The Sociology of African American Nonresident Fatherhood: The Effect of Men's Relationship with the Child's Mother

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ABSTRACT

Researchers commonly compare the parental involvement of black and white nonresident fathers without considering the unique life circumstances of African American men. Using a sample of men drawn from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY79), this study examines the characteristics of African American and white nonresident fathers, and their involvement with their children. Unlike previous research, nonresident fathers are separated into men who were married, cohabiting, and not in a union with their child's mother at the time of the child's birth. This turns out to be an important distinction for understanding African American nonresident fatherhood. Black and white nonresident fathers who were married to their child's mother show similar patterns of social and financial involvement with their children. Married African American and white nonresident fathers were also, for the most part, similar with respect to a wide variety of characteristics associated with father involvement. Parental involvement was substantially lower among nonresident fathers who were not married to their child's mother (including men who cohabited). Within this group, African American exhibited greater involvement with their children than whites on every dimension of parental involvement except child support, even controlling for characteristics of fathers commonly linked to involvement. Results with respect to the determinants of father involvement among African Americans, especially those who had children outside of marriage, suggest focusing on providing stable employment, higher incomes, and housing close by children as well as encouraging perceptions of fathers as moral and ethical teachers. These results suggest that accounting for the circumstances of African American men's entrée into nonresident fatherhood is crucial for understanding their involvement with their children later on.

Studies of race differences in nonresident father involvement routinely compare the levels of child support and visitation of African American and white men. But who are black nonresident fathers? The demographic and social characteristics of African American and white men with nonresident children have never been explicitly compared. The fact that two-thirds of black children compared to one-half of white children spend time in a single parent family (Bumpass and Lu 2000) suggests that African American nonresident fatherhood involves a very different set of demographic processes. Given that nonresident fatherhood is practically normative among African Americans, it may not even be appropriate to compare the two groups. This paper investigates the pathways into nonresident fatherhood for African American and white men and examines how these pathways and subsequent trajectories are related to parental involvement. What I uncover through this analysis is the unique demographic and social reality of African American nonresident fatherhood.

Specifically, this paper compares the characteristics of African American and white nonresident fathers and their financial and social involvement with their children. However, my main interest is African American men, and whites are mainly included for the purposes of comparison. Research demonstrating vast race differences in mothers' marriage, cohabitation, and childbearing patterns (Bumpass and Lu 2000), and research showing important consequences of these patterns for children's lives (Seltzer 2000), suggests breaking fathers into categories of men who were (1) married, (2) cohabiting, and (3) not in a union with their child's mother at the time of their child's birth. I do this to examine the possibility that the circumstances of the child's birth set the stage for later patterns of involvement. Previous research fails to distinguish between these groups of nonresident fathers, an omission that may be responsible for mixed findings with respect to blacks' versus whites' relative levels of

involvement (for an exception see Mincy and Oliver 2003). Other potentially important contextual variables for understanding African American nonresident fatherhood are examined, including men's economic resources, men's subsequent family building activities, and sociocultural support for fathering.

Nonresident father involvement among African Americans has not been the subject of rigorous empirical analysis (McLoyd, Cauce, Takeuchi, and Wilson 2000). There have generally been two approaches to studying parental involvement among African American nonresident fathers: superficial comparisons of black and whites based on nationally representative samples (e.g., Lerman 1993; Mott 1990; Sorensen 1997) and qualitative and small-scale studies limited to African Americans (e.g., Hamer 2001, Lawson and Thompson 1999). Neither approach is adequate for describing the complexity and diversity of the African American experience relative to other racial groups. This paper combines these approaches by highlighting the unique features of a nationally representative sample of African American fathers while simultaneously providing a comparison group of whites. Moreover, the present study, unlike previous research, investigates black-white differences in behavioral and attitudinal characteristics of men and both the quantity and quality of involvement.

Nonresident fathers' involvement with absent biological children is by all accounts extremely low. Only about half of children receive any child support or see their nonresident fathers more than a few times a year (Seltzer 1991). The findings produced by this research will have important implications for national policy, such as the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWOA) of 1996, and state-level marriage promotion efforts (e.g., Louisiana's Covenant marriage act of 1997), which are designed to increase men's involvement in their children's lives.

USING COMPARATIVE MODELS TO STUDY AFRICAN AMERICAN NONRESIDENT FATHERHOOD

Historically, African American families have been studied using pathological deficit models (Gadsden 1999; Lawson and Thomson 1999). That is, black families have been consistently compared to white middle-class families, the "gold standard," and have been proclaimed deficient in innumerable ways either due to internal pathologies (e.g., laziness, alcohol abuse) or external forces (e.g., racism, discriminatory hiring practices). Although certainly less true today, studies that draw comparisons between blacks and whites do risk harkening back to these times. McDaniel (1994) says that comparative frameworks subtly create a "continuum of legitimacy" with the average black family on the low end and the average white family on the high end. Gadsden (1999) argues that these models do little to contextualize the black experience, understand intergenerational processes, and develop effective social policy. In fact there is a whole body of research on African American family life that lacks a comparison group to white families. Many of these studies are published in African American journals such as *The Journal of African American Men*, *Journal of Black Psychology,* and *The Western Journal of Black Studies* (e.g., Fagan 1998; Hamer 1998; Kelley and Colburn 1995). There have also been large-scale data collection efforts that exclude whites, such as the National Survey of Black Americans (Jackson and Gurin 1987). Yet, comparisons are important for informing social policy as to the specific needs of African Americans relative to other racial and ethnic groups. Gadsden (1999) even concedes that comparative models are necessary to locate the socioeconomic position of African Americans in society relative to dominant groups and uncover disparities.

This debate has implications for the study of African American nonresident fathers. Previous research on nonresident fatherhood has contributed stereotypes of black fathers as "invisible men"(Ballard 1995:66) and as men who are not involved with their children (Lawson and Thomson 1999) for a couple of reasons. One problem is that large empirical studies, most involving comparisons of blacks and whites, have provided only superficial treatment of African American nonresident fathers. For the most part, findings are based on simple bivariate comparisons of Blacks and Whites (e.g., Mott 1990; Scoon-Rogers and Lester 1995), or race is included only as a control (e.g., Cooksey and Craig 1998; Seltzer 1991; Smock and Manning 1997). The variables included in this research also primarily reflect white rather than African American family experiences. These studies, for instance, have not considered race differences in what it means to be a good father. Research suggests that black men's conceptions of fatherhood are less dependent on fulfilling the breadwinner role than whites' (Hamer 2001; Martin and Martin 1978). Moreover, these studies are limited to quantitative measures of involvement, frequency of visits and child support. Several studies suggest that African American men are more authoritative parents than whites (Bartz and Levine 1978; Danzinger and Radin 1990 but see Dornbusch et al. 1987) and are more involved in their day-to-day care (Argys et al. 2003). A few studies examine race differences in the quality of nonresident father-child relationships, but these share the limitations discussed above (e.g., Argys et al. 2003; Danzinger and Radin 1990; King et al. 2004; Seltzer 1991; Stewart 1999a). On the other hand, small-scale and qualitative studies of African Americans tend to be limited to young, poor, and unmarried fathers that do not tell us anything about the growing population of middle-class blacks (e.g., Hamer 2001; Lerman and Soresen 2000; Stier and Tienda 1993).

Although assessing race differences was not always a stated objective of previous studies that provide data on black-white differences in nonresident fathers' financial and social involvement with absent children, this work has nonetheless produced very inconsistent results about African American nonresident fathers relative to whites (Cooksey and Craig 1998; Graham and Beller 1996; King 1994; Lerman 1993; Manning and Smock 1999, 2000; Mott 1990; Nord and Zill 1996; Scoon-Rogers and Lester 1995; Seltzer 1991; Smock and Manning 1997; Sorensen 1997; Teachman 1991).

CHARACTERISTICS OF MEN'S LIVES AND INVOLVEMENT WITH NONRESIDENT CHILDREN

African American men enter fatherhood facing different relationships with the mothers of their children, different economic circumstances, different family building experiences, and different cultural environments than white men. I consider how such characteristics affect African American fathers' involvement with their nonresident children. These characteristics are categorized in terms of the following four domains:

Circumstances surrounding the child's birth

The circumstances of men's lives at the birth of their child set the stage for subsequent patterns of involvement. Union status, marriage, and co-residence define men's obligations to children (Seltzer 1991), and the period around the time of the child's birth, referred by some scholars as the "magic moment" (Fragile Families citation), is particularly crucial. Father involvement is greater among men who have been married or have ever lived with their child, with more consistent findings for marriage than cohabitation (Argys et al. 2003; Cooksey and Craig 1998; King et al. 2004; Seltzer and Bianchi 1988). However, prior marriage and co-residence may be less critical to nonresident father involvement among blacks (Dowd 2000).

Over two-thirds of black children are born out of wedlock compared to one-quarter of white children (Bianchi and Casper 2000) and historically it is not unusual for married black men to be absent from the household (Cherlin 1992).

