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AN ASSESSMENT OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ASPECTS OF THE NONRESIDENTIAL FATHER ROLE AND NONRESIDENTIAL FATHER INVOLVEMENT WITH CHILDREN

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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*****

The Ohio State University

1999

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ABSTRACT

As the number of fathers living separately from their children continues to rise, scholars, policy-makers, and practitioners have devoted increasing attention to levels of nonresidential father involvement with children. Attention has been paid to the degree to which fathers visit with their children, provide financial support, and participate in decision-making regarding their children. The present study explores the relationship between nonresidential father involvement and various aspects of father role enactment. Levels of participation in face-to-face visits, telephone/letter contact, and global decision-making concerning children were analyzed utilizing a hypothesized model of role enactment in relation to several samples of nonresidential fathers. Both longitudinal and discrete analyses were included in the study. Strong support is offered for the relationship between father involvement with children and various factors associated with social role enactment.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation reflects the contributions of many individuals. First and foremost, I would like to thank Patrick McKenry. More than merely serving as my advisor, Dr. McKenry stimulated my initial interest in pursuing this field of study and consistently offered encouragement and support to me as I pursued what became a radical departure from what had been an orderly life path. It has been a privilege to work with him over the past four years. He continues to serve as a role model as I complete this program and prepare to move into academia.

The other members of my dissertation committee have also made critical and much appreciated contributions to this effort. I am sure Suzanne Bartle-Haring has come to rue the day she ever mentioned structured equation modeling to me. She has unfailingly and patiently responded to every question and query I have had concerning the methodology utilized here, no matter how trivial they might be, and spent countless hours assisting me in performing the analyses reflected here. The knowledge she imparted is at the heart of this study. Doug Downey brought a level of clarity to this project that did not exist before our conversations. His ability to see the big picture and provide a coherence of thought was like a life preserver at a point at which I felt as if I (and this project) was floundering. I am very grateful to Dr Bartle-Haring and Dr. Downey for their ongoing assistance and hope to have the honor of collaborating with them on future projects.
Neither this dissertation, nor the four years of work leading to its completion, could have been possible without the constant encouragement I received from my wife Theresa, and children Matthew, Caitlyn, and John. Their love and support meant more to me through this process than they will ever know. Their patience with me through my many evenings away from home, missed ballgames, and hours spent at the computer was a constant inspiration and comfort to me. This is as much their work as it is mine.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge and thank Jack Leite, the man who continues to teach me on a daily basis the true meaning of fatherhood.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

Through the latter half of the 20th Century, American families have been viewed in very homogeneous terms, i.e., composed of two parents and between one and three minor age children. Thus, research in the field of family science is rife with studies of middle-class, intact families with findings then generalized across dimensions of ethnicity, social class, age, and geographic location. During the past thirty years, however, the incidence of divorce in American society dramatically climbed, challenging this traditional view of family. In response, researchers have devoted increasing attention to exploring the experiences of family members after divorce.

Of particular interest have been children, perhaps the most vulnerable family members, who have been found to be at risk for various short and long term consequences. However, it has been noted that, although children often experience various emotional problems following divorce, similar responses are often present prior to divorce in response to marital discord (Hetherington & Stanley-Morgan, 1997; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Moreland, Schwebel, Fine, & Vess, 1982). It appears that
children typically experience the most emotional turmoil during a period generally extending from six months prior to divorce to approximately one-and-one-half to two years following the divorce, with most children resuming normal developmental stride (Demo & Acock, 1988). It has been suggested that divorce has a negative impact on a child's academic achievement, conduct, psychological adjustment, self-esteem, and social relations (Amato & Keith, 1991). Younger children are thought to be more susceptible to these impacts than are adolescents (Demo & Acock, 1988, Wallerstein & Kelley, 1980).

Far less is known, however, about ongoing patterns of involvement between children and their nonresidential fathers following divorce and the impact of such involvement on both fathers and children. Children following divorce often exist as members of bi-nuclear families, functioning as members of two different households. The large majority of the research on children following divorce attends to their experiences within a residential mother's household. Attention to the experiences of children with their nonresidential fathers is, in comparison, relatively sparse. Because research findings in this area are limited and somewhat ambiguous (Amato & Keith, 1991), this remains a significant issue. Some studies note the importance to child adjustment of frequent and consistent father visitation (King, 1994; Wallerstein & Kelley, 1980). Policy makers, domestic relations courts, and social service agencies continue to stress involvement between nonresidential parents and their children, arising out of a belief that involved fathers will be more likely to meet financial child support obligations. Far less concern is expressed regarding the psychological or emotional benefits of involvement between fathers and children. However, the focus continues to be on fathers
filling the good provider role following divorce. Largely ignored is the “new father” role that encourages greater interpersonal involvement between fathers and children (Marsiglio, Day, & Lamb, 1997). This new perspective on the father role builds upon new and much more diverse social definition of father involvement, one that extends well beyond the traditional good provider role.

Much of the early research in this area described relationships between children and noncustodial fathers. This term suggested that men had little role in their children’s lives other than that of “visitor.” The term “nonresidential father” is utilized here (and in much of the current research) to account for the fact that many fathers retain a custodial relationship with their children following divorce in the legal sense even though the children may primarily reside with their mothers. The focus of this research is on the relationship between nonresidential fathers and their children with no distinction based upon custody awards or arrangements. This is an important distinction in terms of one’s definition of the relationships explored here.

The emphasis on father involvement with children drives many policies related to the divorce process. Child visitation schedules, mandatory co-parenting workshops, and encouragement of joint custody arrangements all reflect attempts by courts to encourage continued father involvement with children. Clearly, with so much emphasis placed on nonresidential parent involvement with children, an understanding of the factors associated with such involvement is critical.

Mothers, children, and the courts often assume that a father who loves his child will maintain contact with the child. Unfortunately, this assumption ignores how difficult
it is to maintain the father-child relationship when men and their children live apart 
(Shulman & Seiffge-Krenke, 1997). As a result, nonresidential fathers are typically 
described in pejorative ways that reflect absence, abandonment, or incompetent parenting 
Pasley and Minton (1997). There is little acknowledgment of the difficulty that divorcing 
men face as they attempt to transform the father-child relationship as it once existed into an often complicated visitation relationship. Indeed, divorce represents a series of 
transitions rather than a static event (Hetherington & Camara, 1988). A man’s 
negotiation of these transitions contributes to ongoing patterns of involvement with 
children.

A full understanding of nonresidential fathers’ roles and relationships with their 
children should be informed by research that incorporates fathers’ perspectives (Hoffman, 
1995). The relative lack of such perspectives contributes to the negative images of 
nonresidential fathers that are pervasive in both the professional and the popular literature 
(Pasley & Minton, 1997). These negative images largely deny the possibility that fathers 
who do not reside with their children can be important, functional figures in their 
children’s lives and key sources of support during times of stress (Munsch et al., 1995).

Utilizing data from the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), this 
research addresses this issue through the consideration of fathers’ reports of involvement 
with children and various aspects of their enactment of the father role. Indeed, no other 
nationally representative data set examines nonresidential parenting issues to the degree 
that they are addressed within the NSFH. The NSFH also remains one of the few
representative data sets to incorporate nonresidential father reports into the data (Sweet & Bumpass, 1996).

Patterns of Involvement between Nonresidential Fathers and Children

Several authors have explored patterns of involvement between nonresidential fathers and children following divorce. Such explorations provide empirical support for or challenges to commonly held notions of issues surrounding nonresidential father involvement.

In one of the more extensive examinations of issues surrounding divorce and its aftermath, Hetherington (1993) conducted a longitudinal examination of 72 divorced and 72 non-divorced couples. The subjects were re-interviewed at two months, one year, two years, six years, and eleven years following the initial interview. The results indicated a number of significant patterns in nonresidential father involvement with children. It was clear that levels of involvement were static with fathers’ involvement with children adjusting over time. Those fathers who remained involved with their children tended to assume a companionate rather than an instrumental role in their children’s lives. Contact in these cases most often revolved around recreational or leisure activities. Contact between fathers and children declined rapidly following divorce to the extent that less than 25% of the fathers were still seeing their children on a weekly basis two years following the divorce. This level of involvement, then, tended to be maintained through the remainder of the study.

Many of Hetherington’s findings are consistent with those reported by Furstenberg and Nord (1985). In a study designed as a follow-up to the National Survey
of Children (NSC), the authors report low levels of involvement similar to those reported by Hetherington and also found similar types of involvement centered on social and recreational activities. The fathers engaged in little, if any, child care activities.

Neither Hetherington nor Furstenberg and Nord addressed factors underlying the patterns of involvement they observed. Seltzer and Brandreth (1994) explored this issue utilizing data from the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH). Patterns of involvement were observed similar to those documented by Hetherington and Furstenberg and Nord. Most significantly, yet not surprisingly, the authors report considerable differences in the reports of men and women. Fathers report higher levels of involvement than their former spouses whether measured by contact with children or provision of child support.

A Theoretical Model of Role Transitions

Because nearly 90% of divorces result in mothers retaining residential custody of children, fathers are forced to move into a new social role, that of nonresidential father. Such a move represents a major role transition (Cotrell, 1942). Transitions such as this represent a change in the role expectations or norms that are relevant for an individual and, consequently, a change in behaviors associated with the role (Burr, Leigh, Day & Constantine, 1979). The ease with which these transitions are negotiated are tied to various aspects of the transitions themselves. Burr et al. offer a useful model for the examination of the transition men experience as they move into and enact the nonresidential father role and, more specifically, the ease with which men move into this new role. This ease of transition into a new role is largely defined by the degree to which
there is freedom from difficulty in activating the new role and the availability of resources to utilize in beginning a new role (Burr et al., 1979).

Within this conceptualization, the ease with which an individual proceeds through a role transition is tied to a broad range of variables. Figure 1 provides an illustration of the theorized relationships between these variables and the ease with which an individual moves through a role transition. Particularly salient to the proposed study are those variables suggested to be related to the ease with which one moves into a new role— in this case that of nonresidential father. Burr et al. suggest a number of variables contribute to the ease of such transitions.

Of relevance to the proposed study are the direct relationships between the ease of role transitions and variables such as anticipatory socialization, role clarity, role strain, and the degree to which roles facilitate goal attainment. Within the Burr et al. conceptualization, anticipatory socialization is defined as the process of learning the norms of a role before being in a social situation where it is appropriate to actually behave in that role. As indicated in Figure 1, the relationship between anticipatory socialization and ease of role transitions is a positive one. Because nonresidential fatherhood is not a role for which society holds strongly institutionalized norms (Cherlin, 1978), anticipatory socialization may be hypothesized as being low for men moving into the role.

Role clarity, or the degree to which there is a set of explicit definitions of the reciprocal behavior expected while in a role (Burr et al., 1979) is also postulated to be directly related to the ease of role transitions. As with anticipatory socialization, this relationship is expected to be a positive one. These explicit definitions may exist at a
Figure 1: A Model of Role Transitions (Burk, Leigh, Day, & Constantine, 1979)
societal level or may be passed along from more specific sources. In the case of divorced, nonresidential fathers, for example, a degree of role clarity is often provided within the pages of the legal divorce settlement.

