Paternal Residence and Parental Involvement with Early Adolescents: The Mediating Role of Parental Relationship Quality

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Abstract

This paper addresses the association of biological fathers' residence to their involvement and to mothers' involvement with their adolescent children, and the role of parental relationship quality in this association. It uses as its sample 2,161 adolescent children of young women from the 1979 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. Children living with their biological fathers report greater father involvement than children whose fathers are nonresidential, but this relationship is fully mediated by the quality of the relationship between the two parents. In addition, biological fathers' nonresidence has a direct positive contextual effect on maternal involvement, but has a stronger indirect negative effect via parental relationship quality. Failing to get along with one's partner has direct associations with both father and mother involvement, as well as mediates the linkage between fathers' nonresidence and the involvement of both parents.

Research has found a steady decline in father involvement in children's lives from the preschool years through adolescence in terms of time spent together and frequency of communication, closeness, and engagement (Almeida & Galambos, 1993; Eccles et al., 1991; Hofferth & Anderson, 2003). This decline is related, in part, to developmental changes in the parent-child relationship, which are most dramatic during adolescence (Granic, Dishion, Hollenstein & Gerald, 2003); it may also be accelerated by family structure changes, specifically divorce and repartnering. By early adolescence a substantial proportion of children no longer live with their biological fathers; they may live with their single mother, their mother's romantic partner, a stepfather, or their grandparents (Bumpass, Raley & Sweet, 1995; Manning & Lichter, 1996). Children whose biological fathers do not reside with them are likely to be at higher risk for problematic behavior than those children who reside with their fathers.

How residential living arrangements affect biological fathers' and mothers' involvement in their children's lives is an important question that has not been well addressed because fathers' involvement has usually not been assessed in the same way across living arrangements. It is often assumed that residential fathers maintain a close relationship with residential children and that nonresidential biological fathers do not, but recent data suggest that nonresidential fathers of toddlers may remain involved and that residential father involvement varies (Cabrera, Ryan, Jolley & Shannon, forthcoming). Mother-father relationship quality is an important predictor of father involvement (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004). Although prior research does not typically assess father and mother involvement in identical ways, relationship quality is likely to also predict mother involvement. The quality of the parental relationship is not always considered, however, when examining patterns of nonresident father involvement or of maternal involvement when the father is nonresident.

This paper examines the living arrangements of 11-12-year-old early adolescents and the involvement of their biological fathers and mothers with them across living arrangements. It first examines the association between biological fathers' nonresidence and both parents' involvement. It then tests to what extent the quality of the mother-father relationship explains the lower level of paternal involvement by nonresidential fathers, and the lower level of maternal involvement when the biological father does not reside with the child. These analyses are the first to simultaneously assess these effects on the fathers' and mothers' involvement with the child using identical measures for resident fathers' involvement, nonresident fathers' involvement, and mothers' involvement. In addition, we use a large nationally representative sample and control for a number of potentially confounding variables to reduce the problem of selection effects in biological fathers' nonresidence.

Background

Parenting Adolescents

Most current research on fathers either explains variation in father involvement or examines its consequences for children's development. What is meant by *involvement* is based upon a modified model developed by Lamb and colleagues that points to at least three forms of father involvement: 1) accessibility: time fathers spend available to children, overall, 2) engagement: time spent interacting with children, but also encompassing a positive emotional relationship, characterized by warmth and communication, and 3) responsibility: actions taken on their behalf, including supervision and provision of financial support (Lamb, Pleck, Charnov & Levine, 1985; Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004). Even after considerable effort to more reliably measure paternal engagement in terms of time (Yeung, Sandberg, Davis-Kean & Hofferth, 2001), the amount of time fathers spend with or are accessible to children turns out to be less important in contributing to resident or nonresident children's well-being than emotional

closeness and responsibility (Hofferth, 2006). Research confirms that adolescents have fewer adolescent behavior problems when their nonresident biological fathers are engaged, close, and have open lines of communication with them (King, 2006; Hawkins, Amato & King, 2007; Carlson, 2006; King & Sobolewski, 2006). A meta-analysis of nonresidential fathering after divorce, focusing primarily on elementary school-age children and adolescents, found that child support, closeness, and authoritative parenting were consistently linked to greater academic success and fewer behavior problems (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999).

