Growing up with a nonresident father: Implications for offspring well-being during adolescence and adulthood

Mindy E. Scott
Child Trends

May 23, 2012

Research funded by NICHD through grant 1R03HD061633-01A1 (Scott) and grant R01HD043384 (King)
Background

- **Resident Father Families vs. Nonresident Father Families**
  - Focusing on offspring well-being during adolescence and adulthood.
  - Emphasizes the importance of examining the effects of growing up with a nonresident father at later stages of life course.
Background

- **Context**
  - The role of relationship closeness and father involvement.
    - For offspring
    - For fathers
      - Specific work examining associations between nonresident father involvement and men’s transition to multiple partner fertility.

- **Diversity among nonresident father families**
Research Questions

• **What are the effects of growing up with a nonresident father on adolescent offspring well-being?**
  - Do adolescents who are not close to their resident fathers do better (the same, or worse) than those with nonresident fathers?
  - Do offspring who are close to their nonresident fathers ever do as well as those who are close to resident fathers?

Research Questions

• Do the negative effects of growing up with a nonresident father persist into adulthood?

Data

• Add Health
  • Wave I (1995) (12-18 year olds)
  • Wave III (2001-2002) (18-26 year olds)
  • Wave IV (2007-2008) (24-32 year olds)
  • Sample:
    • Adolescents living with either 2 biological parents or a biological mother, but no biological father at Wave I.
    • Approximately 10,000 resident father families and 5,000 nonresident father families.
Key Measures

• Biological father residential status (WI)
• Length of time since lived with biological father (WI)
  – Never lived with father
  – Ever lived with father
    • 1 year or less since lived with bio father
    • 2-5 years since lived with bio father
    • 6-10 years since lived with bio father
    • 11+ years since lived with bio father
• Father-child relationship closeness (WI)
  – Range=1-5, “Close” = Quite a bit or Extremely close
Key Measures

• Offspring Well-being
  – During Adolescence (Wave I)
    • Grades (4 items, 1=D or lower; 4=A)
    • Self-esteem (6 items, 1=disagree/strongly disagree; 4=agree)
    • Delinquency (10 items, 0=never; 2=3+ times)
    • Violence (8 items, 0=never; 2=more than once)
    • Substance use (average of 6 items related to tobacco, alcohol and marijuana use, 0-1 range)
    • Depression (7 items, 0=never or rarely; 2=a lot or most of the time)
Key Measures

- **Offspring Well-being**
  - During Adulthood (Wave III, Wave IV)
    - Problem drinking (*0*=none; *6*=every day/almost every day)
      - During the past 12 months, on how many days did you drink [5 or more/4 or more] drinks in a row?
      - During the past 12 months, on how many days have you been drunk or very high on alcohol?

- Depression (*9* items; *0*=never/rarely; *3*=most of the time/all of the time)
Analyses – Paper 1

• Comparison of offspring well-being in resident father vs. nonresident father families.
  – During adolescence
  – Examine interactions between father residential status and father-adolescent closeness
Results – Biological Father Residential Status (Wave I)

- Resident father: 68%
- Nonresident father, ever lived with father: 25%
- Nonresident father, never lived with father: 7%
Results - Biological Father Nonresidential Status (Wave I)

- **NR, 11+ years since lived with father**: 22%
- **NR, 6-10 years since lived with father**: 25%
- **NR, 2-5 years since lived with father**: 19%
- **NR, 1 year or less since lived with father**: 13%
- **NR, never lived with father**: 22%
Results - Average Father-Adolescent Closeness (Wave I)

- Resident Father: 4.36
- Nonresident Father: 3.01
Results – Adolescent Outcomes (Wave I)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Self-Esteem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resident Father</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>3.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonresident Father</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The chart illustrates the comparison between grades and self-esteem for resident and nonresident fathers. The scores indicate that resident fathers have higher grades than nonresident fathers, while self-esteem scores are slightly lower for resident fathers compared to nonresident fathers.
Results – Adolescent Outcomes (Wave I)

