

**Child Support, Contact, and Involvement with Children after Relationship Dissolution:
Race/Ethnic Differences**

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Abstract

This paper examines how child support, frequency of contact with children, and the relationship between nonresidential parents influence early adolescent reports of the involvement of fathers and mothers in their life. Data come from the Young Adult Study of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 (NLSY79) that has followed the children of NLSY mothers from birth into their twenties. Results show that increases in child support and in contact with the child after separation are linked to a better coparental relationship at ages 11/12. This better relationship between parents is, in turn, associated with greater involvement of both mothers and non-residential fathers with their children. Implications for policies to increase paternal involvement with children are discussed.

Parents living in separate residences constitute a major source of interhousehold exchange (Hill & Callister, 2007). Child support collections amount to 25 billion dollars annually (Grall, 2007). In 2002, 23% of all children were living with only their mother¹ (Fields, 2003). This varied substantially by race/ethnicity; half (48%) of Black children were living with only their mother compared with 16% of White and 13% of Hispanic children. Almost all these children had a biological father living elsewhere (Hofferth, Pleck, Stueve, Bianchi & Sayer, 2002). It is generally believed that financial supports from this nonresidential father are important to the future success of children in school and in later family formation. Child support has been shown to increase GPA and scholastic achievement, and reduce behavior problems (Argys, Peters, Brooks-Gunn & Smith, 1998; Baydar & Brooks-Gunn, 1994; King, 1994; McLanahan, Seltzer, Hanson & Thomson, 1994). Black mothers are less likely to have married than White mothers (Kreider & Fields, 2002) and they are less likely to receive child support after relationship dissolution (Argys et al., 1998; Garasky et al., 2007). As a result, financial support may contribute less to the well-being of Black children than other types of father involvement.

Most believe that how mothers and fathers parent matters to child development. The importance of the relationship between mother and child for future developmental outcomes has been well established (Maccoby & Martin, 1983) and the relationship between residential father and child is well-studied (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004). However, parenting increasingly extends across households; over time the biological father is less likely to remain residential (Furstenberg & Harris, 1993; Hill & Callister, 2007). Besides child support, most studies of nonresidential fathers have focused on contact with children, but other aspects of involvement

¹ Another 5% lived with a single father, a proportion that is similar across race/ethnicity; there are too few single fathers and nonresidential mothers to address in the present study.

may be equally or more important. For example, children who were close to their biological father when growing up have been found to have fewer behavior problems and better grades (Amato & Rivera, 1999; Buchanan, Maccoby & Dornbusch, 1996; King, 2006; Manning & Lamb, 2003), whereas contact has not been so linked. Recent research shows that nonresidential fathers remain involved in many ways that extend beyond the frequency of contact (Argys et al., 1998; Cabrera, Ryan, Jolley & Shannon, forthcoming; Hofferth et al., 2007; King, Harris & Heard, 2004), and that minority fathers are particularly likely to remain involved. A reexamination of the involvement of minority and majority nonresidential fathers with their children is warranted.

The relationship between parents may influence the involvement of both father and mother with their child. Poor cooperation and greater conflict between parents have been shown to decrease children's GPA and increase behavior problems (Amato, 2000; Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; Sobolewski & King, 2005). One of the reasons may be the reduction in the attentiveness of the parents to the child associated with parental conflict (Conger & Elder, 1994). Race/ethnic patterns of post-separation relationship quality are just beginning to be studied (Cabrera et al., forthcoming), but how these various patterns influence father and mother involvement have not been examined.

The extent to which nonresidential fathers are involved in children's daily lives, how their involvement may be facilitated by their relationship with the child's mother and by the provision of child support and contact with the child, and how these factors differ by race/ethnicity are important questions that have not been widely studied. This study improves upon existing research by examining both maternal and paternal involvement, by incorporating information on paternal involvement across the child's entire lifetime, by examining trends in

child support and contact over time rather than studying them at only one point in time, and by examining race/ethnic differences in a latent variable structural model.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

The Importance of Parental Involvement with their Children

Parents who live with their children contribute to their well-being in many ways, including supporting them financially, monitoring and managing their activities, spending time with them, and providing a supportive environment at home in which parents work together to rear their children (Amato, 2000). Although parents may have advantages such as high levels of education (human capital) that could improve the child's learning environment, a positive relationship between parents and children, *social capital*, is necessary for human capital to benefit children (Coleman, 1988; Parks-Yancey, DiTomaso & Post, 2007). The parenting literature focuses on defining the types of relationships that promote the well-being of children. For young children, warm and engaged parenting with firm and enforced rules, often called *authoritative* parenting, results in better outcomes than cold and rigid (*authoritarian*) parenting or lax (*permissive*) parenting. Outcomes include greater self-confidence and self-esteem, lower aggression, and more social responsibility (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). For adolescents, *granting more autonomy* through communication and participation in decision-making is argued to promote maturity and independence (Steinberg, 2001).

In most of the 20th century, parenting research focused upon mothers. Fathers supported the family financially and provided emotional support to the mother. Today's fathers engage with, are accessible to, and take responsibility for their children (King, 2006; King & Sobolewski, 2006; Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth & Lamb, 2000; Pleck, 1997;

Yeung, Sandberg, Davis-Kean & Hofferth, 2001). *Engagement* refers to direct interaction with a child and *accessibility* to time the father is available to his child but not directly interacting with him or her. *Responsibility* includes management activities, ensuring that the child is fed, clothed, housed, monitored, schooled, examined by a doctor, and cared for (Hofferth et al., 2007). In addition, recent writings have specified that father involvement also includes the parenting dimension described above as warm parenting (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004). That is, involvement needs to be positive. These aspects of involvement apply to *both* mothers and fathers. Residential parents have greater motivation, skills and self-confidence, social support, and flexible institutional policies and practices for involvement (Pleck, 1997; Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004).

Nonresidential fathers. Less is known about non-residential parental involvement. The variable most often used to measure nonresidential father involvement is contact. However, research suggests that contact on its own is not the appropriate measure of nonresidential involvement as it has been found to have no effect or even negative effects on child well-being (King, 1994). A meta-analysis suggests, instead, that positive or *authoritative parenting* on the part of the nonresidential father is predictive of higher child achievement and fewer behavior problems (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; Garasky & Stewart, 2007; King, 2006; King & Sobolewski, 2006; Menning, 2006; Stewart, 2003).

The motivation for nonresidential parent involvement is less clear than for residential parents. Nonresidential parents have somewhat more choice about how much and how often investments are made (MacDonald & Koh, 2003). Economic and social exchange theories suggest that children become more costly after divorce (Seltzer, McLanahan & Hanson, 2005; Weiss & Willis, 1985), as the benefit of their children's attention and affection on a daily basis is

lost whereas financial obligations remain. Yet, fathers living apart from their children continue to spend time and money on them (Hofferth & Anderson, 2003).