The parenting style literature, which has focused primarily upon mothers, emphasizes acceptance and monitoring/control as important dimensions of parenting (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). The first dimension, acceptance, defined variously as feelings of warmth, closeness, connection, affection, responsiveness, supportiveness, and attachment, refers to parents' emotional involvement in a child's life. This is consistent with Lamb and his colleagues' dimension of engagement that includes emotional connection between father and child Although for young children disciplinary practices may be the appropriate measures of control, for adolescents, parental monitoring, including knowledge about, attention to, and tracking of their children's whereabouts and activities, seems to be most important (Dishion & McMahon, 1998; Kerr & Stattin, 2000). Steinberg and others added another dimension of control - psychological autonomy granting - that encourages the development of children's decision-making skills, opinions, and beliefs (Galambos & Ehrenberg, 1997; Steinberg, 2001; Steinberg, Elmen & Mounts, 1989; Steinberg & Darling, 1994). This type of parental control requires communication and respect for the child's opinion and ideas. Parents' acceptance and control of their adolescents map well onto traditional fathering measures such as described under engagement, above.

Although early research focused primarily on either fathering or mothering, rarely on both parents, recent research is beginning to examine the effect of *both* mothering and fathering on children's behavior (Cabrera et al., forthcoming; Fletcher, Steinberg & Sellers, 1999; King, 2006; Simons & Conger, 2007). Research suggests that mothers and fathers contribute independently to their children's behavior, and that residential stepfathers may be more critical than nonresidential biological fathers (Carlson, 2006; King, 2006). However, this research does not take into account the quality of the relationship between the parents. In the present research we are able to examine the quality of fathering and mothering, which we refer to as father and mother involvement. We are also able to assess the quality of the mother-father relationship.

`Theoretical Framework

What explains father and mother involvement with their children? The family stress model hypothesizes that economic stressors have an effect on the mother-father relationship as well as on their parenting behaviors (Conger & Elder, 1994). Low income or loss of employment by the father may lead to a disruption in the quality of the relationship between the father and mother (Conger & Elder, 1994; Elder, Van Nguyen & Caspi, 1985). This disruption in marital quality, in turn, leads to a disruption in parenting of children. Besides the loss of employment by the father, the need for the mother to increase her work effort may threaten the breadwinning role of the father and change his relationship with his children.

Divorce may also lead to a drop in family resources by the custodial parent. McLanahan and Sandefur (1994) concluded that, although financial strain is important, the personal disruptions caused by relationship dissolution contribute to family stress. Fathers and children no longer live together and many times live far apart, reducing the frequency of contact and, consequently, emotional closeness (Cooksey & Craig, 1998). Parents are also likely to have a

poorer relationship with each other as a result. Of course, the causality of this association may be reversed; a poor parental relationship may lead to a father's nonresidence as well as his moving farther away. Studies of formerly married couples have consistently found that cooperative parenting was associated with greater nonresident father involvement (contact, responsive fathering, relationship quality) and better-adjusted children than noncooperative parenting (Amato, 1993; Black, Dubowitz & Starr, 1999; Cabrera et al., forthcoming; Cummings, Goeke-Morey & Raymond, 2004; McKenry, Price, Fine & Serovich, 1992; Parke et al., 2004; Sobolewski & King, 2005). Studies of parents before and after separation are rare. Although it is assumed that the quality of the mother-father relationship is good before divorce, we know that conflict rises sharply in the years immediately prior (Cherlin et al., 1991). In addition, research suggests that not only the father-child relationship, but also the mother-child relationship, may be disrupted by remarriage (Hofferth & Anderson, 2003; Cabrera et al., forthcoming). A new stepparent or partner may distract the biological parent's attention from his/her children and disrupt the parent-child bond. New children born to the couple may further dilute the attention the mother can provide to each child.

Study Objectives and Hypotheses

This study focuses on how the quality of the relationship between parents may explain the association between biological fathers' residence and both father involvement and mother involvement with adolescent children. Although some have suggested that the quality of the mother-father relationship acts as a moderator of the association between paternal residence and child outcomes (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999), we propose that it *mediates* the association of paternal residence with father and mother involvement. Nonresidential fathers may be less involved with their children than residential fathers, and mothers may be less involved when the biological

father is nonresident, at least partially because of the reduced quality of the mother-father relationship. Several analyses have examined and found an association between the mother-father relationship and father involvement among nonresident biological fathers, and among resident biological fathers (Ahrons & Miller, 1993; Buchanan, Maccoby & Dornbusch, 1996; Cabrera et al., forthcoming; Sobolewski & King, 2005). But no research to date has examined the mother-father relationship as a mediator of the linkage of paternal residence to father involvement, or explored its potential mediating role in the linkage of paternal residence to mother involvement.

