaviors like

substance abuse (Breivik and Olweus 2006b; Hoffmann and Johnson, 1998), outcomes that were not studied in this paper.

There is a clear negative age gradient for girls in the models for psychosomatic well-being whereas no such pattern can be seen for boys. Taking the patterns for both the psychological as well as the psychosomatic outcomes together we can conclude that boys and girls may be affected differently by living in different family settings. The girls show a rather consistent pattern of lower emotional well-being in a stepfamily setting with a mother and a stepfather whereas the results for those in father/stepmother families are more mixed. For boys, living with a single mother seems to be associated with more psychosomatic problems whereas any negative association with psychological well-being disappears when controlling for parent-child relationship quality. There is some evidence for a positive father effect for boys and an adverse effect of living without a co-resident father figure.

### Study III: Adolescent Educational Outcomes in Blended Families – Evidence from Swedish Register Data 1998-2007

Study III deals with adolescents' educational outcomes in blended families, meaning stepfamilies with half-siblings. Using Swedish register data from the years 1998 to 2007, the study analyzes adolescents' 9<sup>th</sup> grade school results. Previous research within this field is largely based on analyses of U.S. survey data. Using a register dataset including the full Swedish population of ninth-graders (n=874,812) with information on half-sibling links on both the maternal and the paternal side we can get more reliable estimates off the association between family structure and educational outcomes. I look at two different kinds of outcomes; not being eligible for upper secondary school, a relatively "extreme" measure of educational performance, and a more nuanced measure, overall grade score.

The results show clear differences, for overall grade score as well as eligibility for upper secondary school, between adolescents living in different family

forms. Those with separated parents, but no half-siblings, have lower school performance than those living with both their biological parents but do in turn perform better than adolescents who have experienced the birth of a half-siblings. There is not any evidence for girls being less affected than boys by living in a family setting with a single parent or with a younger half-sibling. In fact the difference for girls in these family types and an original two-parent family is slightly bigger than for boys but too small to be regarded as substantially significant. This is in contrast with previous findings by Tillman (2008) showing that girls were less affected by younger half-siblings in the Unites States. Tillman argued that girls develop closer relationships with the half-sibling than do boys. Having an older half-sibling, especially paternal, is negatively associated with school results. Furthermore the results show a gender gap in school performance and a clear positive gradient when it comes to the association with mother's educational level as well as her age at first birth.

# References

- Amato, P. (1993). Children's Adjustment to Divorce: Theories, Hypothesis and Empirical Support. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 55(1), 23-38.
- Amato, P. (1994). The implications of research findings on children in stepfamilies. In Booth, A. & Dunn, J. (Eds.), *Stepfamilies: Who benefits? Who does not?* 81-87. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Amato, P. (2001). Children of divorce in the 1990s: An update of the Amato and Keith (1991) meta-analysis. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 15(3), 355-370.
- Amato, P. (2012). Keynote lecture at Committee on Family Research Conference 2012. September 12, Leuven, Belgium.
- Amato, P. & Boyd, L. (Forthcoming). Children and divorce in a world perspective in Abela, A. & Walker, J. (Eds.) *Contemporary Issues in Family Studies: Global Perspectives on Partnerships, Parenting, and Support in a Changing World*. Wiley. Hoboken.
- Amato, P. and Gilbreth, J. (1999). Nonresident Fathers and Children's Well-Being: A Meta-Analysis, *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 61(3), 557-573
- Amato, P. and James, S. (2010) Divorce in Europe and the United States: Commonalities and differences across nations, *Family Science*, 1(1), 2 – 13.
- Amato, P. and Keith, B. (1991) Parental Divorce and Adult Well-Being: A Meta-Analysis *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 53(1), 43-58.
- Andersson, Gunnar, 2002. –Children's experience of family disruption and family formation: Evidence from 16 FFS countries. *Demographic Research* 7(7), 343-364.
- Andress, H-J.; Borgloh, B.; Brockel, M.; Giesselmann, M. & Hummelshelm, D. (2006). The economic consequences of partnership dissolution – A comparative analysis of panel studies from Belgium, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, and Sweden. *European Sociological Review*, 22 (5), 533-560.

