

2006


Parent-Adolescent Involvement: The Relative Influence of Parent Gender and Residence

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Recommended Citation

Hawkins, Daniel N., Paul R. Amato, and Valarie King. 2006. "Parent-Adolescent Involvement: The Relative Influence of Gender and Residence." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 68: 125-136.

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Running Head: Gender, Residence, and Parental Involvement

PARENT-ADOLESCENT INVOLVEMENT:

THE RELATIVE INFLUENCE OF PARENT GENDER AND RESIDENCE

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: The authors thank Alan Booth, Mindy Scott, Juli Sobolewski, and three anonymous reviewers for helpful and insightful comments on earlier drafts of this article. This research was supported by funding from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) to Valarie King, principal investigator (R01 HD043384), and from core funding to the Population Research Institute, Pennsylvania State University (R24 HD41025). This research uses data from Add Health, a program project designed by J. Richard Udry, Peter S. Bearman, and Kathleen Mullan Harris, and funded by a grant P01-HD31921 from NICHD, with cooperative funding from 17 other agencies. Special acknowledgment is due Ronald R. Rindfuss and Barbara Entwisle for assistance in the original design. Persons interested in obtaining data files from Add Health should contact Add Health, Carolina Population Center, 123 W. Franklin Street, Chapel Hill, NC 27516-2524 (www.cpc.unc.edu/addhealth/contract.html).

Running Head: Gender, Residence, and Parental Involvement

PARENT-ADOLESCENT INVOLVEMENT:

THE RELATIVE INFLUENCE OF PARENT GENDER AND RESIDENCE

ABSTRACT: The 1995 wave of the Add Health study is used to investigate the relative influence of parent gender and residence on patterns of parental involvement with adolescents. Adolescent reports ($N = 17,330$) of shared activities, shared communication, and relationship quality with both biological parents are utilized. A multidimensional scaling analysis reveals that parent gender explains most of the variance in parent-adolescent involvement, with residential status playing a secondary yet fundamental role in accounting for these patterns. Resident mothers who do not live with adolescents' biological fathers engage in the broadest range of activities with their children. Unpartnered resident fathers display patterns of parenting that are as similar to mothers as they are to other fathers.

KEYWORDS: *adolescence, family structure, gender, nonresidential parents, parental involvement*

Recent cultural and demographic changes have brought into question the relative influence of parent gender and parent residence on parental involvement with children. Public attitudes about parenting have shifted toward the view that fathers and mothers should be equally involved in their children's lives, especially when mothers are employed full time, but changes in men's behavior continue to lag behind changes in attitudes (Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001). Although fathers' engagement with children has increased in recent decades, mothers continue to do about two thirds of all child care (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004). Parenting remains a gendered activity, but one that may be changing. At the same time, parent-child relationships have been complicated by changes in family structure. Because of continuing high rates of marital disruption and nonmarital births, about half of all children spend some portion of their lives in a single-parent household (Bumpass & Lu, 2000). Although most of these children live with single mothers, the percentage of children living in single-father families doubled to 4% between 1980 and the late 1990s (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). In addition, about 11% of children live with a biological parent and stepparent, and 4% of children currently live with neither biological parent (U.S. Census Bureau). These demographic shifts may produce new opportunities for and constraints on parental involvement with children.

Research suggests that parent gender and residence are fundamental factors that shape patterns of parent-child involvement, but we do not know how much they matter *relative* to one another. In other words, it is not clear whether parent residence or parent gender has stronger implications for relationships between parents and children, especially in changing cultural and demographic contexts. In this study, we investigate both frequencies and patterns of parent-adolescent involvement, using a wide range of measures such as shared activities, shared communication, and emotional closeness. We move beyond comparing only two-parent and

single-mother families to include a large sample of adolescents in father-only households, adolescents living with stepparents, and adolescents with two nonresident biological parents. We know of no prior study that has incorporated the full range of parent gender and parent residential statuses within the same analysis.

BACKGROUND

Two Perspectives on Parenting

A gender system perspective, which emphasizes the continuing pervasiveness of gender distinctions in social and family life (England, 1999), suggests that parent gender is the primary factor determining the nature of parent-adolescent relationships. According to this perspective, gender is a fundamental dimension of social organization that provides a structured set of opportunities and constraints within which individuals make choices (Ferree, 1990). For example, the gender system in American society provides disparate opportunities in employment and earnings that tend to pull men and women in different directions with respect to parenting. Moreover, because our gender system includes social norms about parenting that are especially strong for women, the parent role may feature more prominently in the identities of mothers than fathers (Arendell, 2000). Correspondingly, society places stronger sanctions on mothers than fathers who do not fulfill their parental responsibilities. In addition to macrostructural and normative explanations, gender differences in parenting may be influenced by biological factors (Udry, 1994) and early socialization experiences (Gilligan, 1982) that shape and reinforce the gender system. Regardless of the source of these differences, parenting appears to be more variable among fathers than mothers, indicating that gender is the key to understanding patterns of parent-adolescent involvement.