Few studies have explicitly focused on race differences in men's entry into nonresident fatherhood, and these do not consider fathers who once cohabited with their child's mother and now live somewhere else. Argys et al. (2003) examined how marriage influences nonresident fathers' involvement with their children across several, mostly nationally representative, datasets (e.g., NLSY79, NSAF97, NSAF, SIPP, Fragile Families [FF], and Wisconsin Child Support Demonstration Evaluation Survey Data [WCSDE]). They find more and higher quality contact among fathers' who were married to their child's mother, especially among whites. Their results suggest that whites have greater contact than nonwhites among fathers who were married to their child's mother, but nonwhites either have greater contact than whites or have similar levels of contact as whites among men who were not married to their child's mother. Mincy and Oliver (2003) use the 1999 National Survey of America's Children to examine nonresident father involvement among poor children born into "fragile families," which result from a birth to unmarried parents (including couples who are cohabiting at the time of the birth). Children are categorized into the following groups based on their relationship to their nonresident father: "divorced-visiting," "fragile-(currently)cohabiting," "fragile-visiting," and "single-mother." They find that the "fragile-visiting" situation, in which the father was never married to the child's mother but visits at least once per week, is much a more common scenario for black children than white. In fact, this pattern is the dominant form of fathering for poor black children, especially the very young. Additional early circumstances that may help determine

patterns of contact later on include fathers' age at the birth of his child, whether the child's birth was planned, and sex of the child (Hamer 2001; Hardy et al. 1989; McAdoo 1997).

Men's economic resources

Paternal involvement is positively associated with nonresident fathers' education, employment, and income (Danzinger and Radin 1990; Graham and Beller 1996; Lerman and Sorensen 2000; Stier and Tienda 1993). Wilson (1987) attributes the rise in single mother households and diminished family roles of African American men to industrial job losses that disproportionately affected black males. African American men face more barriers to staying connected with their children and paying child support. African American nonresident fathers are twice as likely as non-black fathers to live in poverty, pay a higher proportion of their income in child support, and are more likely to work nonstandard hours (Hamer 2001; Lawson and Thomson 1999; Meyer 1998). Yet such factors may have a less negative effect on father involvement among blacks because there is the belief that job losses, pay cuts, etc. are the result of racism and discrimination as opposed to men's unwillingness to work or job performance (Martin and Martin 1978; Ray and McLloyd 1986). King et al. (2004) examined the relationship between nonresident fathers' race, education, and parental involvement and found that nonresident fathers' education has a much greater effect on social involvement among whites than blacks. Their study finds few race differences in involvement among highly educated fathers, but less involvement among less educated white fathers than less educated black fathers. These findings emphasize the importance of examining the unique life circumstances of African American nonresident fathers.

Men's subsequent family building activities

Nonresident fathers' subsequent family building activities, new partners and marriage, new step- and biological children, may negatively affect social and financial involvement with children from previous unions (Manning and Smock 1999, 2000; Manning, Stewart, and Smock, 2003). Concomitantly, involvement with nonresident children may influence men's subsequent family building (Stewart et al. 2001). It is also important to account for "reconnections" between fathers and nonresident children, as black nonresident fathers are more likely than white fathers return to their child's household (Mott 1990).

Socio-cultural support for fathering

The potential effects of culture and attitudes on nonresident father involvement have not been adequately explored. A great deal of evidence indicates that African American and white nonresident fathers may have different concepts of masculinity and fatherhood (Hamer 2001; Kamo and Cohen 1998; Kaufman, 1997; Lawson and Thomson 1999; Shelton and John 1993; Taylor et al. 1999). Gender and parenting attitudes and role identity influence involvement with both resident and nonresident children (Cooksey and Craig 1998; Hofferth, 2003; Minton and Pasley 1996). Faith communities, extended families, and the broader community provide social, financial, and emotional support to African American nonresident fathers that may enhance involvement (Clydesdale, 1997; Gadsden, 1999; Goldscheider and Bures 2003; Greene and Moore 2000; McAdoo 1998; Stier and Tienda 1993). Black fathers' perception of their role is strongly influenced by their childhood experiences with their own father (Furstenberg and Weiss 2000; Hamer 2001; Lerman and Sorensen 2000). Low self-esteem, depression, substance abuse, and health problems may interfere with paternal involvement as well (Fagan 1998). Thus, we examine a host of socio-cultural factors that may influence involvement for African American and white men.

The present study employs an ecological approach to present a more "balanced picture" of African American family roles, specifically the role of African American nonresident fathers (McAdoo 1993:29). We follow Mirandé (1991:56), who contends, "The African American family should be viewed as a distinct cultural form that has been shaped by unique social, historical, economic, and political forces, rather than as a deficient white family." In doing so we overcome the limitations of prior work in several ways. We document African American nonresident fathers' financial and social involvement with their children, basing our analyses on a diverse group of nonresident fathers allowing for broad generalization of our results. We examine the quality of African American nonresident father-child relationships and provide important new information on their perceptions of fathering. We consider a broad set of theoretical explanations of nonresident father involvement that reflect the current realities of African American men's lives—circumstances surrounding the child's birth, men's changing economic fortunes, men's family building activities, and socio-cultural support for fathering. Finally, we include a comparison group of white nonresident fathers to assess the position of black nonresident fathers and their children relative to the dominant group.

METHODS

Data

This study is based on data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 (NLSY79). The NLSY79 is a nationally representative sample of 12,686 of men and women aged 14 to 22 at the time of their first interview in 1979. The NLSY79 contains an overrepresentation of Hispanic, black, economically disadvantaged white, and military youth. Respondents were interviewed annually from 1979 to 1994, and every other year from 1994 to 2000. Retention of the NLSY79 respondents has been superior—90% of respondents were preserved through the

1994, 85% of the original respondents completed the 1998 round of the survey (U.S. Department of Labor 2000), and approximately 96% of 1998 respondents were re-interviewed in 2000 (McClaskie, Personal Communication).

I utilize information collected directly from nonresident fathers themselves, which has been shown to greatly enhance our understanding of nonresident fathers' participation in their children's lives (Smock and Manning 1997). However, studies based on men's reports are limited by missing data (Garfinkel, McLanahan, and Hanson 1998). Men report between one-quarter and one-half fewer children with absent fathers than women (Seltzer and Brandreth 1994; Sorensen 1997). Under-representation of men in national surveys and underreporting children from prior unions (especially nonmarital births) accounts for this gap, both of which are more prevalent among African American than white men (Rendall et al. 1999). Although these issues are not easily resolved, the NLSY79 provides some of the best data on nonresident fathers. The panel design of the NLSY79 reduces the problem of underreporting because men are more likely to have been in recent contact with their ex-partner and child when they provided the information (Rendall et al. 1999). In addition, I used the new NLSY79 Male Fertility File in constructing our sample, which contains a "cleaned" fertility and marital history for men. Nevertheless, I expect greater involvement among the nonresident fathers in our sample than nonresident fathers as a whole (Sorensen 1997). I plan to evaluate the representativeness of our sample by comparing men's reports of nonresident children and involvement to similar reports from custodial mothers (e.g., Lerman and Sorensen 2000). I will also compare our figures to other national estimates (e.g., Panel Study of Income Dynamics, Survey of Income Program and Participation). Despite these limitations, I feel the advantages of using men's reports outweigh the disadvantages. This

study will provide a detailed account of African American nonresident fatherhood not available elsewhere, information that can be used to further future data collection efforts.

Analytic Sample

The analysis focuses on black and white male respondents from the NLSY79 who report a biological child residing elsewhere in 2000. We target the 2000 round because it is the most recent round available and men provide additional data on the quality of contact. Prior to 1998, men were only asked about child support and visitation frequency. Nonresident fathers are identified with a question that asks about the "usual residence" of each child. (The NSLY79 does not contain information on legal or physical custody.) The sample is restricted to fathers with an absent biological child at least two years old because measures of fathers' social involvement do not pertain to very young children, and very few of the children of this cohort of men are under the age of two. Although there is no maximum age specified for the children, the child must live with his or her biological mother or a relative (children may not live on their own or be away at college). Although not the case in this version of the paper, I may decide to focus the analysis of financial involvement to men with minor children (age 0-17) because most child support orders do not extend to children over 17, and because it is important to assess financial involvement of men with very young children (< 2, although there are only 4 of these in the current sample). In addition, I may decide later to limit analysis of social involvement to fathers with absent children 21 and younger because older adult children living at home are probably a select population of young adults.[1] Detailed information on the quality of father-child relationships was only collected with respect to men's oldest and youngest biological child. We choose to focus on the oldest child because they provide more data for tracking changes over time.[2]

Because men's fertility histories are, in general, suspect, we use the constructed variables from the Male Fertility File (MFF) to evaluate the accuracy of each reported birth (through 1998) and make the decision to discard questionable biological children on a case-by-case basis. The MFF only counts children who were at some point claimed as biological children (Canada Keck, personal communication).[3] Confidence level scores represent the analyst's best estimate of whether a particular child was or was not a biological child of the male NLSY79 respondent (Mott 2002). We considered children with a confidence code of 1 (virtually certain child is biological), 2 (reasonably certain child is biological), and 3 (uncertain child is biological) as biological children and consider children with codes of 4 (reasonably certain child is *not* biological) and 5 (virtually certain child is *not* biological) non-biological children. We include respondents who have oldest children with codes of 3 because the uncertainty is largely based on the fact that the respondent never claims this child as a member of his household. Because our focus is on *nonresident* children, leaving out this group would potentially limit our population of interest. For oldest children born after the 1998 round or oldest children born prior to 1998 but reported after the 1998 round and not in prior years, confidence codes are not available. We assume these children are biological children of the respondent, basing our reports on men's fertility histories alone. Thus, there may be less slightly certainty with respect to the confidence of whether these children are in fact biological children of the respondent.[4] Finally, although we focus on men who are nonresident fathers in 2000, some key information about the children was taken from previous rounds. The identification number of the oldest child is matched from round to round to ensure that the "oldest child" reported in previous round is the same "oldest child" reported in 2000. This is important because sometimes children appear in later rounds of the

survey but not in previous rounds (e.g., if a man discovered years later that he had fathered a child).