Fathers may also start a new family. Without as much contact with their nonresidential child and with increased competition from new children and spouse, fathers' voluntary emotional involvement and financial investments are likely to decline, though child support enforcement mechanisms such as automatic withholding may make some fathers' financial contributions through child support payments less dependent upon the relationship with their children and former spouse than in the past. Additionally, conflicts over responsibility and involvement may strain the mother-father relationship, making the relationship with the child through the other parent even more costly to maintain and lead to gradual disengagement (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999). Consistent with this hypothesis, most studies show a gradual decline in contact with children after separation (Argys et al., 2007). Weiss and Willis (1985) argued that non-residential fathers pay less because they cannot monitor how the money is spent. Argys and Peters (2003) suggested that contact is a way for the non-residential fathers to monitor expenditures; thus, child support and contact should be positively correlated. However, fathers' lower incomes after paying child support may reduce their time with their child because they don't have as much money to spend on travel to the child or to bring the child to visit (Seltzer et al., 2005).

Research that has examined the associations among child support, contact and parental conflict generally supports the hypothesis of complementarity between child support and contact. Contact or visitation is positively associated with payment of child support in most studies (Seltzer, Schaeffer & Charng, 1989; Peters, Argys, Wynder & Butler, 2004) rather than negatively associated (Seltzer et al., 2005). Paying/receiving child support, in turn, is associated with lower conflict between the partners (McLanahan et al., 1994), but the role of frequency of

contact in parental conflict remains ambiguous (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; Amato & Rezac, 1994; King, 1994). Conflict could increase as a result of greater contact with a former partner, in turn, reducing future contact and worsening the quality of the relationship between father and child.

This problem of inability to sort out causal order is endemic to most of the previous research examining the effects of contact, child support, and conflict. Because all three are usually measured at the same time, we cannot rule out the possibility that good fathers pay child support, maintain contact and involvement, and also figure out ways to get along with their former partner, because they realize it affects their children. Only one study that we know of analyzed longitudinal data on child support and contact (Seltzer, 2000), but neither conflict nor the parent-child relationship was examined. In that study, contact at time 2 was higher the greater the amount of child support paid at time 1, even after other factors were controlled.

Because it uses data from a longitudinal survey that followed adolescents from birth to the present, the present study can estimate contact with and child support by the father during early and middle childhood, after separation but prior to adolescence. Furthermore, rather than just obtaining an average value of contact, child support, and distance over the period after parental separation, the present study takes into account *trends* in these variables. An average over a period of years does not provide an estimate of whether financial support, contact, and distance are increasing or decreasing over time. It may not be the absolute level that matters, but its upward or downward trend.

Residential mothers. Mothers' involvement with their children may also be influenced by father-child contact, paternal financial support, and the quality of the father-mother relationship. Increased child support and a better father-mother relationship are likely to be linked with greater mother involvement because they promote maternal physical and mental

health. However, greater contact with the father may be linked to lower maternal involvement if the child spends more time with the father. Little previous research has considered maternal involvement in examining nonresidential father involvement (King & Sobolewski, 2006).

Race/ethnic Differences in the Effects of Support, Contact and Conflict on Father Involvement

Research has demonstrated lower child support receipt among Black mothers because they were less likely than White mothers to have married (Garasky et al., 2007). Studies also suggest that Black fathers and mothers maintain better relationships after separation, which may lead to improved relationships with their children (Cabrera et al., forthcoming). One study found that, although divorced fathers generally are more likely to pay child support and have more frequent contact with their children than never married fathers, Black never married fathers had greater contact with their children than Black divorced fathers; the reverse was true for White fathers (Argys et al., 1998). Black mothers and nonresidential fathers have been shown to live in closer proximity, which may facilitate contact (Mott, 1990). Little is known about how Hispanic families maintain parent-child relationships after divorce. Two questions addressed in the current paper are whether father-child involvement differs by race and whether the associations of contact, child support, and mother-father relationships with father involvement differ depending upon race/ethnicity. These questions are exploratory, as little research has addressed this issue.

Other Influences on Father and Mother Involvement

Because of large race/ethnic differences in income, marital status, and other factors, extensive controls are needed. Theory suggests that the commitment of father to child is likely to influence father involvement (Hofferth & Anderson, 2003). The length of time the father and

child lived together and the marital status of the parents when the child was born indicate the father's commitment. Economic factors such as family income and maternal work hours should theoretically be associated with the father-mother, father-child, and mother-child relationship. Research has shown that financial hardship causes marital conflict, which disrupts parenting practices (Conger & Elder, 1994). Thus, the better off the family of the child after divorce, the less expected conflict over finances. Family income is dependent on the mother's work hours, her potential wages, and other family (spousal) income. The higher her potential wage and other family income, the less conflict is likely between nonresidential father and mother. However, maternal work could negatively influence maternal involvement if it reduces the time she would otherwise spend with her child. Having more children could also negatively influence her relationship with her children. Finally, mothers who are better educated and who are older and more mature at first birth should have better relationships both with their children and with their former partners.

Receipt of child support is strongly dependent upon parents' marital status at birth, with those who were married the most likely to receive regular child support. This is a result of differential rules regarding presumed paternity and the greater effort required to establish paternity and establish a child support agreement among unmarried parents. Finally, the closer the child and mother live to the nonresidential parent, the lower the barriers to contact and the greater we would expect his involvement to be. However, the presence of a stepfather may put up additional barriers to contact and to father involvement.

Hypotheses

Although considerable research has examined child achievement and behavior as outcomes of child support and visitation, little previous research has examined the involvement of father *and mother* with their child as the outcome of this process. In addition, almost no research has included the relationship between parents as a mediating factor. Yet the influence of either parent on his child or children is likely to depend directly upon the closeness of the parental relationship rather than on child support or frequency of contact. Father involvement and mother involvement could be independent of the mother-father relationship; however, because mothers serve as gatekeepers, this relationship is likely to mediate father-mother involvement at the very least. Child support and contact may indirectly affect the father-child relationship through the mother-father relationship. This study hypothesizes, first, that an upward trend in the provision of child support over the years from separation to age 10 will be associated with an improved relationship between parents when the child is in early adolescence, and, second, that this positive and cooperative relationship between the parents with regard to how they rear their joint child(ren) will be positively associated with the child's report of his/her involvement with the father and with the mother (Sobolewski & King, 2005). Even though early literature was inconsistent on the association between contact and parental relationship, for example (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; King, 1994), we expect that increased contact over the period from separation to age 10 is likely to be associated with a better relationship between parents and greater father involvement. Although we argue that increased provision of child support is likely to be associated with an improved relationship between parents, we cannot definitively show causality. However, we improve on previous models by examining trends in support and contact over time rather than measures at one point in time. We also hypothesize that Blacks and Hispanics will differ from Whites in this process, though we do not predict specific differences.

