

**“Nonresident Fathers’ Involvement after a Nonmarital Birth:
Exploring Differences by Race/Ethnicity”**

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Abstract

Despite the higher prevalence of nonmarital childbearing among racial/ethnic minorities, there is limited evidence about differences in unmarried father involvement across race/ethnic groups. Using data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study ($N=2,534$), we evaluate racial/ethnic variation in father involvement after a nonmarital birth for nonresident fathers. Since nonresident father involvement typically requires coordinating with the mother, we evaluated involvement measures related to the father-child relationship (time and engagement) as well as measures related to the mother-father relationship vis-à-vis their common child (sharing responsibilities and coparenting). Black fathers were significantly more likely to spend time and engage in activities with their children as compared to Hispanic fathers—but not White fathers. With regard to the mother-father parenting interaction, Black fathers exhibited significantly higher levels of shared responsibility and positive coparenting with mothers than either White or Hispanic fathers. The low level of involvement among Hispanic fathers is notable, and future research should address possible reasons for this outcome.

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Introduction

In recent decades, the proportion of U.S. births that occur outside of marriage has risen dramatically. In 2011, fully 41 percent of all births in the U.S. were nonmarital, with much higher fractions among some minority groups—72 percent for African Americans and 54 percent for Hispanics (Martin et al. 2013). Although many of these births occur within a committed relationship, unmarried couples are likely to break up within only a few years after a baby's birth; by age 5, nearly two-thirds of children born to unmarried parents will be living away from their biological father (McLanahan 2011). Given the deleterious outcomes associated with father absence (McLanahan and Sandefur 1994), researchers have become increasingly interested in studying factors that will encourage father involvement among these vulnerable populations.

Although union instability is increasing for all groups, there are important race/ethnic differences in patterns of family formation and parental involvement. African Americans are less likely than other racial groups to maintain stable cohabiting unions, especially compared to Whites (Furstenberg et al. 1983, Osborne, Manning and Smock 2007). Yet, there is some evidence that once nonresident, Black fathers are more likely to remain involved with children (Edin, Tach and Mincy 2009). Much less is known about other minority groups, including Hispanics (Landale and Oropesa 2001). Given the high prevalence of minority children who will live away from their fathers, it is important to understand differences in father involvement across racial/ethnic groups and factors that may enhance (or diminish) father-child ties.

In this paper, we address the following two research questions about race/ethnic differences in father involvement among men living away from their child(ren) after a

nonmarital birth: 1) Does the level of nonresident father involvement (across multiple survey waves) differ by race/ethnicity? 2) To the extent that race/ethnic differences are observed, what individual and dyadic characteristics can account for such? We extend previous research by using a national, longitudinal sample of unmarried fathers, often under-represented in previous studies of (particularly nonresident) fathers (Hofferth, Forry and Peters 2010); we focus on a recent birth cohort of young children from birth to 9 years, and we examine multiple dimensions of father involvement. Previous studies have often used frequency of contact as a marker of father involvement, which provides at best a limited view of fathering (Amato and Gilbreth 1999). Our study provides new information about patterns of paternal involvement by race/ethnicity by examining both father-child interaction and mother-father interaction vis-à-vis their common child (sometimes referred to as coparenting)—an important topic given the potentially positive role that fathers can play in children’s lives.

Theoretical Perspectives and Empirical Research

Theoretical Perspectives

We draw on several theoretical perspectives that highlight the experiences of African American, Hispanic and White males that may affect their interaction with children and their cooperation and coordination with mothers—two key aspects of paternal involvement by nonresident fathers after a nonmarital birth.

Economic perspective. The first theoretical perspective focuses on race/ethnic differences in economic status and opportunities. As of 2012, Blacks and Hispanics had poverty rates of 27.2 and 25.6 percent, respectively, and non-Hispanic Whites had a poverty rate of 9.7 percent (DeNavos-Walt, Proctor and Smith 2013). Economic factors can affect both how the father relates to the child and how he relates to or is perceived by the mother. The socioeconomic

challenges that face (poor) African American men in American society have been well-documented (Mincy 2006, Wilson 1987, 2003). African American men face a particularly hostile job market and diminished economic opportunities compared to all other groups, including African American women. This is because of low average levels of education (U.S. Census Bureau 2010), a lack of access to jobs (Wilson 2003), a high prevalence of incarceration (Pettit and Western 2004, Sum et al. 2009), and discrimination due to both race and incarceration history (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004, Pager 2003). Hispanics are similarly less educated and more likely to be unemployed than non-Hispanic Whites (Ramirez, 2000).

Employment and economic stability have been identified as key predictors of father involvement, because ‘breadwinning’ remains an important aspect of the father role (Christiansen and Palkovitz 2001). Fathers who have high levels of education (and likely earnings) are more likely to maintain close ties with their children after union dissolution (Seltzer and Bianchi 1988). The transaction costs of participating in childrearing increase when a parent does not live with their child (Weiss and Willis 1985), and nonresident fathers with greater economic resources and stability are better able to defray the costs associated with visitation and participation in childrearing. From another perspective, fathers who lack stable economic resources may feel inadequate in their ability to financially support their children, which may lead to withdrawal from the paternal role (Doherty, Kouneski and Erickson 1998, Harris and Marmer 1996). With regard to coparenting, mothers also may be less willing to encourage involvement if the father does not support their child financially (Edin and Lein 1997). Therefore, racial/ethnic differences in nonresident father involvement may be a reflection of the socioeconomic differences that persist between groups. Given that White fathers tend to have

greater access to economic stability, we might expect them to be more formally/financially involved in fathering than Black and Hispanic fathers.

