

Nonresident Fathers

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Prior Research

- **Focus on nonresident father involvement during the 1980's: visitation and child support**
- **Assumed positive benefits of father contact and child support for child well-being**
- **Empirical findings were limited and contradictory**

Is visitation or child support associated with better child outcomes?

Data:

**NLSY mother/child data (1988)
over 2000 children had nonresident fathers**

King V. (1994) Nonresident Father Involvement and Child Well-being: Can Dads Make a Difference? *Journal of Family Issues* 15, 78-96.

My Findings:

- 1. Visitation not related to any outcomes.**
- 2. Child support positively related to academic outcomes.**

Other Researchers:

- 1. Visitation, by itself, does not appear to be strongly or directly associated with child outcomes.**
- 2. Child support positively associated with some outcomes (e.g., academic outcomes, fewer behavior problems).**

Nonresident Father Involvement and Child Well-Being

Valarie King (PI)

**Funded by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of
Child Health & Human Development (NICHD)
Award # R01 HD043384**

**With core funding to the Population Research Institute,
The Pennsylvania State University (R24 HD41025)**

Co-investigators:

Paul Amato & Alan Booth

... and

many wonderful graduate student collaborators

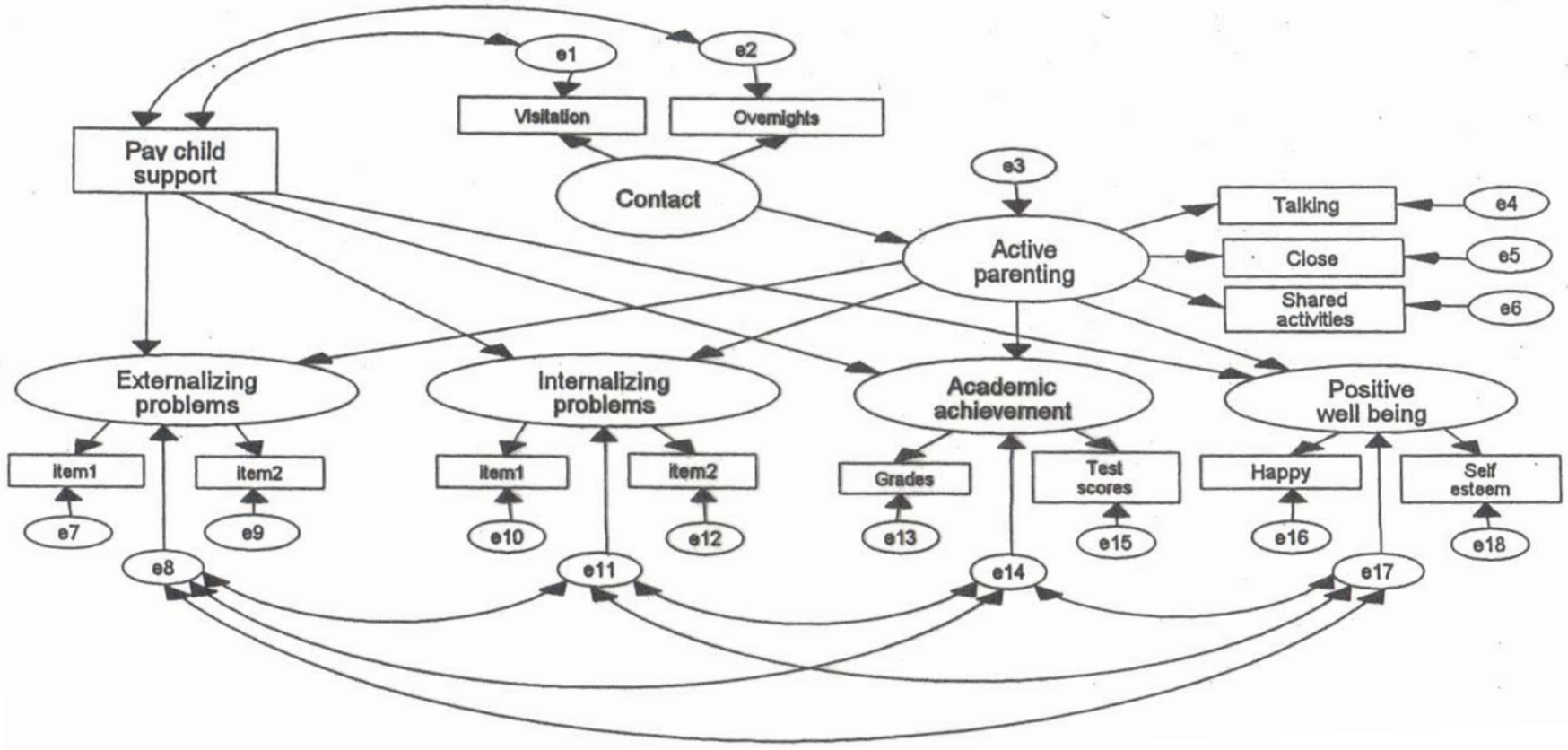
Aims

- 1. To understand how nonresident fathers participate in the lives of children, and how paternal participation varies by characteristics that represent the increasing diversity of families in the U.S.**

Aims

- 2. To assess the importance of nonresident father involvement for child well-being and to determine the contexts in which such involvement is most beneficial to children.**

Conceptual Model



Data

1. National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health)

Nationally representative sample of adolescents

Wave 1 (1994-95) students in grades 7-12 (n = 20,745)

Wave 2 (1996)

Wave 3 (2001-02)

(Wave 4 in 2007-08 now available)

Data

2. National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH)