A negative relationship is hypothesized to exist between role strain and the ease of role transitions. Within this model, role strain is defined as the stress generated within a person when that person cannot comply or has difficulty complying with the expectations of a role. Influencing both levels of role clarity and role strain is the amount of role conflict experienced by an individual. This conflict arises from the presence of incompatible expectations for a social role (Burr et al., 1979). As with role clarity, this role conflict may arise as a result of discrepancies between individual and societal expectations or discrepancies between the expectations of specific groups or individuals. Such role conflict is negatively associated with role clarity and positively associated with role strain. It is through these two variables, then, that role conflict is associated with the ease of making role transitions.

In addition to role conflict, role strain is influenced by three other aspects of social roles: role incompatibility, role compartmentalization, and the amount of activity prescribed within a role. Role incompatibility, or the degree to which the demands of one role are incompatible with the demands of other roles, is hypothesized to positively contribute to levels of role strain. It is suggested that a similar positive contribution to role strain is provided by role compartmentalization, or the degree to which an individual is required to enact roles in different locations or social situations. Finally, a positive contribution to role strain is generated by the amount of roles and role activity one
assumes. Specifically, taking on greater role activity will positively influence levels of role strain.

Finally, a direct relationship is hypothesized to exist between the degree to which a role facilitates goal attainment and the ease of a role transition. Thus, the more likely it is that a role will allow an individual to realize dominant goals within their cultural subgroups, the greater the ease of transition will be (Burr et al, 1979). It is further suggested, however, that this relationship is moderated by three variables. First, it is suggested that transitions are easier if the role facilitates the attainment of goals that are more highly valued by an individual. Second, the presence of substitute gratification serves to weaken the influence of roles that may not contribute to overall goal attainment. Finally, the length of time one expects to be in a role may serve to moderate the influence of roles that may not contribute to goal attainment.

A Theoretical Model of Nonresidential Father Involvement with Children

The Burr et al. (1979) conceptualization serves as a framework for the model of nonresidential father involvement with children illustrated in Figure 2. This model reflects various aspects of role transitions described by Burr et al. and suggests path relationships that exist among these variables.

The dependent variable in this model is level of involvement between fathers and children. Separate models will incorporate one of three observed involvement indicators: telephone/letter contact between fathers and children, face-to-face visits between fathers and children, and fathers' global participation in decision-making concerning children. Within the present study, this variable will be examined at two discreet times. Three of
Figure 2: A Role Transition Model of Nonresidential Father Involvement with Children
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dropped from the model because of a lack of appropriate indicators within the NSFH data set. Finally, the three moderating variables Burr et al. hypothesized as influencing the relationship between role facilitating involvement and role transitions have been dropped from this model. These are value of goals, substitute gratification, and time in role. These variables were dropped because of issues surrounding sample size and item construction within the data set.

Role facilitates goals is indicated as the role salience variable. Role satisfaction is measured through fathers' satisfaction with various aspects of their parent role. Role clarity is measured through the presence of custody and visitation agreements that define expected levels of contact between nonresidential fathers and children. Role conflict is assessed through measures of conflict with the former spouse centered around parenting issues. Role compartmentalization is primarily operationalized as the geographic distance between fathers and their children. These various measures reflect items included in the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), the data set to be utilized in the proposed study.

Figure 3 represents a revision of the model described in Figure 2. It includes each of the three observed involvement variables. All other variables and hypothesized relationships are the same as those included in Figure 2.
Figure 3: A Role Transition Model of Nonresidential Father Involvement with Children (Multiple Involvement Variables)
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Earlier Research on Nonresidential Father Involvement with Children

Prior to the 1980's, fathers were largely ignored in the literature of families. Those few studies addressing aspects of fatherhood, largely focused on fathers’ lesser participation in childrearing and household labor as compared to their wives (Braver & O’Connell, 1998). Although many of these studies were methodologically flawed, they served to paint a picture of fathers who were largely uninvolved in the lives of their children. However, research attention to the father role has substantially grown over the past twenty years (Parke & Brott, 1999). This expansion largely is in response to an ongoing reappraisal of family roles for men and women and unprecedented demographic changes in the American family (Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 1998). It has been suggested that increased research attention to the father role reflects an emerging ideal of fathers as co-parents. This ideal may be viewed as replacing a dominant view of fatherhood from earlier in the 20th Century: that of men as genial dads and sex role models (Pleck & Pleck, 1997). The growth in research attention to fathers, then, has occurred during a time of increasing expectations concerning men’s involvement in the lives of their children (Doherty et al., 1998).
Accompanying the increasing research attention to the father role, the literature on nonresidential father involvement with children has also grown significantly over the past decade (Braver & O’Connell, 1998). Again, this shift is in response to dramatic demographic changes including growth in the incidence of nonresidential fatherhood. As research attention to nonresidential fathers has grown, a broad range of factors have been introduced into consideration by researchers. The result is a recent body of research that has served to provide greater clarity in terms of issues surrounding nonresidential father involvement. However, this clarity remains limited at best. Indeed, earlier research on nonresidential fathers drawn from small, clinical samples facilitated the rise of several myths concerning nonresidential fathers that still dominate public perception despite a recent growth in research challenging those myths (Braver & O’Connell, 1998).

There is still considerable debate regarding the various factors associated with levels of post-divorce contact between fathers and children and the outcomes of such contact. Such debate arises out of the still relatively brief and superficial attention paid to the issue. Indeed, nonresidential father involvement received virtually no research attention prior to 1980, resulting in a knowledge base that is still relatively new and shallow. Only in the past few years have researchers begun to explore the complexity of post-divorce family relationships as they have moved away from comparisons of divorced and non-divorced families. Although these comparisons have been informative, they have necessarily limited attention to patterns of variation within divorced families themselves.
In response to rising divorce rates in the 1960s and 1970s and to increased incidence of single parenting in the 1980s and 1990s, sociologists, psychologists, and family scientists have devoted more and more research attention to patterns of nonresidential father involvement with children. Although this increased attention has substantially contributed to understandings in this area, the research has largely suffered from a number of shortcomings that have been problematic in terms of the breadth and complexity of such understandings.

Generally speaking, earlier research on nonresidential father involvement with children has lacked a depth of complexity consistent with the issues surrounding such involvement. Both the reasons that fathers disengage from their children and obstacles that discourage involvement have been insufficiently studied (Pasley and Minton, 1997; Ihinger-Tallman et al., 1993). Much of the literature on nonresidential father involvement primarily has been descriptive and has failed to provide causal analyses (Stephens, 1996). Thus, although a number of strong associations have been suggested in the literature, there is little support for inferences of causal relationships between various independent variables and nonresidential father involvement.

The literature also has largely failed to acknowledge the contextual complexity that surrounds nonresidential father relationships with children. This includes a lack of attention to the impact of various family characteristics (Seltzer, 1991) and the diversity of circumstances encountered by families (Arditti, 1995) on nonresidential father involvement as well as whether involvement is only circumstantially beneficial in terms of the well-being of both fathers and children (King, 1994). Also, in terms of well-being
outcomes, much of the research has implied a direct relationship between involvement and well-being, failing to consider possible interactive effects between father involvement and other variables (King, 1994). Indeed, research thus far largely has suggested only loosely connected correlates of divorce, father involvement, and adjustment (Coleman & Ganong, 1990).

This lack of complexity is further evident in the failure of researchers to synthesize findings from other disciplines (Fox, 1985; Seltzer, 1991). Indeed, because of the heightened interest in nonresidential parenting, researchers from various disciplines have studied patterns of involvement and factors associated with levels of involvement. The literature would be strengthened by attempts to better integrate findings across disciplines as well as broader interdisciplinary examinations of nonresidential father involvement.

Beyond this issue of general complexity, perhaps the most significant concern inherent in the literature is the general lack of fathers' voices (Braver et al., 1991; Greif, 1995; Kruk, 1991; Kurdek, 1986; McKenry, Price, Fine, & Serovich, 1992). The research is replete with studies that examine nonresidential father involvement through the reports of custodial mothers (Dudley, 1991; Esposito, 1995; Furstenberg & Nord, 1985). Not only have earlier studies relied on the reports of women, but most have limited their attention to reports of middle-class women (Depner & Bray, 1993). Hoffman (1995) suggests that the failure to include fathers in the study of post-divorce involvement is evidence of their status as visitors in the lives of their children and the problems inherent in this role. This manifestation of fathers as visitors in the lives of their children has not
only contributed to the reliance on mothers’ reports, but has also influenced the general focus of research as well as conclusions drawn from the reports of mothers.

Unfortunately, samples of fathers typically suffer from high non-response rates (Sweet & Bumpass, 1987) making the inclusion of father reports more difficult. It is clear, however, that the research will not be complete until fathers’ reports are more fully represented in the literature (Esposito, 1995). This is especially true for examinations of characteristics and attitudes of fathers themselves that contribute to patterns of involvement and outcomes of involvement.

Contributing to the salience of this issue is the well-documented pattern of reporting differences between nonresidential fathers and residential mothers (Hoffman, 1995; Kitson, 1992; Seltzer & Brandreth, 1994). Specifically, nonresidential fathers significantly report more contact (Ahrons, 1983; Braver et al., 1991; Smock & Manning, 1997; Seltzer, 1991; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980), more denial of visitation by mothers (Seltzer, 1991), and higher levels of financial contribution to child support (Smock & Manning, 1997) than do custodial mothers.

Seltzer (1991) suggests that nonresidential fathers are less accurate than custodial mothers regarding their own levels and types of involvement with children. However, there is little research support for her perspective. It has been suggested that such a perspective arises out of a moral undertone to the focus on fathers’ deficits that has characterized much of the research on nonresidential fathers (Doherty et al., 1998). Indeed, it has been suggested that prevalent images of “deadbeat dads” and emotionally
uninvolved fathers arise out of this deficit view of fatherhood (Braver & O’Connell, 1998; Doherty, 1990).

Much of the research on nonresidential fathers also has suffered from a reliance on small samples (Arendell, 1995; Braver et al., 1993; Minton & Pasley, 1996) often drawn from clinical populations (McKenry et al., 1992). Such samples not only limit the ability to generalize results to a larger population, but also hinder examinations of the impact of factors such as socioeconomic status and geographic location (Seltzer, 1991) and contribute to deficit perspectives on nonresidential fathers (McKenry et al., 1992). Unfortunately, those researchers who have developed large samples of divorced families (Kitson, 1992) have paid relatively little attention to patterns of involvement between fathers and children. Although many researchers have effectively used small samples to address complex research issues, generalizeability continues to be an issue (Cherlin et al., 1991). The ongoing development and use of large, representative data sets has resulted in more recent work that has risen above the limitations of small samples. Although these data sets present issues of secondary analysis of data, they also offer access to larger, representative samples that allow for a broader examination of such factors.