Our first hypothesis is that resident biological fathers will be more involved with their adolescent children than nonresidential biological fathers, and that mothers will be less involved when the biological father is nonresident than when he is resident. *Our second hypothesis* is that parental relationship quality will be better when the biological father is resident than when he is nonresident. *Our third hypothesis* is that the better the quality of the mother-father relationship, the greater both biological father involvement and mother involvement with adolescents regardless of paternal residence. Most central to our study, o*ur fourth hypothesis* is that the influence of biological fathers' residence both on their own involvement and on mothers' involvement with their adolescent is mediated by the quality of the mother-father relationship.

Methods

Data: NLSY79

This analysis uses early adolescent 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 Child-Mother study). The NLSY obtained detailed information on the G2 generation from the mother every other year beginning in 1986, and, beginning in 1988, from the children themselves as they entered adolescence (ages 10 and older). We created a data base with the G2 generation's detailed reports of their biological parents' (G1) involvement with them during the ages of 11 to 12 and other information about the children and their biological parents at each observation, and earlier in the child's life. Because the primary survey respondent was the mother, the information on parenting by fathers was less detailed than that by mothers. However, each youth 10 to 14 reported on (all) resident parents (mothers and fathers) and nonresident fathers in a self-administered supplement. This is the major source of information on the adolescent's relationship with both biological father and mother used in this study. Adolescent reports have a lengthy track record as a valid and reliable method of gathering information on family relationships (Sobolewski & King, 2005; Steinberg & Darling, 1994).

The 1992 wave of data was the first year in which detailed information on the relationship of these parents with their early adolescents was asked. To maximize sample size, we included youth interviewed from 1992 through 2002, which limited our questions about parent involvement to those asked from 1992 through 2002, a set of three items. Because children could have been interviewed several times from 10-14, we selected only one observation on each child; we maximized the sample size by selecting children age 11-12. The potential sample consists of 2,950 youth.

The sample was further limited to those early adolescents who answered a self-administered questionnaire in their eleventh or twelfth year, who were living with their biological mother at the time of the interview(s), and whose biological father was alive. Of the total 2,950 adolescents age 11 or 12, we discarded 506 cases that had missing data on residence

of the father because the self-administered supplement was not filled out, 105 who had a father who was no longer alive, and 178 who were missing data on whether the father was alive. The final sample size, therefore, was 2,161 youth. Of these, 1,585 (73% unweighted) had a nonresidential father and 576 (27%) were living with their biological father at least part-time. Ten percent of residential children were living with their father on a part-time basis at age 11 or 12. The high proportion of adolescents in our sample who were not living with their biological father is a result of the design of the original NLSY79 child-mother sample. The first children to enter their adolescent years were born to women 14-21 in 1979, so these mothers were quite young at first birth, and a high proportion of births occurred out-of-wedlock. In our sample, only 57% of the children's mothers were married at their birth. As the entire sample of children moves through childhood and adolescence, they will become more representative of children of all mothers. Weights calculated by the NLSY staff were normalized and applied to the data so that the results are representative of the population of children 11-12 in 1992 to 2002 living with biological mothers who were 14-21 in 1979, but Ns represent actual sample size.

Measures

Mother and Father Involvement. In the NLSY child self-administered questionnaire from 1992 to the present, early adolescents 10-14 were asked about three dimensions of their biological mothers' involvement and their biological fathers' (whether resident or nonresident) involvement: closeness, communication, and engagement. [1] *Closeness* was measured by the question: How close do you feel to your mother/father? (1=not very, 2=fairly, 3=quite, 4=extremely). *Communication* was measured by: How well do you and your mother/father share

[1] The questions asked of adolescents about the involvement of parents with them were developed in the early 1980s by an interdisciplinary team of developmental psychologists convened by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. The questions reflect what was widely believed to be important and the wording reflects common practice at that time.

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 your mother/father miss the events or activities that are important to you? (1=a lot, 2=sometimes, 3=almost never). Each of these three items was included in separate father and mother latent factors that we label "involvement."

Mother, Father, and Family Characteristics. In order to determine family background for adolescents who answered questions about their relationship with their parents, we identified the survey year the early adolescent was 11 or 12 and obtained mother-reported maternal and family characteristics for that year, including the mother's completed years of education and age at first birth. Besides being linked to later human capital, maternal age at first birth also serves as a control for cohort differences among those who were 10-14 in 1992 to 1996 and those who turned 10-14 in the late 1990s, 1998 to 2002). Household record data were used to determine the current marital status of the mother when the child was 11 or 12 and separate dummy variables were created for cohabiting and single, with married to a new partner the omitted category. Data from the household record in previous waves of the survey were used to determine whether the mother was married to the father of the child at birth (1=yes or 0=no).[2] Child gender is coded 0 for male and 1 for female. Finally, a set of 20 items from the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977) was administered to women in 1992. A sample item is: "How often do you feel sad and blue?" (1=often, 2=sometimes, 3=hardly ever). A depressive symptoms scale was created as a sum of scores, coded so that a higher score means more frequent symptoms; no cutoff was used. The mean score based upon the number of completed items was computed, with a reliability of .89 (Cronbach's alpha).