Our Model

Figure 1 shows the structural model. Greater father-child contact and financial support are expected to increase the involvement of the father and mother with their child. Some of the total effect of father-child contact and paternal financial support is likely to affect parental involvement indirectly, by increasing the quality of the father-mother relationship, which increases the involvement of mother and father with their child. Not depicted here are background variables controlled in the analysis. We also develop separate models for the different race/ethnic groups and test whether models differ significantly across groups.

(Figure 1 about here)

Data and Methods

Data: NLSY79

This analysis uses as its sample children of female youth interviewed as part of the 1979 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. The NLSY79 data sets contain information on two generations of youth – men and women 14 to 21 in 1979, the subjects of the original study, which we call the G1 generation, and their own children, now in their late teens and early twenties, the G2 generation. The NLSY79 obtained mother-reported detailed information on the G2 generation every other year beginning in 1986 and, in 1988, began interviewing them biennially as they entered their teen years (ages 10 and older). We created a data base with the G2 generation's detailed reports of involvement with their parents (G1) during the ages of 10 to 14 and other information about the children and their parents during that same period and, in some cases, back to the child's birth. Because the focus of the child-mother study was children of mothers, the information on parenting by G1 fathers was less detailed than that by G1

mothers. However, each youth provided self-reported data on (all) parents in a self-administered supplement from about age 10 to age 14, and it is these data that provide the major source of information. Adolescent self-report has a lengthy record as a valid and reliable method of gathering information on family relationships (Steinberg & Darling, 1994).

The sample for this study included youth who were 11 or 12 years old in either 1992, 94, 96, 98, 2000, or 2002, originally 2,949 youth. The 1992 wave of data was the first year in which detailed information on the relationship of these early adolescents with their parents was asked in a self-administered supplement. To maximize sample size, we started with youth who were 11/12 in 1992 and added those who turned 11/12 each subsequent wave up to 2002. Our questions about parent involvement were limited to a set of three items asked in those 6 waves. Children could have been interviewed several times from 10-14; however, because the interviews were conducted every other year, the child could have been 11 or 12 only once. The year in which the child was 11 or 12 was determined and the other measures for adolescent and most parent measures were taken in that same interview year or from the previous years of the child's life. Ages 11/12 were chosen to maximize sample size and to study a group just entering adolescence. They are unlikely to ever again be as involved with their parents.

The sample was limited to those early adolescents who answered a self-administered questionnaire in the year they turned 11 or 12, who were living with the mother at the time of the interview, and whose father was alive but not living in the same household.² Of the total 2,949 youth, we discarded 798 cases who lived with residential fathers or whose father's residential status was unknown, 131 whose father was no longer alive, and 436 who were missing data on

² Children who live with their nonresidential fathers on a part-time basis (e.g., parents have joint or shared custody) were not counted as having a nonresidential father. This is consistent with common practice.

whether the father was alive. This left 1,584 youth; the unweighted sample comprised 496 White, 766 Black, and 322 Hispanic adolescents.

Measures

Mother and father involvement. In the self-administered questionnaire when the child was 10-14, the NLSY79 asked about 3 dimensions – mother and father warmth and closeness, communication (autonomy-granting), and engagement – that are closely aligned with the authoritative (vs. authoritarian) dimension of parenting discussed earlier, and with the engagement dimension of Pleck’s original fathering model. *Warmth or Closeness* was measured by the question: How close do you feel to each of your parents? (1=not very, 2=fairly, 3=quite, 4=extremely). *Communication*, an aspect of psychological autonomy-granting, was measured by: How well do you and each of your parents share ideas or talk about things that really matter? (1=not very, 2=fairly, 3=quite, 4=extremely well). *Engagement* was measured by: How often does each parent miss the events or activities that are important to you? (1=a lot, 2=sometimes, 3=almost never). Comparable items were asked about the mother and biological father. Reliabilities (Cronbach’s alpha) were .88 for father involvement and .59 for mother involvement.

Mother, child, and family characteristics. In order to determine family background for children in our sample, we identified the survey year the child was 11 or 12 and obtained mother-reported parental and family characteristics for that year, including the mother’s completed years of education, the number of children in the family, the mother’s current marital status, and her age at first birth. Household record data were used to determine whether a stepfather lived in the household with the child’s mother when the child was 11 or 12. Mother’s race/ethnicity was measured with three dummy variables: Hispanic, nonHispanic Black, and nonHispanic nonBlack or “White.” The main child characteristic of gender is coded 1 for male and 0 for female.

Father's characteristics. By examining the household records from the time the child was born, we first determined the number of years the child and father resided in the same household. Dividing the number of years by the age of the child to determine the proportion of years the child had lived with the biological father provides a lifetime picture of the extent to which child and father had lived together. Second, we determined whether the father and mother were married at the birth of the child. Third, because mother and father education tend to be associated and father education data was largely missing³, mother's education was included as a control for parental education.

Trend in distance. The distance between father and child is very likely to impact the involvement of the father with his child. The literature is cautious in the use of this variable because, although living close may facilitate interaction, fathers whose relationship with their child is not close may move away fairly quickly. Distance was a categorical variable coded 1, within 1 mile; 2, 1-10 miles; 3, 11-100 miles; 4, 101-200 miles; and 5, more than 200 miles. To reduce the endogeneity of distance, we created a trend indicator for whether the father moved closer, stayed about the same distance, or moved farther away by subtracting the distance at the earliest time point after the father left the household from the distance when the child was 10. A positive value indicates that the distance between father and child increased and a negative value that the distance declined. For the most part distance was monotonically increasing or decreasing; only a small number of children showed nonmonotonic changes. This measure and the following are novel; no other study has included such trend variables.

³ Although we were able to determine the education level of the child's biological father for children whose parents were married at birth, many children whose parents were not married at birth did not live together then or ever; the large amount of systematically missing data meant that we could not reconstruct this variable for fathers not married to the mother at birth.

Trend in child support. The survey provides information on total paternal child support in dollars from separation up to age 11/12, obtained from each wave of the survey. We argue that it is not the total amount of money provided over all years, or the current amount, but, again, whether child support has been increasing or declining over the child's life. By subtracting the child support in the first year available after the father left the household to age 10, we obtained the trend in child support. A positive difference indicates an increase in child support over the child's lifetime; a negative number indicates a decline. The natural log of this dollar amount was used to normalize its distribution.