These procedures yield an analytic sample of 719 black and white men with a nonresident child in 2000, 432 black and 287 white. These figures are comparable to other national studies of nonresident fathers (e.g., Manning and Smock 1999; Sorensen 1997). The sample was then limit to 663 fathers with valid information on parental involvement, 399 African American men and 264 white men. Means and modes are substituted for missing values for small number of cases missing data on independent variables.

Sample Generalizability

In terms of the generalizability of our findings, it is important to consider for a moment the ages of the men in our sample and the ages of their children. These men, who were between the ages of 14 and 21 when they were first interviewed in 1979, are between the ages of 35 and 43 in 2000 and have a mean age of 38.8. While this range of *current ages* clearly excludes particularly young as well as older fathers, it should be noted that the average age corresponds closely with those from other data sets in the existing literature (see Cooksey and Craig 1998; Manning and Smock 1999, 2000; Stewart 1999b). From the vantage point of *fathers' average age at the birth of their first children*, age 25, our distribution strongly resembles that of the nation at roughly the same period (see Child Trends, 2002). With respect to the age-representativeness of the children, the nonresident children referenced by these fathers range in age from 2 to 26 years, with a mean age of 14.1. The distribution of children's ages for these father-based analyses reveals a plurality of child ages: 19% are 6 to 10 years old, 33% are 11 to 15 years old, 33% are 16 to 19 years old, and 9% are age 20 and 21. The least well-represented groups are younger and older children: 2% are 5 and under and 4% are over 21. To the extent that sub-group sample

sizes allow, this age distribution gives us the opportunity to explore differences in the determinants of father involvement across a spectrum of offspring ages. For instance, little is currently known about men's involvement with young adult children.

Dependent Variables

Nonresident father involvement. Nonresident father involvement is defined broadly as "behaviors that promote interaction with and reflect a commitment to a child, including, among other activities, face-to-face contact, phoning or writing, physical care-taking, and providing financial support (Ihinger-Tallman, Pasley, and Buehler 1993). The NLSY79 contains measures that assess both the quantity and quality of involvement, including items indicative of authoritative parenting, which is an important predictor of child well-being (Amato and Gilbreth 1999). Research on nonresident father involvement is plagued with measurement problems. In their study of this issue, Argys et al. (2003) found a great deal of variability in reports of frequency of father involvement across family surveys (e.g., SIPP, NSAF, NLSY79, NLSY97, FF), especially among never-married nonwhites. Explanations include lack of definition of concepts, differences in question wording across surveys, inability to capture patterns of irregular contact, and differential reporting of resident mothers versus fathers. However, whereas the SIPP and NSAF are at the extremes, with SIPP at the low end and NSAF at the high, the NLSY79 falls somewhere in the middle, which adds confidence in the reliability of the data.

Unlike most prior work that collapses men's parenting behaviors into overall measures of father involvement (e.g., Simons et al. 1994; White and Gilbreth 2001), I provide a separate analysis of each measure. This is because black and white fathers vary with respect their *type* of parental involvement (Argys et al. 2003; King et al. 2004; Stewart 2002; Toth and Xu 1999). Moreover, different fathering behaviors have different effects on child outcomes (Cooksey and

Fondell 1996; Furstenberg and Hughes 1995; Stewart 2003). I use fathers' reports parental involvement in the following areas: (1) any (and amount of) child support paid by the respondent and/or his spouse/partner in 1999, (2) frequency of in-person visits ("how often has child *seen* his/her father?") in the past 12 months ranging from 0 (never) to 7 (almost every day), (3) number of days visits usually last, with two or more days indicative of an overnight visit, (4) Any and frequency of engagement in various activities (leisure, religious, talking/working on a project/playing together, and school/organized activities) measured from 1 (not at all) to 6 (several times a week), as well as a summative index of these activities ranging from 1 to 6, and (5) "Parental embeddedness," defined as involvement of nonresident fathers in their children's social network, measured with two questions about their level knowledge of their children's friends and activities: (a) number of the child's close friends the father knows by sight and first and last name from 1 (none of them) to 5 (all of them),[5] and whether any at all are known, and (b) whether and how often the father knows who their child is with when they are not at home from 1 (never or rarely) to 4 (all the time). These scores are also combined into a single measure for multivariate analysis ranging from 2 to 9 (Cronbach's alpha = .72). A dichotomous measure was also created with 1 indicating at least some knowledge of friends and/or activities.

Independent Variables

Circumstances of the child's birth. Men's relationship with the child's mother at the time of the child's birth is coded as (1) not in a married or cohabiting union with the child's mother, (2) cohabiting with the child's mother, and (3) married to the child's mother.[6] The NLSY79 does not specifically ask men their union status with the child's mother at the time their child was born. Various procedures were used to create these categories. For men whose oldest child was born before the 1984 survey round, I utilized constructed variables from the MFF that indicate

whether the mother of the child lived in the father's household at the time the child was born. For these respondents, children's mothers were coded as being in the father's household if the mother was reported in the father's household either at the last survey before the birth or the first survey after the birth. For children born before 1979 (the first round of the survey), children's mothers were coded as living in the household at the birth (1) if the birth was subsequent to marriage to the child's mother, or (2) was within nine months of the 1979 interview and the mother was present in the household in 1979 (Mott 2002). These seem to be reasonable assumptions, given the limitations of the survey.

From 1984 forward, the fertility section of each round includes a question that asks respondents whether the mother of each child is present in the household. Similar to the constructed variables in the MFF, mothers were coded as living in the household at the time of the child's birth if she is in the household either at the last survey before the birth year of the child, the survey year of the actual birth, or first survey after the birth year of the child. This is a slightly broader definition in that it is based on only the child's birth *year* rather than *month and year* of the child's birth, especially in the later years of the survey where the interval between years is two years rather than one (1994 forward). Nevertheless, this strategy is reasonable given that children are often not reported until the second survey after their birth (Mott 2002). Thus, although we can be quite certain about men who *never* resided with their child's mother, we are less certain about the details of men who *ever* resided with their child's mother, in terms of being sure about the specific dates of the living arrangement and type of union (marriage vs. cohabitation).

This information is combined with information from the MFF on the father's marital status at each survey round. The MFF contains variables that assess whether the father was

married, cohabiting, or not in a union at each survey round. These variables were constructed from information provided in the household record portion of the survey. For fathers whose child's mother is reported as being in the household at the child's birth, and who report being married in the survey rounds surrounding the child's birth year, are coded as being married to the child's mother. A similar scheme was used to denote fathers who were cohabiting with their child's mother. Men who reported that their child's mother was living in the household in the fertility history but did not report them in the household record were coded as cohabiting with their child's mother. It is unlikely that the father would omit a wife from the household record whereas cohabiting partners are commonly unreported. Moreover, many of these fathers report cohabiting partners and/or unrelated adults in their households in other survey years, but did not report them in the year of or immediately before and after the birth. I coded marriages before cohabitations, and this method probably slightly overestimates the number of children born in marriage versus cohabitation because it assumes that when a cohabitation is followed by a marriage in the next survey round, the child was born within marriage. That is, when men report both cohabitations and marriages around the birth year, they are coded as having married before the birth.[7] In future drafts, a more precise version of this variable based on the month and year of the child's birth, month and year of men's marriages and cohabitations, and the month and year of each survey round will be used. Data pertaining to the exact dates of men's cohabiting unions is limited prior to 1990, but may be reasonably estimated by matching household roster information on opposite sex adults (age, education, etc.) from round to round. In addition, I plan to use the spouse-partner identification variables from the NLSY79 Male Fertility File, which will help determine spouse and partner continuity and discontinuity across survey rounds.

Despite these measures, cohabitations of short duration occurring between rounds may still be missed.

In addition to men's union status, circumstances surrounding the nonresident child's birth include the nonresident father's age at the birth of the child in years, the sex of the child (1=female), and whether the child resulted from a planned versus unplanned pregnancy (not yet completed). Unfortunately, no paternity information is available. The age and birth date of the child, used for constructing the age of the father at the birth of his child, is taken from the MFF, which is the analysts' best estimate of the child's month and date of birth from all sources (across all survey years, birth record, and household roster). The same is true of the child's sex. The MFF does not include children born after 1998. For these children, information on the sex and age of the oldest child comes from the 2000 round.