In contrast to a gender system perspective, a microstructural perspective on household arrangements suggests that parent residential status is the primary factor shaping parental involvement, largely because of disparate opportunities for interaction. Some observers have emphasized that the situational and structural constraints implicit in not sharing a residence with children make it difficult for mothers as well as fathers to fulfill their normative obligations as parents (Braver & O'Connell, 1998). Examples of these contextual constraints include geographical distance, financial costs of maintaining contact, and commitments to new families (Arditti, 1995; Stewart, 1999), especially when nonresident parents have children with new partners (Manning & Smock, 1999). Visitation arrangements and gatekeeping by resident parents can limit the availability of children to nonresident parents, who often complain that the amount of time they have with children is insufficient to establish meaningful and satisfying relationships (Braver & O'Connell, 1998). Because these visits are often awkward, even painful, some nonresident parents gradually disengage from their children (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Overall, nonresident parents are less involved with children than are resident parents (Cooksey & Fondell, 1996; Harris & Ryan, 2004), but this is confounded with the fact that the majority of nonresident parents are fathers. Thomson, McLanahan, and Curtin (1992), however, found that parent gender did not account for family structure differences in shared activities. Instead, residential status was the most important predictor of parental involvement, which is consistent with a microstructural perspective on parenting.

If both the gender system and microstructural perspectives are supported, then the relationship between parent-adolescent involvement and parent residence may depend on parent gender. For example, the implications of not sharing a residence with children could be stronger for fathers than mothers, as fathering is especially sensitive to contextual influences (Doherty,

Kouneski, & Erickson, 1998). The norm of intensive motherhood (Arendell, 2000) may compel nonresident mothers to work harder than nonresident fathers to overcome the structural constraints that all nonresident parents face in maintaining close relationships with their children. In addition, because nonresident mothers are viewed more negatively than are nonresident fathers for living apart from children (Dolan & Hoffman, 1998), they may try to compensate by being especially involved in their children's lives. Consistent with these assumptions, some studies indicate that nonresident mothers maintain higher levels of visitation than do nonresident fathers (Gunnoe & Hetherington, 2004; Stewart, 2004).

Family Structure

We focus on two additional family structure factors that may influence the involvement of the focal parent: the residential status of the other biological parent and the marital status of resident parents. We include both biological parents' residential status in each analysis because the correlation between mother involvement and father involvement is highest when both parents reside with their children, compared with other living arrangements (Harris & Ryan, 2004). This finding suggests that mothers and fathers in two-parent homes may engage in cooperative coparenting or reciprocally encourage participation in parenting. Cooperative coparenting is relatively uncommon when parents live apart (Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992). Among nonresident parents, Harris and Ryan found that nonresident fathers were more involved when children lived with their mothers than with neither parent, suggesting that some resident mothers draw nonresident fathers into parenting. A contrary possibility is that some resident parents serve as gatekeepers and make it difficult for nonresident parents to maintain contact. Children living with neither parent experience a wide variety of living arrangements, making it difficult to predict what type of barriers to involvement their nonresident parents may face (Stewart, 2004).

We include the marital status of resident parents because the dynamics of stepfamilies often differ from those of intact or single-parent families (Cherlin, 1992). On one hand, stepfamilies often experience more conflict and stress than other family forms, which could limit the frequency of positive parent-adolescent involvement (Coleman, Ganong, & Fine, 2000). In addition, stepfamilies may include previous biological children of either partner. If the stepchildren of an adolescent's biological parent are younger and require more intensive parenting, this too could constrain the amount of time the parent spends with biological children. On the other hand, the presence of two parents in the household may lessen the burden of other family responsibilities and provide repartnered biological parents with greater opportunity than single parents to be involved with adolescents.

Adolescent Factors

Among all adolescent characteristics, gender is likely to have the most influence on parental involvement. For example, resident fathers tend to be more involved with sons than daughters (Harris & Morgan, 1991), and sons tend to report closer relationships with their fathers than do daughters (King, 2002; Youniss & Smollar, 1985), although this may not be the case among single parents (Powell & Downey, 1997). Among nonresident fathers, some studies show that sons enjoy longer, more frequent visits than daughters (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Manning & Smock, 1999), although other studies reveal no differences in the frequency of contact (Mott, 1990; Stephens, 1996). Adolescent age could also be related to parental involvement. In general, parental involvement tends to decline as children move through adolescence and spend more time with peers (Furstenberg, 2000). Adolescents with nonresident parents may be especially likely to disengage from the relationship, considering the effort required to be involved with parents compared to peers. In addition, late adolescence is a time

when the internalization and externalization of culturally-defined gendered behavior is accelerated (Furstenberg). Variations in parental involvement by parent and child gender may be especially apparent at this developmental stage. Race-ethnicity is another adolescent factor that may be associated with parental involvement. Maternal involvement does not appear to be sensitive to racial-ethnic contexts (Arendell, 2000), but father involvement varies with the race-ethnicity of resident (Hofferth, 2003) and nonresident (King, Harris, & Heard, 2004) father families.