Trend in contact with the father. Similarly, we created a trend in contact with the father from separation to age 10. The values for contact are ordinal rather than interval: 0=never, 1=once in last year, 2=2-6 times per year, 3=7-11 times per year, 4=1-3 times a month, 5=once a week, 6=2-5 times a week, 7=almost every day, and 8=every day, but a high value indicates greater contact. We subtracted the initial value of contact immediately after divorce or separation from the value at age 10. A positive value indicates increasing contact and a negative value decreasing contact over the child's first 10 years.

Parental relationship quality. In the adolescent self-administered questionnaire, the NLSY79 asked each adolescent about the relationship between his/her parents: How often do your parents agree when dealing with you, and how often do your parents get along, and frequency with which parents argue with a 4-part response category of (1=never, 2= once in a while, 3=fairly often, 4=very often). A factor analysis found that the "agree" and "get along" items formed a factor with a reliability of .78. A third item, frequency of arguing, did not fit into this construct and was not included. This makes sense as parents may argue but still get along.

Time and Financial Resources. We include a measure of the average annual hours the mother worked for pay over the period the child was 11/12 as an indicator of her employment constraints. Her hourly wage (natural log) measures her potential wage in the work force. Subtracting the annual earnings of the mother (wage times hours worked) and child support from total family income provides an estimate of “other family income.” For analysis, the natural log of other family income was used to make its distribution normal. Data from the household record in previous waves of the survey were used to determine, first, whether the mother was married to the father of the child at birth (1=yes or 0=no) and, second, the age of the mother at first birth. Both are related to availability of financial resources for the child, the first through potential child support and the second through maternal human capital.

Data Analysis Plan

Factor analysis and SEM. Confirmatory factor analysis using EQS software was first used to test whether the three involvement items and the two relationship items formed single-factor scales. This was confirmed, with the models fitting the data well. A structural equation model based upon Figure 1 was conducted on the covariance matrix, using population weights. Our dependent variables are father-mother relationship quality, mother-child involvement, and father-child involvement and our independent variables are child support and father-child contact. Instead of hypothesizing causal relationships between child support and father-child contact, we permitted errors between the two variables to be correlated. We also allowed the errors in the comparable mother-child involvement items and the father-child involvement items to be correlated, permitting mother and father involvement to be correlated through the items measuring the constructs. Cases with missing data were retained in the file and the model was estimated using maximum likelihood, including missing data. All analyses are weighted by the

population weights provided with the NLSY data set. The weighted correlation matrix is available from the first author.

Model fit is evaluated using two fit indices: the comparative fit index (CFI) that compares the hypothesized model to a model with no relationships, and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) that compares the model to the projected population covariance matrix. The CFI ranges from 0 to 1.00, with a cutoff of .95 or higher indicating a model with a good fit and .90 indicating a model with an adequate fit (Byrne, 2001). RMSEA values below .05 indicate a good model fit and values between .05 and .08 indicate an adequate fit (Byrne, 2001).

Variables controlled in the analysis of contact, financial support, mother involvement, and father involvement include number of children, age of mother at first birth, maternal education and work hours, maternal wage, other family income, race/ethnicity, gender of child, whether the mother remarried, distance from the child and marital status at birth. Because relationship quality is not primarily demographically determined, only a small set of controls was expected to affect the quality of the relationship between the parents (Bradbury, Fincham & Beach, 2000). These include maternal education, race/ethnicity, and the proportion of years the father lived with the child. Maternal education was tested but was not significantly linked to the quality of parental relationship. Restrictions in the variable set permitted the identification of the model.⁴ Finally, the model allowed the errors in the independent variables to be correlated.

Because research suggests that the effects of child support, contact, and parental relationship will vary by race/ethnicity of the child and family, after examining the total sample,

⁴ Besides education, we assumed no direct relationship to parental relationship quality of number of children, age of mother at birth, mother's work hours, mother's hourly wage, other family income, gender of child, whether there was a residential stepfather, the trend in distance from the child, and mother's marital status at birth. In any case, these control variables may still affect the mother-father relationship indirectly through child support and contact.

we then examine these groups separately. In early research we looked at the samples separately by marital status of the parents at birth; the models were similar so we do not present them here.

Results

Sample Characteristics

Social and Demographic Factors. As expected from the fact that all these children had a nonresidential father, the sample (Table 1) was disadvantaged relative to the population of all children in terms of having a higher proportion of minority families, a lower maternal age at first birth, and a lower level of maternal education. Even after weights were applied, about 29% of the sample was Black, 62% was White, and 9% was Hispanic (Table 1). Mothers averaged 20 years of age at first birth and had completed 12 years of schooling. Only about half of the parents were married at the child's birth and children had lived with their fathers on average only about one-quarter of their lives. One-third were living with a stepfather at age 11/12. The mother's hourly wage averaged \$7.80 (in 2002 dollars), and the average income of other family members was under \$10,000.

(Table 1 about here)

Minorities were more disadvantaged than whites. Relative to white children, mothers of Hispanic children had completed fewer years of schooling. Mothers of both Black and Hispanic children worked fewer hours, had their first child at a younger age, and had more children than mothers of White children. Wages did not vary across groups. The other family incomes of Black children were lower than those of White children. The largest differences were in family structure. Compared with Whites, Black children were less likely to live with a stepfather, they had lived a smaller proportion of their lives with their father, and their mother was less likely to

be married to their father when they were born. Hispanic children were similar to White children except that their parents were less likely to have been married when they were born.

Trends in contact, child support and distance. Next we examine trends in contact, child support, and distance in the full sample and across race/ethnic groups. As expected, contact with the father declined after the father left (the trend in contact is negative), and contact declined more for Black than for White and Hispanic children. Child support, in contrast, increased over the period. It makes sense that support immediately after the father leaves the household is likely to be lower than it will be a few years later after child support awards are established. The upward trend in child support was stronger for White children, whose mothers are more likely to be awarded child support, than for either Black or Hispanic children. The distance from the father also increased over time, as expected. The trend toward increased distance from the father was smaller for Black and Hispanic children than for White children. Black and Hispanic children remained geographically closer to their fathers over time.

Parent relationship and parent involvement. According to these simple means by race/ethnicity, Black fathers were less involved with their children than White fathers. Adolescents of Black fathers were less likely to perceive their fathers as emotionally close, less likely to share ideas with the father, and more likely to report that their father missed key events. Adolescents of Black mothers were slightly more likely to share ideas with their mothers, but were also slightly more likely to report their mother missed key events. There were no differences in perceived emotional closeness between Black and White mothers, according to their adolescents. In contrast, parental relationship quality was consistently higher for Black than White parents. According to their adolescent children, Black mothers and fathers were more likely to agree and to get along than White mothers and fathers. We see no significant

differences between Hispanics and Whites in levels of maternal and paternal involvement and parental relationship. It is important to see whether these results hold up when we control for the well-documented social and economic differences between race/ethnic groups.