Men's economic resources. My assessment of men's economic resources utilizes the rich employment, income, and educational information collected at each wave of the NLSY79. For this draft of the paper, I rely on just a few variables for assessing men's economic resources. First is men's highest grade completed, coded as less than high school, high school, some college, and college degree and higher. Second, I include family income, adjusted for the number of people in the nonresident father's household. Third, I include the number of weeks nonresident fathers worked in the last year, coded as full year (52 weeks), partial year (1-51 weeks), and did not work (0 weeks). Fourth, I include a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent lives in an urban area (versus rural). I plan to create summary measures such as the proportion of years nonresident fathers have been employed full-time since separating from the child, number of unemployment spells, shifts in occupation, number of job changes, proportion of time spent working nonstandard hours, and percent increase in pay. I plan to include state

child support enforcement variables (e.g., statewide child support and paternity establishment guidelines), state-level measures of educational attainment and local unemployment rates and median household income as indicators of "economic opportunities" for fathers using the NLSY79 geocode file.

Men's subsequent family building activities. I plan to create cumulative measures of men's subsequent family building activities. These will include the proportion of time spent in a new union, the number and type of new unions formed, proportion of time spent living with new children (step- and/or new biological), number and residence of new children, and any reconnections with the nonresident child and the child's mother. For this draft of the paper, I rely on a dummy variable indicating whether the nonresident father is currently married or cohabiting.

Sociocultural support for fathering. I will investigate a wide variety of measures to indicate socio-cultural support for fathering, such as men's perceptions of fathering, frequency of church attendance, whether men lived with their biological father at age 14, any health problems that limit employment, attitude toward working women, self-esteem, depression, and alcohol and drug use. I also use a variable indicating whether fathers received any gifts or money from relatives or friends and whether fathers reside with relatives as proxies of social support from extended family members. Unfortunately, many of the sociocultural variables are not available for all survey years, and some are assessed only once, usually in the initial rounds of the survey. Nonetheless, this limitation is outweighed by the fact that many of these variables have never before been examined for nonresident fathers.

In this draft of the paper, sociocultural support for parenthood is assessed in terms of men's perceptions fatherhood. Male respondents were asked, "Think now about yourself in the

job of being a father to your child. Which of the following do you think is the most important?" Responses include providing my child with emotional support, taking care of my child's everyday needs, taking care of my child financially, giving my child's mother encouragement and emotional support, giving my child moral and ethical guidance when appropriate, and making sure my child is safe and protected. Men could mark as many as applied.

Characteristics of the nonresident child. The analysis also controls for the child's current age and the distance the child lives from the father, whether the child is living with his or her biological mother versus a relative (not yet completed), and the number of years the father and child have lived apart (not yet completed). Distance was recorded in terms of five categories: within one mile, one to ten miles, eleven to 100 miles, 101-200 miles, and more than 200 miles. Because the distance the father lives from his child is assessed at each wave, we will eventually account for changes in proximity. I will investigate whether it is possible to control for legal agreements with respect to child support and visitation.

Analysis Strategy

In this draft of the paper, the analysis presented is mostly descriptive. However, some preliminary multivariate analysis is presented. Because I am interested in tracking men's trajectories as nonresident fathers, I first examine black and white men's relationship to their child's mother at the child's birth. Second, I examine the relationship between nonresident fathers' relationship to the child's mother at the child's birth and subsequent involvement. I do this to emphasize how nonresident fathers' differential "starting points" influence involvement with children later on. Third, I compare black and white nonresident fathers' involvement with their children, distinguishing between men who were married, cohabiting, and not married to their child's mother. Fourth, I compare African American and white fathers' characteristics with

respect to each of the four domains (circumstances of the child's birth, economic resources, family building activities, and sociocultural support for fathering), again breaking men into categories based on their union status at the time of their child's birth. All bivariate analyses use t-tests or chi-square tests to indicate statistically significant differences. I expect to find statistically significant differences in African American and White nonresident fathers' characteristics and parental involvement, and the magnitude of these differences to vary by men's union status at the time of their child's birth.

The second part of the analysis involves multivariate regression models. Each measure of father involvement is regressed on the four sets of explanatory factors. Because I am dealing mostly with ordinal variables (values are not equidistant from one another but can be ranked) I plan to conduct most multivariate analyses using dichotomous and/or ordered logits (DeMaris 1995). However, depending on the "Score Test for the Proportional Odds Assumption," measures of involvement with at least five categories may be treated as continuous and analyzed with OLS regression (tobit regression may be employed in the case of highly skewed continuous dependent variables). This first draft of the paper is limited to examining dichotomous measures of involvement. For each dependent variable, each set of explanatory factors will be entered in stages (in this version of the paper, only final models are shown). When using OLS, we will conduct partial F-tests between nested models to determine whether each set of variables significantly contributes to model fit (McClendon 1994). For logit models, we use the analogous "model chi-square test," the difference in model chi-squares between hierarchical models (DeMaris 1995). For substantive reasons, I conduct separate regressions for African American and White nonresident fathers, and, depending on sample sizes, men who were married, cohabiting, and not in a union with their child's mother. I also plan to conduct Chow tests using

the pooled sample of blacks and whites to detect statistically significant differences between racial groups and reinforce that separate multivariate analysis is warrented (McClendon, 1994).

RESULTS

Pathways into Nonresident Fatherhood and Involvement with Children

There are three basic modes of entry into nonresident parenthood for American men: (1) childbearing outside of both marriage and cohabitation (2) childbearing outside of marriage but within cohabitation (3) childbearing within marriage followed by separation or divorce. Table 1 compares black and white nonresident fathers with respect to their relationship with their child's mother at the child's birth. These figures demonstrate that black and white men begin their careers as nonresident parents in very different ways. The most common pathway into nonresident parenthood for African American men is having a child outside of a union (marriage and cohabitation). Almost two-thirds (65%) of black nonresident fathers were not in a union with their child's mother at the time of the child's birth. Only 22% of black nonresident fathers were married to their child's mother. A smaller percentage of nonresident fathers were in a cohabiting union with their child's mother when the child was born, about 14%. The opposite pattern is seen for white nonresident fathers. Whereas 22% of white nonresident fathers were not in a union with their child's mother when the child was born, 71% of white nonresident fathers were married to their child's mother. Less than one in ten white nonresident fathers (7%) were cohabiting with their child's mother when the child was born. These figures are compatible with the high rate of nonmarital births among African American women; in 1998 69% of births to African Americans were to unmarried women compared to 22% of white births (Bianchi & Casper, 2000).

Table 2 compares nonresident father involvement by their relationship to their child's mother at the child's birth. Involvement is measures in terms of (1) any involvement versus none, and (2) quantity of involvement. The results in this table reveal three important findings. First, nonresident fathers' relationship to their child's mother at the child's birth is an important determinant of subsequent involvement. With few exceptions, men who were married to their child's mother are significantly more involved with their nonresident children than both men who cohabited and men who did not form a union with the child's mother, regardless of race.[8] Although men who were in cohabiting unions appear to have higher levels of involvement than men who did not form a union (with the exception of religious activities), none of the differences in involvement between men who were not in a union and men who were in a cohabiting union are statistically significant. Moreover, the number of men in cohabiting unions at the child's birth is quite small, only 72 men (53 black and 19 white). Thus, subsequent analyses combine men not in unions and men in cohabiting unions at the birth of their child into one category, "not married." As discussed below, a very similar pattern of black-white differences in father involvement was observed for men who did not form a union with the child's mother and men who cohabited with the child's mother. Combining these groups does not substantially alter the findings.

Table 2 also examines black-white differences in parental involvement. The first two columns compare black and white father involvement not distinguishing marital status. The table shows several important differences. First, white fathers are more likely than black to have made any child support payments in the previous year (67% compared to 47%) and make higher payments ($337 per month compared to $191). A higher proportion of white fathers say they have had their child stay with them overnight than black fathers (48% compared to 38%),

although the average number of days spent does not differ between the two groups. White fathers report greater involvement in children's school and organized activities than black fathers and report that they know more of their child's friends.

Analyses that do not distinguish between married and unmarried fathers (at the child's birth) obscure important differences in black-white differences in involvement. The second major finding from this table is that comparisons of black and white nonresident fathers who were *married* to their child's mother (and who are now separated or divorced) yield no statistically significant differences, even with respect to financial involvement. These results stand in contrast to those of Argys et al. (2003) who found greater involvement among married white nonresident fathers than married nonwhite nonresident fathers, across several surveys including NLSY79. However it is important to keep in mind that their sample of nonwhites included men of other races in addition to black men.

The pattern is quite different for nonresident fathers who were not married to their child's mother. With a few exceptions, these results portray African American men in a much more positive light than prior studies that do not account for marital status at birth. Among men who cohabited with their child's mother, black men are more involved fathers than white men on every measure of involvement except child support, school and organized activities, and parental embeddedness, where there is no difference between groups. Among nonresident fathers who did not form a union, black men are more involved in every category except child support and school and organized activities. Thus, these descriptive statistics reveal a third major finding. With the exception of child support, black men are no "worse" at fathering and, in the case of unmarried men, are "better" nonresident fathers than white men (based on the measures available

in the NSLY79). However, it is important to note that, among both black and whites, the highest levels of involvement are men who were previously married to their child's mother.