[2] Marital status at birth is assumed to be linked only to father involvement and not to mother involvement or to the parental relationship. This variable proxies the likelihood of payment of child support, a variable which could not be included in our models because it is not relevant to residential fathers.

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. We know whether the residential father is employed but not his hours or his wages. Similarly, the father's education level was unavailable for children who never or briefly lived with their father. There was a large amount of systematically missing data in father variables; consequently, we were unable to include the father's employment characteristics or education. As a measure of financial well-being, we included the income of all members in the child's household, logged (natural log). Finally, race/ethnicity was measured with two dummy variables, nonHispanic Black (1, 0) and Hispanic (1, 0), with the omitted category being nonHispanic nonBlack. We refer to the latter as "White," although a few children of other race/ethnicities are included.

Father's Residence. Dummy variables indicating whether the biological father was nonresidential or residential part-time in the year the child was 11 or 12, reported by the child, were included for the whole sample, with resident full-time as the reference category. These variables are assumed to be linked directly to father involvement and not directly but only indirectly to mother involvement through the father-mother relationship. In addition, after extracting the year in which the father left using the household records from the time the child was born, we divided the number of years the child and father resided in the same household by the age of the child to determine the proportion of years the child had lived with the biological father. This provides a lifetime picture of the extent to which child and father had lived together and is included as a control in examining each dependent variable. Including this variable means that the effect assessed by the main father residence variable is the effect of residence at the time of interview, not confounded by the earlier history of residence. Finally, for children who do not live full-time with their father, we have a categorical measure of the distance between child and

father divided into three distance categories - close (within 10 miles), moderate (11 to 200 miles), and far (more than 200 miles). Although we thought the proportion of years with the child and distance from the child would affect father involvement, we did not expect them to affect mother involvement over and above whether the father is resident or not.

Parental Relationship Quality. In the 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?, with a four-level response category of (1=never, 2= once in a while, 3=fairly often, 4=very often). How often parents argue was also reported. An exploratory factor analysis found that the "agree" and "get along" items formed a factor whereas the "argue" item did not fit, which thus was not included in the latent factor used in the analysis.

Analysis Plan. Distributions of all study variables are first presented for the total sample and by biological father's residence status. Confirmatory factor analysis using EQS was then used to test whether the three involvement items (i.e., closeness, communication, and monitoring) for mothers and fathers each formed separate but correlated latent factors, and the two parental relationship quality items also formed a separate latent factor.

A structural equation model based upon Figure 1 was conducted on the covariance matrix, using population weights. Our independent variable was father residence, our dependent factors were mother and father involvement with their biological child, and the mediating factor was father-mother relationship quality. Instead of hypothesizing causal relationships between father and mother involvement, we permitted the errors of the two factors to be correlated, and we allowed the errors in the comparable mother and father involvement items to be correlated. We also permitted all correlations among the independent variables shown in Figure 1 to be

estimated. Cases with missing data were retained in the file and the model was estimated using maximum likelihood. The correlation matrix is available from the first author.

(Figure 1 about here)

Results

In Table 1 we show the weighted sample characteristics of 11-12-year-olds and their parents. Seventy percent of our adolescents had a nonresidential biological father. However, because mothers often remarried or repartnered, only 43% of adolescents in the full sample were living with a mother without a partner when they were 11 or 12; the remaining 57% were living with a mother and her new partner.

Table 1 also shows mean adolescent-reported mother involvement, father involvement, and parental relationship quality by biological father residence. Consistent with Hypothesis 1, levels of involvement differed by residence. Fathers' closeness, communication, and engagement were higher for adolescents living with their biological father compared with children not living with him ($p<.001$). Partially consistent with Hypothesis 1, mother closeness and engagement, but not communication, were higher for adolescents with resident compared with nonresident biological fathers ($p<.05$ and $p<.001$, respectively). Consistent with Hypothesis 2, the two items assessing mother-father relationship quality were also higher for adolescents living with their biological father and their mother ($p<.001$). Further analyses relevant to Hypotheses 1 and 2 using the latent factor measures are reported subsequently. Other differences in control variables by residential status are shown in the table. In the next sections we present results of our multivariate structural equation models.

