## Motivation

- Lower education groups leading the retreat from marriage
- (Ellwood and Jencks 2004; McLanahan 2004)
- Lower education groups place high value on marriage and have a high bar for marriage (Gibson-Davis et al. 2005; Edin and Kefalas 2005)
- Educational differences in meaning of marriage and childbearing (Sayer et al. 2007)
- Can educational differences in family attitudes help to explain differences in marriage behavior?

## Fragile Families Data

- N=3080 mothers who are unmarried at time of birth
- Dependent variable: married by 3 years after child is born
- Independent variable: mother's educational attainment
- Explanatory variables: attitudes re:
- Benefits of marriage
- Cohabitation
- Financial pre-requisites for marriage
- Children and Marriage
- Gender Roles
- Companionate

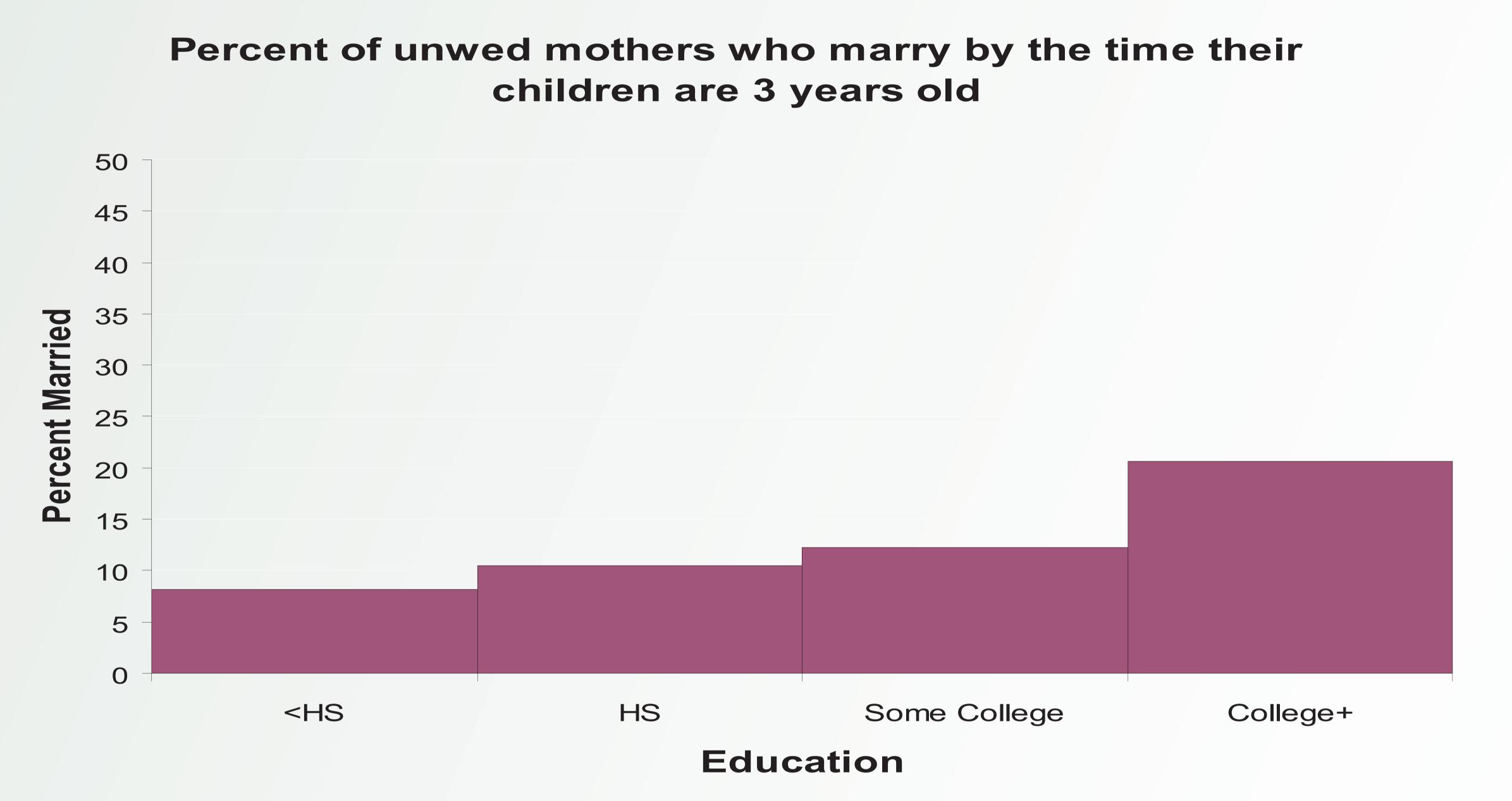
Homogamy

 Covariates: Race, Religious Attendance, Cohabitation at first wave, Number of Kids, Age, Age squared, Mom lived with both biological parents at age 15

### Can attitudes help explain why college educated mothers are more likely to marry?

- H1: Less educated mothers perceive fewer benefits to marriage
- H2: Less educated mothers are more likely to see cohabitation as equivalent to marriage
- H3: Less educated mothers place more emphasis on financial stability for marriage
- H4: Less educated mothers are more approving of single parenthood

## Why do more educated mothers have a higher rate of marriage after birth of a child?

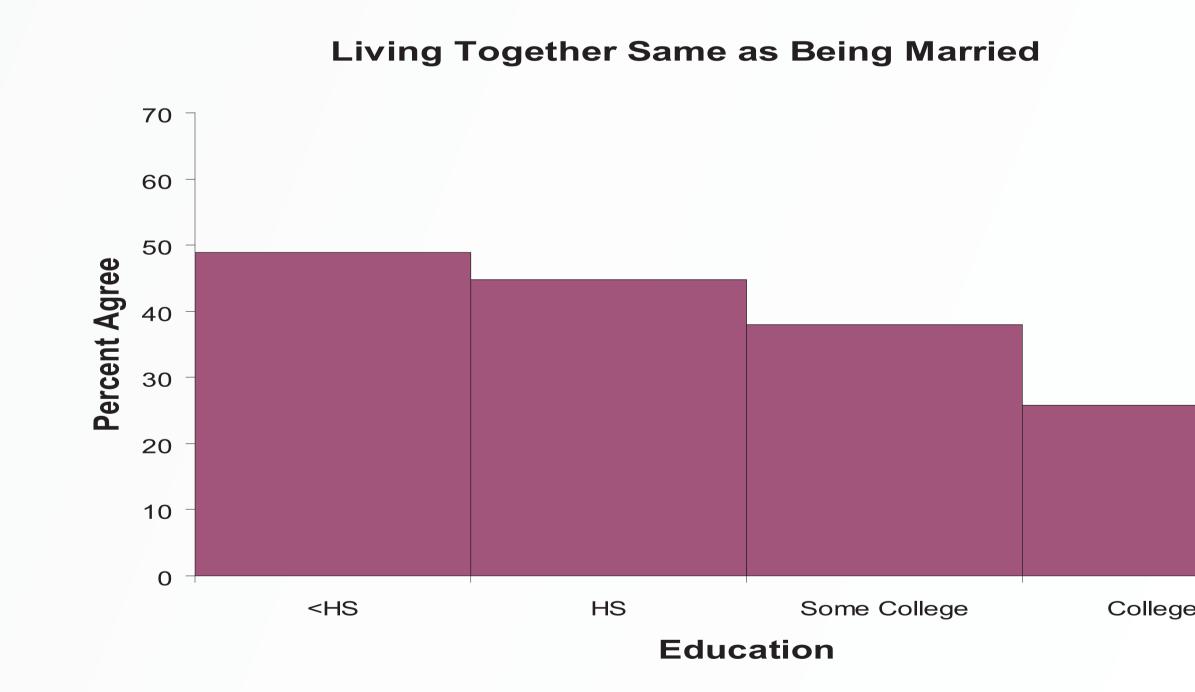


Part 1: The relationship between attitudes and education: Regression-adjusted attitudes by educational group.