Characteristics of Nonresident Fathers and Relationship to Child's Mother at Birth

Table 3 compares African American and white fathers with respect to characteristics commonly associated with nonresident father involvement. These characteristics are broken into four domains: circumstances of the child's birth, economic resources, family building experiences, and characteristics of the child (age and distance). As was the case for involvement, not accounting for men's marital status with the child's mother obscures our understanding of African American nonresident fathers. Among nonresident fathers regardless of union status at the child's birth, black nonresident fathers are younger when their child was born, less educated, have less income, are more likely to have not worked in the previous year and are less likely to have worked all year, are more likely to be living in an urban area, and are less likely to be in a married and cohabiting union, and are more likely to be living within a mile of their child.

Among fathers who were married to their child's mother, a different story emerges. African and white nonresident fathers are overwhelmingly similar in their sociodemographic characteristics, except for percent urban and the presence of married and cohabiting partners. On the other hand, there are vast differences in the characteristics of black and white fathers who were not married to their child's mother (these differences are reflected in the total sample). African American fathers in this group are younger when their child was born, less educated, have less income, are more likely to have not worked in the previous year (over one-quarter of black unmarried nonresident fathers) and are less likely to have worked the whole year, are more likely to be living in an urban area, and live closer to their children. In almost all ways, the

characteristics of black men would predict lower levels of involvement than that of whites. Yet, African American men are either more involved with their children or similarly involved.

Table 4 compares black and white men who were married and not married to their child's mother with respect to one aspect of sociocultural support for fathering—men's attitudes about their most important job as a father. The pattern of findings with respect to black-white differences is similar for married and unmarried men. Black men are more likely to report that giving their mother's child encouragement and support is an important part of being a father. Like living closer to their children, this variable may underlie higher levels of involvement among African American men.

In logistic regression models predicting whether any involvement occurred versus no involvement. I tested whether the black-white differences discussed above remain statistically significant controlling for the characteristics of the father (Appendix Table A-1 and Table A-2). For instance, black unmarried fathers may have more frequent visits because they live closer to their children. However, even with controls, black unmarried fathers are more involved with their children than white on every type of social contact considered. Moreover, white unmarried fathers no longer have higher odds of paying child support than black unmarried fathers once these controls are in the model. Their greater financial involvement is explained by their higher incomes and greater employment (data not shown). Among married nonresident fathers, no differences in parental involvement between blacks and whites were observed with the controls in the model. Future models will examine black-white differences in *quantity* of contact, as opposed to simply whether any involvement occurred.

Determinants of Parental Involvement Among Black Nonresident Fathers

What factors predict father involvement among African American men? The next set of analyses examines the effects of the circumstances of the child's birth, economic resources, subsequent family building, and sociocultural support for fathering on men's financial and social involvement with nonresident children. Black nonresident fathers who were married to their child's mother and black nonresident fathers who were not married to their child's mother are examined separately, and results for married and unmarried white men are reported alongside these results for contrast. Results for the total sample, regardless of men's marital status, are reported in the appendix (Table A-3).

Table 5 and Table 6 present the logistic regression estimates of the regression of father involvement on the characteristics of nonresident fathers who were married (Table 5) and not married (Table 6) to their child's mother. These characteristics include indicators of the circumstances of the child's birth, men's economic resources, family building since the birth, and sociocultural support for fathering. Similar to previous studies (e.g., King et al., 2004) the effects of these variables depend on the particular type of involvement considered. Moreover, a different pattern of effects is observed for white than black nonresident fathers across the various types of involvement. Finally, it is important to keep in mind that the patterns of effects may differ when involvement is measured in terms of quantity of involvement as opposed to whether or not any involvement occurred.

The first two columns of these two tables show the effects of these variables on child support payments. Only two of the variables considered are significant predictors of whether married black fathers pay child support. The first is family income. Another variable that has a marginal negative effect on child support is the perception that a father's most important job is providing emotional support to his children. White married fathers' child support payments are

influenced by lack of employment and perceptions of fathering (taking care of child financially and giving mortal and ethical guidance are positively associated with payments whereas providing emotional support and meeting child's everyday needs are negatively associated with payments). Unmarried black men with higher family incomes, men living in urban areas as oppose to rural, men who say that taking care of their children financially is a father's most important job, and men who live closer to their children have higher odds of having had paid child support in the previous year. On the other hand, unmarried black men who did not work in the previous year and men with older children have lower odds of having paid child support. Unmarried white fathers' payments are associated with the sex of the child, family income, whether they have a spouse or partner, and the perception of fathers' role as making sure child is safe and protected.

The second two columns deal with frequency of in-person visitation. Married black nonresident fathers who have higher family incomes and who feel that making sure their child is safe and protected is a father's most important job have higher odds of visiting their child and married black nonresident fathers who did not work at all in the previous year have lower odds of visitation. White married fathers who feel that taking care of their child's everyday needs is a fathers' most important job and those who live closer to their child are more likely to visit. Among black fathers who were not married to their child's mother, visitation is also negatively affected by not working, as was the case for black married fathers, and is positively affected by the desire to give the child moral and ethical guidance and nearness to the child. Similar to black fathers who were not married to their child's mom, white unmarried fathers also are more likely to visit if they live closer and if they think moral and ethical guidance is important. White

fathers who were not married and who rate taking care of my child financially as most important are less likely to visit.

The next two columns show the results for whether had his children stay overnight with them. Black married fathers with higher incomes and those with a spouse or partner are more likely to have had their child stay overnight, whereas fathers who live closer to their children (less than 10 miles) have lower odds of overnight visits compared to those who live over 100 miles away. White married fathers share the effects of spouses and partners and distance, but are also positively influenced by working less than 52 weeks, the desire to give moral and ethical guidance and having younger as opposed to older children. The results differ somewhat for men who were not married to their child's mother. Black men who were not married to their child's mother with higher family incomes are less likely to have had their children overnight as are men who were not employed or who were employed less than 52 weeks, as well as men who feel emotional support is a fathers' most important job, and men who live closer to their children. Unmarried black men in urban areas and those who feel taking care of my child financially is most important have higher odds of having their children stay overnight. White fathers who were not married to their child's mother were more likely to have their child overnight if they lived between 11 and 100 miles away (as opposed to further), and if they feel giving moral and ethical guidance is important. In contrast to blacks, white fathers who think taking care of their children financially is most important have lower odds of overnight visits.

The fourth set of findings report whether nonresident fathers' involvement were involved in several different activities with their children (leisure, religious, talking/working/playing, school/organized). A college education, work, living close by, and wanting to provide moral and ethical guidance and wanting to keep children safe and protected help determine black married

men's involvement in activities with their children. Black married fathers who feel financial support is most important are less likely to be involved in activities with their children. White married fathers are positively influenced to engage in activities by living close by their children and negatively influenced by the age of the children. Black fathers who were not married to their child's mother have lower odds of engagement in activities if they did not work a full 52 weeks in the previous year. They have higher odds of involvement if they feel moral and ethical guidance is most important and if they live within 10 miles of their child. White fathers who were not married to their child's mother are similarly influenced by distance and moral and ethical guidance. Men who rate taking care of the child financially as most important are less likely to be involved in these activities.

The final set of findings (last two columns) deal with parental embeddedness, measured in terms of whether fathers know any of their child's friends by first and last name and whether they know who their child is with when they are not at home. Black men who were married to their child's mother are more likely to know about their child's life when they live closer to their children. Black men who were married who have less than a high school education and did not work in the previous year are less likely to know about their child's friends and activities. Education, family income, distance from the child, and child's age predict knowledge among white married fathers. Black men who were not married to their child's mother are less likely to have knowledge about their child's life if they worked less than 52 weeks last year. They are more likely to have this knowledge if they feel giving moral and ethical guidance is important and if they live closer their child. White men who were not married to their child's mother also are more likely to know about them if they live closer, and also if they feel emotional support and moral and ethical guidance are important jobs.

Summary

Men who have children outside of marriage are of key policy interest due to their low levels of social and financial involvement with their children. Among black men in this group, significant predictors of parental involvement across outcomes include employment (all types of involvement), distance from children (all types), the perception that moral and ethical guidance is important (visits, activities, embeddedness), the perception that financial involvement is important (child support and overnights) and income (child support and overnights). White fathers who were not married to their child's mother are even less involved with their children, and the pattern is less clear as to which variables consistently promote involvement. Among this group of nonresident fathers, the feeling that financial support is the most important job of a father is linked to greater participation in visits, overnights, and activities. The perception that providing moral and ethical guidance is an important job, and living close by, are associated with greater social involvement with children (all types).

Fathers who were married to their child's mother have significantly higher levels of contact with their children. Many of the same factors that promote involvement among black men who were not married to their child's mother, also promote involvement among black men who were married: income, employment, and living close by. Education also seems important for this group, with respect to activities and embeddedness in their children's social world. Among whites, married men are similarly influenced by distance as well as providing moral guidance (child support and overnights) and children's age (overnights and activities). Nevertheless, the results presented here suggest that parental involvement of black and white men who were married and not married to their child's mother are affected by different sets of variables.