(Table 1 about here)

Measurement Model of Father and Mother Involvement and Parental Relationship Quality

The standardized loadings of our measurement model are shown in Table 2. All were highly significant. The lowest loading was indicated for *mother engagement*. Even so, the fit of the measurement model was very good, with a comparative fit index (CFI) of .997 and a root mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) of .025. The CFI ranges from 0 to 1.00, with a cutoff of .95 or higher indicating a well fitting model and .90 indicating an adequate fit (Byrne, 2001; Hu & Bentler, 1995). RMSEA values below .05 indicate a good model fit and values between .05 and .08 indicate an adequate fit (Browne & Cudeck, 1993; Byrne, 2001).

Structural Model without Parental Relationship

We first ran the structural model of father residence and mother and father involvement without parent relationship quality (detailed results not presented). This provides multivariate tests of Hypotheses 1 and 2, and a point of comparison for testing Hypothesis 4. The fit of the model was good, with a CFI of .975 and an RMSEA of .040. However, the proportion of variance in mother involvement explained by the model was small, only 1.9%, whereas the variance of father involvement explained was higher, 27.8%. Confirming Hypothesis 1 using the latent factor measures of involvement, having a nonresidential father had a large and significant negative effect on father involvement (*Beta*=-.199, *b*=-0.568. *t*= 7.16, *p*<.001). It also had a smaller but significant negative effect on mother involvement as reported by the adolescent. (*Beta*=-.058, *b*=-.072, *t*=1.98, *p*<.05).

(Table 2 about here)

Structural Model with Parental Relationship

In order to test Hypotheses 3 and 4, we then tested the full model by adding parent relationship quality (Table 3). The CFI (.975) was the same, and the RMSEA (.037) was slightly lower, implying a slightly improved fit. Mother and father involvement were positively correlated (*rho* = .086, $p < .05$). The proportion of variance in father involvement explained by the model (41% compared with 27.8%) was higher, and the proportion of variance of mother involvement explained (8% compared with 1.9%) was higher than the earlier model.

(Table 3 about here)

Parental Relationship Quality. The model explained 29% of the variance in parental relationship quality. Not currently living with the father was associated with a poorer relationship between the parents (*Beta*=-.308, *b*=-0.609. *t*=-10.075, *p*<.001). Thus Hypothesis 2, that parental relationship quality is higher when the biological father is resident, was supported using the latent factor measure of relationship quality, and net of controls. Other predictors of parental relationship quality are shown in the table.

Father Involvement. As specified in Hypothesis 3, the quality of the relationship between the two parents was associated with father involvement (*Beta*=.436, *b*=.628, *t*=16.090, *p*<.001). Children whose parents got along better and were more in agreement had more involved fathers than those who did not. Prior results also established that paternal nonresidence was associated with lower parental relationship quality, so that the mediating role of parental relationship quality in the association between paternal nonresidence and father involvement specified in Hypothesis 4 can now be tested. In the prior model with parental relationship quality omitted, paternal nonresidence predicted low father involvement (*Beta*=-.199, *b*=-0.568. *t*= 7.160, *p*<.001). In the full model, however, adolescent reports of the involvement of the father are no longer linked to whether the father lived with the child (*Beta*=-.054, *b*=-.154, *t*=-1.955, *ns*). Using the Sobel test,

mediation was highly significant (t=-8.586, p<.001). Once the quality of the parent relationship was controlled, a biological father's residence was not associated with his level of involvement with his adolescent children. Additional predictors of father involvement are shown in the table.

Mother Involvement. Supporting Hypothesis 3, mother involvement was significantly affected by mother-father relationship quality (*Beta*=.286, b=.017, t=8.004, p<.05). Children whose parents got along better also had more involved mothers. The size of the (standardized) coefficient was about two-thirds the size for mothers compared with fathers, but was still significant for mothers. Consistent with Hypothesis 4, parental relationship quality mediates the association between paternal nonresidence and maternal involvement. However, this mediation takes an unexpected form. Whereas paternal nonresidence was significantly negatively associated with maternal involvement (*Beta*=-.058, b=-.072, t=1.981, p <.05) in the prior model without parental relationship quality, in the full model it is positively linked to mothers' involvement (*Beta*=.069, b=.085, t=2.117, p<.05). Using the Sobel test, mediation was highly significant (t=-4.774, p<.001). That is, biological fathers' nonresidence has a negative *total* effect on maternal involvement, reflected in the significant negative coefficient in the prior model that did not include parental relationship quality. In the full model, however, this total negative effect is decomposed into two, opposite component effects. Paternal nonresidence has an *indirect* negative effect via parental relationship quality: nonresidence is linked to poorer quality relationships, which, in turn, are associated with lower maternal involvement. When this indirect effect is taken into account, however, paternal nonresidence is shown to have a *direct* positive effect on maternal involvement. Because this negative indirect "relationship quality" effect is stronger, the positive direct effect is suppressed. A few additional predictors of mother involvement are shown in the table.