Family Factors

We control for other parent and family characteristics that may influence patterns of parental involvement with adolescents. Socioeconomic status, measured here as educational attainment and family income, could be related to parent-adolescent involvement. For nonresident parents, financial issues may be particularly relevant when visitation involves travel and other costly activities. Because divorce and female-headed households are more common among lower socioeconomic groups, education and income could account for the finding that nonresident parents are less involved than resident parents. In addition, middle-class fathers are especially likely to embrace the ideal of *new fatherhood*, which encourages high levels of parent-child engagement (Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000). We also control for the nativity of parents, because foreign-born parents face more language and cultural barriers to parent-adolescent involvement than do parents born in the United States (McAdoo, 1978).

METHOD

Sample

The data came from the first wave of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Bearman, Jones, & Udry, 1997). The full 1995 Add Health sample includes interviews

with 20,475 adolescents and their parents or parent figures. The sample is representative of children in grades 7 through 12 in 1995 in the United States when appropriate sample weights are used. We restricted our analyses to adolescents with two living biological parents who had valid weights ($N = 17,330$). We compared six groups based on the residence of the biological parents and marital status of the resident parent: (a) children with two married parents ($n = 10,275$), (b) children with an unpartnered resident mother and nonresident father ($n = 3212$), (c) children with a repartnered (married or cohabiting) resident mother and nonresident father ($n = 1955$), (d) children with a nonresident mother and unpartnered resident father ($n = 529$), (e) children with a nonresident mother and repartnered (married or cohabiting) resident father ($n = 422$), and (f) children with two nonresident parents ($n = 937$). Add Health does not include information on the marital status of nonresident parents. Adolescents reported on involvement with mothers and fathers separately, yielding reports on 34,660 parents.

Measures

Parental Involvement. The 10 parent-adolescent involvement variables come from adolescent reports and measure shared activities, shared communication, and relationship quality with each biological parent separately. For activities and communication, adolescents are asked if a given item occurred in the past four weeks (0 = *no*, 1 = *yes*). The five activities include going shopping, playing a sport, attending a religious event, attending a cultural event (movie, play, museum, etc.), and working on a school project together. The four communication items are talking about grades, talking about other school-related topics, talking about personal problems, and talking about social events (dates, parties, etc.). Relationship quality is measured with one question that asked how close adolescents felt to their biological mothers and fathers (separately). Responses range from 1 = *not close at all* to 5 = *extremely close*. Although multiple

indicators of relationship quality would be preferable, Add Health contains only one item that was asked with respect to nonresident as well as resident parents.

Controls. Adolescent's gender is coded as 1 = *female* and 0 = *male*. Adolescents' age is measured in years. Race-ethnicity is measured as a set of dummy variables that includes Black, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American, with White serving as the omitted reference category. Parents' education is an ordinal variable that ranged from 1 = *never attended high school* to 9 = *postgraduate training*. Parents' nativity is measured as a dichotomous variable (1 = *born in the US*, 0 = *born outside the US*). Family yearly income (reported by parents or parent figures) is a continuous variable that referred to the income in thousands of dollars of the household in which the adolescent currently lived. The log of this variable is used in the regression analyses.

Missing Data. In our sample, there is a negligible amount of missing data on parent-adolescent involvement (less than .2% for each item). For the controls, less than 10% of data was missing for each variable, with the exception of family income (25% missing). For ordinal and interval variables, the mean was imputed and a variable was created that indicated *missing*. For categorical variables, we include *missing* as an additional dummy variable. The *missing* variables were included in the regression analyses, but were not significantly related to any outcomes.

Descriptive Statistics. In the weighted sample, 49% of adolescents were girls and the average adolescent age was 16 years. In terms of race-ethnicity, 70% of the adolescents were White, 14% were Black, 11% were Hispanic, 4% were Asian, and 1% were Native American. The average family household income was just under \$47,000 a year. The average education level for both mothers and fathers was 5.3, meaning they had graduated from high school but not college. About 87% of both mothers and fathers were born in the United States.