Cultural perspective. Differences in paternal involvement across race/ethnic groups may also arise from differences in attitudes, values and social mores that affect how fathers relate to children and coparent with mothers. Although African Americans and Whites tend to share generally similar views of marriage and family formation (Edin and Kefalas 2005, Harknett and McLanahan 2004), Blacks are much more accepting of out-of-wedlock childbearing than Whites (Carter 1993). In fact, a recent study finds that in the Black community, childbearing outside of marriage is neither discouraged nor stigmatized (Cherlin et al. 2008). Thus, there are few barriers to forming families outside of marriage, which is underscored by the lower socioeconomic status of this group—and hence the lower opportunity cost of nonmarital childbearing (Willis 1999).

More generally, the family roles of African American men may be less circumscribed by the ‘package deal’ that typically links the partner and paternal roles of White (and especially higher-SES) men (Furstenberg and Cherlin 1991, Tach, Mincy and Edin 2010, Townsend 2002). This may be in part because unlike most White families, African Americans view childrearing as a responsibility that goes beyond the parents of children to extended kin (grandmothers, aunts, etc.) (Stack 1974). These kin networks are particularly important for emotional and financial support, and African Americans rely more on kin networks—and have more women-centered kin networks—than Whites. For example, more than half of African American grandparents report providing for the basic needs of their grandchildren, and African Americans make up a disproportionate percentage of grandparent-headed households (Minkler and Thompson 2005). Black fathers may also view financial provision as a less important aspect of fathering in comparison to spending time with children or providing emotional support; Mincy and

Nepomnyaschy (2005) found that White fathers complied with child support orders more often than Black fathers, even after controlling for fathers' ability to pay.

Similar to African American families, Latino families have a longstanding tradition of strong family ties that emphasize familism and interdependence over individualism (Baca Zinn and Pok 2002). Family represents the most important aspect of life for many Latinos, especially those of Mexican descent, and familial solidarity and kinship are highly valued (Clutter and Zubieta, 2009). In general, Latino fathers have been found to be highly involved with their children and to share childrearing responsibilities with their partners at least as often as White fathers (Coltrane, Parke and Adams 2004, Hofferth 2003). Extended and fictive kin (i.e., kin by choice rather than blood) networks are often used to supplement limited economic resources, as well as contribute social and emotional support to nuclear families (Jelm, 2010). Although the notion of the *machismo* (exaggerated male dominance) has been widely used in American society to describe Latino fathers (Quintero and Estrada 1998), research has increasingly shown that this stereotype is an inaccurate depiction.

Taken together, the economic and cultural perspectives suggest that African American nonresident fathers may be more involved with children and as coparents with mothers than White or Hispanic fathers. Furthermore, since there is such a high prevalence of union dissolution after a nonmarital birth for African American fathers, they may have developed more effective ways of parenting apart than other groups; from the outset, partners may be less inclined to believe that their union will be long term and therefore, routines related to coparenting and father-child involvement may be easier to establish. Conversely, since Whites and Hispanics break up less frequently and go on to marry more often after nonmarital births (Harknett and McLanahan, 2004), breaking up may be more jarring to the relationship and to the

paternal involvement that previously occurred within the ‘package deal’ of partner and parent relationships (Furstenberg and Cherlin 1991, Townsend 2002).

Empirical Research

Whereas racial differences in the prevalence of nonmarital childbearing are well-known (Martin et al. 2013, Mincy and Oliver 2003), research on potential differences in fathers’ *involvement* by race/ethnicity has been more limited, particularly concerning involvement measures beyond the frequency of father-child contact. Given the economic and cultural differences found between Black, White and Hispanic men, we might expect differences in the level and nature of their involvement with children.

Nonresident father involvement. Early studies of nonresident fathers initially focused on divorced fathers (who had been resident at one time) or a mixture of both divorced and never-married fathers. More recent analyses have focused on unmarried, nonresident fathers, as this population continues to grow, but most of these studies focus only on the frequency of father-child contact or analyze only select groups of fathers. Although limited, studies on racial/ethnic differences in nonresident father involvement have—taken together—yielded mixed findings.

Some studies identify nonresident minority fathers as *less* engaged or similarly engaged in childrearing as White fathers. For example, King et al. (2004) examined race/ethnic differences in nonresident father involvement (including both divorced and never-married fathers) using adolescent reports. They found that White adolescents had significantly more contact with their nonresident fathers than both Black and Hispanic adolescents. An earlier study by Seltzer and Bianchi (1988) also showed some evidence that Hispanic fathers had less contact with their children than White fathers.

More recent studies focused on unmarried fathers in particular have shown that many Black fathers remain highly involved after a nonmarital birth (Cabrera et al. 2008, Edin, Tach and Mincy 2009, Mincy and Pouncy 2007). Although father involvement after a nonmarital birth declines for all race/ethnic groups over time, Black fathers experience the least drastic decline in involvement as compared to White and Hispanic fathers (Edin, Tach and Mincy 2009, Tach, Mincy and Edin 2010). Even in the case of incarceration, minority fathers maintained contact with their children more often than White fathers (Swisher and Waller 2008). Taken as a whole, studies increasingly suggest that minority fathers are more likely to maintain parent-child ties outside of a committed, residential relationship with the child's mother compared to White fathers. Yet, these studies have not considered a wider range of involvement measures that reflect contemporary fathering and/or are limited to small, non-representative samples.