Measurement Model

Table 2 shows the factor loadings for the measurement models. The loadings were higher for fathers than mothers, but were high for both parents. The lowest loading (0.314) was that of “mother does not miss events.” The correlations between errors in mother-father items were significant. Models were similar for White, Black, and Hispanic fathers and for White and Black mothers. The model for Hispanic mothers was not as good; “shares ideas” could not be estimated and the loading on “does not miss events” was low.

(Table 2 about here)

Structural Model without Parental Relationship Quality

Table 3 shows the structural model for mother and father involvement with their child, but without parental relationship. Trend in father-child contact and trend in financial support were included in the model, but not shown in the table. This model provides an adequate fit to the data, with a CFI of .949 and an RMSEA of .048. The R squares for the models were acceptable, but the R square was quite low for mother involvement (.029).

(Table 3 about here)

Father involvement. Contact and child support have direct effects on father involvement with his child (Table 3). The more positive the trend in father-child contact and the more positive the trend in child support, the greater the child reported the involvement of his father. Father involvement was also greater if the parents were married at birth and if the father lived

with the child for a longer time. Females reported lower father involvement than males. Greater other family income in the child's household improved the involvement of father with child and father involvement was greater in Black than in White families.

Mother involvement. Neither trend in child support nor the trend in father-child contact affected the child's reported relationship with the mother. Only three variables were linked to mother involvement. Females reported less mother involvement than do males. Children whose mothers had remarried, and those who were Black reported greater mother involvement than those whose mothers had not remarried and those who were White.

Structural Model adding Parent Relationship Quality

Table 4 shows the structural model after including parent relationship quality. The model fit is better, with a CFI of .978 and an RMSEA of .033. In addition, the proportions of variance of father and mother involvement explained have increased considerably.

(Table 4 about here)

Parent relationship quality. Examining the factors related to parent relationship quality (Table 4, panel C), we see that both contact and child support were strongly and positively related to parent relationship quality, net of other factors. This supports the argument that positive trends in *both* contact and financial support over the previous years improved the current relationship between the biological parents. The effect of contact was stronger than child support in altering relationship quality. This may be because the father has less control over child support than over contact; therefore, more contact is more likely to be associated with an improved relationship with the mother than more child support. The standardized coefficient

(Beta) for the effect of contact on relationship quality is about 66% larger than that of child support.

Of the background factors, the greater the proportion of years the father and child lived together, the better the quality of the relationship between the parents. Black race was the only other background variable that also predicted parent relationship quality. After separation, Black mothers get along better with the child's father than do White mothers. In other analyses not shown here, we confirmed that this result was primarily because Black parents were more likely to be unmarried at birth and Black unmarried parents had a better relationship with their former partner than White unmarried parents, whereas there was no race/ethnic difference in the relationship quality of formerly married parents. Overall, the mean relationship quality of Black parents was higher than that of White parents even though Black parents were less likely to have married (Table 1)

Father involvement. We next examine the relationship between parent relationship quality and father and mother involvement (Table 4, panels D and E). Parent relationship quality was highly associated with both father and mother involvement, with an effect size of .40; the coefficient was stronger for father involvement than mother involvement.

The unstandardized coefficient for the effect of child support on father involvement was about 50% lower (but still significant) in the model in which parent relationship quality was included (Table 4) than in the one in which it was not (Table 3). The positive association of child support with father involvement is partially but not entirely due to its positive effect on parent relationship quality. Similarly, the effect of the trend in contact with the father declined by 43 percent but also remained statistically significant after parent relationship quality was

included (Table 4). Some but not all of the effect of contact operates through improved parental relationship quality.

Most of the other results are similar to those presented in Table 3. Father involvement was lower among females and higher other family income was associated with greater father involvement. Both the proportion of years lived with the father and the mother and father having been married were associated with greater father involvement. The difference by race/ethnicity was no longer significant, however. We showed earlier that Black parents have better relationships than White parents after separation. Black and White children no longer differ in father involvement once parent relationship quality is included in the model.

Mother involvement. The R square for mother involvement was .079, compared with .321 for father involvement, suggesting that our models did not explain mother involvement as well as father involvement. Father involvement was highly affected by parental relationship quality, whereas mother involvement was not as strongly affected. As in Table 3, the trend in child support was not linked to mother involvement. In contrast to the previous analysis without parent relationship quality in which the effect was not significant, the effect of father-child contact on mother involvement was significant and negative. The more positive the trend in father-child contact, the lower the child reported mother involvement to be. Two other variables were also related to mother involvement: a greater number of siblings reduced mother involvement and having a stepfather in the household increased mother involvement.

Trend in father-child contact from separation to age 10. The models of father-child contact were good, explaining 12 percent of variance and the results are the same whether or not parent relationship quality is included. As expected, as the distance from the father increased over time, the greater the reduction in contact. As the proportion of years spent with father

increased, the trend in contact increased. Consistent with trends in Table 1, children of Black fathers showed a steeper downward trend in contact compared with children of White fathers.

Trend in financial support from separation to age 10. Greater maternal wages, maternal education, age at first birth, and number of children were associated with a positive trend in paternal financial support over time. Again, the results are similar whether or not parent relationship quality is included. Financial support declined among Blacks and Hispanics compared to Whites. Children living with a stepfather and those with increasing distance from the father were also likely to experience declining paternal financial support. Finally, children of parents married at birth experienced increased support over time.

Models for Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics

In Table 5 we show the results of the effects of contact and child support on relationship quality, and then the effects of contact, support, and relationship quality on mother and father involvement for White, Black and Hispanic children. The variables shown in Table 4 are included in each model, but are not shown in the table.

(Table 5 about here)

Relationship quality. The major difference in the models is that the trend in child support significantly influenced the quality of the parental relationship for White children, but not for Black or Hispanic children. The child support coefficient was large for White children but small and not significant for Black or Hispanic children. We constrained the association between child support and the quality of the parental relationship to be the same for Whites and Blacks and then tested whether releasing the constraint would improve the model. The level of significance was .10, suggesting that the child support coefficient is marginally different between Blacks and

Whites. The same test comparing the child support coefficient for Whites and Hispanics results in a probability of .15, not even marginally significant. This is a conservative test; given how complex the model is, constraining one single association does not have a major effect on the model. The differences in coefficient size ($B = .046$ for White children compared with .008 for Black and .011 for Hispanic children) confirm that child support is not as important to the relationship between Black parents as it is to White parents. However, we cannot definitively reject the hypothesis that the models are the same across race/ethnicity.

