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*Listening, learning,
and living together:
it's the science of life.*

Strengthening Relationships Among Unwed Parents ¹

Donna Davis²

For many, Mendelssohn's "Wedding March" conjures up a host of emotions. Yet many young people today are making the leap to family without the formality of a wedding or marriage. Consider these statistics: Although the majority of Americans still agree with the concept of marriage as an ideal, one-third of all births in the U.S. are to unmarried women. Additionally, as a result of divorce and the unstable but growing trend in cohabitation, less than 25% of children today live with both of their biological parents.

Research shows that the decline of marriage and the increase of nonmarital childbearing may result in serious consequences for children. There is also substantial evidence that children in single-parent families are generally at greater risk for poor behavioral, health, and academic outcomes. They are also much more likely to live in poverty than children raised by their married biological parents.

These statistics are key motivators behind the Building Strong Families project, one of many government-funded initiatives designed to improve child well-being. This project evaluates the effectiveness and suggests improved methods for programs and services that are currently helping unwed parents enter healthy marriages or help them maintain

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positive relationships that benefit their children. For more information on this project, check out their web site at <http://www.buildingstrongfamilies.info>.

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