- Barret, A. and Turner, J. (2005) Family Structure and mental health: The Mediating Effects of Socioeconomic Status, Family Process and Social Stress. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 46(2), 156-169.
- Bergström, M. (2012). Barn med växelvis boende. In Socialstyrelsen, *Skolans betydelse för barns och ungas psykiska hälsa – en studie baserad på den nationella totalundersökningen i årskurs 6 och 9 hösten 2009*. Stockholm: Socialstyrelsen.
- Biblarz, T., and Raftery, A. (1999). Family structure, educational attainment, and socioeconomic success: Rethinking the “pathology of matriarchy”. *American Journal of Sociology*, 105(2), 321–365.
- Bjarnason, T., Andersson, B., Choquet, M., Elekes, Z., Morgan, M. & rapinett, G. (2003). Alcohol Culture, Family Structure and Adolescent Alcohol Use: Multilevel Modeling of Frequency of Heavy Drinking among 15-16 Year Old Students in 11 European Countries. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 64(2), 200-208.
- Bjarnason, T., Bendtsen P, Arnarsson AM, Borup I, Iannotti RJ, Löfstedt P, Haapasalo I and Niclasen, B. (2012). Life Satisfaction Among Children in Different Family Structures: A Comparative Study of 36 Western Societies. *Children & Society*. 26(1), 51–62.
- Bjarnason, T., Davidaviciene, A., Miller, P., Nociar, A., Pavlakis, A. Stergar, E. (2003). Family structure and adolescent cigarette smoking in eleven European countries. *Addiction*, 98(6), 815–824.
- Björklund, A. Ginther, D & Sundström, M. (2007). Family structure and child outcomes in the USA and Sweden. *Journal of Population Economics*, 20(1), 183-201.
- Björklund, A. & Sundström, M. (2006). Parental Separation and Children’s Educational Attainment: A Siblings Analysis on Swedish Register Data. *Economica*, 73, 605-624.
- Booth, A. & Dunn, J. (1994). *Stepfamilies: Who benefits? Who does not?* Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Bramlett, M. & Blumberg, S. (2007). Family Structure And Children’s Physical And Mental Health. *Health Affairs*, 26(2), 549-558.
- Breivik, K. and Olweus, D. (2006a) Children of divorce in a Scandinavian welfare state: Are they less affected than US children? *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 4(1), 61–74.
- Breivik, K. & Olweus, D. (2006b): Adolescent's Adjustment in Four Post-Divorce Family Structures, *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, 44(3-4), 99-124.

- Bumpass, L.; Raley, K. & Sweet, J. (1995). The changing character of stepfamilies: Implication of cohabitation and nonmarital child-bearing. *Demography*, 32 (3), 426-436.
- Bzostek, S. & Beck, A., (2011). Family instability and young children's physical health. *Social Science & Medicine*, 73(2), 282–292
- Case, A., Lin, I.-F., & McLanahan, S. (2001). Educational attainment of siblings in stepfamilies. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 22(4), 269 – 289.
- Cavanagh, S. E., & Huston, A. C. (2006). Family instability and children's early problem behavior. *Social Forces*, 85, 551 – 581.
- Cherlin, A. (1978). Remarriage as an incomplete institution. *American Journal of Sociology*, 84(3), 634-650.
- Cherlin, A. (2005). American marriage in the early twenty-first century. *The Future of Children*, 15(2), 33-55.
- Cherlin, A. & Furstenberg, F. (1994). Stepfamilies in the United States: A Reconsideration. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 20, 359-381
- Clarke-Stewart, K.A. & Hayward, C.( 1996). Advantages of father custody and contact for the psychological well-being of school-age children. *Journal of applied Developmental Psychology*, 17(2), 239-270.
- Coleman, M. & Ganong, L. (1990). Remarriage and Stepfamily Research in the 1980's: Increased Interest in an Old Family Form. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 52(4), 925-940.
- Coleman, M., Ganong, L. & Fine, M.(2000). Reinvestigating Remarriage: Another Decade of Progress. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62(4), 1288-1307.
- Cooper, C., Osborne, C., Beck, A., & McLanahan, S. (2011). Partnership Instability, School Readiness, and Gender Disparities. *Sociology of Education* 84(3), 246-59.
- Crosbie-Bumett, M., & Ahrons, C.R. (1985). From divorce to remarriage: Implications for therapy with families in transition. *Journal of Psychotherapy and the Family*, 1(3), 121 -137.
- de Graaf, P. & Kalmijn, M. (2003). Alternative routes in the remarriage market: Competing-risk analyses of union formation after divorce. *Social Forces* 81(4), 1459-1498.
- Fomby, P., & Cherlin, A. J. (2007). Family instability and child well-being. *American Sociological Review*, 72(2), 181 – 204.