Analytic Strategy

First, we examine the frequencies of various forms of parental involvement across the 12 parent categories. These groups are based on the gender of the focal parent (mothers or fathers), residential status of the focal parent (resident or nonresident), and the marital status of the resident parent (married, unpartnered, or repartnered). Because we cannot determine the marital status of nonresident parents, this part of the analysis represented a $2 \times 2 \times 3 = 12$ group design. Second, we included the adolescent and family control variables to minimize the possibility that significant differences in involvement between parent categories are spurious. The Add Health data utilized a weighted, stratified, and clustered design, so the Survey Module in Stata 8.1 is used to calculate the correct confidence intervals for significance levels. The table and figures report weighted and adjusted data.

For the second part of the analysis, we rely on multidimensional scaling to summarize the similarities and differences among patterns of parent-adolescent relationships. Multidimensional scaling reveals how a set of stimuli is organized in an n -dimensional space. The input into the multidimensional scaling analysis consists of adolescents' ratings of mothers and fathers on each of the 10 involvement variables described above. Based on these ratings, the software calculates the degree of dissimilarity between each pair of stimuli. In this case, the stimuli are the 12 combinations of parent gender and parent residence/partnership status. For example, if adolescents generally rate unpartnered resident mothers and nonresident fathers differently across the 10 involvement variables, then the overall dissimilarity score for these two groups would be high. The software then plots the locations of the stimuli in a multidimensional space, with the distances between stimuli corresponding to their degree of similarity. That is, the closer two stimuli are in the multidimensional space, the more similar they are. The organization of stimuli in the multidimensional space provides important clues about the dimensions that

underlie adolescents' ratings of parental involvement. Multidimensional scaling has many advantages: It requires no assumptions about the distributions of variables, it works well with ordinal and interval data, and it lends itself to visual inspection and interpretation of the results. We rely on the Alternating Least Squares scaling procedure (ALSCAL) available in SPSS 12.0 (see Borg & Groenen, 1997).

RESULTS

Frequency of Parent-Adolescent Involvement

Table 1 displays adolescents' reports of involvement across the 12 categories of parents. Because of the large sample sizes, as well as the large number of possible comparisons, we propose a relatively stringent but easy-to-use criterion for determining significant differences between groups. The 95% confidence intervals listed in parentheses below each proportion allow the reader to check for significant differences between all proportions in the table. If the 95% confidence intervals of two proportions do not overlap, then we conclude that they are significantly different (Reichardt & Gollob, 1997). This is a more conservative test than using difference-of-proportion tests or *t*-tests to determine significant differences. The reader can look for differences across parent categories on a particular type of involvement by looking down the columns, and for differences within parent categories by looking across the rows.

[Table 1 about here]

Table 1 shows some clear patterns in parent-adolescent involvement among focal parent categories. Shopping and playing sports were clearly gendered activities, with mothers much more likely to participate in the former and fathers the latter. Attending religious and cultural events was significantly more common among resident parents than nonresident parents. Working on school projects was a relatively infrequent activity among all groups of parents, with

the only significant differences occurring between resident mothers and nonresident fathers. In general, mothers were more likely to talk about social life and problems with adolescents than were fathers. Resident parents of adolescents with a nonresident parent, however, most frequently engaged in these forms of communication relative to other mothers and fathers, respectively. Talking about school and grades were consistently frequent activities among all parent groups, although nonresident fathers ranked significantly lower than all other parent groups on these two variables. Adolescents' ratings of closeness were much higher among resident than nonresident parents, although nonresident mothers scored significantly higher on this variable than did nonresident fathers.

Some differences between parent categories, although significant, may not be large substantively. The easiest way for the reader to determine effect sizes for different parent types is to compare the difference in proportions. For example, Table 1 indicates that 75% of married resident mothers went shopping with their adolescents in the past four weeks compared to 26% of married resident fathers. In other words, married resident mothers were three times as likely as married resident fathers to engage in this form of parental involvement, a large effect size. In contrast, a comparison between the proportions of married resident mothers (.52) and unpartnered resident mothers (.57) who have recently talked about school-related topics with their adolescents reveals a significant difference by our standard of nonoverlapping 95% confidence intervals. A difference in proportions of only .05, however, indicates a relatively modest effect size.

To rule out possible spurious effects in the frequencies presented in Table 1, we regressed the involvement items on the 12 parent categories with controls for adolescent gender, age, and race-ethnicity, family household income, and parent education and nativity. We adjusted the

standard errors for comparisons based on the same subsample of children, which was necessary because each child provided two sets of ratings, one for each biological parent. The addition of control variables (table not shown) does not alter the overall patterns of parental involvement shown in Table 1. Resident mothers, especially those of adolescents with nonresident fathers, remain the most involved. In contrast, nonresident fathers are the least involved parents, particularly when adolescents also have a nonresident mother. Among fathers, unpartnered resident fathers are rated highest by adolescents on parental involvement, especially in the more traditionally female-oriented items such as shopping and talking about social events and problems, although they were no more involved overall than nonresident mothers.