DISCUSSION

Black scholars consider father absence a serious problem for the African American community (Elijah Anderson, personal communication). However, black-white comparisons of family patterns typically conducted by demographers are particularly problematic for understanding African American nonresident fatherhood. Comparing black and white nonresident fathers without accounting for nonmarital childbearing often shows that blacks are less involved with their children than whites, because a larger proportion of blacks have children outside of marriage where levels of involvement are low. However, when analysis is limited to the main domain in which African American childbearing occurs, non-marriage, blacks show greater levels of involvement than whites. Thus, "meeting blacks where they live" provides a much different understanding of African American men's relationship with their children.

One of the major findings of this study is that married black and white nonresident fathers are generally similar, in both their sociodemographic characteristics and their involvement with their children. Yet marriage is out of reach of large numbers of African Americans. It is unclear to what extent marriage may be considered a proxy of social class. However, caution should be used when interpreting race differences without controlling for factors associated with social class, such as marriage. Anderson maintains that middle class blacks probably have more in common with middle class whites than lower class blacks (personal communication). For instance, Lareau (2002) finds few differences in the parenting practices of middle-class blacks and whites. King et al. (2004) observe few race differences in nonresident father involvement among highly educated fathers.

Nonmarital childbearing is a prominent feature of African American family life. This pattern has important implications for our understanding of race differences in nonresident father

involvement. While having a child outside of marriage is associated with low rates of involvement with nonresident children for both blacks and whites, this family pattern has a less detrimental effect on parental involvement for blacks. Thus, these findings suggest that marriage is not going to be quite as good at distinguishing the "good" dads from "bad" dads among African Americans. Rather than focus on simplistic marriage-promotion policies to encourage father involvement, the focus should be on factors related to *both* father involvement and marriage formation, such as black male joblessness (Mincy and Oliver 2003).

Indeed, results with respect to the determinants of involvement suggest that employment and income are important predictors of parental involvement, especially among black nonresident fathers whose children were born outside of marriage. Thus, providing adequate employment opportunities should be a key policy initiative. Living close to children is an important determinant of involvement for all nonresident fathers. Thus, policies should be developed to help fathers and children live close by one another, such as subsidized housing. If living close by is not an option, policies should encourage nonresident parents to participate in types of involvement that transcend distance (e.g., phone calls and email). The effect of new technologies on nonresident father-child involvement has not been examined. Finally, men's perceptions of fathering are associated with involvement with nonresident children. Especially among nonresident fathers who had children outside of marriage, men who perceive moral and ethical guidance as an important part of fathering are more likely to stay connected with their children. This is a much more consistent predictor of father involvement than the perception that taking care of your child financially is a father's most important job. Programs should be developed that help dispel the notion that a father's only contribution is breadwinner. Public

service announcements along these lines are already being broadcast in some states (e.g., Iowa) and the findings of this study suggest that such efforts might be worthwhile.

NOTES

1. On the other hand, few studies include nonresident fathers' involvement with young adult children so this may represent an important contribution.
2. We considered pooling men who reported a biological child living elsewhere in 1998 and/or 2000, but we did not do so for several reasons. First, there is no danger of older children aging out of the sample by 2000 because analyses are not restricted by children's age. If we did decide to limit our sample to men with minor children (or children 21 years of age and younger), such as in the analysis of child support, only a few children reported as living elsewhere in 1998 would have aged-out of the sample by 2000. Moreover, from a developmental standpoint we are less interested in these older children than the younger ones. Second, although we lose a few men whose children were nonresident in 1998 but not in 2000, for example if they are no longer living with their mother because they are away at college, are living on their own, or are living back with their father, there are not very many of these. Again, our interest lies mainly in younger as opposed to these older children.
3. A few adopted children may show up in the MFF, because sometimes men initially report adopted children as biological and then change the status to adopted—these are noted in the confidence codes, as are stepchildren.
4. Among 2,326 black and white fathers who reported a biological child (regardless of the children's residence), 79% had a confidence code of 1 (1,829), 17% had a confidence code of 2 (N=393), and 1.5% had a code of 3 (N=35). Sixty-nine men, or 3% of the sample, had children without a code because they were born after 1998 (N=45) or were reported after 1998 (N=24). Less than 1% of men (N=17) were excluded from this

sample because their oldest child had a code of 4 or 5. Several more cases (N=12) were excluded because a code could not be determined (these cases are in the process of being investigated and may be added in later).

5. In 3 cases, respondents reported that their child has no close friends. These respondents were coded as not knowing any of their child's close friends.
6. These labels are more appropriate than the more conventional "never married" and "divorced" categories because a father can be currently divorced, yet have never been married to that particular child's mother. This is important because about 10% of nonresident fathers have had children with more than one woman (Manning, Stewart, and Smock 2003).
7. Even when the birth occurred in a round coded as cohabitation (and followed by a marriage) I coded this as a birth in marriage because there is no way to know whether the birth occurred before or after the end of the cohabitation. Many cohabitors who become pregnant "legitimate" their pregnancy by marrying before the child is born, and this behavior varies by race (Manning and Landale 1996). Cooksey and Craig (1998) found no difference in social involvement between fathers who were married to their child's mother at the birth and fathers who were cohabiting but later married their child's mother, so the impact of this strategy should be minimal.
8. The exceptions are amount of leisure, amount of talk, projects, and play, any and amount of school and organized activities, and any and degree of knowledge about who child is with. In these cases men who were married are significantly more involved than men who did not form a union, but the difference between married and cohabiting men is not

statistically significant. There are no significant differences in length of visits by birth status.

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Table 1. Nonresident fathers' relationship with their child's mother at the birth of the child

	Black		White		Total	
Relationship status	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Not in a union	260	64.8	58	21.6	318	35.2
Cohabiting	53	13.5	19	7.3	72	9.3
Married	86	21.7	187	71.1	273	55.6
Total	399	100.0	264	100.0	663	100.0

Table 2. Parental involvement of black and white nonresident fathers by relationship to child's mother at the child's birth (percentages and means)

	Total		Married		Cohabiting		Not in union	
Parental Involvement	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White
Child support								
Any payments	47.1	67.2[a]	69.1	73.3	52.0	57.7	38.7	50.4
Amount monthly payments	190.5	337.3[a]	327.9	396.7	145.1	210.1	153.9	184.7
Visitation								
Any visits	79.8	80.9	88.0	90.9	93.3	53.9[a]	74.2	57.0[a]
Frequency of visits	3.3	3.5	3.4	3.9	3.8	2.8	3.2	2.3[a]
Duration of visits								
Any overnight visits	37.5	48.2[a]	52.8	58.2	38.8	21.4	32.1	24.3
Length of visits	3.9	3.8	6.0	5.0	2.8	0.8[a]	3.4	1.2[b]
Activities								
Leisure								
Any leisure	74.5	75.5	82.3	87.0	74.9	48.4[a]	71.8	47.0[a]
Amount of leisure	3.1	3.3	3.3	3.7	3.2	2.5	3.0	2.3[a]
Religious								
Any religious	40.0	33.0	49.3	41.3	34.3	5.8[a]	38.1	15.0[a]
Amount religious	1.9	1.8	2.2	2.0	1.8	1.2[a]	1.8	1.2[a]
Talk, project, or play								
Any talk, project, play	68.3	72.0	77.6	82.7	71.0	47.6[a]	64.7	44.9[a]
Amount talk, project, play	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.6	3.4	2.6[b]	3.1	2.2[a]
School and other organized								
Any school or other organized	45.0	55.0[a]	54.2	61.3	54.0	42.7	40.0	38.5
Amount school or other organized	2.2	2.5[a]	2.3	2.8	2.6	2.2	2.1	1.9
Total number of activities								
Any activities	76.7	76.9	82.3	87.8	79.2	53.9[a]	74.3	48.9[a]
Amount activities	2.6	2.7	2.8	3.0	2.8	2.1[b]	2.5	1.9[a]
Parental embeddedness								
Know child's friends								
Any friends known	59.3	55.4	70.7	68.3	54.3	49.0	50.4	32.9[a]
Number of friends known	2.0	2.2[b]	2.2	2.4	2.0	1.8	1.9	1.6[b]
Know who child is with								
Any knowledge	44.5	42.2	43.9	50.3	47.2	42.7	40.7	26.1[a]
Degree of knowledge	1.8	1.9	1.8	2.0	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.5[a]
N	399	264	86	187	53	19	260	58

[a]Difference between blacks and whites is statistically significant at at least $p < .05$

[b]Difference between blacks and whites is statistically significant at $p < .10$.

Notes: Married men have significantly higher levels of involvement than cohabiting men and men not in a union

(regardless of race), with the exception of amount of leisure, amount of talk, projects, and play, any and amount of school
and organized activities, and any and degree of knowledge about who their child is with. In these cases married men had significantly more involvement than men not in a union but similar involvement as cohabiting men. There are no significant differences in length of visits by birth status. Cohabiting and unmarried men are not significantly different on any measure of involvement.