Related to this reliance on small, clinical, or convenience samples is the lack of longitudinal examinations of involvement and related issues (Braver, Wolchik, Sandler, & Sheets, 1993). Researchers still largely view divorce as an event rather than a process. When longitudinal approaches are utilized, they typically only cover a period of a few months or years. In this respect, long-term studies exemplified by Hetherington (1993) are extremely important. Research that examines father involvement throughout the
process of divorce and divorce adjustment as well as in the years following remarriage will serve to move researchers and practitioners past a perspective of divorce as an event. Although extremely difficult (some would say impossible) to do, the payoffs can be immense. Additionally, longitudinal approaches that incorporate prospective views of divorce largely are lacking. Unfortunately, the few longitudinal studies to incorporate prospective data such as those conducted by Cherlin et al. (1991) and Hetherington (1993) are as instructive for their weaknesses as they are for their contribution to the literature. Specifically, they rely on extremely small samples and produce results that are fairly narrow in focus. More recently, however, large, representative data sets have offered researchers an opportunity to assess longitudinal patterns in the area of divorce and post-divorce parent-child relationships (Amato & Booth, 1996).

Although often overlooked, it is important to acknowledge the largely atheoretical nature of much of the research on nonresidential father involvement (Kurtz, 1996). As noted below, however, there have been a number of recent studies that have explored nonresidential father involvement from an explicit theoretical perspective. Still, though, there is a need for more complex theoretical models contributing to a better understanding of directions of influence between variables (Arditti, 1992). This is especially true of conceptualizations of the father role and its relationship to patterns of involvement (Minton & Pasley, 1996; Seltzer, 1991).

A key issue surrounding research in this area is the various operational definitions of nonresidential father involvement. The majority of studies continue to rely on measures of frequency of contact between fathers and children rather than on the nature
and quality of that contact (Stephens, 1996). This lack of attention to qualitative issues leads to a tendency to view involvement as a dichotomous issue (Seltzer, 1991). Indeed, more than any other factor, the ambiguity surrounding the relationship between nonresidential father involvement and child adjustment can be attributed to the lack of attention to the quality rather than the quantity of father-child interactions.

When quantity of involvement is used as a measure, involvement is typically assessed through levels of face-to-face contact between fathers and children or levels of financial child support. Indeed, involvement may include telephone contacts, written or e-mail exchanges, the provision of money, and involvement in decision-making concerning the child (McArthur, 1994). Such alternate considerations of contact allow researchers to move beyond a number of confounding structural factors not the least of which is the fact that many fathers geographically live distant from their children.

Finally, the research on nonresidential fathers also suffers from many of the problems inherent in the research on fatherhood in general. Specifically, there is a comparative lack of attention to the father role in general and the impact of various forms of father involvement on children. Research interest in fatherhood and the father role has only recently begun to grow. The relative lack of earlier attention to fatherhood research creates two difficulties. First, there are only superficial understandings concerning enactment of the father role in general. Thus, when behaviors are observed among nonresidential fathers, it is difficult to assess the degree to which they are related to nonresidential status. Second, the field is left with relatively simplistic views of fatherhood. When views of fathering explicitly are expressed in the literature, they are
often built upon notions of residential fatherhood and the assumption that these notions are relevant to the experiences of nonresidential fathers. This creates additional difficulty in identifying factors of nonresidential father involvement that impact child well-being (Fox & Blanton, 1995). Furthermore, it is clear that any attempt to understand patterns of nonresidential father involvement with children must consider aspects of men’s enactment of the father role in general.

Thus, it is clear that the research on nonresidential father involvement with children following divorce has dramatically grown in both scope and depth. At the same time, there is considerable room for further advancements in understandings and attention to the various substantive issues that remain prevalent in the literature. Ambiguity regarding the relationships between divorced family structures and processes, nonresidential father involvement, and child outcomes continues to exist. With the ongoing high incidence of divorce and the changing nature of parenting (both in divorced and non-divorced families), a continuing focus on the issues identified here is important. Such a focus must continue to grow in both depth and complexity.

The Demographics of Nonresidential Fatherhood

A high incidence of nonresidential parenthood in the United States have been well documented in the literature. Approximately half of all children are expected to live in a single-parent household for a period of time prior to reaching adulthood (Bumpass & Sweet, 1989) with these children spending an average of five years in such households (Glick & Lin, 1986). In looking specifically at children born in the 1990s, it is anticipated that as many as 60% will spend time living in a single parent household.
This pattern is largely a result of increases in cohabitation, nonmarital fertility, and marital disruption (Bumpass, 1990, Smock & Manning, 1997). In 1993, over 6.3 million children were living with a single parent who had never married and an even greater number (6.6 million) were living with a single parent subsequent to divorce (Doherty et al., 1998). In most cases, children in single parent households reside with their mothers. In fact, ten times as many children reside with a single mother as with a single father (Parke & Brott, 1999; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1995) so that in 1990, at least 25 million children, or 40% of all children in the United States, did not live with their biological father (Norton & Miller, 1992). Indeed, at no time in United States history have so many children had biological fathers living elsewhere (Bianchi, 1995; Marsiglio et al., 1997).

Contributing to high levels of nonresidential parenthood is the incidence of divorce in the United States. More than one million marriages are dissolved each year (Arendell, 1997), and almost 60% of all first marriages in the United States end in divorce (Norton & Miller, 1992). It has been suggested that 40% of all persons born in the 1970s who marry will eventually divorce (Glick & Lin, 1986). Children are involved in approximately two-thirds of all divorces (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1995), emphasizing the salience of nonresidential parenting issues for a large number of divorced families. It has been suggested that more than half of all children will experience their parents’ divorce prior to reaching adulthood (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1994; Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991, Martin & Bumpass, 1989). In 1993, 6.6 million children lived with a single parent subsequent to a divorce (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1995).
Despite an emphasis on joint custody and equal participation in childrearing activities by both parents, mothers continue to bear primary responsibility for raising children following divorce (Seltzer, 1991).

Non-marital childbearing is the second key factor contributing to the high incidence of nonresidential parenting in the United States. Approximately 31% of all births in the United States are non-marital births (Doherty et al., 1998); 6.3 million children, or 9% of all children in the United States, were living with a single parent who had never married in 1993 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1994).

In light of the high incidence of nonresidential fathering in the United States, there is considerable interest over patterns of social and financial support of children by fathers who do not reside with them. Numerous researchers have reported diminished levels of face-to-face contact (Stephens, 1996, Furstenberg & Nord, 1985) and financial support (Fox & Blanton, 1995; Smock & Manning, 1997; Teachman, 1991) among nonresidential fathers. As research has increased, a more extensive understanding of such patterns has begun to emerge. This is true, in particular, for post-divorce nonresidential fathers. This group has received considerably more research attention than have men who fathered children outside of marriage and never resided with those children.

Patterns of Nonresidential Father Involvement with Children

The large majority of the research on nonresidential father involvement has been completed in the last decade. Despite the recency of this body of research, however, various patterns of involvement between nonresidential fathers and children have emerged.
First, it is apparent that many men have little or no face-to-face contact with their children when living separately from those children (Dudley, 1991; Hoffman, 1995). Utilizing data from the National Survey of Children, it has been reported that nearly half of all children with nonresidential fathers had not seen their fathers during the past year (Furstenberg, Morgan, & Allison, 1987; Furstenberg & Nord, 1985). An additional 21% of children were reported as having seen their fathers less than once a month during the same period. Although more recent studies utilizing data from representative national data sets suggest that these patterns may not be as extreme as reported (Braver et al., 1991; Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992; Seltzer, 1991; Seltzer & Brandreth, 1994; Smock & Manning, 1997), it remains clear that many nonresidential fathers have little contact with their children.

Similar patterns have been documented in terms of payment of child support. Only 48% of mothers who are awarded child support receive the full amount (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1995). However, this figure is far lower when considering only never-married custodial mothers. Among these women, only 27% have been awarded child support, and far less actually receive full child support payments (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1995). In 1993, only $13 billion of the $34 billion in outstanding child support orders was paid (Kellan, 1995). Once again, however, the majority of these data were collected through reports of mothers who may underreport father contributions or through governmental child support collection programs that only record payments made directly through the program (Braver & O'Connell, 1998).
At the same time, these recent studies point out that many men remain as very active, engaged presences in the lives of their children. Indeed, it appears as if there is wide variation in patterns of paternal involvement after separation (Arditti, 1990; Munsch et al., 1995; Seltzer, 1991). These involved men stand in contrast to the frequent pejorative descriptions of nonresidential fathers as incompetent parents who have abandoned their children (Pasley & Minton, 1997). What has not been explained is why such diversity exists among nonresidential fathers (Ihinger-Tallman et al., 1993).

A second clear involvement pattern is that of declining contact between fathers and children over time. Decline in contact following residential separation has been reported as being gradual (Amato & Rezac, 1994), fairly steady (Aquilino, 1994; Seltzer, 1991), and continuing into the child’s adulthood (Rossi & Rossi, 1990). Seltzer (1991) reports that declines in involvement occur not only in terms of face-to-face contact, but also in relation to child support and participation in decision-making concerning the child. Additionally, when there is ongoing contact between fathers and children, it is likely that fathers’ involvement will be social rather than instrumental (Esposito, 1995; Furstenberg & Nord, 1985). Similarly, Marsiglio (1991) reports that nonresidential fathers assume little responsibility for activities associated with primary parenting.

Along with this pattern of declining involvement, it has been reported that there is an increasing sense of alienation between fathers and children after separation (Zill, Morrison, & Coiro, 1993). In the case of divorced nonresidential fathers, Amato (1996) reports there is a similar decline in father-child emotional attachment following divorce while such attachment between mothers and children increases.
It has been suggested that this pattern of ongoing decline in father involvement begins during a transition period immediately following the initiation of initial separation. Among divorced fathers, Kruk (1991) suggests patterns of involvement become established and consolidated during a period ranging from the time of initial separation to about six months after the divorce. Supporting this notion, Mitchell (1985) reports that between 25% and 30% of children lose contact with their nonresidential fathers in the first year following divorce.

Greif (1995) suggests that this pattern of decline during the initial transition to nonresidential status reflects the struggle of fathers and children to form relationships that often significantly differ from those that existed when the father was still living in the child’s home. Again, however, it is important to acknowledge that more recent studies utilizing nationally representative data sets suggest that declines in involvement over time may not be as extensive as earlier reported (Depner & Bray, 1993). Also, one must acknowledge that this transition period may be a time of flux in which fathers leave, return, and leave again (Shulman & Seiffge-Krenke, 1997). Indeed, as Mott (1990) reports, father-leaving is not always a discreet event in the lives of children.

A third clear involvement pattern is that low levels of one type of involvement tend to be associated with low levels of other forms of involvement. A number of authors have reported a strong correlation, for example, between levels of visitation and levels of child support payment (Braver et al. 1993; Furstenberg & Nord, 1985; Peterson & Nord, 1990; Seltzer, 1991; Teachman, 1991). Indeed, it has been suggested that participation in visitation without child support is rare (Veum, 1992). It has also been reported that levels
of visitation and levels of child support payment are strongly correlated with participation in decision-making concerning the child (Arendell, 1995; Smock & Manning, 1997). Thus, it appears that fathers who disengage from their children do so relatively completely in terms of the behaviors typically utilized to measure levels of involvement.