Multiple factors may help explain the variation in findings between early versus more recent studies. Many past studies focused only on the frequency of fathers' contact with children (visitation, calls, and/or letters) and/or financial support. In order to effectively identify differences in fathers' involvement by race/ethnicity, it is important to consider multiple measures of involvement. Also, many previous studies examined never-married and/or divorced nonresident fathers. We would expect different involvement patterns for these two groups, given that divorced fathers typically spent a longer period of time living with the child before the union dissolved than never married fathers. Also, who reports about fathers' involvement affects the conclusions (Coley and Morris 2002); some studies have used mothers' reports, others have examined adolescents' reports, and still others have analyzed fathers' reports. The present work will add to the limited literature on unmarried, nonresident fathers, a growing and increasingly important group, by using a nationally-representative sample of fathers who experience a

nonmarital birth and are nonresident from that child, by considering multiple measures of father involvement, and by estimating multivariate models to control for key factors that distinguish fathers by race/ethnicity.

Coparenting with mothers. As previously mentioned, an important aspect of father involvement is the extent to which nonresident fathers can cooperate with mothers in rearing their common child, sometimes referred to as coparenting (McHale 1995). In order for effective parenting to take place, parents must be willing to work in concert on behalf of the child, communicate well, and share parental responsibilities. Research has found in fact that coparenting directly impacts father involvement (Carlson, McLanahan and Brooke-Gunn 2008). Although little research has addressed racial differences in coparenting after a nonmarital for nonresident fathers, some racial ethnic differences have been identified. Carlson and Högnäs (2009) found that Black mothers reported more positive coparenting with nonresident fathers than White or Hispanic mothers; this is likely because nonmarital childbearing—and subsequent union instability—are more common among African Americans, so childrearing across households is more normative (Mincy and Pouncy 2007). Therefore, for our purposes we can expect to find that Black fathers may be more likely to effectively coparent and share responsibilities with mothers than men in other race/ethnic groups. The present study extends previous research by examining several measures of coparenting among nonresident fathers.

Data

We used data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, a nationally-representative birth-cohort study of 4,897 children born in large (populations over 200,000) U.S. cities between 1998 and 2000. The study is based on a stratified, multi-stage probability sample with an oversample of children born to unmarried parents (3,710 unmarried, 1,187 married)

(Reichman et al. 2001). Baseline interviews with mothers and fathers were conducted shortly after their child's birth. Mothers were interviewed in person in the hospital within 48 hours, and fathers were interviewed either in the hospital or elsewhere. Follow-up interviews with both parents were conducted when the child was about 1, 3, 5, and 9 years old. Response rates for the baseline survey among eligible parents were 87% for unmarried mothers, 82% for married mothers, 75% for unmarried fathers, and 89% for married fathers. The 1-year, 3-year, 5-year, and 9-year follow-up interviews were completed with 90%, 88%, 87%, and 76% of eligible mothers, respectively, and 74%, 72%, 70%, and 59% of eligible fathers, respectively, where eligibility was based on mothers having completed a baseline interview. Our analyses used information from all survey waves to focus on fathering behaviors in early and middle childhood.

Sample

To maximize the number of observations, we used mothers' reports of father involvement. Therefore, we were not limited to cases where the father was interviewed. Our results are substantively similar when using father-reported measures (results not shown, summarized in Discussion). The full sample of unmarried births (and mothers) was 3,710. Observations were excluded when the mother reports that the father was unknown ($n=26$) or the father lived with the child at all waves ($n=880$). We also excluded cases where the child did not live full-time with his/her mother or where information was missing about the fathers' residence ($n=270$). Our final analytic sample included 2,534 cases. We used multiple imputation (Royston 2004) to impute missing covariates (excluding race and the father involvement measures); the imputation model included variables related to our independent variables of interest, our dependent variables, and the likelihood of being missing (Allison, 2002).

Variables

Fathers' Involvement. We used five measures of father involvement from the one-, three- five-, and nine-year surveys that reflect four aspects of father involvement (time, engagement, shared responsibility, and coparenting). As noted above, we used mothers' reports of fathers' involvement. Our first measure is the number of days the (nonresident) father saw the child in the past month, ranging from 0 to 30; we assigned to zero days the cases where the father did not see the child in the past month. Our second measure is how often fathers spent one or more hours with the child in the past month; responses ranged from 1 = *never* to 5 = *every day*. The third measure (reported if the father saw the child more than once in the past month) reflects how often the father engaged in activities with the child in the past week; our measure indicates the mean number of days in the past week (0 to 7) that the father engaged in four activities with the child—singing, reading stories, telling stories, and playing with toys ($\alpha = .83$ at one year, .88 at three years, .89 at five years)¹; we assigned to 0 days the cases where the father had not seen the child more than once in the past month (and hence had no report of engagement). The fourth measure is how often fathers shared responsibilities with mothers as identified by three activities—looking after the child, running errands for mother, and taking the child places such as to daycare or the doctor ($\alpha = .90$ at one year, .91 at three, five, and nine years); responses ranged from 1 = *never* to 4 = *often*. The fifth measure representing coparenting was constructed from mothers' responses to six items including—“when father is with child he acts like the father you want for the child,” “you can trusts the father to take good care of the child,” “father respects

¹ At the nine-year interview, measurement of engagement changed to reflect activities in the past month, rather than the past week as in previous waves. In order to maintain continuity, we decided against using engagement from this interview.

rules you make for the child,” “father supports the way you raise the child,” “you and father talk about the problems that come up with raising the child,” “and you can count on father” ($\alpha = .86$ at one years, .90 at three years, .88 at five years, and .89 at nine years) responses ranged from 1 = *never* to 3 = *always*.

Covariates. We included a range of covariates to investigate the various factors that may account for differences by race/ethnicity in fathers’ involvement. These variables reflected fathers’ baseline demographic characteristics, health and human capital, socio-behavioral characteristics, as well as several child characteristics all variables are reported by the father at the time of the baby’s birth unless otherwise noted. Fathers’ race/ethnicity is specified as non-Hispanic Black (reference), non-Hispanic White, Hispanic, and Other. Fathers’ age at the time of birth is measured in years. Family background is represented by a dichotomy for whether or not the father lived with both parents at age 15. Physical health status is reported in categories from 1 = *poor* to 5 = *excellent*. Fathers’ education is specified as less than high school (reference), high school diploma, and some college, and college or above. Given the high correlation in mother and father education, we also included a dichotomous variable for whether the father had more education than the mother. Fathers’ employment status was measured by the total number of hours he usually works in all jobs in any given week (0 to 80 hours).