Patterns of Parent-Adolescent Involvement

The first step in the multidimensional scaling analysis involved the calculation of dissimilarities between all 12 parent categories, based on adolescents' ratings of parental involvement. We then calculated solutions in one and two dimensions. Two measures of fit were available. *Stress* reflects the discrepancies between the dissimilarities and the distances between stimuli in the multidimensional space. Although there is no simple cut-point for assessing this index, stress levels below .2 are generally acceptable (Kruskal & Wish, 1978). R^2 reflects the proportion of variance in the dissimilarities that can be accounted for by the distances between stimuli in the multidimensional space. The one-dimensional solution yielded a stress value of .12 and an R^2 value of .95. Although the one-dimensional solution was acceptable, the two-dimensional solution produced a substantially lower stress value of .03 and an R^2 of .99. The variance accounted for may seem unusually high, but readers should note that R^2 refers only to between-group variance (the within-group component is not counted). To interpret the dimensions, we correlated the coordinates of each of the 12 stimuli with parent gender and parent

residential status. Parent gender was associated strongly with dimension one ($r = .79, n = 12, p < .01$), and parent residence was associated strongly with dimension two ($r = .73, n = 12, p < .01$). The resulting configuration of the 12 groups in the two-dimensional space is shown in Figure 1.

[Figure 1 about here]

The figure reveals a clear partitioning of parents on the basis of gender, with the six groups of mothers on the right-hand side of the figure (with high scores on dimension one), and five groups of fathers on the left-hand side of the figure (with low scores on dimension one). Unpartnered resident fathers of adolescents with nonresident mothers were the only exception to this rule, being slightly closer in the multidimensional space to mothers than fathers. The figure also partitioned parents on the basis of residence. The top half of the figure includes the six groups of resident parents (with high scores on dimension two) and the lower half of the figure includes the six groups of nonresident parents (with low scores on dimension two). The results reveal that adolescents' ratings of parental involvement were based on two fundamental dimensions: parent gender and parent residence. The distance between each group in the multidimensional space indicates the similarity or dissimilarity in their patterns of parent-adolescent involvement. For example, unpartnered and repartnered resident mothers (upper-right quadrant) occupy almost identical points in the multidimensional space, suggesting that adolescents rate them quite similarly on the involvement variables. In contrast, the greatest distance is between resident mothers who are married to resident fathers (upper-right quadrant) and nonresident fathers of adolescents with nonresident mothers (lower-left quadrant), indicating that their involvement patterns are quite different.

The effect of the other biological parent's residential status and the resident parent's marital status can be determined by looking at the space between subgroups of parents. For

example, the tight clustering of nonresident mothers indicates that their involvement patterns are similar whether the adolescents live with their biological fathers and whether the resident father has repartnered. Resident mothers of adolescents with nonresident fathers, who are rated similarly regardless of whether they have repartnered, appear to have slightly different parenting patterns than married resident mothers. Similarly, the repartnering of resident mothers makes little difference in the involvement patterns of nonresident fathers, but adolescents with two nonresident parents rate their fathers slightly differently than adolescents with nonresident fathers and resident mothers. Resident fathers are the most diverse subgroup of parents. Unpartnered resident fathers show parental involvement patterns that are as close to mothers (especially nonresident mothers) as they are to the other groups of fathers. Repartnered resident fathers are located in the multidimensional space about halfway between unpartnered resident fathers and resident fathers who are married to resident mothers, indicating that repartnering may pull resident fathers back toward the parenting patterns seen in biological two-parent families. (Generating separate solutions for sons and daughters revealed that the configuration of adolescent-parent relationships differed only modestly by adolescent gender).

To further facilitate the interpretation of the multidimensional scaling solution, we represent adolescents' responses to the 10 involvement items as vectors through the two-dimensional space. We did this by calculating the mean score on each of the involvement items for the 12 groups of parents. We then regressed these means, one at a time, on the coordinates of each group of parents on the two dimensions. The 10 regression equations yielded multiple R values that ranged from .77 to .95; all were statistically significant ($p < .05$). These large and statistically significant associations indicated that the items can be represented as vectors through the two-dimensional space. To determine the direction of each vector, we converted the

standardized b coefficients from each equation into direction cosines and plotted the 10 vectors through the two-dimensional space (see Kruskal & Wish, 1978).