Doherty (1997) offers an interesting perspective on declines in involvement between fathers and children. He notes that nonresidential fathers, more than nonresidential mothers, tend to withdraw physically and emotionally from their children in non-marital family structures. He suggests that this indicates that gender norms may be more important than family structure in affecting fathers’ behavior. On the other hand, nonresidential mothers are less likely to provide child support than nonresidential fathers. Doherty suggests, then, that family structure more than gender norms, is primarily responsible for fathers’ economic withdrawal from their children. In making this argument, Doherty emphasizes the importance of considering the gender norms associated with fatherhood as well as systemic aspects of families if one is to better understand the experiences of nonresidential fathers and their children.

Recent Perspectives on Fatherhood

Compared to motherhood, the literature on fatherhood is relatively sparse. However, there has been a relatively recent increase in research and theorizing on fatherhood and aspects of the father role. Thus, a relatively elementary yet still more extensive view of fatherhood has begun to emerge in the literature over the past several years.
Fatherhood itself has received far less attention in the literature than motherhood (Marsiglio, 1995). Recently, however, a number of authors have considered the development of the father role from a number of theoretical perspectives. Most common among these are socialization theories, microstructural theories, psychoanalytic explanations, and social learning perspectives (Daly, 1995). A socialization or structural functional perspective on development of the father role suggests men internalize a set of societal norms for the father role and that these norms provide a functional benefit for the family and society as a whole (Parsons & Bales, 1955). Daly (1995) suggests that ongoing views of fatherhood built on instrumental functions and the provider role are artifacts of this perspective.

Somewhat dichotomous to a socialization perspective, microstructural perspectives on fatherhood suggest men are continually impacted by different experiences and opportunities to which they are exposed, and these different experiences account for differences in patterns of fathering behaviors (Risman, 1987). From this perspective, enactment of the father role is a function of the life experiences of individual fathers. This perspective acknowledges, however, that cultural expectations for fathering behaviors are strong microstructural influences (Risman, 1987). From this perspective, then, increasing cultural ambiguity concerning specific father behaviors and enactment of the father role will influence men on a microstructural level as an aspect of the father experience in current society.

A psychoanalytic perspective suggests that men struggle as fathers because of limited childhood opportunities to identify with their own fathers (Daly, 1995).
Obviously, this perspective builds on the notion of fathers who are largely detached from
the lives of their sons. Such a perspective fails to account, however, for the increasingly
diverse experiences of children in families and ongoing changing trends in men’s
enactment of various aspects of the father role (Gerson, 1994). More than any other
factor, this diversity of family experience calls into question psychoanalytic perspectives
that fail to account for the interactive effects of fathers’ multiple roles as provider parent
and support for the mother (Daly, 1995).

Social learning perspectives on fatherhood largely build on the notion of
differential reinforcement of boys’ and girls’ behaviors (Daly, 1995). Thus, while young
boys and girls are likely to model behaviors of both men and women, they are
differentially reinforced for gender-appropriate behaviors, and this differential
reinforcement contributes to boys’ increasing attention to male role models and the
development of father identities based on those same-sex role models.

Each of these perspectives, however, attempts to explain fatherhood from a deficit
perspective. In other words, the focus is on providing theoretical explanations for men’s
relative struggles with father role enactment in comparison to women’s enactment of the
mother role (Doherty et al., 1998). In many ways, mothers have become the foundation
for societal norms concerning fathering (Day & Mackey, 1989). It is not surprising that
fathers behave differently toward their children than do mothers. It is well documented
that fathers interact less frequently with their children than do mothers, engage in
different types of interaction, are less involved than mothers in caregiving, and display
less affect toward children than do mothers (Minton & Pasley, 1996). The unfortunate
assumption often arising out of these results is that men are worse parents because of these differences. A more inclusive view would suggest that both parents are important resources for children, albeit differentially involved (Pasley & Minton, 1997). In considering fathers in relation to mothers, it is perhaps most important to acknowledge that mothers have considerable control over fathers’ relationships with children (Daly, 1995; Doherty, 1997; Gerson, 1993). It has been suggested that women’s control over father-child relationships is much more pronounced when fathers and children live apart (Seltzer & Brandreth, 1994). This control is exercised through mothers’ assumption of a gatekeeper function in the relationship between children and their nonresidential fathers (Ahrons, 1994, 1983). Mothers who are the primary residential parent can influence a father’s ability to interact with his children through various direct and indirect means. As a result, a father’s interaction with his children is largely dependent on his former spouse’s willingness to facilitate such interaction.

Although each of the above theoretical perspectives offers a potential framework for research that moves away from examinations of fathers in relation to mothers and toward considerations of the diversity of father behaviors that exist among men, there has been relatively little research attention to such diversity thus far.

Far more common in the research literature are attempts to explain patterns of fathering behavior in relation to societal expectations of fathers. Complicating this work is the fact that there is greater societal ambiguity today concerning the father role and men’s enactment of both the provider and caregiver aspects of fatherhood (Pasley & Minton, 1997). Indeed, this ambiguity is clear when considering societal notions of
residential and nonresidential fathers. In the case of residential fathers, definitions of positive parenting increasingly seem to have become tied to fulfillment of the caregiving function. For nonresidential fathers, however, greater societal emphasis seems to be placed on fulfilling the provider role through provision of child support (Doherty et al., 1998).

Historically, fathers have been viewed as providers and nurturers with varying degrees of emphasis on each (Atkinson & Blackwelder, 1993). This varying emphasis has contributed to ongoing shifts in the social construction of fatherhood (Doherty et al., 1998). Presently, although men are being called on to contribute more broadly to their children’s care and well-being as a means of participating in family work (Pasley & Minton, 1997), views of “good” fatherhood are still closely tied to being, first and foremost, a good provider (Thompson & Walker, 1989). As a result, men may develop self-definitions as fathers that are broad and inclusive of various roles while their behavior is narrowly judged on their performance solely as providers with the ultimate result being increased role confusion and ambiguity (Pasley & Minton, 1997).

Central to the current study are perspectives concerning the nature of father involvement with children. Much of the work in this area has relied on assessment of the amount of time fathers spent in specific fathering behaviors. Although such approaches provide an element of methodological ease, they are also fraught with problems. It has been suggested, for instance, that less time consuming aspects of parenting may hold more salience for men, suggesting that measures of time in behavior may not provide a clear sense of men’s attitudes concerning parenting (Palkovitz, 1997). Similarly, such an
approach fails to acknowledge that involvement can occur proximally or distally and
directly or indirectly (Palkovitz, 1997).

Palkovitz (1997) goes on to suggest that this simplicity arises out of a number of
common misconceptions about father involvement with children. These include the
commonly-held beliefs that more involvement is better, that involvement requires
proximity, that involvement can always be observed or counted, that involvement levels
are static, that involvement is similar across cultures and social classes, and that mothers
are more involved with children than fathers. Such misconceptions, while still
commonly-held in the United States, fail to acknowledge the contextual complexity
surrounding understandings of father involvement with children.

Recently, a number of perspectives on father involvement with children have
provided models that go beyond relatively simplistic measures of time in contact. Lamb
(1986) suggests that there are three forms of involvement: interaction, accessibility, and
responsibility. This view suggests that father involvement includes a number of
dimensions and behaviors that occur outside of the time that fathers actually spend with
children. Indicators of involvement, then, are much more broad than those utilized in
much of the earlier research on fathers and may include measures such as participation in
decision-making regarding the child, provision of advice to a child, and provision of
educational materials within the child’s household among others.

It has been suggested that fathering, more than mothering is influenced by
contextual factors in the family and the community (Daly, 1993; Doherty et al., 1998).
As with other aspects of family functioning, father involvement lends itself to a systemic
framework (Palkovitz, 1997). From this perspective, involvement may be viewed as a process involving fathers, mothers, children, extended family, and the broader community. It also may be viewed as engaging three domains of functioning: cognitive, affective, and behavioral (Palkovitz, 1997). Typically, it the behavioral domain that receives the bulk of the research attention. Without attention to the cognitive and affective aspects of involvement with children, a clear description of involvement cannot be developed (Palkovitz, 1997).

A contextual view of fathering is even more critical to an understanding of nonresidential fathers. The lack of consensus concerning father involvement with children is exacerbated following a divorce (Pasley & Minton, 1997). The fact that divorce results in limitations on behaviors that may have been central to a man's self-definition as a father implies that a redefinition of self in this area is probable (Ihinger-Tallman et al., 1993).

The Father Role Among Nonresidential Fathers

Men's enactment of the father role is built upon parenting identities incorporating self-meanings and cognitions attached to the status of being a parent (Ihinger-Tallman et al., 1993). It is clear that nonresidential status impacts men's enactment of the father role. Divorce carries with it the loss of familiar opportunities to parent and this loss impacts a man's identity as a father (Ihinger-Tallman et al., 1993). This impact on men's identities as fathers serves to create greater role ambiguity and role complexity (Minton & Pasley (1996). Adjustment to changes wrought by divorce or parental separation can be a lengthy process with many parents and children entering a "crisis" period that can last for
an extended time. Working out parental relationships and parenting during this time of transition can be complicated and difficult (Arendell, 1997). It has been suggested that fatherhood involves the creation and reformulation of roles through observation, communication, and negotiation with considerable institutional constraints on how these roles are exercised (Daly, 1995). Such constraints are often magnified for nonresidential fathers. Some nonresidential fathers find themselves seeking involvement in the face of former partners and even children who make it difficult for them to feel an active part of a child’s life. Others struggle with inadequacy associated with an inability to fulfill the good provider role (Marsiglio, 1995).

Indeed, the period of transition to nonresidential status and the time following are perhaps best characterized by a heightened level of role ambiguity for men. Although men do not have a clear job description for the parental role (Daly, 1995), there is even less clarity for nonresidential fathers. This ambiguity is evident not only in nonresidential father responsibilities (Seltzer, 1991) but also in the very meaning of fatherhood among those living separate from their children (Minton & Pasley, 1996). Ambiguity is further evident in varying custody and child support laws, varied beliefs about the impact of father involvement, and variations in actual behaviors (Seltzer, 1991). Many men argue that visitation serves to reinforce the role ambiguity they feel as parents after divorce (Arendell, 1997). In effect, they struggle with wanting to be identified as fathers while assigned the status of “visitor” in the lives of their children.

Along with this ambiguity, many nonresidential fathers report a sense of loss of the father role (Mandell, 1995). This role loss leads to role strain and, subsequently,
disengagement from children (Kruk, 1993). This sense of role loss is often magnified by an accompanying sense of loss regarding children (Arendell, 1995; Gerson, 1994; Minton & Pasley, 1996).

The experience of role ambiguity and role loss, then, may account for the diverse levels of involvement among nonresidential fathers. There is considerable variation among nonresidential fathers concerning what it means to be a father and what constitutes “good” fathering (Ihinger-Tallman et al., 1993). Men may behave very differently in terms of involvement with children largely because of differences in their interpretation of these meanings. Concurrently, men’s behaviors may also reflect their response to the real and imagined expectations of others regarding them as a father. In this respect, the nature of fathers’ involvement with children is subject to change resulting from social factors and the attitudes of others (Marsiglio, 1995).