We included a measure of fathers’ attitudes toward fathering based on three items, with responses ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 4 = *strongly agree*: 1) “Being a father and raising children is one of the most fulfilling experiences a man can have,” 2) “I want people to know that I have a new child,” and 3) “Not being a part of my child’s life would be one of the worst things that could happen to me” ($\alpha = .72$). Traditional gender role attitudes were also included based on two items; responses ranged from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 4 = *strongly agree*:

1) “Important decisions in the family should be done by the man,” and “It is better if the husband earns the main living and the woman cares for family” ($\alpha = .47$).

How often fathers attended religious services was measured, ranging from 1 = *never* to 5 = *once a week or more*. Fathers’ incarceration history is indicated by whether the father has ever been in jail or prison by year 1 (based on both mothers’ and fathers’ reports). The Dickman scale of dysfunctional impulsivity measures impulsivity by a summation of five questions on a Likert scale, reverse-coded when necessary, including 1 = *strongly disagree* to 4 = *strongly agree*: “often, I don’t spend enough time thinking over a situation before I act;” “I often say and do things without considering the consequences;” “I often get into trouble because I don’t think before I act;” “many times, the plans I make don’t work out because I haven’t gone over them carefully enough in advance;” “and I often make up my mind without taking the time to consider the situation from all angles” ($\alpha = .80$). A substance abuse dummy was created from mothers’ response to the question, “Does (baby’s father) have problems such as keeping a job or getting along with family and friends because of alcohol or drug use?” Physical partner violence toward the mother is represented by whether the mother reported at the one-year survey that she was ever “seriously hurt” by the father at some point before the baby’s birth. Mother’s report of supportiveness in the couple relationship at the time of birth was measured by four items assessing how often baby’s father were “fair and willing to compromise,” “expressed affection or love to you,” “criticized you or your ideas (coding reversed),” and “encourage you do things that were important to you.” Responses ranged from 1 = *never* to 3 = *often* ($\alpha = .84$).

A series of dummies denote the mother’s and father’s relationship status at baseline (mothers’ report): friends or no relationship (reference) or visiting (romantically involved but living apart). We include a continuous variable for the number of biological children the focal

parents have together. We included whether or not fathers had a child or children by another woman. We note whether the mother has a new partner (social father to the child) at each interview, this measure captures mothers' resident and non-resident romantic relationships with a new partner. We also include relationship quality based on mother's report of relationship with the father, responses ranged from (1 = *excellent* to 5 = *poor*). A measure from each wave is also included on the number of months that has passed since the end of the parents' relationship. Finally, we include a dummy variable indicating whether or not the child is a boy.

Method

In our primary analysis, we pooled data from the one-, three-, five-, and nine- year surveys. First, we estimated random effects models to examine how nonresidential father involvement with respect to time, engagement, shared responsibility, and coparenting with mothers was differentiated by race and ethnicity. In the random effects models, we made use of the longitudinal data to capture variation both between fathers and among the same fathers over time. Model 1 served as a baseline estimate of differences in paternal involvement by race and ethnicity. In Model 2, we included all characteristics to examine whether any racial and ethnic differences were robust to these associated characteristics.²

Table 1 provides descriptive information about our primary analytic sample of nonresident fathers subsequent to a nonmarital birth ($N = 2,534$). The average unmarried father was in his mid-20s when his baby was born and is of minority race/ethnicity: 66% of fathers were non-Hispanic Black, and 21% were Hispanic. Thirty-four percent of fathers reported that they lived with both parents at age 15. Fully 79% had a high school diploma or less, and about

² Note that we had originally added categories of covariates sequentially to observe change in the race/ethnic coefficients; since little change is observed, for parsimony, we show here only the bivariate and the full models.

three-fourths reported being employed in the past week. Only 25% of fathers were more educated than the mother. Most fathers held positive attitudes toward being a father and attended church infrequently. Most fathers were in good health, did not report a substance problem, and were not physically violent. Yet, 48% of fathers had been previously in jail/prison. Most parents were not romantically involved at the time of the birth. On average, fathers had about 1.40 children with the biological mother of the focal child, and 50% had at least one child by another mother. Slightly more than half of the focal children were boys.

Results

Descriptive Results. Table 2 shows the levels of nonresident father involvement, at one-, three-, five-, and nine- years after a nonmarital birth by race/ethnicity; of all fathers who had an unmarried birth, 54% were nonresident at 1 year and 70% by 9 years. There is notable racial variation in involvement at the one-year interview. Black and Hispanic fathers spent more days per month (mean of 12.60 and 10.30 days, respectively) with their children than White fathers (6.68 days). Over time, however, the gaps in the number of days seeing the child between Black and White fathers declined and then reversed; by nine years, White nonresident fathers saw their children more days per month (7.15 days) than either Black (5.93 days) or Hispanic (2.67 days) fathers. These patterns over time reflect changes among the same fathers, as well as changes in the sample composition as an increasing number of couples break up, and new (previously coresident) fathers enter the sample. In results not shown, we find that among the smaller subsample of consistently-nonresident fathers, across all waves, Black fathers see their children more days than either White or Hispanic fathers. A similar pattern is observed for the second measure of fathers' time with children—spending one or more hours with the child. In terms of

engagement in father-child activities, the differences by race are smaller; Hispanic fathers display consistently lower levels of engagement than either White or Black fathers.