[Figure 2 about here]

Figure 2 shows the results of this procedure, which confirm the findings from Table 1. The points in Figure 2 correspond to the points in Figure 1, which are labeled with the 12 parent categories. Six items (shopping, working on school projects, and the four types of communication) were aligned closely with dimension one, indicating that these activities were associated primarily with gender, with mothers engaging in them more often than fathers. The vector for playing sports was also closely aligned with dimension one (in the opposite direction) indicating that fathers, especially resident fathers, were much more likely to spend time with their children in sports activities. The vector representing attending religious events was aligned with dimension two, indicating that this activity occurs mostly with resident parents, regardless of gender, rather than nonresident parents. The vectors that represent attending cultural events and feelings of closeness point toward the upper right-hand quadrant. This orientation indicates that resident parents are more likely than nonresident parents and that mothers are more likely than fathers to attend cultural events and have close relationships with adolescents. Adolescents rate especially high feelings of closeness to resident mothers in comparison to nonresident fathers.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study support a gender system view of parenting, as parent gender, compared to parent residence, was found to be the stronger dimension underlying parent-adolescent involvement. In terms of involvement frequency, mothers tend to be more involved than fathers, and even nonresident mothers engage in as wide a range of activities with children

as do most resident fathers. Moreover, in the multidimensional scaling analysis, parent gender accounted for approximately 95% of the variance between parent categories in patterns of involvement. Macrostructural, normative, internalized, and even biological aspects of the gender system may allow, encourage, or sanction mothers to participate in a wide range of activities and forms of communication with their adolescent children, irrespective of living arrangements. Regardless of the explanation, and despite changing attitudes about the role of fathers, our study indicates that parent gender continues to be the key factor shaping parent-adolescent involvement patterns.

Nevertheless, parental residence also plays a role in parent-adolescent involvement. As reported in previous studies (e.g., Harris & Ryan, 2004), resident parents tend to be more involved with their children than nonresident parents. Nonresident parents of both genders face a variety of structural barriers, such as distance, time, and expenses that preclude them from participating in activities with their children. Relationship quality and attending religious services are the dimensions of parent-adolescent involvement most closely tied to residence, with resident parents rated much higher on each item than nonresident parents. This was true regardless of whether the resident parent was living with the adolescent's other biological parent, with a new partner, or without a partner. The general availability and frequent access to resident parents may contribute to feelings of closeness among adolescents. Clearly, not sharing a household makes it more difficult for parents and adolescents to establish close emotional bonds. Furthermore, the positive association between religious attendance and relationship quality is consistent with recent research on parent-adolescent ties (Smith & Kim, 2003).

The additional family structure variables included in the analysis showed little effect on patterns of parent-adolescent involvement. For example, resident mothers of adolescents with

nonresident fathers showed similar parenting patterns regardless of whether they had repartnered. The same was true for nonresident parents in that the marital status of their adolescent's other biological parent made little difference in their involvement. Nonresident fathers showed slightly lower levels of involvement when their adolescents did not live with their biological mothers, supporting previous work that suggests a pattern of mothers pulling nonresident fathers into parenting (Harris & Ryan, 2004), rather than gatekeeping to limit contact with the adolescent. Adolescents with unpartnered resident fathers and nonresident mothers were an especially interesting group. These fathers were about as similar to mothers as they were to other types of fathers. Risman's (1987) qualitative work suggests that fathers can be effective "mothers" when circumstances make it necessary. These fathers frequently engage in many activities that are not stereotypically masculine, such as taking adolescents shopping or talking with them about their social life and personal problems. Nevertheless, resident fathers of adolescents with nonresident mothers (especially those who had repartnered) did not engage in as wide a range of activities as did resident mothers of adolescents with nonresident fathers, a finding that suggests the pervasiveness of the gender system and the possible limits on the extent to which resident fathers are able to expand their behavioral repertoire with children.

The methodology and sample utilized in this study involve some limitations. First, the overall pattern of parental involvement that emerged from our analysis, especially the representation provided by the multidimensional scaling analysis, is only as accurate as the stimuli used for input. Although we included a wider range of involvement items than most prior studies, the addition of other activities could alter the patterns revealed in Figures 1 and 2. Future studies could build on these findings by focusing on other forms of parental involvement, such as monitoring, providing support, setting limits, accessibility, and taking responsibility for

children. Second, we do not know if the findings from our study can be generalized to samples of children who have not yet entered adolescence. Gender and residence may provide different opportunities for and constraints on parents with younger children. Third, all of the information on involvement in the Add Health data comes from adolescents' reports. The extent to which patterns of involvement based on parents' accounts might differ from the patterns described in the present study is unknown. Fourth, we cannot account for the mechanisms through which gender and residence provide opportunities for and constraints on parent-adolescent involvement. For example, parent gender could be related to work hours, which in turn is related to time available to spend with adolescent children. Finally, although residence may have implications for parent-child relationships, we cannot rule out the possibility that parents select themselves into different household arrangements. Fathers with relatively little investment in parenthood, for example, may be especially likely either to divorce or to never marry the mothers of their children.