Table 3. Characteristics of black and white nonresident fathers by relationship to child's mother at the child's birth (percentages and means)

	Total		Married		Not Married	
Characteristics of father	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White
Circumstances of child's birth						
Father's age at birth	24.1	25.3[a]	25.9	25.3	23.2	24.3[a]
Nonresident child is female	51.3	49.2	53.9	51.1	50.6	44.6
Men's economic resources						
Level of education						
Less than high school	13.3	14.8	9.3	15.3	14.4	13.5
High school	61.9	51.9[a]	52.5	49.0	63.6	59.1
Some college	20.0	20.0	24.9	19.8	18.7	20.5
College degree or more	5.5	13.3[a]	13.3	15.9	3.3	6.8
Adjusted family income	19,057.80	33,013.8[a]	25,565.7	35,907.3	17,253.9	25,897.4[a]
Number weeks worked last year						
Did not work	22.9	8.4[a]	10.8	6.9	26.3	12.0[a]
1-51 weeks	19.3	18.6	23.2	18.7	18.3	18.3
52 weeks	57.7	73.0[a]	66.1	74.4	55.4	69.2[a]
Lives in urban area	82.6	61.0[a]	83.6	63.7[a]	82.3	54.4[a]
Family building since separation from child						
Has current spouse/partner	33.2	49.1[a]	37.8	54.6[b]	31.9	35.5
Characteristics of nonresident child						
Age	14.9	13.7[a]	13.7	13.9	15.2	13.3[a]
Distance lived from father						
Within 1 mile	8.0	4.1[a]	6.7	3.7	8.3	5.0
1-10 miles	35.1	27.9	28.9	29.6	36.9	23.8[a]
11-100 miles	24.7	31.5	31.0	34.8	23.0	23.4
101-200 miles	5.9	7.8	8.6	8.4	5.1	6.3
More than 200 miles	26.3	28.7	24.9	23.6	26.7	41.5[a]
N	399	264	86	187	313	77

[a]Difference between blacks and whites is statistically significant at at least $p < .05$

[b]Difference between blacks and whites is statistically significant at $p < .10$.

Table 4. Sociocultural support for fatherhood by relationship to child's mother at the child's birth (percentages)

	Total		Married		Not Married	
Characteristics of father	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White
Sociocultural support						
Most important job as father						
Provide emotional support	57.7	57.2	70.2	57.1	54.2	57.5
Meet child's everyday needs	45.8	38.1	43.4	36.2	46.4	42.8
Take care of child financially	50.0	48.6	56.0	46.8	48.3	52.9
Give child's mother encouragement and support	33.1	24.5[a]	37.4	24.9[b]	31.8	23.4[b]
Give child moral and ethical guidance	54.4	54.2	56.9	54.5	55.5	52.1
Make sure child is safe and protected	59.8	57.4	59.1	54.2	60.0	65.3
N	399	264	86	187	313	77

[a]Difference between blacks and whites is statistically significant at at least $p < .05$

[b]Difference between blacks and whites is statistically significant at $p < .10$.

Table 5. Results from Logistic Regression Models Predicting Involvement with Nonresident Children (Married Sample)

	Child Support		Visitation		Overnight Visits		Activities		Parental Embeddedness	
	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White
Variable	Coef.	Coef.	Coef.	Coef.	Coef.	Coef.	Coef.	Coef.	Coef.	Coef.
Circumstances of child's birth										
Father's age at birth	-0.069	-0.009	0.313	-0.106	0.095	-0.096	0.464	0.025	0.119	0.018
Nonresident child is female	0.014	0.005	-0.270	-0.426	-0.141	-0.496	0.105	-0.410	0.694	-0.500
Men's economic resources										
Level of education										
Less than high school	-1.613	-0.763	-0.178	-0.100	-0.013	-0.489	2.650	1.369	-2.437 *	1.510 *
Some college or more	0.496	0.363	2.186	-0.391	-0.005	0.335	3.015 *	-0.465	0.232	0.469
Adjusted family income ($10,000)	0.670 *	0.064	0.958 #	0.290	0.410 #	0.041	0.482	0.388	0.515	0.220 #
Number weeks worked last year										
Did not work	-1.427	-1.782 *	-3.864 *	-0.465	0.869	0.303	-7.297 **	-0.532	-1.989 #	-0.899
1-51 weeks	0.923	0.422	-1.109	0.733	0.235	0.950 *	-1.957	1.039	-0.804	-0.232
Lives in urban area	1.224	-0.389	0.543	-0.607	1.224	-0.171	0.969	-0.764	1.392	-0.202
Family building since separation from child										
Has current spouse/partner	0.939	0.141	-1.204	-0.176	1.412 *	0.684 #	-0.711	-0.271	-0.455	-0.333
Sociocultural support										
Most important job as father										
Provide emotional support	-1.600 #	-0.887 #	-1.304	-0.725	-0.100	0.637	-0.065	-0.102	0.521	-0.006
Meet child's everyday needs	-0.326	-1.251 *	-0.464	2.711 #	0.245	-0.531	0.746	0.934	0.184	-0.051
Take care of child financially	1.733	1.363 *	-1.815	0.096	-0.199	0.014	-2.461 #	0.027	-0.799	-0.200
Give child's mother encouragement and support	-1.217	1.059	2.797	-2.108	0.573	0.936	0.780	-0.085	1.329	0.568
Give child moral and ethical guidance	-0.900	0.862 #	0.537	0.549	1.093	0.669 #	3.144 *	0.159	-0.299	0.595
Make sure child is safe and protected	0.858	-0.259	2.830 #	-0.890	-0.636	-0.674	3.489 *	-0.746	1.279	-0.017
Characteristics of nonresident child										
Age	-0.121	-0.093	0.249	-0.215	-0.064	-0.232 **	0.269	-0.204 #	0.197	-0.214 *
Distance lived from father										
0-10 miles	0.291	0.364	0.911	2.382 *	-1.603 *	-0.832 #	0.765	0.954	2.794 **	2.989 ***
11-100 miles	-0.530	0.537	0.966	1.799 *	-0.685	-0.090	-1.639	1.761 *	0.263	1.116 *
Intercept	2.525	2.201	-11.474	7.796	-3.672	5.573 #	-16.516	3.717	-8.287	1.968

N	86	187	86	187	86	187	86	187	86	187
-2 log likelihood	74.928	175.038	40.279	73.374	96.890	208.506	40.348	96.831	69.034	146.261

Note: Omitted category for level of educaton is "high school," for number of weeks worked it is "52," for distance from father it is "more than 100 miles."

Table 6. Results from Logistic Regression Models Predicting Involvement with Nonresident Children (Not Married Sample)

	Child Support		Visitation		Overnight Visits		Activities		Parental Embeddedness	
Variable	Black Coef.	White Coef.	Black Coef.	White Coef.	Black Coef.	White Coef.	Black Coef.	White Coef.	Black Coef.	White Coef.
Circumstances of child's birth										
Father's age at birth	-0.077	0.140	0.056	0.120	0.040	0.169	0.048	-0.062	-0.086	0.005
Nonresident child is female	-0.357	1.194#	0.177	-0.550	0.343	-0.66	0.346	-0.075	0.381	1.043
Men's economic resources										
Level of education										
Less than high school	-0.555	-0.628	-0.470	0.457	-0.210	1.128	-0.207	-0.125	-0.269	-2.168
Some college or more	0.267	1.620#	-0.533	0.303	0.121	-0.378	0.044	1.270	0.031	1.701
Adjusted family income ($10,000)	0.252**	0.636*	-0.071	0.104	-0.006#	0.126	0.043	0.042	0.047	0.322
Number weeks worked last year										
Did not work	-1.589***	-1.411	-1.166**	-2.143	-0.771*	-0.411	-0.957*	-1.560	-1.022**	0.417
1-51 weeks	0.162	-0.942	-0.981*	-0.360	-0.887*	0.158	-0.689#	-1.100	-0.634#	-0.798
Lives in urban area	0.626#	0.686	-0.039	0.651	0.816*	0.204	-0.066	0.712	0.075	0.035
Family building since separation from child										
Has current spouse/partner	-0.168	1.876*	-0.460	0.590	0.111	1.057	-0.145	1.024	-0.139	1.370
Sociocultural support										
Most important job as father										
Provide emotional support	-0.095	-0.327	-0.158	0.469	-0.677#	1.756	0.171	0.318	0.232	-1.016
Meet child's everyday needs	-0.035	1.324	0.604	0.592	0.268	-1.504	0.334	1.367	-0.272	3.680*
Take care of child financially	0.826*	0.551	0.004	-1.548#	0.649#	-2.253#	0.245	-1.600#	-0.087	-1.527
Give child's mother encouragement and support	-0.343	-0.270	-0.052	1.091	-0.034	1.572	-0.290	0.652	0.106	-1.573
Give child moral and ethical guidance	0.311	0.239	0.890*	2.210*	0.111	3.496**	0.720#	1.728#	0.772*	1.939#
Make sure child is safe and protected	-0.405	-1.862*	-0.036	0.372	0.241	0.364	-0.176	0.393	-0.094	-0.150
Characteristics of nonresident child										
Age	-0.148*	-0.017	0.035	0.144	-0.042	0.143	0.029	-0.164	-0.109	-0.086
Distance lived from father										
0-10 miles	0.566#	-1.158	2.272***	2.584**	-1.079***	-0.069	1.729***	1.779*	2.059***	2.701**
11-100 miles	0.155	0.271	1.228**	4.542***	-0.727*	1.692#	0.262	2.914**	0.590#	2.853**
Intercept	2.854	-5.445	-1.254	-8.116	-1.195	-10.935	-1.251	0.446	2.996	-3.759

N	313	77	313	77	313	77	313	77	313	77
-2 log likelihood	345.831	70.220	267.931	56.365	353.436	55.284	297.447	64.927	347.051	57.676

Note: Omitted category for level of educaton is "high school," for number of weeks worked it is "52," for distance from father it is "more than 100 miles."