With respect to mother-father parenting activities, across the first three interviews, Black nonresident fathers shared childcare responsibilities with the mother more frequently than White and Hispanic fathers. By nine years, White fathers shared activities slightly more frequently than either Black or Hispanic fathers—again likely due to the changing sample composition, since this pattern is not observed among the subset of consistently-nonresident fathers. Coparenting is the one measure where there is no crossover by race over time – Black fathers exhibited higher levels of positive coparenting with the mother than all other race/ethnic groups across all waves.

Multivariate Results. Next, we turn to our random effects models to examine whether nonresidential father involvement was differentiated by race and ethnicity, net of various control variables (Tables 3 and 4). We discuss our results first by describing racial and ethnic differences in father-child interaction and next in mother-father interaction vis-à-vis their common child. Our bivariate results (Model 1) suggest that Hispanic fathers spent significantly fewer (-1.750) days with their child in a month than Black fathers; this translates to about 21 fewer days with their child in a year. The significant difference between Hispanic and Black fathers persists, regardless of which controls we include, becoming slightly larger (-1.980) when all covariates are included (Model 2). There are no statistically significant differences between Black and White fathers in the number of days the father saw the child in the past month regardless of the inclusion of covariates.

The results follow the same general pattern for hours spent in the past month with the child. In our baseline estimate (Model 1), Hispanic nonresident fathers spent a statistically significant (-.231) fewer hours with their children in the past month in comparison to African-

American fathers. Again, this difference persists regardless of covariates and becomes slightly larger (-.279) in the full model. Again, there are no significant differences between Black and White fathers in their frequency of spending one or more hours with the child.

With respect to engagement in father-child activities, again Hispanic nonresident fathers were significantly less likely to participate in activities with their children. In our baseline estimate, Hispanic fathers were (-.246) units less engaged in activities with their children in comparison to African-American fathers, rising slightly (to -.255) when all covariates were included. Yet again, no significant differences in engagement were observed between Black and White fathers.

Next, we examine racial and ethnic differences in the mother-father interaction vis-à-vis their common child, following the same analytic strategy (Table 4). Shared responsibility with the mothers was significantly lower for both White and Hispanic fathers as compared to Black fathers. The difference becomes slightly smaller for Whites—but not Hispanics—when all covariates are included. A similar pattern of racial variation holds for the measure of coparenting. In the baseline estimate, both White and Hispanic fathers were shown to engage in significantly less positive coparenting than Black fathers (-.194 and -.087 units, respectively). These significant differences between the racial/groups persist after accounting for all associated covariates. Overall, these results suggest that net of various confounding factors, Black fathers appear to coordinate parenting activities more effectively with mothers than do White or Hispanic fathers (based on mothers' reports).

Discussion

In this research, we examined racial/ethnic differences in paternal involvement among nonresident fathers following a nonmarital birth. We evaluated four aspects of father's

involvement—time spent with children, engagement in developmental activities, shared responsibility, and coparenting with mothers—using the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study across four survey waves over years 1, 3, 5, and 9 subsequent to a child’s birth. Because of the rapid increase in nonmarital childbearing in recent decades (Martin et al. 2013), along with the positive association between paternal involvement and the wellbeing of children (Amato and Gilbreth 1999, Amato and Rivera 1999), it is important to understand the nature of fathers’ involvement with children and in coordinating with mothers following relationship dissolution. Given the notable differences in the prevalence of nonmarital births—as well as socioeconomic and cultural characteristics—across racial/ethnic groups, we might also expect differences in fathers’ involvement. We examined paternal involvement for Black, White and Hispanic fathers and evaluated the extent to which a host of individual-level and dyadic characteristics can account for possible differences observed.

Across our four domains of paternal involvement, Hispanic fathers were particularly notable. Our results indicated that even after adjusting for observed associated characteristics, Hispanic fathers were less likely to spend time with children, engage in developmental activities, and to participate in shared responsibility and coparenting with mothers in comparison to African-American fathers. These results both confirm and contradict comparable studies which suggest that Hispanics displayed the lowest levels of contact with children in comparison to other ethnic groups, but were no different in the frequency of activities they engaged in with children (King, Harris, and Heard 2004). Given that nonmarital childbearing is most prevalent among African-Americans, we might expect that nonresidential parenting behaviors are better institutionalized for this group. Because of this, there are established norms and expectations about the responsibilities of nonresidential fathers that may be absent among Hispanics, hence

the decreased likelihood of paternal involvement.

Relatedly, we find no Black-White difference in time spent with children and engagement in activities, but White fathers were less likely to share responsibility and coparent with mothers than Blacks. Following relationship dissolution, White fathers may continue to maintain their relationship with their children, but minimize interaction with mothers. The family roles of African American men look to be less subject to what is often called the ‘package deal’ that typically links the partner and paternal roles of White (and especially higher-SES) men (Furstenberg and Cherlin 1991, Tach, Mincy and Edin 2010, Townsend 2002). This may be in part because unlike most White families, African Americans view childrearing as a responsibility that goes beyond the relationship they have with the mother. Also, since Blacks may be less able to economically contribute to the family, they may compensate by engaging in other parenting activities.

We also examined whether racial and ethnic variation in paternal involvement is a function of differences in demographic, social/psychological, prior relationship status, and socioeconomic characteristics in our multivariate models. We found that these factors do not attenuate the statistically significant association for Hispanics on the various aspects of father involvement. In fact, the magnitude of the coefficient generally increased, suggesting an even stronger association after we accounted for observed characteristics. However, associated factors did partially account for racial variation in paternal involvement for Whites fathers, largely a function of relationship quality characteristics. This may be a function of the previously mentioned ‘package deal’ that can be particularly important for this group. Furthermore, we did not find that socioeconomic factors explain race and ethnic differences in paternal involvement. These results were surprising, given that various studies have shown education and economic

status are important factors in accounting for racial differences in father involvement (King, Harris, and Heard 2004). It is important to note, however, that nonresident fathers after a nonmarital birth are a rather disadvantaged group; therefore, there is little heterogeneity in socioeconomic status within the Fragile Families sample.

