Table 1 contains a large number of categories, and many of the cell sizes are small. In the remainder of the article, we collapse these categories into six: Both parents intended the pregnancy; neither intended the pregnancy; only the mother intended it; only the father intended it; the mother’s intention was not determined; and the father’s intention was not determined (if the mother’s intention was determined). Thus, we combine mistimed and unwanted pregnancies into a single category for unintended pregnancies.

Maternal behaviors during pregnancy and infant outcomes appear to be best when both parents intended the pregnancy (Table 2, page 201). Children whose conception had been intended by both parents are the least likely to have mothers who delayed prenatal care beyond the first trimester (15% vs. 22–27%) and who smoked during pregnancy (26% vs. 34–37%); they also are the most likely to have been breastfed (52% vs. 33–44%). They and their mothers have the most advantaged backgrounds. For example, their mothers are the least likely to be black or to have been on welfare during the year of the child’s birth; these mothers are the most likely ever to have been married and to have lived with both parents at age 14. Differences in family background could account for differences in child and infant outcomes independent of pregnancy intention. We explore this possibility in our regression models, described below.

More interesting, perhaps, are comparisons regarding pregnancies that were intended by the father only and those intended by the mother only. Consistent with the maternal predominance hypothesis, children whose conception had been intended only by their father were less likely to have been breastfed (33%) than were those whose conception had been intended by their mother alone (44%). They also appear to be less likely to have mothers who smoked and who smoked heavily during pregnancy, but these differences were not statistically significant. This pattern could reflect that a much larger proportion of these children have mothers who are black (46%, compared with 28% of those whose conception had been intended only by their mother), because black women were less likely to breastfeed and less likely to smoke, especially heavily (not shown). In sum, the descriptive data demonstrate the need to control for possibly confounding variables in comparing outcomes between births following intended and unintended pregnancies.

Multivariate Analyses

Results from the logistic regression analyses show that among infants born to unmarried women, those whose conception had been intended by neither parent were significantly more likely than those whose parents had both wanted the pregnancy to have a mother who delayed prenatal care (coefficient, 0.5 for the entire sample and 0.7 in the fixed-effects model—Table 3). This finding is consistent with the dose-response hypothesis, since not being wanted by both parents (relative to being wanted by both) may be the strongest indicator of an unintended pregnancy. On the other hand, there is no consistent evidence for other elements of the dose-response hypothesis. A pregnancy’s being intended by only one parent is not clearly better than its being intended by neither. Nor is there evidence to support the maternal predominance hypothesis.

A question raised in the literature is whether fathers’ in-