In contrast, the effect of the trend in father-child contact was positive, large, and significant for all three race/ethnic groups. This suggests that the effect of contact is similar across groups.

Father and mother involvement. Parent relationship quality was significantly associated with both father and mother involvement in White and Black families. In Hispanic families, parental relationship quality was related to father involvement, but not to mother involvement.

Although it has a significant direct effect in the total sample and for Hispanic children, the direct effect of child support trend on father involvement was not significant for Black or White children and child support had no direct effect on mother involvement for any group. Because of its effect on parent relationship quality for Whites, child support indirectly affected parent involvement.

Father-child contact trend had similar effects on father involvement for all race/ethnic groups. For White, Black, and Hispanic children, contact had positive direct effects on father involvement. For all three groups of children the effects of father-child contact on father involvement are both direct and indirect through an improved mother-father relationship. The

effects on maternal involvement are only indirect, also through an improved mother-father relationship.

To understand these findings we examined the factors associated with trends in paternal financial support and contact (not shown). For Whites, maternal marriage and older age at first birth were associated with a positive trend in paternal financial support. In contrast, living with a residential stepfather was associated with declining support. It is likely that the biological father's investment is more costly and less beneficial and perhaps seen as less necessary once a new father enters the household. For Blacks and Hispanics, a mother whose hourly wage was higher experienced an upward trend in child support. Thus legal marital status, which facilitates support, and repartnering, which interferes, were important only for Whites. Higher wages, an indicator of self-sufficiency efforts, improved child support receipt for Blacks and Hispanics. For all race/ethnic groups, contact was primarily a function of distance and proportion of years together. The proportion of years with father was also positively and directly linked to relationship quality for all three groups, but significant only for Whites and Blacks (not shown).

Discussion and Conclusions

This study has described how linkages across households, particularly, financial support, contact, and the mother-father relationship, influence the involvement of both mother and nonresidential biological father with their adolescent child. The main finding is that the relationship between the mother and nonresidential biological father is positively and significantly associated with the child's report of his mother's and father's involvement with him. Improving the relationship between the two parents may be a promising strategy in the battle to maintain or increase parental involvement in the lives of children after the dissolution of

their parents' relationship. A current \$150 million dollar per year federal initiative, The Healthy Marriage Initiative, funds grantees across the United States who provide premarital and marriage education to individuals ranging from high school students to engaged couples and to long-term married couples to improve relationship and conflict resolution skills and to avoid divorce (Administration for Children & Families, 2008). In the Mid-Atlantic region alone, 24 programs are currently in progress.

However, there are other potential intervention opportunities. In examining the types of factors amenable to policy influence that could reasonably affect the mother-father relationship, this paper focused upon child support and contact. In line with our theory and the existing research, we find a strong positive association between trends in the provision of child support and both the quality of relationship between mother and nonresidential biological father after separation and the extent of father (but not mother) involvement. Although previous research has not consistently found a positive association, we find that an increasing trend in contact is also associated with a more positive mother-father relationship and with greater father involvement. In contrast to the earlier studies, we utilized information on contact over the entire early years of the child before the outcomes were measured and the result was a strong positive association. Child support and contact are linked. Thus, these results suggest that besides providing crucial financial assistance, child support enforcement programs could help improve family relationships and increase father involvement (Peters et al., 2004). Unfortunately, the current administration has proposed cutting precisely these same child support programs (Turetsky, 2008).

Greater father-child contact, surprisingly, was found to be associated with the reduced involvement of the mother with this child. It is possible that nonresidential father involvement

substitutes for some aspects of mother involvement. As the child spends more time with the father, perhaps, the mother may spend more time developing new relationships, such as with a new partner and new family. Such tradeoffs are to be expected, but are not likely to have an overall negative effect on child wellbeing. Research suggests that the involvement of either parent improves adolescent well-being compared to having no involved parent (King & Sobolewski, 2006).

Group Differences

Some caution is needed in generalizing across all groups of the population. Because of potential race/ethnic differences in the effects of contact, child support, or relationship quality on parental involvement with their children, we ran the models separately for the three race/ethnic groups. The Healthy Marriage Initiatives have developed specific programs appealing separately to African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians. What evidence is there that programs differing in other than minor ways are justified?

Relationship quality and parent involvement by race/ethnicity. The results suggest that programs to improve parental relationship quality can be effective for all three groups in increasing parental involvement. The effect of parental relationship quality was large and significant for all three groups in predicting father involvement and for two of the three in predicting mother involvement. The size of the coefficient was always larger for father than for mother involvement, as in the model across all groups. Only the coefficient for mother involvement among Hispanics was not significant, but this is probably because the measurement model was poor for Hispanic mothers.

Contact, child support and relationship quality by race/ethnicity. We found weak evidence for race/ethnic differences in the effect of child support on relationship quality.

Although the effect of contact was consistently associated with improving parent relationship quality for all three groups, the same was not the case for child support. The trend in child support was only significantly related to parental relationship quality for White children. As the earlier results for all groups showed, Black parents have a stronger relationship after separation than do White parents. Although Black mothers have a less positive trend in child support than White mothers, the more positive relationship between former partners facilitates informal exchanges which substitute for formal child support (Nepomnyaschy, 2007). This positive relationship facilitates father involvement, as was described earlier.

Contact, child support and father involvement. Child support also did not directly improve father and mother involvement in each race/ethnic group. The trend in child support was only directly associated with father involvement for Hispanic children, not for White or Black children. For Whites the influence of child support on father involvement was indirect, through relationship quality. For Blacks, child support had neither a direct nor indirect effect on father involvement.

These results suggest that healthy relationship programs that address the financial aspects of supporting a family and that foster informal exchanges between parents may appeal to Black and Hispanic parents. Activities directly promoting fatherhood, including counseling, mentoring, and job training and placement may also be helpful. This does not imply that child support enforcement does not benefit minority mothers and children; such programs are less effective for minority than for majority populations in promoting positive relationships.

Limitations of the research

There are three limitations to our analysis. First, we were limited to the few variables about parents asked consistently between 1992 and 2002 in the NLSY-79 child self-administered

questionnaire. Although the reliability of father involvement was high (.88), the reliability of the mother involvement measure (.59) was low. The types of questions asked do not represent mother involvement as much as they do father involvement. In addition, the model did not measure the involvement of Hispanic mothers well at all. On the positive side, the overall fit of the measurement model to the data was very good.