A main strength of the present work was to explore a wider range of involvement variables than is commonly found in prior research. We examined four key dimensions of father involvement that have been identified as important in the literature—time, engagement, (shared) responsibility, and coparenting (Lamb et al. 1985). We recognize, however, that fathers may be involved in other ways that are not measured here. For example, for nonresident fathers, we did not measure any forms of communication from afar such as emails/letters or phone calls; we also did not include child support payments which have been studied in prior research (King, Harris, and Heard 2004; Muthén and Muthén 1998-2012). Our focus here is on the interactive aspects of paternal involvement with children and mothers.

Although our study adds new information about nonresidential father involvement, we must consider several limitations. By using a hospital-based design, the Fragile Families Study was able to attain higher response rates than other studies of fathers, who are typically under-represented in national surveys (Garfinkel, McLanahan and Hanson 1998, Nelson 2004). At the same time, about one-quarter of fathers were not interviewed at baseline, the time when we measured fathers' reports of race/ethnicity and their other characteristics. We attempted to minimize the problem of fathers being lost to attrition by using mothers' reports of fathers' involvement at years 1, 3, 5, and 9. This also provides a safeguard against using the same reporter for both the dependent and independent variables to avoid so-called shared method variance (Marsiglio et al. 2000). Yet, the use of mothers' reports of fathers' involvement

represents our second limitation. We recognize that mothers may have only limited knowledge of the frequency and nature of paternal involvement with children, especially if fathers are nonresident (Coley and Morris 2002, Seltzer and Brandreth 1995).

In an effort to deal with this concern, we conducted supplemental analyses to examine whether our results were similar using fathers' reports, and we were reassured by the similarity of the results. The number of interviewed fathers was much smaller than the number of interviewed mothers, and time and engagement were the only variables available for all dads which could be similarly coded. Although the levels of involvement reported by interviewed fathers are higher than the overall levels reported by mothers, the results about race differences using fathers' reports were nearly identical to those using mothers' reports.

In spite of these limitations, this paper adds to our understanding of how race/ethnicity is related to nonresident paternal involvement. Hispanics fathers are less engaged on every aspect of paternal involvement included in our analysis, while White fathers are less likely to maintain a positive parenting relationship with mothers in comparison to Blacks. These differences remain, even as we account for a robust set of associated characteristics. Our research suggests that following relationship dissolution, Hispanic children's well-being may be unduly compromised by the father's absence from the household. Future research would be well served to examine if these persistent Black-Hispanic differences in paternal involvement continue as children age through the life course.

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Table 1. Descriptive Characteristics of Nonresident Fathers

| | <i>M</i> or % | <i>SD</i> |
|---|---------------|-----------|
| <i>Demographic characteristics</i> | | |
| Race | | |
| White, non-Hispanic | 5.6 | |
| Black, non-Hispanic | 62.8 | |
| Hispanic | 29.9 | |
| Other | 1.8 | |
| Age at baby's birth (range=15-67) | 25.83 | (7.06) |
| Lived with both parents at 15 | 32.7 | |
| Father's self-reported health | 3.81 | (1.06) |
| Father's education | | |
| Less than high school | 35.8 | |
| High school degree | 42.1 | |
| Some college | 19.5 | |
| College or above | 2.6 | |
| Father has more education than mother | 27.3 | |
| Hours worked in a week (range=0-80) | 34.5 | (24.28) |
| <i>Social/psychological characteristics</i> | | |
| Positive fathering attitudes (1-4) | 3.64 | (0.53) |
| Traditional gender attitudes (1-5) | 2.26 | (0.66) |
| Religious attendance (1-5) | 2.53 | (1.29) |
| Ever incarcerated | 41.0 | |
| Impulsivity | 2.1 | (0.78) |
| Substance problem | 7.2 | |
| Physically violent | 5.9 | |
| <i>Relationship Status characteristics</i> | | |
| Supportiveness | 2.50 | (0.45) |
| Relationship status (ref=Friends) | 23.2 | |
| Visiting | 46.3 | |
| Cohabiting | 30.5 | |
| Number of children with biological mother | 1.39 | (0.78) |
| Has child(ren) with another woman | 52.4 | |
| Presence of Social father | 40.8 | |
| Time since end of relationship (months) | 47.1 | (34.11) |
| Relationship quality (range=1-5) | 3.1 | (1.33) |
| <i>Child Characteristic</i> | | |
| Child is a boy | 50.6 | |
| Number of cases (<i>N</i>) | 2,534 | |

All figures are weighted by city sampling weights that adjust for the over-sampling of nonmarital births in the Fragile Families Study.