- Fomby, P. & Sennott, C. (2013). Family Structure Instability and Mobility: The Consequences for Adolescents' Problem Behavior. *Social Science Research* 42(1), 181-206.
- Furstenberg, F. (1979). Recycling the family: Perspectives for researching a neglected family form. *Marriage and Family Review*, 2(3), 12-22
- Furstenberg F. & Cherlin A. (1991). *Divided Families: What Happens to Children When Parents Part*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Furstenberg, F. & Spanier, G. (1984). The Risk of Dissolution in Remarriage: An Examination of Cherlin's Hypothesis of Incomplete Institutionalization. *Family Relations* 33(3), 433-441.
- Goldscheider, F. & Goldscheider, C. (1998). The Effects of Childhood Family Structure on Leaving and Returning Home, *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 60(3), 745-56.
- Goldscheider, F. & Kaufman, G. (2006) Willingness to Stepparent: Attitudes About Partners Who Already Have Children, *Journal of Family Issues*, 27(10), 1415-1436.
- Goldscheider, F., Kaufman, G. & Sassler, S. (2009). Navigating the "New" Marriage Market: How Attitudes Toward Partner Characteristic Shape Union Formation, *Journal of Family Issues*, 30(6), 719-737.
- Goldscheider, F. & Sassler, S. (2006). Creating Stepfamilies: Integrating Children Into the Study of Union Formation. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, (68), 275-291.
- Gähler, M. & Garriga, A. (2013). Has the Association between Parental Divorce and Young Adults' Psychological Problems Changed over Time? Evidence from Sweden, 1968-2000. *Journal of Family Issues*, 34(6), 784-808.
- Halpern-Meehin, L. & Tach, S. (2008) Heterogeneity in Two-Parent Families and Adolescent Well-Being. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 70(2), 435-45.
- Hetherington, E. M., & Kelly, J. (2002). *For better or for worse: divorce reconsidered* (1st ed.). New York: W.W. Norton.
- Hetherington, E., Henderson, S., O'Connor, T., Insabella, G., Taylor, L., & Anderson, E. (1999). Family Functioning and the Adjustment of Adolescent in Diverse Types of Families. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 64(4), 1-25

- Hill, M. S., Yeung, W. J., & Duncan, G. J. (2001). Child family structure and young adult behaviors. *Journal of Population Economics*, 14(2), 271 – 299.
- Hoem, J. (1997). Educational gradients in divorce risks in Sweden in recent decades. *Population Studies*, 51(1), 19-27.
- Hoffmann, J. P., and Johnson, R. A. (1998). A national portrait of family structure and adolescent drug use. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 60(3), 633–645.
- Holden, K.C. and Smock, P.J. (1991). The Economic Costs of Marital Dissolution: Why Do Women Bear a Disproportionate Cost? *Annual Reviews of Sociology*, 17, 51-78.
- Jonsson, J.O. & Gähler, M. (1997) Family Dissolution, Family Reconstitution, and Children's Educational Careers: Recent Evidence for Sweden". *Demography* 34(2), 277-293.
- Jonsson, J.O. & Östberg, V. (2010). Studying Young People's Level of Living: The Swedish Child-LNU. *Child Indicators Research*, 3(1), 47–64
- Kennedy, S. & Thomson, E. (2010). Children's experiences of family disruption in Sweden: Differentials by parent education over three decades. *Demographic Research*, 23 (17), 479-508.
- Kiernan, K. (1992). The Impact of Family Disruption in Childhood on Transitions Made in Young Adult Life. *Population Studies*, 46(2), 213-234
- Lundström, K. (2009). Växelvis boende ökar bland skilsmässobarn [Alternating residence is increasing among children of divorce] . *Välfärd, Nr 4*. Stockholm: Statistiska centralbyrån/Statistics Sweden.
- Låftman, S. (2010). Family Structure and Children's Living Conditions. A Comparative Study of 24 Countries. *Child indicators research* 3(1), 127-147.
- Låftman, S., Gähler, M. & Jonsson, J. (2009). *The importance of being present: the influence of 'absent' parents and 'present' stepparents on children's educational attainment*. Paper presented at the RC28 conference in Beijing, China.
- Låftman and Östberg (2006) The pros and cons of social relations: An analysis of adolescents' health complaints. *Social Science and Medicine* 63(3), 611-623.
- Manning, W., & Brown, S. L. (2006). Children's economic well-being in married and cohabiting families. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68(2), 345 – 362.