Nationally representative sample of adults

Wave 1 (1987-88) n = 13,007

Wave 2 (1992-94) includes focal child interviews

(Wave 3 in 2001-03 also available)

Data

3. National Longitudinal Study of Youth (NLSY - mother/child)

**Nationally representative sample of men and
women 14-21 in 1979 (n = 12,686)**

1979-1994 interviewed annually, then every 2 years since

**Children of NLSY - born to the female NLSY respondents
Assessed every 2 years since 1986**

Findings for Aim 1: Patterns of nonresident father involvement

- Substantial variation in nonresident father involvement**
- Variation by race/ethnicity, social class, father's religiousness, pre-divorce circumstances, parents new marriages and new children, and the ability of parents to cooperatively co-parent after separation**
- Little variation by child's gender**
- Little variation by presence of a stepfather**

Closeness to mothers, nonresident fathers, and stepfathers

1 = not at all close

2 = not very close

3 = somewhat close

4 = quite close

5 = extremely close

= not close

= close

Adolescents' Closeness to Mothers, Stepfathers, and Nonresident Biological Fathers

	Mothers	Stepfathers	Nonresident Fathers
Mean level of closeness ^a (<i>SD</i>)	4.60 (.70)	3.65 (1.16)	2.99 (1.47)
% Close ^b	91	60	41
% Not at all close ^c	0.1	6	25

Note: All values are weighted. $N = 1149$.

^aRange from 1 to 5; all means differ from one another at $p < .001$. ^bScores of 4 (*quite close*) or 5 (*extremely close*). ^cScores of 1 (*not at all close*).

King, V. (2006) The Antecedents and Consequences of Adolescents' Relationships With Stepfathers and Nonresident Fathers. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68, 910-928.

Percentage of Adolescents Close to Stepfathers and Nonresident Biological Fathers

Close to both fathers	25
Close to neither father	24
Close only to stepfather	35
Close only to nonresident father	16

Note: All values are weighted. $N = 1149$.

Variation in nonresident father contact with children over time

- **The literature on nonresident fathers has led to the impression that a gradual decline in the frequency of contact is the typical trajectory after separation.**