Discussion

We hypothesized from family stress theory as well as prior research that nonresident parents have less positive relationships with each other than do resident parents. Controlling for sociodemographic variables and using a latent factor measure of relationship quality, results support this hypothesis. In addition, this analysis supports our hypothesis about the importance of the quality of the mother-father relationship for fathers' and mothers' involvement with adolescents. The quality of relationship between the parents was the single strongest predictor of fathers' and mothers' involvement with their adolescents. The effect was somewhat larger for fathers than mothers, but significant among both. These findings are consistent with prior research suggesting that fathers and mothers who are in supportive relationships with their children's other parent engage in more positive parenting than those who are in less supportive relationships, irrespective of socioeconomic status and residence (Cummings & O'Reilly, 1997). Current efforts to improve mother-father relationships will be directly beneficial to children whether the mother-father relationship is sustained or dissolved.

Our results indicate that when biological fathers are nonresident, these fathers as well as mothers are less involved with their adolescents, consistent with our hypothesis. This result goes beyond prior research in that the study uses identical measures of parental involvement for resident fathers, nonresident fathers, and mothers. In light of the importance of parental involvement in fostering positive developmental outcomes, these results call attention to the need for interventions and policies promoting positive parental involvement on the part of both parents following relationship dissolution.

Our most noteworthy results concern the hypothesized mediating role of parental relationship quality in the association between paternal nonresidence and parental involvement.

For fathers, parental relationship quality fully mediates the link between nonresidence and involvement. That is, parental relationship quality entirely explains the association between father residence and father involvement, and residence is unrelated to involvement when relationship quality is controlled.

For mother involvement, taking parental relationship quality into account reveals that paternal nonresidence has significant indirect and direct effects in opposite directions. On the one hand, nonresidence is linked to poorer quality relationships, which in turn are associated with lower maternal involvement. On the other hand, with this indirect effect controlled, fathers' nonresidence has a direct positive association with maternal involvement. A possible interpretation is that fathers' nonresidence has a direct, positive "contextual" effect on mothers: the biological father's absence is by itself a context promoting increased maternal involvement. But this effect is more than counterbalanced by a negative "parental relationship quality" effect of paternal nonresidence. That is, the low parental relationship quality associated with a father's nonresidence has a negative influence on maternal involvement that outweighs the positive contextual effect of his absence by itself. These results concerning the mediating role of parental relationship quality on the consequences of fathers' nonresidence on both parents' involvement gives even more impetus to the development of interventions promoting better parental relationship quality after parental relationships are disrupted.

Limitations and Strengths. The major limitation of this study is that, because the data were collected at the same point in time when the child was 11 or 12, causal relationships among paternal residence, parental relationship quality, and father and mother involvement cannot be established with certainty. It is possible that father involvement may improve the mother-father relationship. However, it is perhaps more likely that the quality of the parent relationship

precedes his involvement, since research finds that parental conflict precedes dissolution (Cherlin et al., 1991). But we were unable to sort this out because we do not have a measure of father involvement prior to relationship dissolution. Another possible causal reversal is that fathers who have a worse relationship with their partners may decide to leave. Nonresidence, therefore, may be an outcome of the relationship quality rather than a cause. Again, this analysis cannot sort out directionality. Finally, the fact that the three dependent variables are reported by the same person, the adolescent, could lead to common reporter bias. The correlation between the errors in the mother and father involvement factors may result from this common response set. However, we believe that the associations between mother-father relationship and mother and father involvement are not just a reporter effects, because the model takes the correlation between mother and father involvement into account.

In addition to its use of a national sample, the key strength of the analysis is that we were able to test the association between biological fathers' residence status and their involvement because adolescent reports were available on father involvement in identical form for both resident and nonresident fathers, which other studies did not have. In addition, using the same involvement measure as that used for fathers, we were also able to examine the linkage between fathers' nonresidence and maternal involvement. The study took into account the relationship between the two parents' involvement, which, again, previous studies have not been able to do. Finally, in analyzing the effects of fathers' nonresidence, the study controlled for distance from the child and for the proportion of years fathers lived with their child prior to divorce; including the latter variable as a control means that the effect assessed by the father nonresidence variable is the effect of nonresidence specifically at the time of interview, not confounded by the earlier history of residence or nonresidence.

Overall, the results show how central the quality of the mother-father relationship is to both father and mother involvement with adolescent children. Failing to get along with one's partner has a direct association with both parents' involvement, as well as mediates the linkage between biological fathers' nonresidence and the involvement of both fathers and mothers. This critical association between parenting and parental relationship quality is important for clinical practitioners, public policymakers, and parents to understand.