It is not surprising, then, that divorced fathers report lower levels of satisfaction associated with the father role. This reduced satisfaction is magnified by the fact that fathers tend to assign higher levels of salience to the father role despite the ambiguity and barriers they face in this role (Minton & Pasley, 1996). Indeed, this issue of salience is central to a role perspective on nonresidential father involvement suggested by Ihinger-Tallman et al. (1993). The authors suggest that levels of involvement will largely depend on: (a) the salience of the father identity in comparison to other identities, (b) the salience hierarchy of the various father roles to be enacted, (c) commitment to the father identity, and (d) expectations significant others have for his behavior as a father.
Other Theoretical Perspectives on Nonresidential Father Involvement with Children

Although many studies of nonresidential father involvement with children are atheoretical, a number of authors have offered theoretical perspectives on the topic. Models based on many of the common theories of family functioning have been put forth in recent years.

Braver et al. (1993), for example, emphasize decision making in viewing nonresidential father involvement from a social exchange perspective. From this perspective, the choices a nonresidential father makes concerning involvement with children are based upon the perceived rewards and costs of such involvement. Involvement is predicted to be higher when the perceived rewards of the parent-child relationship are greater than the perceived costs of the relationship. While many of the costs and rewards may not be derived directly from the relationship between father and children, each is related in such a way as to impact the enactment of that relationship.

Braver et al. (1993) suggest a number of potential rewards and costs for fathers in these relationships. These include affectional or interpersonal costs and rewards, material or tangible costs and rewards, and symbolic or moral costs and rewards. The authors explore each of these and provide limited empirical support for their relationship to nonresidential father involvement with children.

Another theoretical perspective is offered by Serovich, Price, Chapman, and Wright (1992) who utilize concepts of family systems theory in exploring the relationship between nonresidential father involvement and the psychological boundaries that exist around the family. The concept of boundaries is central to a systems perspective on
Building on Boss’ (1977) notion of boundary ambiguity, the authors suggest that nonresidential father involvement is associated with the degree to which members of the family perceive the father as being inside or outside the boundaries of the family. It is suggested that situations such as divorce create ambiguous notions concerning family members’ new status. Nonresidential fathers, in particular, are faced with the difficult task of establishing a new status in the family. This ambiguity can lead to frustrations that may inhibit involvement between fathers and children.

Beal (1979) also utilizes a systems perspective in examining families following divorce. He suggests that the conflict between mothers and fathers that is often associated with divorce often shifts to conflict between a parent and child following the divorce. Consistent with a systems perspective, Beal’s model suggests that the conflict within the former spouse subsystem carries over to and impacts the various other subsystems within the family. Often, it becomes focused on children as barriers to communication with the former spouse become more rigid following the divorce.

Bray and Berger (1993) suggest that nonresidential father involvement is a dynamic phenomenon. In applying a developmental perspective, Bray and Berger suggest that nonresidential father involvement is largely a function of several sequential stages of divorce and remarriage experienced by the father and his former spouse. These stages begin during the first marriage, run through periods of separation and divorce and three stages of remarriage; planning for remarriage, early remarriage years, and later remarriage years. In utilizing a developmental perspective, Bray and Berger offer a longitudinal
perspective of nonresidential father involvement—one that is important in light of the
tendency of researches to view involvement at one point in time.

Finally, Ihinger-Tallman et al. (1993) incorporate identity into the view of
nonresidential father involvement as associated with patterns of father role identification.
They suggest that the key element in post-divorce father involvement with children is
fathers' identification with the status and roles of being a parent. This parenting role
identity is described as the self-meanings attached to the status and associated roles of
parenthood.

The model presented by Ihinger-Tallman et al. is built on the notion of father role
strain with the authors hypothesizing that higher levels of role strain will serve to
discourage a nonresidential father from seeking high levels of involvement with his
children. Stone and McKenry (1998) provide support for the Ihinger-Tallman et al.
model. Similarly, Umberson and Williams (1993) argue that similar patterns of father
role strain also have negative consequences in terms of the fathers' well-being following
divorce.

Although each of these perspectives offers a unique lens through which to view
nonresidential father involvement with children, none of the authors offers substantial
empirical support for their model. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, the research on
nonresidential father involvement has largely been atheoretical. Each perspective,
however, does offer a theoretical foundation upon which future empirical work may be
based. In this respect, the theoretical models offered by the above authors are an
important first step in developing more complete understandings regarding nonresidential father involvement.

However, recent empirical support for three theoretical perspectives on nonresidential parenting has been offered, however. Stephens (1996) explored the merits of the social parenting, marital-involvement parenting, and socioeconomic-advantaged parenting perspectives utilizing a sample of reports from 369 mothers drawn from the NSFH data set. The social parenting perspective suggests that fathers are serial parents who are likely to reduce or discontinue contact with children following the birth of a new child or the assumption of a father role in the lives of stepchildren. The marital-involvement parenting perspective assumes the experiences of fathers prior to divorce explain involvement with children following divorce. Finally, the socioeconomic-advantaged parenting perspective relates post-divorce nonresidential father involvement to parents' socioeconomic characteristics. Of the three perspectives, Stephens reports that the social parenting model explains the highest proportion of variation in nonresidential father involvement. It is important to note, however, that these results may reflect a bias introduced by the utilization of maternal reports. Indeed, this is an ongoing issue surrounding many of the studies of nonresidential father involvement with children following divorce which still frequently rely on the reports of former spouses.

Of particular relevance to the present study is the application of role theory, in particular, a theoretical perspective on role transitions, to the examination of patterns of involvement between nonresidential fathers and children.
Factors Associated with Levels of Involvement

Many researchers have examined predictors of nonresidential father involvement with children following divorce. Factors identified as being associated with nonresidential father involvement can be divided into four broad categories: (a) father characteristics, (b) child relationship characteristics, (c) former spouse relationship characteristics, and (d) structural factors. Remarriage, a fifth frequently cited category, is subsumed within the broad category of structural factors. Numerous studies have offered empirical support for associations within each of these categories.

Father Characteristics

Numerous studies have focused on characteristics of the father as predictors of post-divorce involvement with children often assuming a deficit perspective in their assessments. More recently, however, researchers have conducted more extensive and less subjective analyses of father characteristics as predictors of involvement with children.

Contradicting Stephens' lack of support for the marital-involvement parenting perspective, Hodges, Landis, Day, and Oderberg (1991) report that fathers who were involved in early child rearing activities visited more frequently with their children following divorce. They specifically focused on fathers of infants and toddlers, however, and no support was offered for such a pattern continuing on through childhood and adolescence. Arditti and Keith (1993) report that, rather than involvement with children, earlier levels of emotional closeness between fathers and children are associated with levels of post-divorce involvement.
Kruk (1991), however, offers conflicting results. He reports an inverse relationship between pre- and post-divorce involvement with children. Those men who were more highly involved with their children prior to a divorce were often the ones with the least amount of contact following the divorce. Kruk argues that this pattern is a result of the experience of role strain similar to that theorized by Ihinger-Tallman et al. (1993). These involved fathers experienced loss of the father role as a result of the divorce and, consequently, chose to withdraw from the psychological strain this produced for them through withdrawal from contact with their children. Kruk goes on to suggest that contact is high among those men who were less attached and involved with their children during marriage because the divorce offers an opportunity to formalize a part-time father role that they may have sought while still married. In support of Kruk's findings, Arditti (1992) found a strong association between fathers' feelings and contact with children following divorce. Specifically, she reports that the fathers' feeling that visits are too short/infrequent is negatively associated with frequency of visitation, whereas feelings of closeness with children is positively associated with visitation frequency. Seltzer (1991) acknowledges these somewhat contradictory reports in her summary of mixed findings between pre-divorce father-child involvement and post-divorce contact.

Hetherington (1993) suggests that role strain associated with transitions to new parental roles were particularly stressful and were strongly related to declines in involvement in the first two years immediately following divorce. McKenry et al. (1992) also found a strong relationship between nonresidential father involvement and factors associated with the father role. These authors hypothesized that factors that facilitate a
nonresidential father’s sense of meaning father role behavior would result in greater physical involvement with children following divorce. Both a father’s level of satisfaction with parenting and the amount of perceived influence in the child’s life were significantly associated with levels of involvement.

More recently, Pasley and Minton (1997) extensively focused on the relationship between men’s perceptions of their roles in the lives of children and subsequent contact with children. Specifically, they argue that the meaning attached to the “visiting status” can be an obstacle to father involvement. The “visitor” label contributes to intrapersonal conflict and emotional turmoil for fathers in that it creates questions concerning appropriate degrees of involvement between fathers and children that typically do not exist for residential fathers (Arendell, 1995; Bertoia & Drackich, 1993). As a result, fathers may avoid involvement at a strategy for avoiding emotional pain associated with a move to “visitor” status. Indeed, Pasley and Minton (1997) suggest that fathers often feel that they are relegated to an insignificant role in the lives of their children, one which does not provide emotional or social rewards that encourage involvement (Arendell, 1995).

Characteristics beyond those associated with enactment of the father role also have been explored. Dudley (1991a) reports that over 25% of the fathers in his sample reported personal characteristics and problems as being the greatest barriers to involvement with their children. Identified issues included substance abuse problems, job demands, desire to assist child in avoiding confusion between a father and a stepfather, gay lifestyle, and time constraints. Interestingly, these men largely indicated that their
relationships with their former spouses were either positive or, at least neutral. Stephens (1996) found similar support for the strength of father characteristics as predictors of involvement.

A number of other demographic factors associated with the father have been shown to be positively associated with nonresidential father involvement with children. These include race (King, 1994) with African-American children reported to have more contact with fathers, whereas Caucasian children receive more consistent child support. Others have identified socioeconomic status as an associated factor (Furstenberg et al., 1984; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980) with men from lower status levels being less involved with children. Related to this, there is also a suggested association between (a) education level and involvement (Dudley, 1991) with less educated fathers being less involved, and (b) financial stability and involvement (Furstenberg et al., 1984) with less stable fathers being less involved. In terms of child support, Teachman (1991) reports positive associations with father's income level, father's remarriage, father's visitation, and the degree to which the father voluntarily enters into the child support agreement.

It seems clear, then, that various characteristics of fathers are associated with aspects of involvement with children following divorce. The relationships identified in the research, however, offer little support for the commonly held view that fathers who have little post-divorce contact with their children are deficient in some way. Rather, the relationships are far more complex and bear further study.

Indeed, Stephens (1996) argues that father characteristics are better predictors of nonresidential father contact with children than mother characteristics, child
characteristics, or marital relationships. There are, however, a number of other relationships suggested in the literature.

Child Relationship Characteristics

Somewhat less attention has been paid to the merits of characteristics of the father’s relationship with children as predictive of patterns of father involvement. However, recent years have been characterized by increased attention to this area. Still, though, far less is known about the associations that may exist.

Simons et al. (1994) report that fathers are likely to diminish their involvement with adolescents who exhibit externalizing problems following divorce. Alternately, internalizing problems were not associated with declines in involvement. These findings are consistent with the patterns of involvement reported by Hetherington (1993) and Furstenberg and Nord (1985) in that they support the contention that nonresidential fathers largely avoid instrumental activities such as discipline. It is reasonable to assume that exclusively social and recreational involvements may be more difficult with children who exhibit externalizing problems.