Variation in nonresident father contact with children over time

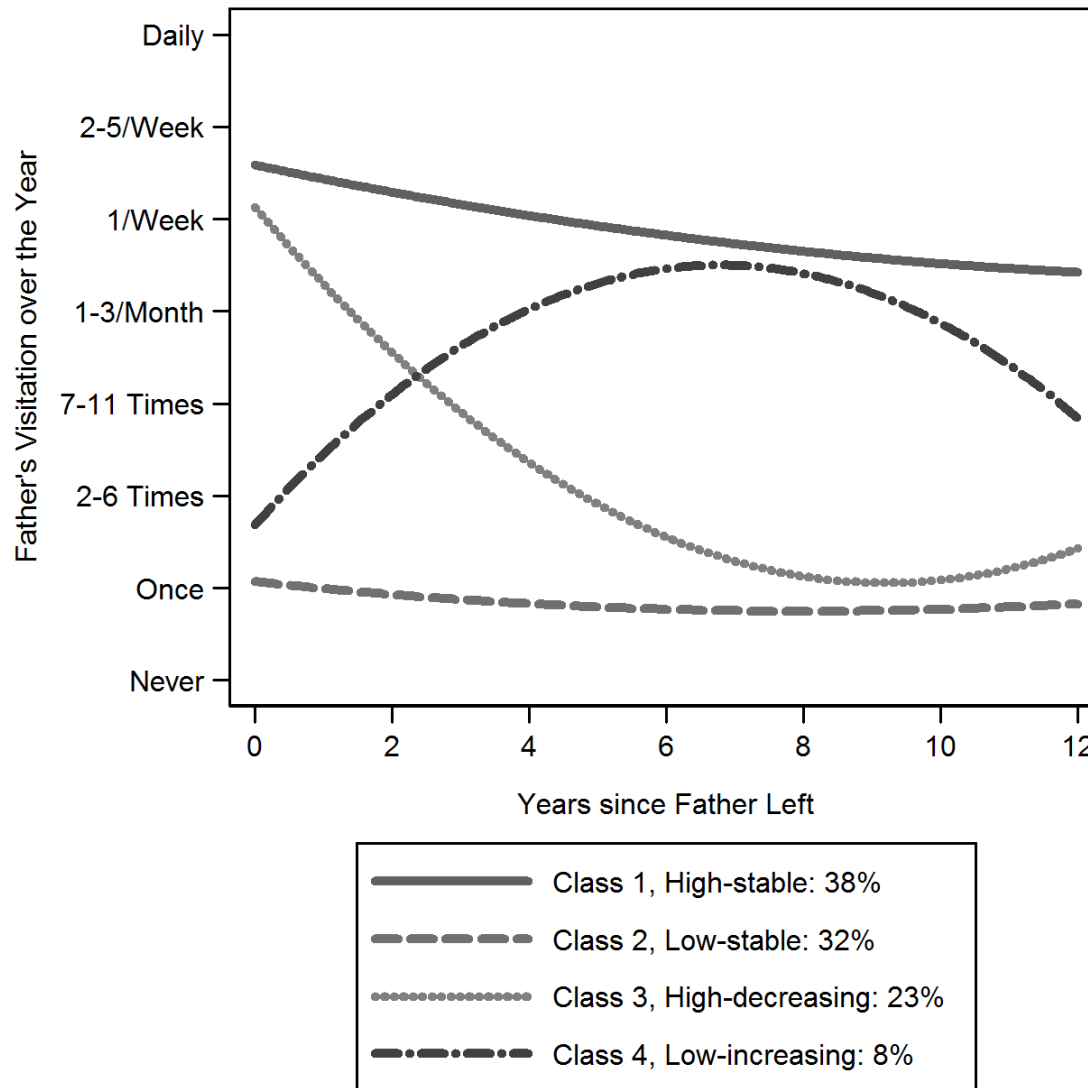
Data: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 cohort (NLSY79) from 1979-2002 and the Children of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (CNLSY) from 1986 to 2002.

Father visitation trajectories over a 14 year period.

Growth Mixture Models.

Cheadle, J.E., Amato, P.R., & King, V. (2010). Patterns of Nonresident Father Contact. *Demography*, 47, 205-225.

Patterns of father contact from the 4-category/class model with population estimates of the proportion of fathers in each category/class



Findings for Aim 2: Assess the importance of nonresident father involvement for child well-being

- **Some evidence that nonresident father involvement is associated with better child outcomes, especially for those dimensions of father involvement that indicate close, high quality relationships or responsive, authoritative parenting.**
- **The benefits of nonresident father involvement for child well-being have been similar for different groups of children, such as boys and girls, children born within and outside of marriage, and children from low and high SES backgrounds.**

But, some qualifiers and caveats:

- The effects of nonresident father involvement on child outcomes tend to be modest and are not found for all outcomes.**

Some qualifiers and caveats (continued):