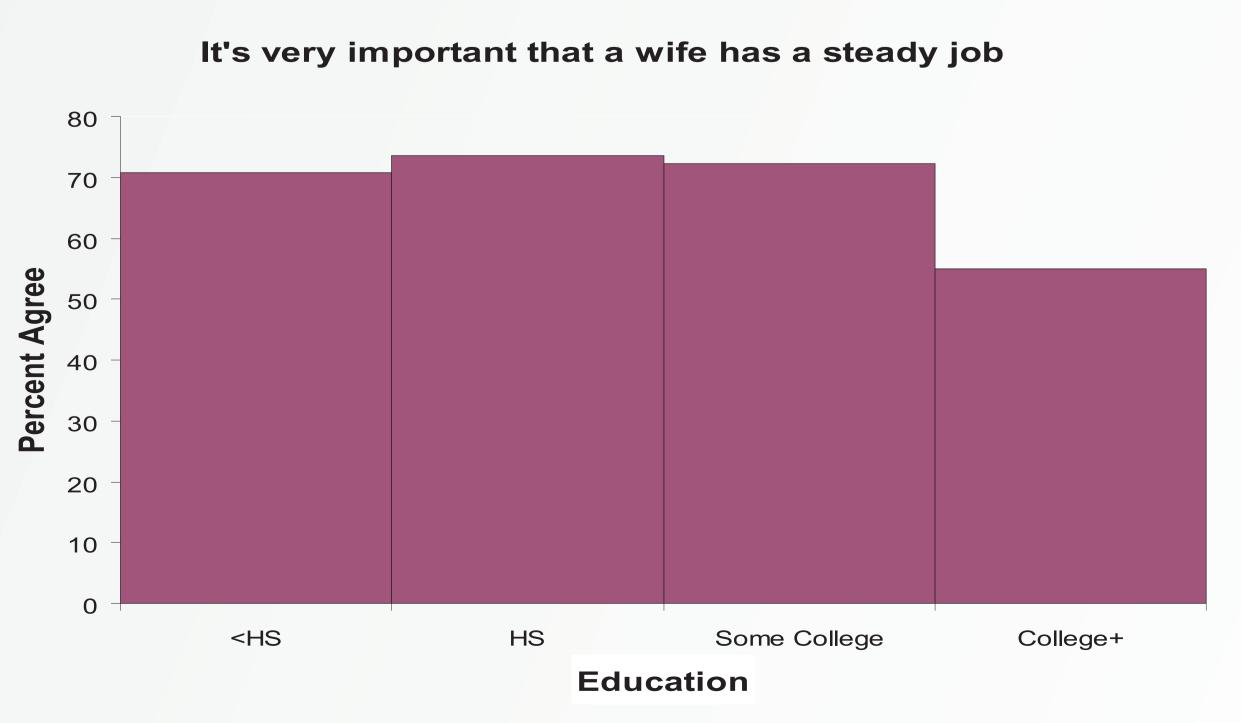


Less educated mothers perceive MORE

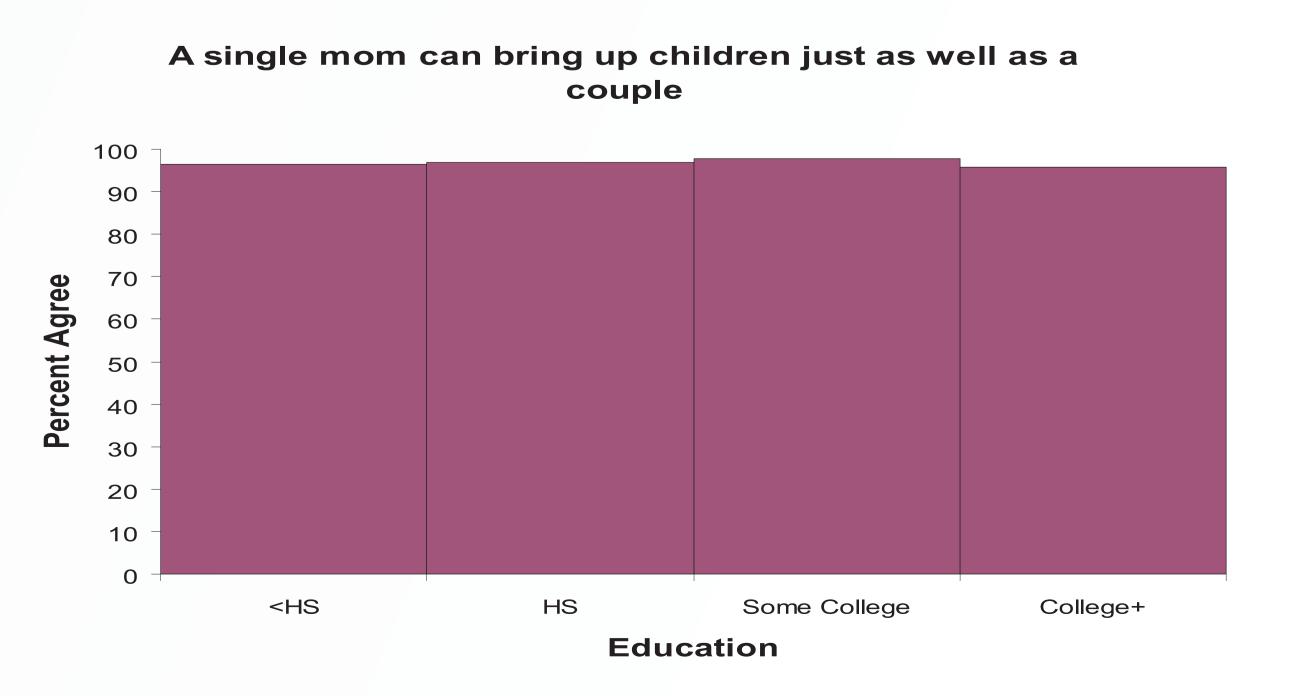
Less educated mothers are more likely to equate marriage with cohabitation



financial stability for marriage



Less educated mothers place more emphasis on Mothers' education is unrelated to approval of single motherhood