Second, although we had considerable information about each sample child and family going back to birth, we had no information on whether or not the biological father remarried after separating from the sample child and mother. Forming a new family may divert the father's attention and resources from his previous family and children. It may increase the distance between nonresidential father and child as the family moves away and may reduce direct contact. However, there is no reason to think that this would affect parent relationship quality and father involvement except indirectly through reduced contact. The results show that father involvement is dependent less upon frequency of contact than upon on the quality of the relationship between father and mother.

Finally, our sample does not represent children with shared physical custody. Whether because of reporting problems or the fact that half of the sample was born to unmarried parents, only a few children in our sample were reported as living part of the time with each parent. Consequently, we were unable to separately analyze such children and removing them would not have affected our results.

Strengths of the Research

The first advantage of the analysis presented here is that it took advantage of longitudinal information on the children's background and family structure. We examined the influence of trends in child support, distance from the father, and frequency of contact on father involvement.

No other study has done so. The second advantage of our analysis was that we were able to examine the relationship of the child with the biological mother as well as the biological father. This allowed us to link the quality of the mother-father relationship with the involvement of the child with each individual parent. As was father involvement, mother involvement was sensitive to the quality of the relationship with the former partner and to father-child contact. Finally, we were able to estimate differences across race/ethnic groups. This is the first study to test differences in nonresidential father and residential mother involvement in White, Black, and Hispanic families using structural equation models.

Conclusions

From a policy perspective, the research shows that, in addition to improving relationship quality, the provision of child support is important for nonresidential father involvement in White and Hispanic families and greater contact is important to increase father involvement for all three groups.

The Healthy Marriage Initiative emphasizes marriage. Consistent with this emphasis, we showed that having been married and having stayed together longer before separating were associated with greater father involvement after relationship dissolution. Even if we could definitely say that this association is causal, marriage will not solve the involvement problem for Blacks. Black children are less likely to receive child support even if their parents were married when they were born. Instead, in developing policies, capitalizing on the more positive relationship among Black parents between former partners is important. Our results suggest that Black parents have a better relationship post-separation than do White parents, and relationship quality is the strongest predictor of father and mother involvement with their child. However,

because this was not a controlled experiment, the reverse interpretation is possible; fathers with a strong relationship with their children will be more motivated to get along with their former partner. In this case, promoting father involvement directly would be the correct policy prescription. The Healthy Marriage Initiative permits about one-third of the overall funds to be used for activities directly promoting fatherhood, and this is an important avenue to reach minority parents.

In spite of our inability to conclusively establish causal direction, a good relationship between the parents appears to be strongly linked to both mother and father involvement. Mothers cannot assume that they can maintain a poor relationship with the other parent and a good relationship with their child. Maternal gatekeeping is not a strategy that is to the mother's benefit. A crucial factor in mother-child involvement is the relationship with the other parent, just as it is for fathers. Participation in healthy relationship programs is likely to benefit both parents and children.

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Table 1: Weighted Means and Standard Deviations, Full Sample and by Race/Ethnicity

Name	Variable Description	TOTAL		WHITE		BLACK ^a		HISPANIC ^a			
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
V1	Number of children	2.5	1.2	2.4	1.1	2.7	1.3	***	2.8	1.2	**
V2	Age of mother at first birth	20.4	3.4	20.9	3.4	19.5	3.4	***	19.9	3.1	**
V3	Mother's education	12.1	2.0	12.2	1.9	12.1	2.0		11.4	2.2	***
V4	Mother's work hours	24.0	16.3	25.1	15.8	22.2	17.1	**	21.8	16.6	+
V5	Mother's hourly wage	7.8	9.6	8.1	11.7	7.3	8.0		7.5	6.6	
V5	Ln(Mother's hourly wage)	1.7	1.1	1.8	1.0	1.5	1.1		1.6	1.2	
V6	Other family income	9536.5	16341.7	11231.0	23515.0	5980.2	8782.9	***	8452.7	8732.8	
V6	Ln(Other family income)	5.3	4.5	5.6	4.6	4.6	4.4	***	5.2	4.5	
V7	Black	0.29	--	0.00	--	1.00	--		0.00	--	
V8	White	0.62	--	1.00	--	0.00	--		0.00	--	
V9	Hispanic	0.09	--	0.00	--	0.00	--		1.00	--	
V8	Female	0.53	--	0.54	--	0.51	--		0.48	--	
V9	Stepfather in household	0.32	--	0.38	--	0.19	--	***	0.30	--	
V10	Trend in distance from father	1.2	1.2	1.4	1.2	0.8	1.1	***	1.2	1.3	+
V11	Proportion of years lived with father	0.27	--	0.32	--	0.16	--	***	0.31	--	
V12	Mother marital status at birth	0.50	--	0.63	--	0.21	--	***	0.51	--	*
V13	Trend in contact with father	-1.0	2.4	-0.9	2.2	-1.4	2.7	***	-0.9	2.5	
V14	Ln(Trend in child support)	3.1	3.9	3.7	4.0	2.2	3.4	***	2.1	3.5	***
V15	Child close to father	3.1	1.5	3.2	1.5	2.9	1.5	**	3.2	1.5	
V16	Shares ideas with father	2.7	1.4	2.8	1.3	2.5	1.4	**	2.8	1.4	
V17	Father does not miss key events	2.2	1.0	2.3	1.0	2.1	1.0	***	2.2	1.0	
V18	Mother and father agree	2.3	1.1	2.2	1.1	2.4	1.2	+	2.3	1.1	
V19	Mother and father get along	2.2	1.0	2.1	1.0	2.3	1.1	**	2.2	1.0	
V20	Child close to mother	3.5	0.8	3.5	0.7	3.6	0.8		3.6	0.7	
V21	Shares ideas with mother	3.1	0.9	3.1	0.9	3.2	0.9	+	3.2	0.9	
V22	Mother does not miss key events	2.4	0.7	2.4	0.7	2.3	0.7	*	2.3	0.7	
Number of cases (unweighted)		1584		496		766		322			

^aBlacks and Hispanics are separately compared to Whites using a t-test for the difference of means and proportions

+ $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 2. Measurement Model (Standardized)

Items	Coefficients		Corr between errors in mother-father items	
	Mother	Father		
Close to mother/father	0.748	0.914	0.27	*
Shares ideas w mother/father	0.658	0.878	0.248	*
Mother/father does not miss event	0.314	0.742	0.257	*

* $p < .05$

Table 3: Coefficients from the Structural Model of Parent Involvement, No Parent Relationship