Johnston (1993) explored the impact of child preferences on nonresidential father involvement. Largely, he found that the majority of children exhibited resistance to visitation with the nonresidential father. Such resistance was evident in children at all ages between 2 and 12 (the ages included in the samples). For no age was resistance evident in less than 56% of the children interviewed. Similar findings concerning child resistance to visitation have been reported by Greif (1995) and Greif and Kitrall (1993).
In exploring this pattern of resistance, Johnston suggests six factors contribute to the high levels reported: anxiety about separating from the primary caregiver, loyalty conflicts, intensity of parental disputes, inability of children to separate their feelings from that of a distressed residential parent, exposure to emotional abuse and physical violence between parents, and the child’s sense of counter-rejection by the nonresidential parent. Loyalty conflicts were also reported as negatively correlated with nonresidential father involvement by Clingempeel et al. (1995).

In a different vein, Paasch and Teachman (1991) explored the relationship between child gender and nonresidential father involvement. Despite reports of variation by child gender in other father behaviors, the authors found no relationship between child’s gender and the provision of financial and instrumental forms of assistance. Rather, the authors suggest differences in the provision of assistance to sons and daughters may be a function of different levels of request for assistance by the mothers. Also, it is important to note that the authors assessed instrumental forms of assistance in which nonresidential fathers are typically less likely to be involved. This overall lack of participation may make it difficult to observe differences based on factors such as the child’s gender. Still, though, positive associations between involvement and a child’s sex have been reported by Seltzer and Bianchi (1988) and Wallerstein and Kelly (1980). Although there are methodological concerns in both studies, these reports do offer at least partial support for further explorations in this area.

It is clear that the results regarding child relationship characteristics are sparse and ambiguous at best. Although there is some indication that child behaviors might inhibit
involvement, these findings are drawn from singular studies with relatively small sample sizes. There is also little attention to controlling for other potential factors. Of each of the predictive categories, child relationship characteristics have been examined the least. There is a need for far more research attention to the reciprocal nature of father-child relationships following divorce and the potential impact of the child on levels of involvement.

**Former Spouse Relationship Characteristics**

More than any other area, the research on the impact of the relationship with the former spouse on levels of involvement with children is clear and consistent. Numerous studies have documented the strong association between conflict with the former spouse and reduced levels of involvement with children following divorce. Indeed, many courts now mandate co-parenting education as a step in the divorce process in an attempt to reduce potential conflict following a divorce.

Fox and Blanton (1995), in a meta-analysis of the research, report that conflict between former spouses is the one factor consistently identified as most salient in restricting fathers' relationships with children following divorce. They also indicate that conflict was neither exacerbated nor lessened by shared custody arrangements.

Hodges et al. (1991), in a study of post-divorce father involvement with infants and toddlers, report a strong correlation between levels of spouse conflict prior to separation and levels of post-separation visitation with children. Pre-separation spousal conflict was also strongly associated with post-separation tension in the father-child relationship. Thus, conflict may inhibit father visitation in two ways: first through a
pattern in which the father seeks to avoid contentious contact with a former spouse and, second, through a father's avoidance of tension during times of contact with the child.

Dudley (1991a) reports a similar strong relationship between nonresidential father involvement and conflict with the former spouse. Two manifestations of conflict were identified as significant by these men. First, they identified direct conflict with the former spouse that often played out by the former spouse directly interfering with visitation. A less direct manifestation of conflict occurred through a former spouse talking negatively to children about the father. Similar patterns have been documented by Arendell (1995), Johnston (1993), and King (1994). Arditti and Keith (1993) report that the quality of the relationship with the former spouse does not impact visitation frequency but does impact the quality of visitation.


Arditti (1992), on the other hand, found no direct association between levels of conflict with the former spouse and nonresidential father involvement with children arguing instead for the possibility of a mediated association. Specifically, she suggests that conflict with the former spouse impacts levels of satisfaction with custody and visitation arrangements. This satisfaction, then, is associated with frequency of visitation.
In addition to conflict, levels of emotional attachment between former spouses has also been examined as a factor contributing to post-divorce patterns of involvement. Dozier, Sollie, Stack, and Smith (1993) suggest that former spouses who retain an attachment as friends experience more supportive and shared co-parenting relationships and lower levels of conflict around childrearing issues. Similar support for the benefits of a retained degree of attachment is offered by Serovich et al. (1992). Both studies argue against the notion that a complete emotional break with the former spouse is ideal. Rather, former partners appear to work together better if they retain some degree of feeling for one another.

In sum, the relationships specified are clear. The presence of positive emotions between former spouses is positively correlated with nonresidential father involvement while the presence of conflict is negatively associated with involvement. These results provide strong support for a more complex model of father involvement that goes beyond the earlier reliance on father characteristics as accounting for most of the variation. Additionally, there is a need to explore the relationship between father (and mother) characteristics and levels of conflict and attachment in post-divorce relationships.

**Structural Factors**

Additional complexity is added when one considers various structural constraints on nonresidential father involvement with children. Considerable research attention has been paid to such factors outside the father and his relationships with his children and former spouse. Although there is strong support for the negative consequences of some factors, the relationship of others is more ambiguous.
Receiving perhaps the strongest support is the negative relationship between geographic distance from children and levels of nonresidential father involvement. Consistent reports of strong negative correlations between distance from children and levels of involvement are offered by Arditti (1992), Arditti and Keith (1993), Dudley (1991a), McKenry et al. (1991), Seltzer (1993), and Stephens et al. (1993). Of course, assessments of the relationship between distance and involvement might appear quite different as broader definitions of involvement moving beyond face-to-face interaction are developed.

Other structural factors also have been examined in some detail. Various authors have reported positive correlations between nonresidential father contact with children and characteristics of the legal divorce agreement. These include the presence of a joint legal custody arrangement and/or a legal child support agreement (Arditti & Keith, 1993; Dudley, 1991b; Gray, 1992; Hetherington, Cox, & Cox., 1982; Kruk, 1991; Stephens et al., 1993; Stephens, 1996), mediated divorce settlements (Dudley, 1991b), and patterns of visitation arrangements (Pasley and Minton, 1997). A similar relationship exists between the presence of a joint custody agreement and/or visitation privileges and payment of child support (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1995). It has been suggested that joint custody is positively associated with father-child contact because it gives fathers the impression that society recognizes their importance to their children (Pasley & Minton, 1997) and provides fathers with a greater sense of influence in their child’s life (Arditti, 1992). However, caution must be taken in interpreting these relationships. Directionality is not clearly established. Although the various legal characteristics may lead to differences in
involvement, they may also be a function of the fact that men who seek various legal arrangements may also be those men who seek greater involvement.

Remarriage has also received considerable attention in recent years. Christensen and Rettig (1995) found that both fathers' and mothers' remarriages were associated with declines in nonresidential father involvement with children as well as with less frequent co-parental interaction, less felt parenting support from the former spouse, and more negative attitudes about the other parent. For men, remarriage also led to lower reported parental satisfaction although this effect was not evident for women. Similar negative relationships between both fathers' and mothers' remarriages and nonresidential father involvement were also documented by Furstenberg and Nord (1985) and Seltzer (1993). McArthur (1994) reports a decline in father involvement following his own remarriage but no similar decline following the remarriage of the former spouse. Stephens et al. (1993) report a similar lack of relationship between a mother's remarriage and a nonresidential father's level of involvement. Again, caution must be exercised in interpreting these results. Because remarriage is experienced by such a broad number of men, observed declines in involvement may be a result of other factors. Although remarriage may hold merit as a predictor of involvement, one cannot rule out other factors such as time since divorce or ages of children when considering observed declines. There is a need for further research that explores these factors and their potential correlation to remarriage status.

Finally, King (1994) and Seltzer (1991) both report that men are more likely to be involved with children born within marriage. This assertion is consistent with the fact
that many fathers of children born outside marriage never experience a residential relationship with those children. Thus, these fathers would seem to have less of a foundation for an ongoing engaged relationship. Seltzer (1991) reports a similar distinction within the National Survey of Families and Household sample with both men and women reporting greater involvement among men who fathered children within marriage. However, attributing this pattern to marital status at time of child birth may mask other factors. Within the general population, the group of never married fathers contains a higher proportion of poorly educated teenage fathers living in urban ghettos, men deeply embedded in the underclass. Conversely, divorced fathers tend to be better educated, higher paid, and somewhat older than their never-married counterparts (Braver & O’Connell, 1998).

**Outcomes of Involvement**

**Child Outcomes**

Although nonresidential father involvement with children following divorce is commonly viewed as valuable, there is considerable debate concerning its benefits for both children and fathers. Amato’s (1993) meta-analysis of the literature indicates highly ambiguous results in terms of the impact of levels of nonresidential father involvement on child well-being. Similar ambiguity was reported by Bray and Berger (1990) and King (1994). This ambiguity arises out of relatively dichotomous sets of results reported in this area.

One the one hand, numerous authors report finding no substantial relationship between nonresidential father involvement and child well-being. For example, authors
such as Mott (1992) and Amato (1993) suggest that level of nonresidential father involvement is not associated with child outcomes as measured through cognitive ability or psychological well-being. A similar lack of association has been reported by numerous other authors (Bolgar, Sweig-Frank, & Paris, 1995; Fox & Blanton, 1995; Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991; Furstenberg & Nord, 1985; Hawkins & Eggebean, 1991; King, 1994). Additionally, in one of the few longitudinal studies of nonresidential father involvement with children, Hetherington (1993) reports that father visitation has no main effect on child adjustment over time. It has also been suggested that there is little difference in the well-being of children who reside in single mother or single father households (Downey, Ainsworth-Darnell, & Dufur, 1998).

On the other hand, various authors have offered support for a relationship between involvement and child adjustment. Bisnaire et al. (1990) report a strong relationship between child academic performance and time spent with the nonresidential father. Maccoby, Buchanan, Mnookin, and Dornbusch (1993) report a similar strong relationship between involvement and adjustment in adolescents. Others suggest a relationship between the quality of a father's involvement and child adjustment. Simons et. al (1994) reported a relationship between the quality of a nonresidential father's parenting and externalizing problems in adolescence although there is some question concerning the direction of this relationship. Similar results were reported by Thomas, Farrell, and Barnes (1996). Conversely, Simons and Associates (1996) reported father involvement in instrumental activities such as discipline, assistance with school work, problem solving,
and moral reasoning is positively associated with a number of positive outcome variables in children.

Most of these studies, however, relied on small samples often drawn from convenience or clinical populations. Studies using large, nationally representative samples largely suggest little evidence of either positive or negative impacts of nonresidential father involvement on child well-being (Furstenberg et al., 1987; King, 1994; Stephens, 1996). These results support the notion that child adjustment is associated to a much greater degree on the child’s relationship with the residential parent and the quality of the care provided by that parent (Emery, 1988; Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991; Hetherington, 1993).