Our study makes new contributions toward understanding the relative importance of gender and residence for patterns of parent-adolescent interaction. Using nationally representative data, we focused on a range of involvement indicators and examined adolescents in all types of resident and nonresident households, including those living with neither biological parent, to represent the full range of children's living arrangements. We found that the influence of parent gender is considerably stronger than that of parent residence, which indicates that gendered behavior still governs much of parents' involvement with their children. The constraints of living apart from children, however, also influence parent-child relationships in important ways, especially in regard to the difficulty faced by nonresident parents in forming close emotional bonds with their adolescents. As family structure becomes more complex,

researchers will need to consider parent residence as well as parent gender to understand the nature of parent-adolescent involvement.

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TABLE

Frequency of Parent-Adolescent Involvement by 12 Parent Categories

Focal Parent	Involvement Item									
	Shopping	Play Sports	Religious Events	Cultural Events	School Projects	Talk Social	Talk Problems	Talk Grades	Talk School	Closeness
MARRIED RESIDENT MOM -	.75	.10	.43	.28	.13	.45	.33	.60	.52	4.55
Married Resident Dad	(.73-.77)	(.09-.11)	(.40-.45)	(.26-.30)	(.12-.14)	(.42-.47)	(.31-.35)	(.59-.62)	(.50-.54)	(4.52-4.58)
UNPARTNERED RESIDENT MOM -	.74	.09	.32	.30	.16	.51	.47	.66	.57	4.58
Nonresident Dad	(.72-.77)	(.07-.10)	(.28-.35)	(.27-.32)	(.14-.18)	(.48-.54)	(.45-.50)	(.64-.69)	(.55-.60)	(4.54-4.62)
REPARTNERED RESIDENT MOM -	.73	.10	.28	.25	.14	.57	.47	.65	.56	4.58
Nonresident Dad	(.70-.76)	(.08-.12)	(.24-.31)	(.22-.27)	(.12-.16)	(.54-.61)	(.44-.50)	(.62-.69)	(.52-.60)	(4.54-4.63)
NONRESIDENT MOM -	.43	.13	.14	.28	.16	.48	.37	.64	.50	3.73
Unpartnered Resident Dad	(.37-.49)	(.09-.16)	(.10-.19)	(.23-.34)	(.11-.20)	(.41-.55)	(.30-.43)	(.58-.70)	(.44-.57)	(3.59-3.87)
NONRESIDENT MOM -	.36	.11	.14	.26	.13	.48	.37	.65	.55	3.59
Repartnered Resident Dad	(.30-.43)	(.06-.16)	(.09-.20)	(.20-.33)	(.09-.17)	(.41-.55)	(.30-.43)	(.59-.72)	(.48-.63)	(3.38-3.80)
NONRESIDENT MOM -	.43	.08	.19	.18	.14	.53	.47	.54	.42	3.75
Nonresident Dad	(.39-.47)	(.05-.10)	(.15-.23)	(.14-.22)	(.11-.17)	(.48-.58)	(.42-.51)	(.49-.59)	(.38-.46)	(3.62-3.87)

MARRIED RESIDENT DAD -	.26	.34	.33	.27	.12	.26	.17	.53	.45	4.36
Married Resident Mom	(.25-.27)	(.31-.36)	(.31-.36)	(.25-.29)	(.10-.13)	(.24-.28)	(.16-.18)	(.51-.55)	(.43-.47)	(4.33-4.40)
UNPARTNERED RESIDENT DAD -	.50	.22	.15	.26	.09	.44	.38	.60	.47	4.25
Nonresident Mom	(.44-.56)	(.17-.26)	(.11-.19)	(.21-.31)	(.06-.13)	(.39-.50)	(.32-.44)	(.54-.65)	(.40-.53)	(4.14-4.37)
REPARTNERED RESIDENT DAD -	.27	.31	.21	.25	.14	.44	.37	.60	.51	4.53
Nonresident Mom	(.22-.33)	(.24-.39)	(.15-.27)	(.19-.32)	(.09-.18)	(.37-.51)	(.30-.43)	(.54-.67)	(.44-.57)	(4.42-4.65)
NONRESIDENT DAD -	.25	.17	.12	.21	.10	.29	.20	.53	.43	3.03
Unpartnered Resident Mom	(.23-.27)	(.15-.20)	(.10-.13)	(.19-.23)	(.08-.12)	(.27-.32)	(.17-.22)	(.50-.55)	(.40-.45)	(2.95-3.11)
NONRESIDENT DAD -	.23	.21	.10	.20	.09	.35	.24	.51	.42	3.13
Repartnered Resident Mom	(.20-.27)	(.17-.24)	(.08-.12)	(.18-.23)	(.07-.11)	(.31-.39)	(.21-.26)	(.48-.55)	(.39-.45)	(3.03-3.24)
NONRESIDENT DAD -	.17	.15	.09	.14	.08	.29	.21	.38	.31	3.02
Nonresident Mom	(.14-20)	(.11-.18)	(.06-.12)	(.11-.16)	(.05-.11)	(.24-.33)	(.17-.24)	(.34-.43)	(.26-.35)	(2.88-3.16)

Notes: $N = 17,330$ adolescents reporting on 34,660 parents. The first parent (in upper-case letters) refers to the residence and gender of the focal parent.