Variable Description	Father Involvement			Mother Involvement		
	Beta	B	SE	Beta	B	SE
Number of children	0.012	0.014	0.031	-0.060	-0.029	0.016
Age of mother at birth	0.012	0.005	0.012	0.026	0.004	0.006
Mother's education	-0.009	-0.006	0.020	0.013	0.004	0.010
Mother's work hours	-0.046	-0.004	0.003	0.042	0.001	0.001
Mother's hourly wage	0.038	0.049	0.045	-0.020	-0.011	0.023
Other family income	0.092 *	0.028	0.009	-0.065	-0.008	0.004
Child's race- Black	0.063 *	0.187	0.090	0.087 *	0.108	0.045
Child's race- Hispanic	0.009	0.045	0.129	0.056	0.112	0.065
Child female	-0.072 *	-0.195	0.069	-0.066 *	-0.074	0.037
Residential stepfather	0.023	0.066	0.081	0.096 *	0.116	0.040
Trend in distance from child	0.002	0.002	0.034	-0.040	-0.019	0.017
Proportion of years with father	0.248 *	1.090	0.127	0.055	0.101	0.064
Mother's marital status at birth	0.121 *	0.328	0.082	0.030	0.034	0.042
Trend in father-child contact	0.235 *	0.132	0.015	-0.018	-0.004	0.008
Trend in child support	0.117 *	0.041	0.010	0.019	0.003	0.005
		$R^2=$	0.185		$R^2=$	0.029
Correlations between errors in:				Model Fit:		
Difference father-child contact, Difference child support			0.045	CFI: 0.949		
				RMSEA: 0.048		
				CI RMSEA: .044-.053		

* $p < .05$

Table 4: Coefficients from the Structural Model of Parent Involvement

Variable Description	A			B			C			D			E							
	Trend in Father-Child Contact			Trend in Paternal Financial Support			Parent Relationship Quality			Father Involvement			Mother Involvement							
	Beta	B	SE	Beta	B	SE	Beta	B	SE	Beta	B	SE	Beta	B	SE					
Number of children	-0.029	-0.06	0.052	0.059	*	0.195	0.09				0.006	0.007	0.03	-0.064	*	-0.031	0.016			
Age of mother at birth	-0.052	-0.036	0.019	0.073	*	0.082	0.036				-0.015	-0.006	0.011	0.011		0.002	0.006			
Mother's education	-0.052	-0.063	0.033	0.064	*	0.126	0.057				-0.007	-0.005	0.019	0.013		0.004	0.010			
Mother's work hours	-0.027	-0.004	0.005	-0.001		0.000	0.009				-0.040	-0.003	0.003	0.043		0.002	0.001			
Mother's hourly wage	0.038	0.087	0.074	0.118	*	0.435	0.131				0.030	0.039	0.043	-0.022		-0.012	0.023			
Other family income	-0.052	-0.028	0.014	0.042		0.036	0.025				0.093	*	0.028	0.008	-0.065		-0.008	0.004		
Child's race- Black	-0.125	*	-0.663	0.146	-0.158	*	-1.357	0.252	0.159	*	0.328	0.065	-0.015	-0.045	0.088	0.040	0.050	0.046		
Child's race- Hispanic	-0.018		-0.153	0.210	-0.101	*	-1.403	0.356	0.037		0.123	0.100	-0.007	-0.032	0.123	0.045	0.091	0.064		
Child female	0.003		0.015	0.115	-0.025		-0.196	0.198					-0.066	*	-0.178	0.066	-0.063	-0.072	0.037	
Residential stepfather	0.010		0.054	0.131	-0.151	*	-1.258	0.225					-0.005	-0.013	0.077	0.083	*	0.101	0.040	
Trend in distance from child	-0.327	*	-0.657	0.054	-0.065	*	-0.213	0.092					-0.007	-0.008	0.032	-0.045		-0.021	0.017	
Proportion of years with father	0.172	*	1.341	0.207	-0.047		-0.598	0.353	0.131	*	0.398	0.094	0.196	*	0.860	0.123	0.025	0.046	0.064	
Mother's marital status at birth	0.050		0.241	0.136	0.119	*	0.925	0.232					0.110	*	0.299	0.078	0.024	0.028	0.042	
Trend in father-child contact									0.234	*	0.091	0.012	0.133	*	0.075	0.015	-0.080	*	-0.019	0.008
Trend in child support									0.141	*	0.034	0.008	0.064	*	0.022	0.010	-0.015		-0.002	0.005
Parent relationship quality													0.401	*	0.579	0.050	0.242	*	0.147	0.025
			R ² =	0.117			R ² =	0.101			R ² =	0.105			R ² =	0.321			R ² =	0.079
Correlations between errors in:			Difference father-child contact, Difference child support			0.044						Model Fit:								
												CFI:			0.978					
												RMSEA:			0.033					
												CI RMSEA:			.028-.038					

*p < .05

Table 5: Coefficients from the Structural Model of Parent Involvement, by Race/Ethnicity

Variable Description	Parent Relationship Quality				Father Involvement			Mother Involvement				
	Beta	B	SE		Beta	B	SE	Beta	B	SE		
White Children												
Trend in father-child contact	0.264	*	0.110	0.020	0.141	*	0.083	0.027	-0.081	-0.020	0.015	
Trend in child support	0.200	*	0.046	0.011	0.074		0.024	0.015	-0.025	-0.003	0.008	
Parent relationship quality					0.340	*	0.481	0.076	0.235	*	0.142	0.040
R ²	0.141				0.321				0.079			
Model Fit: CFI: .976, RMSEA: .035; CI RMSEA: .024-.045												
Black Children												
Trend in father-child contact	0.179	*	0.064	0.016	0.142	*	0.072	0.020	-0.092	-0.020	0.011	
Trend in child support	0.028		0.008	0.013	0.026		0.011	0.016	0.007	0.001	0.008	
Parent relationship quality					0.495	*	0.710	0.073	0.334	*	0.210	0.040
R ²	0.053				0.338				0.130			
Model Fit: CFI: .992, RMSEA: .019; CI RMSEA: .006-.029												
Hispanic Children												
Trend in father-child contact	0.253	*	0.093	0.023	0.110	*	0.062	0.031	-0.051	-0.006	0.008	
Trend in child support	0.040		0.011	0.017	0.141	*	0.058	0.021	-0.071	-0.006	0.005	
Parent relationship quality					0.523	*	0.799	0.102	0.008	0.003	0.020	
R ²	0.077				0.456				0.093			

Model Fit: CFI: .961, RMSEA: .045; CI RMSEA: .032-.057

Note: Controlled in father and mother involvement models are number of children, age of mother at birth, mother's education, mother's work hours, mother's hourly wage, other family income, child female, residential stepfather, trend in distance from child, proportion of years with father, and mother's marital status at birth

Controlled in parent relationship quality model is the proportion of years with the father.

* $p < .05$

Figure 1: Model of Contact, Child Support, Parental Relationship, and Parent-Child Involvement