Table A-1. Results from Logistic Regression Models Predicting Involvement with Nonresident Children by Race (Married Sample)

	Child Support		Visitation		Overnight Visits		Activities		Parental Embeddedness	
Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10
Nonresident father is black	-0.172	0.023	-0.450	-0.345	-0.357	-0.389	-0.539	-0.364	-0.062	-0.011
Circumstances of child's birth										
Father's age at birth		-0.005		0.064		-0.013		0.116		0.001
Nonresident child is female		0.057		-0.360		-0.339		-0.371		-0.288
Men's economic resources										
Level of education										
Less than high school		-0.929 *		0.251		-0.268		1.581 #		0.541
Some college and more		0.417		0.064		0.179		0.184		0.340
Adjusted family income ($10,000)		0.107		0.345 #		0.065		0.302 #		0.245 *
Number weeks worked last year										
Did not work		-1.449 *		-0.737		0.341		-1.393 *		-1.001
1-51 weeks		0.571		0.118		0.559		0.270		-0.391
Lives in urban area		-0.074		-0.356		0.154		-0.352		0.054
Family building since separation from child										
Has current spouse/partner		0.150		-0.014		0.768 **		-0.047		-0.236
Sociocultural support										
Most important job as father										
Provide emotional support		-0.905 *		-0.572		0.329		-0.142		0.205
Meet child's everyday needs		-0.681 #		1.259		0.014		0.797		0.170
Take care of child financially		1.343 **		-0.215		0.014		-0.024		-0.259
Give child's mother encouragement and support		0.033		-0.302		0.548		-0.289		0.415
Give child moral and ethical guidance		0.406		0.337		0.678 *		0.635		0.167
Make sure child is safe and protected		-0.107		-0.124		-0.632 #		-0.059		0.285
Characteristics of nonresident child										
Age		-0.070		-0.063		-0.147 *		-0.077		-0.108
Distance lived from father										
0-10 miles		0.238		1.899 **		-1.108 **		1.120 *		2.559 ***
11-100 miles		0.087		1.593 **		-0.228		0.967 *		0.816 *
Intercept	1.008 ***	0.724	2.369 ***	0.583	..357 *	2.180	2.015 ***	-1.026	0.954 ***	0.758

N	273	273	273	273	273	273	273	273	273	273
-2 log likelihood	322.563	273.361	175.034	134.865	372.604	318.944	218.102	167.925	324.758	242.159

Note: Omitted category for level of educaton is "high school," for number of weeks worked it is "52," for distance from father it is "more than 100 miles."

Table A-2. Results from Logistic Regression Models Predicting Involvement with Nonresident Children by Race (Not Married Sample)

	Child Support		Visitation		Overnight Visits		Activities		Parental Embeddedness	
Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10
Nonresident father is black	-0.420#	-0.180	1.010***	0.978**	0.546#	0.782*	1.181***	1.282***	0.856***	0.930**
Circumstances of child's birth										
Father's age at birth		-0.053		0.081		0.052		0.038		-0.059
Nonresident child is female		-0.146		0.031		0.293		0.202		0.376
Men's economic resources										
Level of education										
Less than high school		-0.303		-0.326		-0.143		-0.189		-0.322
Some college and more		0.432		-0.291		0.102		0.260		0.197
Adjusted family income ($10,000)		0.274**		0.024		0.047		0.059		0.095
Number weeks worked last year										
Did not work		-1.333***		-0.959**		-0.697*		-0.854*		-0.791*
1-51 weeks		-0.017		-0.866*		-0.831*		0.741*		-0.489
Lives in urban area		0.523#		0.108		0.507#		0.171		0.200
Family building since separation from child										
Has current spouse/partner		0.131		-0.327		0.294		-0.063		-0.094
Sociocultural support										
Most important job as father										
Provide emotional support		-0.025		-0.037		-0.263		0.203		0.138
Meet child's everyday needs		-0.109		0.561		0.173		0.378		0.090
Take care of child financially		0.760*		-0.292		0.091		-0.139		-0.128
Give child's mother encouragement and support		-0.102		0.097		0.110		-0.023		-0.058
Give child moral and ethical guidance		0.223		0.961**		0.441		0.779*		0.807*
Make sure child is safe and protected		-0.676*		0.069		0.115		-0.032		0.035
Characteristics of nonresident child										
Age		-0.123*		0.068		-0.024		0.015		-0.079
Distance lived from father										
0-10 miles		0.330		2.225***		0.844**		1.671***		2.063***
11-100 miles		0.151		1.753***		-0.490		0.750*		0.998***
Intercept	0.078	2.117	0.235	-3.882	-1.187*	-2.646	-0.026	-2.493	-0.395#	0.436

N	390	390	390	390	390	390	390	390	390	390
-2 log likelihood	531.520	442.927	438.396	344.216	487.092	441.853	451.431	384.849	521.467	429.166

Note: Omitted category for level of educaton is "high school," for number of weeks worked it is "52," for distance from father it is "more than 100 miles."

Table A-3. Results from Logistic Regression Models Predicting Involvement with Nonresident Children (Total Sample)

	Child Support		Visitation		Overnight Visits		Activities		Parental Embeddedness	
	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White
	Coef.	Coef.	Coef.	Coef.	Coef.	Coef.	Coef.	Coef.	Coef.	Coef.
Variable	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)
Circumstances of child's birth										
Father's age at birth	-0.037	-0.007	0.106	0.042	0.051	-0.059	0.085	0.043	-0.017	-0.012
Nonresident child is female	-0.275	0.375	0.102	-0.138	0.239	-0.383	0.307	-0.189	0.380	0.025
Men's economic resources										
Level of education										
Less than high school	-0.703 #	-0.378	-0.408	0.365	-0.295	-0.043	-0.037	0.664	-0.449	0.767
Some college	0.173	0.385	-0.403	0.085	-0.019	-0.154	0.025	0.043	0.130	0.567
College degree or more	1.691 *	0.743	0.567	0.951	0.649	1.475 **	0.616	1.000	-0.056	0.970
Adjusted family income ($10,000)	0.297 ***	0.119	0.020	0.306 *	0.059	0.071	0.067	0.241 *	0.100	0.295 **
Number weeks worked last year										
Did not work	-1.371 ***	-1.332 *	-1.031 **	-0.644	-0.524	-0.252	-1.160 **	-0.437	-1.001 **	-0.345
1-51 weeks	0.345	0.004	-0.803 *	0.119	-0.503	0.605	-0.712 *	0.139	-0.579 #	-0.207
Lives in urban area	0.591 #	-0.057	-0.027	-0.132	0.778 *	-0.148	0.049	-0.025	0.233	-0.055
Family building since separation from child										
Has current spouse/partner	0.038	0.637 *	-0.465	0.563	0.306	0.938 **	-0.129	0.390	-0.142	0.214
Sociocultural support										
Most important job as father										
Provide emotional support	-0.087	-0.495	-0.061	-0.044	-0.505 #	0.783 *	0.178	0.236	0.478	-0.164
Meet child's everyday needs	-0.099	-0.839 #	0.341	1.043 #	0.134	-0.456	0.412	0.360	-0.175	0.572
Take care of child financially	0.834 *	1.083 **	-0.079	-0.744	0.418	-0.272	0.190	-0.640	-0.106	-0.352
Give child's mother encouragement and support	-0.373	0.853 #	0.417	-0.046	0.195	0.933 *	-0.215	0.697	0.133	0.337
Give child moral and ethical guidance	0.165	0.575	0.617 #	0.795 #	0.248	0.818 *	0.713 *	0.652	0.493 #	0.576
Make sure child is safe and protected	-0.303	-0.591 #	0.018	-0.330	0.095	-0.607 #	-0.034	-0.370	0.015	0.029
Characteristics of nonresident child										
Age	-0.111 #	-0.068	0.066	0.010	-0.035	-0.123 #	0.047	-0.061	-0.039	-0.128 #
Distance lived from father										
0-10 miles	0.430	0.210	2.035 ***	2.139 ***	-1.123 ***	-0.346	1.676 ***	1.385 ***	2.078 ***	2.458 ***

11-100 miles	0.007	0.867 *	1.080 **	2.753 ***	-0.643 *	0.636 #	0.203	2.074 ***	0.594 *	1.578 ***
Intercept	1.443	0.724	-2.878	-1.969	-1.637	1.900	-2.520	-0.959	0.063	-0.002
N	399	264	399	264	399	264	399	264	399	264
-2 log likelihood	442.724	275.196	329.723	179.720	466.512	297.951	360.641	219.655	432.839	248.384

Note: Omitted category for level of educaton is "high school," for number of weeks worked it is "52," for distance from father it is "more than 100 miles."