Table 2. Means on Nonresident Father Involvement by Race/Ethnicity

| | 1-Year | | | | | | | | 3-Year | | | | | | | |
|---|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| | <i>Blacks</i> | | <i>Whites</i> | | <i>Hispanics</i> | | <i>Other</i> | | <i>Blacks</i> | | <i>Whites</i> | | <i>Hispanics</i> | | <i>Other</i> | |
| | <i>M</i> | <i>(SD)</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>(SD)</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>(SD)</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>(SD)</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>(SD)</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>(SD)</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>(SD)</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>(SD)</i> |
| Number of Days Saw Child Past Month (Range=0-30) | 12.60 | (12.84) | 6.68 | (10.46) | 10.30 | (11.60) | 16.52 | (11.92) | 9.14 | (11.80) | 6.51 | (5.73) | 5.72 | (9.33) | 9.56 | (8.28) |
| Spent One or More Hours in Past Month (Range=0-5) | 3.17 | (1.68) | 2.31 | (1.53) | 2.75 | (1.65) | 3.53 | (1.55) | 2.56 | (1.61) | 2.24 | (1.52) | 2.17 | (1.59) | 2.19 | (1.21) |
| Engagement in Activities (Range=0-7) | 2.01 | (2.19) | 1.18 | (2.03) | 1.14 | (1.45) | 2.20 | (1.55) | 1.20 | (1.73) | 0.85 | (1.55) | 0.77 | (1.40) | 0.53 | (1.32) |
| Sharing Responsibilities (Range=1-4) | 2.36 | (1.19) | 1.66 | (0.99) | 2.04 | (1.09) | 2.30 | (1.14) | 1.95 | (1.11) | 1.64 | (0.95) | 1.62 | (0.95) | 1.44 | (0.87) |
| Coparenting (Range=1-3) | 2.46 | (0.56) | 1.92 | (0.75) | 2.27 | (0.61) | 2.60 | (0.45) | 2.21 | (0.67) | 1.95 | (0.73) | 2.02 | (0.68) | 2.05 | (0.46) |
| <i>n</i> | 1,073 | | 637 | | 352 | | 40 | | 1,169 | | 160 | | 363 | | 36 | |

Table 2. Continued

| | 5-Year | | | | | | | | 9-Year | | | | | | | |
|---|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| | <i>Blacks</i> | | <i>Whites</i> | | <i>Hispanics</i> | | <i>Other</i> | | <i>Blacks</i> | | <i>Whites</i> | | <i>Hispanics</i> | | <i>Other</i> | |
| | <i>M</i> | <i>(SD)</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>(SD)</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>(SD)</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>(SD)</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>(SD)</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>(SD)</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>(SD)</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>(SD)</i> |
| Number of Days Saw Child Past Month (Range=0-30) | 7.34 | (10.46) | 7.29 | (9.76) | 4.24 | (8.54) | 5.58 | (7.33) | 5.93 | (9.22) | 7.15 | (9.57) | 2.67 | (5.32) | 5.03 | (7.14) |
| Spent One or More Hours in Past Month (Range=0-5) | 2.35 | (1.54) | 2.40 | (1.41) | 1.89 | (1.30) | 2.50 | (1.46) | 2.03 | (1.37) | 2.27 | (1.47) | 1.59 | (1.06) | 2.14 | (1.30) |
| Engagement in Activities (Range=0-7) | 0.89 | (1.55) | 0.89 | (1.43) | 0.38 | (0.87) | 0.46 | (0.65) | | | | | | | | |
| Sharing Responsibilities (Range=1-4) | 1.81 | (1.06) | 1.60 | (0.93) | 1.48 | (0.83) | 1.50 | (0.83) | 1.04 | (.27) | 1.18 | (0.62) | 1.01 | (0.16) | 1.02 | (0.16) |
| Coparenting (Range=1-3) | 2.21 | (0.62) | 2.08 | (0.73) | 2.15 | (0.69) | 1.86 | (0.52) | 2.23 | (0.63) | 2.04 | (0.65) | 2.07 | (0.65) | 2.02 | (0.58) |
| <i>n</i> | 1,275 | | 172 | | 425 | | 35 | | 1,121 | | 166 | | 354 | | 35 | |

Note: All figures are weighted by city sampling weights, M: mean; SD: standard deviation

Table 3. Random Effects Regression Results among Non-Resident Fathers
Days spent per month **Hours spent per month**

| | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 1 | | Model 2 | |
|---|------------|---------|------------|---------|-----------|--------|-----------|--------|-----------|--------|-----------|--------|
| | β | SE | β | SE | β | SE | β | SE | β | SE | β | SE |
| Race(ref=Black, Non-Hispanic) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| White n-H | -.938 | (.652) | -.871 | (.554) | .006 | (.091) | -.033 | (.079) | -.113 | (.113) | -.096 | (.102) |
| Hispanic | -1.750 *** | (.459) | -1.980 *** | (.398) | -.231 *** | (.064) | -.279 *** | (.056) | -.246 ** | (.077) | -.255 *** | (.072) |
| Other | -1.060 | (1.260) | -.770 | (1.060) | -.109 | (.175) | -.073 | (.148) | -.291 | (.218) | -.215 | (.192) |
| Demographic Characteristics | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Father Age at Birth | | | .036 | (.029) | | | .003 | (.004) | | | .000 | (.005) |
| Father live with Bio Parents age 15 | | | .380 | (.379) | | | .064 | (.049) | | | .026 | (.068) |
| Global Health | | | .014 | (.148) | | | -.004 | (.021) | | | .018 | (.026) |
| Baby is a boy | | | -.167 | (.319) | | | -.050 | (.045) | | | .044 | (.057) |
| Social/Psychological Characteristics | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Religious Attendance | | | -.229 | (.145) | | | -.027 | (.019) | | | -.027 | (.024) |
| Attitudes toward fathering (1-4) | | | .738 * | (.335) | | | .115 * | (.048) | | | .101 + | (.061) |
| Father traditional gender roles | | | .044 | (.272) | | | -.035 | (.039) | | | -.036 | (.049) |
| Dad ever jail (1 yr) | | | -1.773 *** | (.346) | | | -.292 *** | (.050) | | | -.255 *** | (.064) |
| Impulsivity | | | -.035 | (.227) | | | -.006 | (.035) | | | -.009 | (.041) |
| Substance Problem | | | .123 | (.626) | | | .001 | (.089) | | | .026 | (.113) |
| Physical Violence | | | -.885 | (.654) | | | -.152 | (.097) | | | -.090 | (.113) |
| Relationship Status Characteristics | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Supportiveness | | | .441 | (.412) | | | .091 | (.059) | | | .205 ** | (.073) |
| Cohabiting at BL | | | 2.045 *** | (.486) | | | .368 *** | (.070) | | | .196 * | (.087) |
| Visiting at BL | | | 2.384 *** | (.461) | | | .337 *** | (.065) | | | .285 *** | (.081) |
| Bio parity (# kids w/ bio dad) | | | .460 * | (.195) | | | .011 | (.028) | | | .010 | (.035) |
| Mom says dad has kid(s) by someone else | | | -1.585 *** | (.410) | | | -.295 *** | (.059) | | | -.333 *** | (.068) |
| Presence of Social Father | | | -3.829 *** | (.244) | | | -.451 *** | (.035) | | | -.385 *** | (.047) |
| Time since end of Relationship (months) | | | -.051 *** | (.006) | | | -.005 *** | (.000) | | | -.011 *** | (.002) |
| Relationship Quality with father | | | -1.761 *** | (.141) | | | -.252 *** | (.020) | | | -.288 *** | (.025) |
| Socioeconomic Characteristics | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Dad HS degree | | | -.016 | (.391) | | | .003 | (.056) | | | -.066 | (.069) |
| Dad some college | | | -.273 | (.502) | | | .027 | (.072) | | | -.088 | (.090) |
| Dad college or above | | | -.534 | (1.051) | | | -.214 | (.149) | | | -.188 | (.194) |
| Dad more educated | | | .337 | (.409) | | | .029 | (.058) | | | .173 * | (.072) |
| Hours Worked | | | .025 ** | (.007) | | | .004 ** | (.001) | | | .002 | (.001) |
| Wave | -.732 *** | (.037) | -.226 ** | (.069) | -.109 *** | (.005) | -.058 *** | (.009) | -.183 *** | (.011) | -.084 *** | (.018) |
| Observations | 2,502 | | 2,502 | | 2,517 | | 2,517 | | 2,291 | | 2,291 | |
| Person-Period Observations | 6,587 | | 6,587 | | 6,585 | | 6,585 | | 4,699 | | 4,699 | |

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

Table 4. Random Effects Regression Results among Non-Resident Fathers

| | Shared Responsibility | | | | Coparenting | | | |
|---|-----------------------|--------|-----------|--------|-------------|--------|-----------|--------|
| | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 1 | | Model 2 | |
| | β | SE | β | SE | β | SE | β | SE |
| Race(ref=Black, Non-Hispanic) | | | | | | | | |
| White n-H | -.205 *** | (.053) | -.173 *** | (.045) | -.194 *** | (.042) | -.188 *** | (.037) |
| Hispanic | -.193 *** | (.038) | -.193 *** | (.032) | -.087 ** | (.030) | -.129 *** | (.028) |
| Other | -.170 | (.106) | -.122 | (.089) | -.081 | (.083) | -.058 | (.071) |
| Demographic Characteristics | | | | | | | | |
| Father Age at Birth | | | .001 | (.002) | | | .003 + | (.002) |
| Father live with Bio Parents age 15 | | | -.005 | (.032) | | | .018 | (.025) |
| Global Health | | | -.008 | (.013) | | | -.005 | (.009) |
| Baby is a boy | | | -.021 | (.026) | | | -.034 | (.021) |
| Social/Psychological Characteristics | | | | | | | | |
| Religious Attendance | | | -.005 | (.013) | | | -.006 | (.009) |
| Attitudes toward fathering (1-4) | | | .017 | (.028) | | | -.007 | (.024) |
| Father traditional gender roles | | | -.028 | (.023) | | | .026 | (.019) |
| Dad ever jail (1 yr) | | | -.107 *** | (.030) | | | -.085 ** | (.024) |
| Impulsivity | | | .007 | (.021) | | | -.026 | (.018) |
| Substance Problem | | | -.033 | (.053) | | | -.028 | (.046) |
| Physical Violence | | | -.049 | (.051) | | | -.112 * | (.044) |
| Relationship Status Characteristics | | | | | | | | |
| Supportiveness | | | .083 * | (.034) | | | .140 *** | (.028) |
| Cohabiting at BL | | | .178 *** | (.041) | | | .050 | (.034) |
| Visiting at BL | | | .199 *** | (.038) | | | .071 * | (.032) |
| Bio parity (# kids w/ bio dad) | | | .019 | (.017) | | | .015 | (.013) |
| Mom says dad has kid(s) by someone else | | | -.128 ** | (.035) | | | -.025 | (.025) |
| Presence of Social Father | | | -.336 *** | (.022) | | | -.184 *** | (.017) |
| Time since end of Relationship (months) | | | -.001 ** | (.000) | | | -.002 *** | (.000) |
| Relationship Quality with father | | | -.198 *** | (.011) | | | -.149 *** | (.009) |
| Socioeconomic Characteristics | | | | | | | | |
| Dad HS degree | | | .002 | (.031) | | | -.006 | (.027) |
| Dad some college | | | -.032 | (.041) | | | -.038 | (.036) |
| Dad college or above | | | -.078 | (.089) | | | -.078 | (.072) |
| Dad more educated | | | .022 | (.033) | | | .038 | (.030) |
| Hours Worked | | | .001 * | (.001) | | | .001 | (.001) |
| Wave | -.136 *** | (.003) | -.122 *** | (.006) | -.030 *** | (.002) | -.013 ** | (.004) |
| Observations | 2,510 | | 2,510 | | 2,214 | | 2,214 | |
| Person-Period Observations | 6,668 | | 6,668 | | 4,938 | | 4,938 | |

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