Other studies suggest that only indirect relationships exist between father involvement and child well-being. One such indirect relationship is reported by Mott (1994) who suggests that father absence impacts the home environment which, in turn, impacts child outcomes. Amato (1996) offers a similar perspective in arguing that nonresidential father involvement impacts child well-being through contributions of human, financial, and social capital. Also, it has been suggested that fathers impact child adjustment to the extent that they counter low control and inept discipline by custodial mothers (Simons et al., 1994). Again, the problem here may be that impacts have frequently been examined in relation to quantity of involvement rather than to the quality of the involvement. Indeed, Amato suggests that this is the key weakness of the literature he reviewed.
A number of authors have suggested that, more than levels of nonresidential parent involvement, child well-being is a function of levels of conflict between former spouses. Support for such a perspective is offered by Brody and Forehand (1990) who suggest that adolescent well-being as measured through internalizing problems is a function of an interaction between inter-parental conflict and the adolescent's relationship with the nonresidential father. Amato and Rezac (1994) offer a similar finding utilizing NSFH data. They report that nonresidential father involvement with children was associated with less problem behavior only when inter-parental conflict was low. Similarly, Simons et al. (1994) reported that involvement accompanied by inter-parental conflict is related to more child adjustment problems. Buchanon, Maccoby, and Dornbusch (1991) suggest that higher levels of parental conflict contribute to a child's feeling caught between parents and that this feeling of being caught is emotionally problematic for children. Stephens (1996) reports a similar positive association between inter-parental conflict and behavior problems in boys.

These results suggest that rather than having no effect, involvement may actually be deleterious in highly conflicted situations. Amato and Booth (1996) argue that pre-divorce conflict is also negatively associated with both the quality of post-divorce parent-child relationships and children's post-divorce behavior problems. Indeed, many children experience parental divorce only after long exposure to parental conflict leading up to the divorce (Arendell, 1997; Chase-Lansdale & Hetherington, 1990). This perspective suggests that divorce may, indeed, be advantageous for children whose parents' relationship is characterized by high levels of conflict in that it serves to end or reduce
levels of conflict in the children’s lives. Additional support for the relationship between inter-parental conflict and post-divorce child adjustment has been offered by Forehand, Wierson, Thomas, Armisted, Kempton, and Fauber (1990), Garber (1992), and Hodges et al. (1991).

Other researchers argue that economic involvement is more critical than physical or emotional involvement. For example, in a study of young adolescents, Furstenberg et al. (1987) report that paternal involvement was largely a non-issue in terms of child outcomes. Fathers’ level of economic support, however, was associated with decreases in problem behaviors. Similar support for the association between child outcomes and father involvement being largely (or exclusively) limited to the sphere of economic contributions is offered by King (1994), McLanahan and Sandefur (1994), McLanahan et al. 1991; and Buehler and Legg (1992). Indeed, McLanahan et al. (1994) suggest the positive effects of child support payments outweigh the negative effects of parental conflict.

A number of researchers have also focused on adult outcomes among children of divorce. Aquilino (1994) and Booth and Amato (1994) provided evidence of a decline in father-child adult relationships as a result of divorce. The authors argue that this pattern is the result of lowered support for children when they were young. There is some indication, however, that patterns of adult involvement with parents may be a function of levels of marital quality in childhood rather than divorce. Interestingly, both Aquilino and Booth and Amato report that mothers did not experience similar declines in their relationships with adult children.
As with other areas of inquiry relating to nonresidential fathering, the research on child outcomes suggests the need to explore more complicated relationships than those reported thus far. Further analyses of the qualitative aspects of involvement will serve to provide a more complete understanding of the outcomes of divorce for children.

**Father Outcomes**

Considerably less attention has been directed to the relationship between nonresidential father involvement with children and levels of father well-being. It has been documented that nonresidential fathers are more likely to engage in health-compromising behaviors (Umberson, 1987), have poorer mental health scores (Hughes, 1989), and higher feelings of inadequacy (Dudley, 1991a) than their counterparts who live with their children. It is not clear, however, that this pattern is a result of their nonresidential parent status. Indeed, it has been shown that both divorced men and single men have lower psychological and physical well-being scores than their married counterparts and this effect may, in fact, account for the differences between residential and nonresidential fathers. At the same time, Umberson and Williams (1993) suggest that strain associated with the parental role is a key factor contributing to distress experienced by divorced fathers. Through a series of interviews with divorced fathers, they report that men experience strain associated with visitation/child support, relationships with former spouses, and issues of personal and social identity.

It has also been suggested that nonresidential fathers experience more stress associated with the parenting role largely because they have no wife to facilitate contact; they are required to provide sole supervision for their children when visiting (Seltzer,
1991); there are no established norms for nonresidential fathering (Cherlin et al., 1991); contact with children requires contact with a former partner; and feelings of guilt associated with failure at the parental role (Riessman, 1990).

Research Support for Relationships within the Hypothesized Model

The hypothesized model suggests a number of relationships between various elements of role enactment and father involvement with children as measured by levels of contact, child support payments, and participation in decision-making concerning the child. Although the hypothesized model has not been previously examined in relation to nonresidential father involvement with children, the literature does suggest varying degrees of support for each of these relationships.

Role Salience to Father Involvement

There has been little direct attention to the relationship between levels of father role salience and nonresidential father involvement with children. Thus, support for this relationship is sparse, at best. Although not empirically examined, this relationship has been hypothesized.

For example, role salience is central to Ihinger-Tallman et al.'s (1993) view of the relationship between role identity and nonresidential father involvement. Although Ihinger-Tallman et al. provided only a rudimentary level of data in support of this relationship, a subsequent examination of the relationship between role identity and father involvement conducted by Minton and Pasley (1996) did include a role salience measure. The authors report that nonresidential fathers report higher levels of role salience than their residential counterparts but that levels of salience are not associated with levels of
involvement. Although the findings did not support a relationship between role salience and levels of involvement, the authors theorize that the measure of salience used in this study may not have accurately captured the true meaning of the construct.

**Role Satisfaction to Father Involvement**

Similar to role salience, role satisfaction has received little research attention in relation to levels of nonresidential father involvement with children. McKenry et al. (1992), utilizing data from the National Survey of Families and Households, found that satisfaction with the parenting role was associated with levels of physical involvement between fathers and children as measured through frequency of visitation, length of visitation, time spent in meaningful activities, and extent of talking on the telephone or writing.

Within their examination of the relationship between parent role identity and nonresidential father involvement, Minton and Pasley (1996) also reported a relationship between role satisfaction and involvement. Like McKenry et al. (1992), the authors report that higher levels of role satisfaction are associated with greater involvement in various parenting activities.

**Role Clarity to Father Involvement**

Considerably more support is evident in the literature for the relationship between role clarity as it is measured here and father involvement. For the purpose of the present study, role clarity is measured through the presence of legal agreements that specify custody arrangements and schedules of visitation and child support.
Joint legal custody is associated with higher levels of contact between fathers and children as measured through provision of child support, levels of face-to-face contact, and degree of influence in children’s lives (Arditti, 1992; Pasley & Minton, 1997). It has been suggested that this pattern is explained by the fact that joint legal custody is a form of recognition of their importance to their children (Minton & Pasley, 1996). Others argue that joint legal custody contributes to higher levels of satisfaction for fathers, and this contributes to increased involvement (Arditti, 1992; D’Andrea, 1983). It has also been suggested that legal agreements concerning patterns of visitation contribute to levels of involvement between fathers and children (Arendell, 1992, 1995; Bertoia & Drakich, 1993; Teachman, 1991). Kruk (1991) suggests that this effect is magnified among men who were highly involved fathers prior to a divorce.

**Role Conflict to Father Involvement**

Although parental conflict is associated with decreased levels of involvement between fathers and children, this may not be entirely attributable to the fathers themselves. In many cases, parental conflict contributes to patterns of mothers limiting contact between fathers and children (Arditti & Keith, 1993; Arendell, 1995; Dudley, 1991b). At the same time, however, fathers may reduce contact with children or provision of child support as a means of exerting control over former spouses with whom they experience high levels of conflict (Arendell, 1992). This may be especially true when the conflict revolves around these types of involvement with children. Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) suggest this pattern of maternal gatekeeping is indicative of women’s continuing to manage father-child relationships after marital separation. In a qualitative
study of patterns of involvement between divorced fathers and children, Arendell (1995) reported that those men who actively sought to decrease conflict with their former wives also had substantially more contact with their children, again suggesting that the relationship between parental conflict and father-child contact is somewhat dependent on how conflict is addressed between fathers and mothers. Hodges et al. (1991) suggest that levels of pre-separation conflict are also closely associated with levels of post-separation involvement between fathers and children.

It has also been suggested that parental conflict also impacts the quality of fathers’ relationships with their children following separation. Arditti and Keith (1993) report that low parental conflict is associated with higher quality visits between fathers and children. Donnelly and Finkelhor (1992) report higher levels of conflict between parents results in high levels of conflict between children and both fathers and mothers. This heightened conflict between children and parents may also contribute to the reported association between parental conflict and child adjustment following divorce (Furstenberg et al., 1984; Kline, Johnston, & Tschann, 1991). A similar relationship has been suggested by Brody and Forehand, (1990), Forehand et al. (1990), and Garber (1992).

**Role Conflict to Role Satisfaction**

Very little scholarly attention has been directed toward this relationship. Support is offered by Arditti (1992), who reports that hostility with a former spouse is associated with various aspects of father’s satisfaction including satisfaction with the custody arrangement, length of visits, and child support obligations, as well as perceptions
regarding the quality of visits with children. She goes on to argue that levels of satisfaction are then associated with patterns of contact between fathers and children.

**Role Conflict to Role Clarity**

Role clarity is defined here as the presence of legal agreements concerning visitation, custody, and child support. It has been suggested that levels of conflict may serve as a predisposing factor contributing to the presence of such agreements (Braver & O'Connell, 1998). In other words, the presence of inter-parental conflict and the nature of that conflict contribute to a couple’s seeking explicit agreements in this area. It has been suggested that the positive shared parenting that may arise out of the presence of explicitly defined parental activities and a less conflicted approach to those activities contributes to overall increases in involvement between fathers and children (Hetherington & Stanley-Morgan, 1997). Additionally, the presence of inter-parental conflict tends to decrease the likelihood of involvement even in the presence of legal agreements concerning visitation, custody, and payment of child support (Emery, 1994, Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992).

**Distance to Role Satisfaction**

Although it seems obvious that greater geographic distance would be associated with reduced contact, at least as measured through face-to-face visits, it is not as clear that this relationship is mediated by levels of role satisfaction. In other words, greater geographic distance is associated with reduced levels of satisfaction in fathers which, in turn, are associated with declining levels of involvement. Although not extensively researched, such a relationship has been suggested by Pasley and Minton (1997) who
report such a pattern within the qualitative reports of nonresidential fathers. Although not specifically addressing a relationship to role satisfaction, others have described distance from children as a significant barrier to all types of involvement (Dudley, 1991; McKenry et al., 1992).
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Question

This project examined the relationship between various aspects of the father role and patterns of involvement between nonresidential fathers and their children as measured by (a) face-to-face contacts between fathers and children, (b) telephone or letter contact between fathers and children, and (c) father participation in decision making concerning the child. The primary research question was, “Does a role transition perspective serve to explain variations in involvement between nonresidential fathers and their children?” It was hypothesized that father role satisfaction, role clarity, and role salience would all positively contribute to involvement, while role conflict and role compartmentalization would negatively contribute to involvement.