- McLanahan, S. (2004). Diverging destinies: How children are faring under the second demographic transition. *Demography*, 41(4), 607-627.
- McLanahan, S., & Sandefur, G. (1994). *Growing up with a single parent: What hurts, what helps?* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Mokruue, K., Chen, Y. & Elias, M. (2012) The Interaction between Family Structure and Child Gender on Behavior Problems in Urban Ethnic Minority Children, *International Journal of Behavior Development*. 36(2), 130-136.
- Nozawa, S. (2008) The Social Context of Emerging Stepfamilies in Japan: Stress and Support for Parents and Stepparents in Pryor, J. (Ed.) *The International Handbook of Stepfamilies: Policy and Practice in Legal, Research, and Clinical Environments*. Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley.
- Oláh, L. S. & Bernhardt, E. (2008). Sweden: Combining childbearing and gender equality." *Demographic Research*, 19(28), 1105-1144.
- Ono, H. (2006) Divorce in Japan Why it happens, why it doesn't in Blomström, M. & La Croix, S. (Eds.) *Institutional Change in Japan*. New York, N.Y.: Routledge.
- Osborne, C., & McLanahan, S. (2007). Partnership instability and child well-being. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 69, 1065 – 1083.
- Qvortrup, J. (1990) in Prout, A. and James, A. (Eds.) *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood*. Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. New York, N.Y.: Routledge-Falmer.
- Robila, M. & Taylor, A. (2001). The recent Use of Theory Within Stepparent and Adolescent Relationship Research. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, 35(3-4), 81-92
- Rodgers, B. (1994). Pathways between parental divorce and adult depression. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 35(7), 1289-1308.
- Stewart, S. (2007). *Brave New stepfamilies. Diverse Paths Toward Stepfamily Living*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Sundström, M. (1991). Sweden: Supporting work, family and gender equality. In: Kamerman, S. B. & Kahn, A. J. (Eds.), *Childcare, parental leave, and the under 3s: Policy innovation in Europe*. New York: Auburn House.

- Sweeney, M. M. (2007). Stepfather families and the emotional well-being of adolescents. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 48(1), 33 – 49.
- Sweeney, M. (2010) Remarriage and Stepfamilies: Strategic Sites for Family Scholarship in the 21st Century, *Journal of Marriage and Family* 72(3). 667-684.
- Taylor, A., Robila, M. & Fisackerly, B. (2013). Theory Use in Stepfamily Research in Fine, M. & Fincham, D., *Handbook of Family Theories. A Content-Based Approach*. New York, N.Y.: Routledge.
- Thomson, E., Mosley, J., Hanson, T., & McLanahan, S. (2001). Remarriage, cohabitation, and changes in mothering behavior. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 63(2), 370 – 380.
- Thomson, E., McLanahan, S. & Curtin, R. (1992). Family structure , gender and parental socialization. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 54(2), 368-378.
- Thomson, E. and Eriksson, H. (2010) Register-based Estimates of Parental Separation in Sweden. Stockholm Research Reports in Demography 2010:10.
- Thomson, E., Hanson, T.L., and McLanahan, S. S. (1994). Family Structure and Child Well-Being: Economic Resources vs. Parental Behaviors. *Social Forces*, 73(1), 221-242.
- Tillman, K. (2007). Family Structure Pathways and Academic Disadvantage among Adolescents in Stepfamilies. *Sociological Inquiry*, 77(3), 383–424.
- Tillman, K. (2008) .”Non-traditional siblings” and the academic outcomes for children. *Social Science Research*, 37, 88-108.
- Trost, J. (1996). Family studies in Sweden. *Marriage and Family Review*, 23(3–4), 723–743.
- Wu, L. (1996) Effects of family instability, income, and income instability on the risk of a premarital birth, *American Sociological Review*, 61(3), 386–406
- Öberg, B. & Öberg, G. (2004). *Skiljas – men inte från barnen* (4th edition). Stockholm: Mareld.