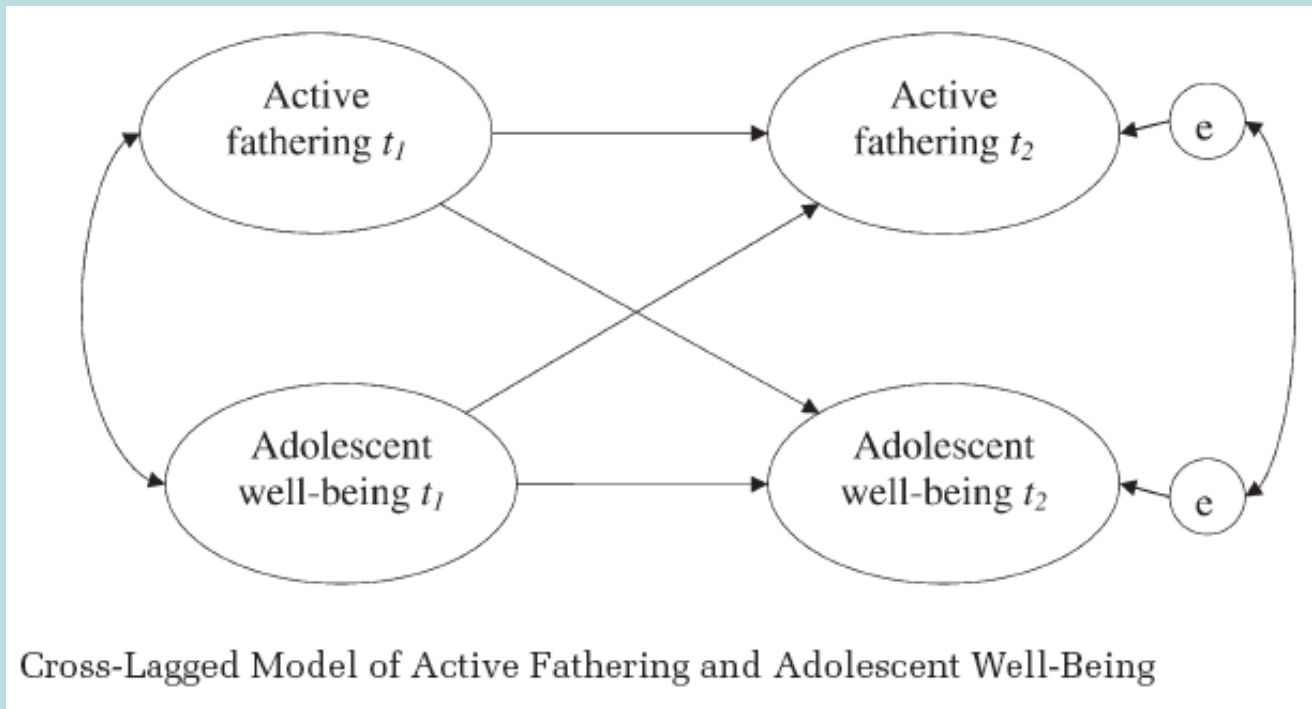
- The quality of the mother-child relationship often has stronger, more consistent effects on child well-being than does the nonresident father-child relationship.**

Some qualifiers and caveats (continued):

- For children who also have a stepfather, we have found that stepfather involvement has a stronger association with positive child outcomes than nonresident father involvement.**

A final caveat:

- Child effects may be driving some or much of our results.**



Hawkins, D.N., Amato, P.R. & King, V. (2007) Nonresident Father Involvement and Adolescent Well-Being: Father Effects of Child Effects? *American Sociological Review*, 72, 990-1010.

Cross-Lagged Associations between Active Fathering and Adolescent Well-Being in Waves 1 and 2: Nonresident Biological Fathers

	Externalizing Problems			Internalizing Problems			Academic Achievement		
	b	(SE)	beta	b	(SE)	beta	b	(SE)	beta
Active fathering $t_1 \rightarrow$ Active fathering t_2	.76***	(.02)	.80	.75***	(.02)	.79	.76***	(.02)	.80
Well-being $t_1 \rightarrow$ Well-being t_2	.52***	(.04)	.64	.73***	(.03)	.73	.77***	(.02)	.79
Active fathering $t_1 \rightarrow$ Well-being t_2	.00	(.01)	.00	.00	(.01)	.00	.00	(.02)	.01
Well-being $t_1 \rightarrow$ Active fathering t_2	-.24*	(.11)	-.05	-.17 ^a	(.10)	-.06	.08*	(.03)	.05
χ^2 (df)	1,512.13 (239)			1,108.42 (239)			1,025.51 (300)		
CFI	.91			.93			.94		
RMSEA	.04			.03			.03		

Notes: N = 3,394. All models control for variables shown in Table 2.

* $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$; ^a $p = .09$ (two-tailed).

Hawkins, D.N., Amato, P.R. & King, V. (2007) Nonresident Father Involvement and Adolescent Well-Being: Father Effects of Child Effects? *American Sociological Review*, 72, 990-1010.

Keep in mind ...

It is likely that children value having close ties to nonresident fathers, even if these ties do not always directly translate into high scores on scales of well-being.

Thank you!