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Your views: Letters to the editor

Fragile Families study not accurately portrayed

Lillian Hill Woods' recent guest column "Minority kids and poverty" inaccurately portrays the focus and findings of Families and Child Wellbeing Study.

This nationally representative study of families in large cities includes a large number of unmarried, poor, minority to accurately capture the diversity of their institutional settings and experiences with young children. We gather data on policy climates (such as child support enforcement laws or welfare eligibility) and challenges parents encounter (such as food insecurity or missing work because of insufficient child care).

By doing so, we hope to discover which programs and environments can help families in difficult circumstances, and address some of the hardships that Woods identifies. Our goal is not to eliminate social programs or stereotypes, but rather to improve them in families' lives and identify the approaches most likely to mitigate their challenges.

The author also expresses distaste at the term "multi-partner fertility," claiming both that this term suggests biological determinism and that it is aimed specifically at poor, urban, minority mothers. Neither of these is true. The term is class- and race-neutral and refers to an individual that has children with more than one partner. This can and does occur in families of all demographics, including Hollywood celebrities.

The Fragile Families study does not judge family formation patterns; we are interested in their effects, regardless of income or race. For more information, visit our website www.fragilefamilies.princeton.edu/.

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