- Delinquency: Resident Father (0.09), Nonresident Father (0.1)
- Violence: Resident Father (0.17), Nonresident Father (0.24)
- Depression: Resident Father (0.32), Nonresident Father (0.42)
Results – Adolescent Outcomes (Wave I)

- Substance Use
  - Resident Father: 0.17
  - Nonresident Father: 0.23
Results - Father Residence X Father-Child Closeness (Wave I)

- Resident father-close: 57%
- Resident father-not close: 12%
- Nonresident father-close: 19%
- Nonresident father-not close: 11%
Results – Percent Close to Biological Father (Wave I)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percent Close to Biological Father</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resident Father</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonresident Father</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results – Interaction Results

**Grades**

- Low Closeness
- High Closeness

**Self Esteem**

- Low Closeness
- High Closeness

- Resident
- Nonresident
Results – Interaction Results

Delinquency

Depressive Symptoms

Delinquency (Standardized)

Depressive Symptoms (Standardized)

Low Closeness  High Closeness

Low Closeness  High Closeness

Resident

Nonresident

Resident

Nonresident
Results – Interaction Results

![Graph showing the relationship between substance use (standardized) and closeness for resident and nonresident fathers. The x-axis represents low and high closeness, while the y-axis shows the range from -0.6 to 0.3. The graph indicates a negative correlation, with resident fathers showing a decrease in substance use as closeness increases, and nonresident fathers showing an increase.](image-url)
Analyses – Paper 2

• Comparison of offspring well-being in resident father vs. nonresident father families.
  – Examine trajectories of well-being from adolescence into adulthood.
  – Examine differences for daughters vs. sons
Preliminary Results – Trajectories of Well-being (Wave I, III, IV)

Problem Drinking

- Resident father
- Nonresident father, never lived with father
- Nonresident father, ever lived with father
Preliminary Results – Trajectories of Well-being, by Offspring Gender

**Problem Drinking, Sons**

- Resident father
- Nonresident father, never lived with father
- Nonresident father, ever lived with father

**Problem Drinking, Daughters**

- Resident father
- Nonresident father, never lived with father
- Nonresident father, ever lived with father

Wave I  Wave II  Wave III
Preliminary Results – Trajectories of Well-being (Wave I, III, IV)

Depressive Symptoms

- Resident father
- Nonresident father, never lived with father
- Nonresident father, ever lived with father
Preliminary Results – Trajectories of Well-being, by Offspring Gender

Depressive Symptoms, Sons

- Resident father
- Nonresident father, never lived with father
- Non-resident father, ever lived with father

Wave I  Wave II  Wave III

Depressive Symptoms, Daughters

- Resident father
- Nonresident father, never lived with father
- Nonresident father, ever lived with father

Wave I  Wave II  Wave III
Results – Differences in Offspring Well-being during Adulthood (Wave IV)

Problem Drinking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resident father</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never lived with father</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 year or less since lived with father</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>6-10 years since lived with father</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-5 years since lived with father</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>11 or more years since lived with father</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results – Differences in Offspring Well-being during Adulthood (Wave IV)

Depressive Symptoms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residency with Father</th>
<th>Depressive Symptoms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resident father</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never lived with father</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 year or less since lived with father</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-5 years since lived with father</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years since lived with father</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 or more years since lived with father</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Implications for Policy and Practice

• Focus on increasing family complexity and diversity.
• Importance of father-child relationship quality and father involvement (beyond family structure).
• Longer term implications of growing up with a nonresident father.
Papers


- Scott, M.E. (working paper). The effects of nonresident father closeness on offspring well-being during the transition to adulthood.


Mindy Scott
mscott@childtrends.org
202-572-6124

Relevant paper(s) and link on Child Trends site if applicable.

www.childtrends.org
Twitter/childtrends
www.facebook.com/childtrends