The second parent (in lower-case letters) refers to the residence and gender of the other biological parent. Numbers in parentheses are 95% confidence intervals. Results are weighted and adjusted for design effects.

FIGURES

Figure 1.

Multidimensional Scaling Analysis of 12 Types of Parent-Adolescent Relationships

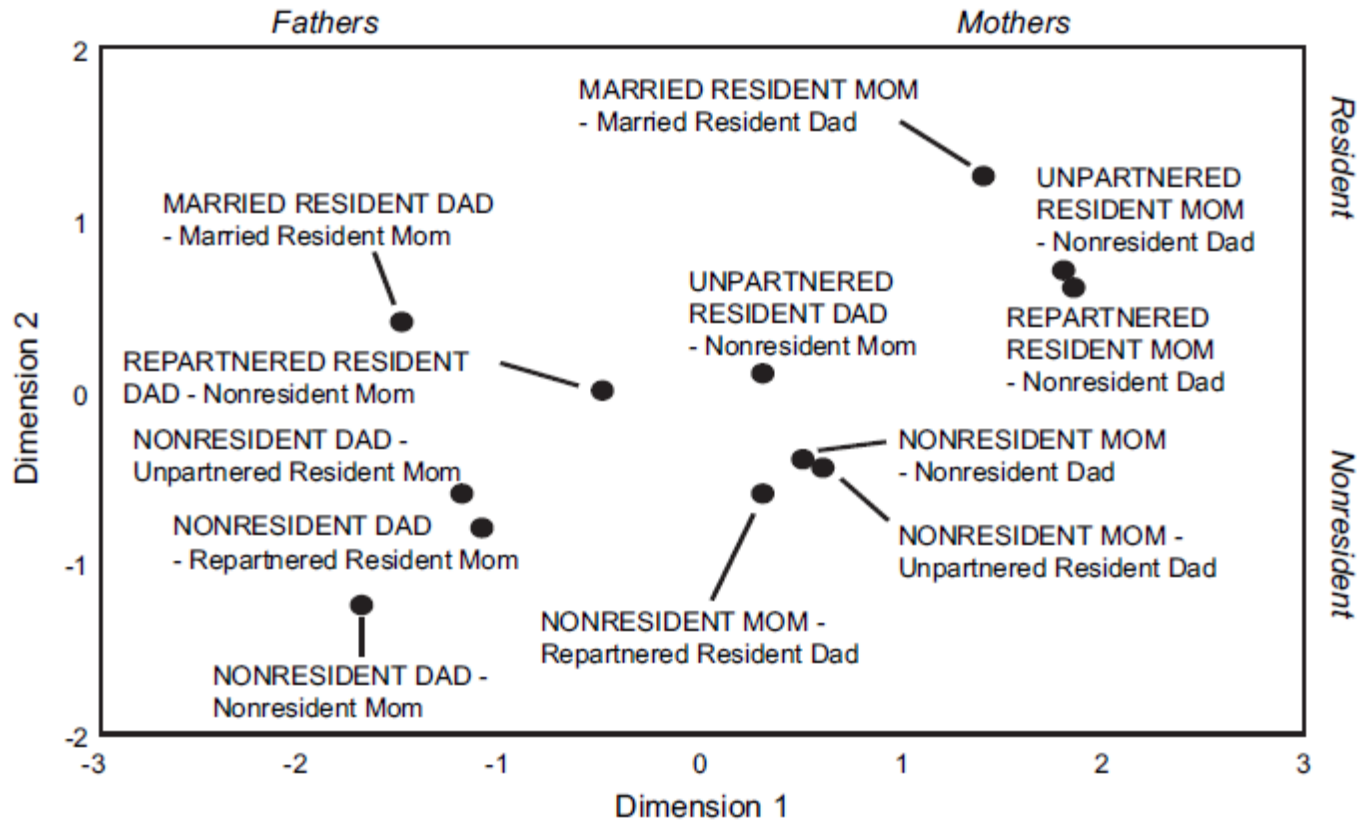


Figure 2.

Ratings of Parent-Adolescent Involvement Represented as Vectors Through the Two-Dimensional Space