### Part 2: The relationship between education and marriage: Do attitudes mediate?

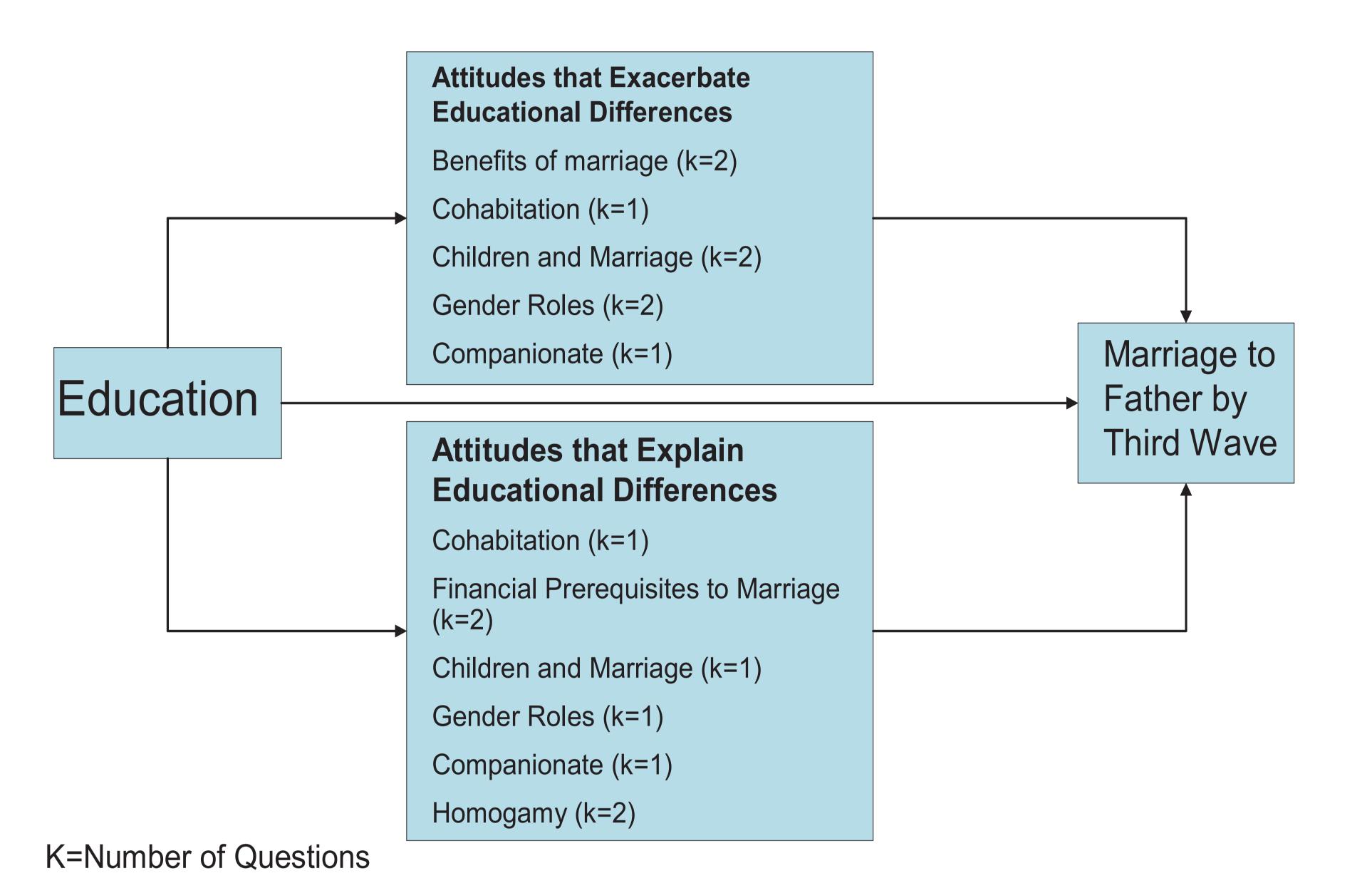
#### Potential Attitudinal Mediators

- Benefits of marriage
- Main advantage is financial
- More advantages to be married than single
- Cohabitation
- Better to be married than just living together
- Living together is the same as being married
- Financial pre-requisites for marriage
- Husband steady job important Wife steady job important
- Children and marriage
- Parents should stay together for child
- Better for child if parents are married
- Single mom can raise child just as well as a couple
- Gender roles
  - Male breadwinner model is best
  - Important decisions should be made by man
- More important for man to spend time with family than to work a lot
- Companionate
- Good sex important Same friends important
- Homogamy
- Same religion important
- Same race important

#### Regression-Adjusted Marriage Probabilities by education with and without controls for Attitudes

| Adjusted Probability of Marriage                                  | Education+<br>Controls | Education + Controls + Exacerbating Attitudes | Education + Controls + Explanatory Attitudes | Education + Controls + All Attitudes |
|---|------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------------|
| <hs< td=""><td>.08</td><td>.09</td><td>.08</td><td>.09</td></hs<> | .08                    | .09   | .08  | .09                                  |
| HS  | .10                    | .12   | .11  | .13                                  |
| Some<br>College   | .12                    | .16   | .13  | .16                                  |
| College+  | .21                    | .26   | .17  | .22                                  |

# Summary of Results



## Conclusions

- Higher levels of maternal educated are associated with marrying fathers after a nonmarital birth
- Some attitudes explain a modest portion of educational differences in marriage
- Less educated mothers place more emphasis on financial prerequisites for marriage
- Some attitudes exacerbate educational differences in
- Less educated mothers see more benefits to marriage Mediating influence of other attitudinal domains is neutral
- Cohabitation, Children and Marriage, Gender roles, Companionate, Homogamy
- Attitudes are not a good explanation for educational differences in marriage after a nonmarital birth