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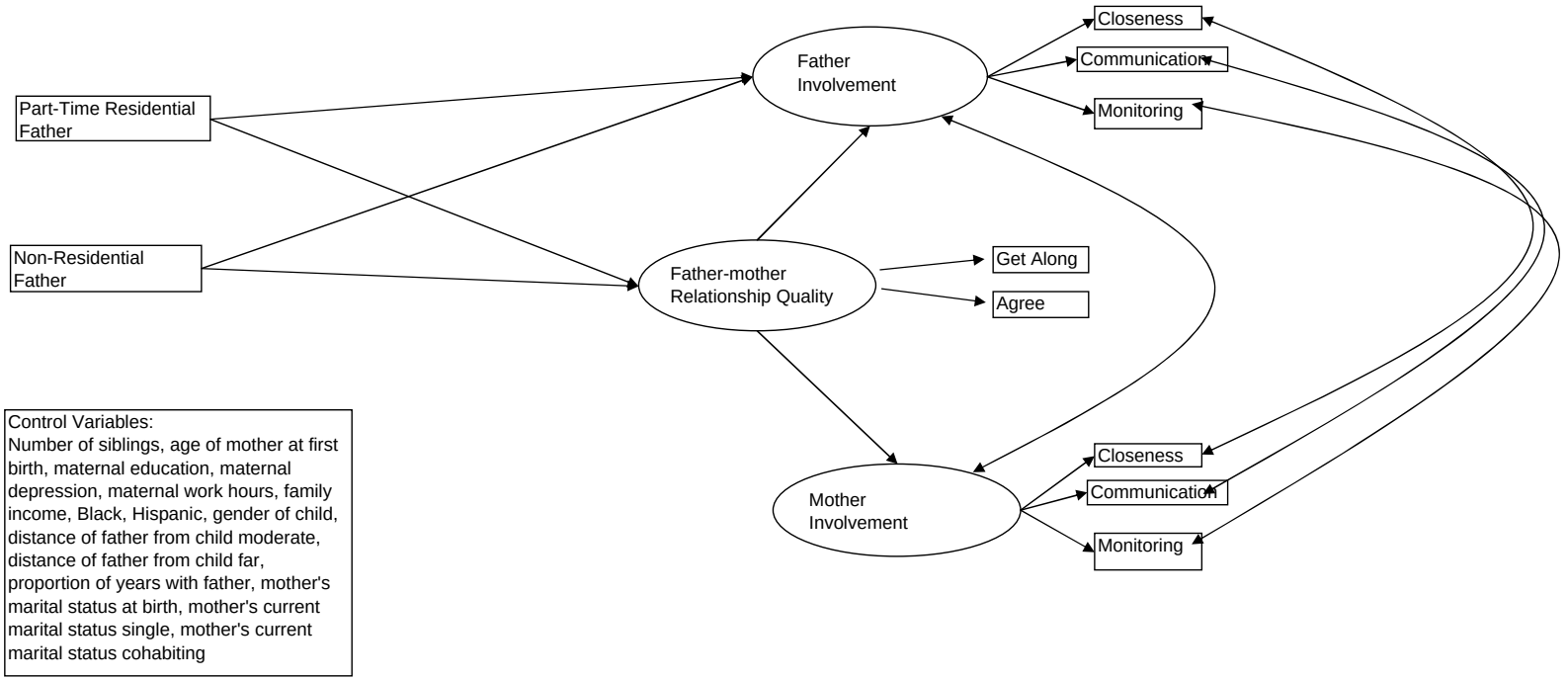
Figure 1: Structural Model of Paternal and Maternal Involvement, All Biological Fathers



	All Fathers		Nonresidential		Residential			
Variable Description	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**T-value**	**Sig.**
Number of children	2.64	1.22	2.53	1.17	2.89	1.29	6.40	***
Age of mother at first birth	23.61	3.68	23.21	3.64	24.52	3.60	7.68	***
Mother's education	12.24	2.16	12.10	1.99	12.57	2.47	4.63	***
Maternal Depression	0.59	0.51	0.63	0.52	0.50	0.45	-5.52	***
Mother's annual work hours/100	23.50	16.76	23.96	16.33	22.46	17.67	-1.91	†
Log Annual family income	10.13	0.90	9.98	0.84	10.46	0.93	11.01	***
Black	0.25	0.43	0.29	0.45	0.15	0.35	-7.27	***
Hispanic	0.09	0.28	0.09	0.28	0.09	0.29	0.53	
Female	0.51	0.50	0.53	0.50	0.46	0.50	-2.73	**
Part-time father residence	0.04	0.19	na	na	0.28	0.45	na	
Nonresidential father	0.70	0.46	na	na	na	na	na	
Father lives moderate distance	0.29	0.46	0.38	0.49	na	na	na	
Father lives far away	0.21	0.41	0.28	0.45	na	na	na	
Proportion years lived with child	0.43	0.40	0.27	0.31	na	na	na	
Marital status of mother at birth	0.57	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.73	0.44	10.27	***
Mom currently single	0.43	0.51	0.55	0.52	na	na	na	
Mom currently cohabiting	0.10	0.31	0.12	0.33	0.08	0.27	-2.76	**
Dad closeness	3.50	1.46	3.14	1.50	4.25	0.99	16.90	***
Dad communication	3.03	1.38	2.72	1.39	3.71	1.08	15.84	***
Dad engagement	2.52	1.04	2.22	1.00	3.16	0.80	20.58	***
Parents get along	2.49	1.11	2.19	1.05	3.13	0.94	19.09	***
Parents agree	2.55	1.14	2.27	1.13	3.16	0.90	17.10	***
Mother closeness	3.55	0.75	3.52	0.76	3.60	0.71	2.04	*
Mother communication	3.12	0.90	3.10	0.91	3.17	0.87	1.54	
Mother engagement	2.42	0.70	2.37	0.72	2.54	0.65	5.27	***
Number of cases (unweighted)	2161.00		1585.00		576.00			

+p,.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001; t-test for difference between residential and nonresidental father families
na - not applicable

Table 2. Measurement Model (Standardized loadings)

Items	Parents	Joint Model		Correlation between errors in mother-father items
		Mother	Father	
Closeness		0.759***	0.913***	.259**
Communication		0.625***	0.864***	.336***
Engagement		0.288***	0.743***	.252***
Get along	0.793***			
Agree	0.835***			
Cronbach's alpha		0.786		
Fit (CFI/RMSEA)		.997/.025		

***p<.001, **p<.01,*p<.05

Table 3: All Children with a Living Biological Father

Variable Description	Parent Relationship Quality Beta		B	SE	Mother Involvement Beta		B	SE	Father Involvement Beta		B	SE
Number of children	-0.014		-0.011	0.017	-0.057	*	-0.027	0.012				
Age of mother at birth	0.114	*	0.028	0.005	0.030		0.005	0.004				
Mother's education	-0.005		-0.002	0.010	0.050		0.013	0.007	-0.028		-0.017	0.012
Mother's depression	-0.003		0.005	0.039	0.009		0.011	0.029	-0.024		-0.062	0.049
Mother's work hours	-0.029		-0.002	0.001	-0.003		0.000	0.001	-0.027		-0.002	0.002
Household Income	0.063	*	0.065	0.017	-0.039		-0.024	0.013	0.055	*	0.081	0.018
Child's Race- Black	0.111	*	0.235	0.048	0.014		0.019	0.036	-0.051	*	-0.155	0.064
Child's Race- Hispanic	0.020		0.065	0.070	0.042		0.083	0.053	-0.009		-0.042	0.089
Child Female	-0.014		-0.026	0.039	-0.048		-0.054	0.029	-0.067	*	-0.177	0.049
Part-Time Residential Father	-0.041		-0.196	0.111	0.021		0.063	0.081	0.035		0.239	0.141
Non-Residential Father	-0.308	*	-0.609	0.060	0.069	*	0.085	0.040	-0.054		-0.154	0.079
Distance from child- moderate	-0.033		-0.065	0.051					0.006		0.017	0.064
Distance from child- far	-0.113	*	-0.251	0.058					-0.157	*	-0.503	0.073
Proportion of years with child	0.159	*	0.36	0.064					0.09	*	0.294	0.082
Marital status at child's birth									0.096	*	0.253	0.056
Child 's Mother is Single	-0.074	*	-0.132	0.045	-0.031		-0.034	0.034	-0.017		-0.044	0.056
Child's Mother is Cohabiting	-0.051	*	-0.149	0.068	-0.017		-0.031	0.052	0.015		0.064	0.086
Parent Relationship Quality					0.286	*	0.178	0.022	0.436	*	0.628	0.039
			R^2=	0.290			R2=	0.081			R^2=	0.414
									N=2161			
Correlations between errors in:									Model Fit:			
Mother-Child Relationship Quality, Father-Child Relationship Quality					0.086	*			CFI:		0.975	
									RMSEA:		0.037	
									CI RMSEA:		.033-.041	

*p<.05