Building on the model of role transitions described by Burr et al. (1979), the model analyzed in the present study included a number of causal relationships suggesting direct and indirect relationships among the variables in the model. These relationships model those causal inferences built into the Burr et al. model. Role salience, role satisfaction, and role clarity were all proposed to directly and positively impact involvement as measured through face-to-face visits, telephone/letter contacts, and
fathers' global influence in decision-making concerning the child. A direct, negative relationship was also proposed between role conflict and involvement. Role conflict was also proposed to be negatively associated with role clarity and role satisfaction while role compartmentalization, as measured by geographic distance between fathers and children, was proposed to negatively contribute to role satisfaction.

Research Hypotheses

The purpose of this study was to assess the strength of a theoretical model of role transitions to explain variations in father involvement with children. A model of role transitions developed by Burr et al. (1979) was revised into the models described in Figures 2 and 3. Based on the revised models, the following hypotheses were developed:

**Hypothesis One:** The proposed path models would significantly account for variance in father involvement at Time 1 as measured by face-to-face contact, telephone/letter contact, and global influence in decision-making concerning the child.

**Hypothesis Two:** The proposed path models would significantly account for variance in longitudinal patterns of father involvement as measured by face-to-face visits, telephone and letter contact, and global influence in decision-making concerning the child.

**Hypothesis Three:** The proposed path models would significantly account for variance in father involvement as measured by face-to-face contact, telephone/letter contact, and global influence in decision-making concerning the child among men who resided with their child(ren) at Time 1 and lived separately from their child(ren) at Time 2.
**Hypothesis Four**: The proposed path models would significantly account for variance in African-American father involvement at Time 1 as measured by face-to-face contact, telephone/letter contact, and global influence in decision-making concerning the child.

Within the model, a number of bivariate relationships were hypothesized. These were:

**Hypothesis Five**: Levels of role satisfaction would positively contribute to levels of involvement between fathers and children for all sample groups.

**Hypothesis Six**: Levels of role salience would positively contribute to levels of involvement between fathers and children for all sample groups.

**Hypothesis Seven**: Higher role clarity as measured through the presence of legal custody and visitation agreements would positively contribute to levels of involvement between fathers and children for all sample groups.

**Hypothesis Eight**: Role compartmentalization would negatively contribute to role satisfaction for all sample groups.

**Hypothesis Nine**: Role conflict would negatively contribute to levels of involvement between fathers and children for all sample groups.

**Hypothesis Ten**: Role conflict would negatively contribute to levels of role satisfaction for all sample groups.

**Hypothesis Eleven**: Role conflict would negatively contribute to role clarity for all sample groups.
Each of the above bivariate relationships were hypothesized to hold true for each of the four samples examined in the present study and within the longitudinal analysis.

Data Source

This study consisted of an analysis of data included in the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH). The NSFH includes data collected from a nationally representative sample of 9,643 individuals as well as an over-sample of minorities and households containing single-parent families, stepfamilies, recently married couples, and cohabiting couples. 13,017 individuals comprised the total sample for an initial wave of data collected in 1987-88 (Sweet, Bumpass, & Call, 1988). A second wave of data was collected in 1993-94 from 10,008 of the initial respondents (Sweet & Bumpass, 1996). Thus, the survey included a longitudinal dimension utilized in this study. The NSFH was selected because of its treatment of issues surrounding nonresidential parenting and its inclusion of father reports. It provides more extensive information in this area than many of the other national data sets currently available. The recent inclusion of time two data also allows for a variety of longitudinal analyses.

The reports of the fathers included in the NSFH are made in relation to a focal child selected from all of the men’s children. Thus, although fathers’ relationships may vary from child to child, such variation is not included here. In all cases, only father responses are considered.

Sample Selection

A primary sample of 426 men was utilized in this study. These men were all living separately from one or more children under the age of 18 at Time 1 of the NSFH.
data collection. The sample included fathers separated from their children as a result of divorce and unmarried fathers who had never lived with their children. Within this initial sample, a subset of 119 African-American fathers was also analyzed.

Of the 426 initial subjects, 117 were included in an analysis of Time 2 data. These were men whose children were still under age 18 at Time 2 and from whom Time 2 data was collected. Because of the large number of African-American fathers in the initial sample who dropped out of the data set at Time 2, a separate analysis of African-American fathers at Time 2 was not performed.

Finally, because this study is an analysis of a theoretical model of role transitions, an effort was made to examine subjects who had separated from their children fairly recently. Thus, a sample of 86 men who had residentially separated from their children between Time 1 and Time 2 was analyzed. All of the men in this group had lived with their children at Time 1 and, consequently, had been separated from their children for less than five years.

A descriptive summary of the samples and their subsets is included in Table 1. In all cases, subjects with missing data on any of the measured items were excluded from the sample. Although this exclusion necessarily limits the overall sample sizes and raises concerns regarding the degree to which the samples are representative, it is necessary for the analysis techniques being utilized (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1996).

Utilization of the NSFH data set, while offering access to a large, nationally representative subject pool, carries a number of limitations that are evident in the samples included in the present study. First, the NSFH data set offers a relatively small sample at
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>All Subjects</th>
<th>African-American</th>
<th>Caucasian</th>
<th>Time 2 Sample</th>
<th>Missing at Time 2</th>
<th>Newly-Separated</th>
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<td>n=426</td>
<td>n=119</td>
<td>n=307</td>
<td>n=117</td>
<td>n=309</td>
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<td>33.82</td>
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<td>19 to 62</td>
<td>21 to 61</td>
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<td>21 to 56</td>
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<td>Mean No. Years</td>
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<td>12.64</td>
<td>12.67</td>
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<td>30 (25.64)</td>
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<td>174 (41.23)</td>
<td>52 (44.44)</td>
<td>109 (40.22)</td>
<td>123 (39.68)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>$25.175</td>
<td>$21.785</td>
<td>$25.164</td>
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<td>$15.773</td>
<td>$34.312</td>
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<td>$5,000 - $9,999</td>
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<td>13 (12.75)</td>
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<td>4 (4.71)</td>
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<td>$10,000 - $19,999</td>
<td>113 (29.67)</td>
<td>34 (33.33)</td>
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<td>$20,000 - $29,999</td>
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<td>21 (20.59)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>$100,000 or more</td>
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<td>1 (0.98)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>82 (69.49)</td>
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<td>54 (57.45)</td>
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<td>22 (19.65)</td>
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<td>21 (22.34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
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<td>0 (0.00)</td>
<td>3 (1.08)</td>
<td>0 (0.00)</td>
<td>4 (1.28)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>56 (13.15)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>1.60</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>1.21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Std. Dev.</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.78</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of Children Living Elsewhere</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
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<td>1.73</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Dev.</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>1.12</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>11.06</td>
<td>10.52</td>
<td>11.26</td>
<td>9.22</td>
<td>11.71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Dev.</td>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>5.01</td>
<td>5.22</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>5.14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1 to 18</td>
<td>1 to 18</td>
<td>5 to 18</td>
<td>5 to 18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focal Child Sex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>222 (52.4)</td>
<td>58 (49.2)</td>
<td>144 (52.9)</td>
<td>62 (55.4)</td>
<td>160 (51.3)</td>
<td>49 (52.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>202 (47.6)</td>
<td>60 (50.8)</td>
<td>128 (47.1)</td>
<td>50 (44.6)</td>
<td>152 (48.7)</td>
<td>45 (47.9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Sample Descriptive Information
Time 2. This is the result of the fact that the children of many of the initial subjects reached age 18 during the period between the first and second waves of data collection as well as the large number of initial subjects who dropped out of the data set at Time 2. Indeed, it is reasonable to expect that nonresidential fathers are one group at risk of dropping out of a longitudinal study because of residential, marital, and other changes they may experience. A descriptive comparison of those subjects who remained in the sample at Time 2, subjects whose children reached adulthood between Time 1 and Time 2, and subjects who dropped out of the data set at Time 2 is included in Table 1. Although large enough to warrant further examination, sample size may weaken the power of the various analyses to be run. This is the case in terms of the analysis of African-American fathers at Time 1, fathers remaining in the sample at Time 2, and fathers separated from their children between Times 1 and 2.

Second, the sample largely lacks racial diversity. Despite over-sampling for minorities, the NSFH data set often yields racially homogeneous samples. Care must be taken to avoid over-generalizing the results to minority and class groups not adequately represented in the sample. Although Caucasian and African-American fathers are sufficiently represented in the sample, other ethnic groups are largely absent.

Also, items relating to several variables appear to be less rigorous measures than one might desire. In particular, the items used to assess role salience appear somewhat vague and distant from the original meaning of the role facilitates goals variable. At the same time, the lack of research attention to role salience suggests that reliance on these measures will still offer an important contribution to the literature. It is anticipated,
However, that the relationship between role salience as measured here and father involvement will be weak at best. A related issue is the fact that different items were incorporated into the survey at Times 1 and 2. Thus, role salience is operationalized through different survey items at Times 1 and 2. This introduces a potentially confounding element into longitudinal analyses. This issue will be addressed in the summary of results.

Finally, because of the structure of relevant NSFH survey items, a reliable determination of subjects' income and socioeconomic status is difficult. Although income level is reported in Table 1 along with other descriptive information, this information should be viewed with caution. The income levels reported are drawn from a constructed variable merging measures of several sources of income. Unfortunately, there are concerns about the reliability of this data. Thus, generalizations to the larger population based on this data are inappropriate. Despite this liability, data included in the NSFH offer a valuable source of information on the experiences of nonresidential fathers and their children and, thus, is appropriate to the scope of this study.

Sample Characteristics

Descriptive data on the various samples and subsamples are provided in Table 1. The 426 fathers ranged in age from 19 to 62 with a mean age of 36.41 years. African-American fathers were slightly younger as a group with a mean age of 34.96 years while the mean age for Caucasian fathers was 37.11 years. As a group, the fathers who remained in the sample at Time 2 were younger (mean = 33.82) than those fathers who dropped out of the sample at Time 2 (mean = 37.33). This difference is largely
attributable to the fact that older fathers were more likely to drop out of the sample because their focal child reached age 18 prior to Time 2.

Among the 426 fathers, 272 (64.2%) were Caucasian, 118 (27.8%) were African-American and 34 (8.0%) were of other ethnic affiliation. At Time 2, 79 (70.5%) of the fathers were Caucasian, 27 (24.1%) were African-American, and 6 (5.4%) were of other ethnic affiliation.

Within the sample, 218 (51.17%) of the fathers reported being Protestant, 88 (20.66%) reported being Catholic, 4 (0.94%) reported being Jewish, and 60 (13.15%) reported having no religious affiliation. The remaining 56 fathers (13.15%) reported an affiliation with one of 15 other religions. Among African-American fathers, a greater percentage reported being Protestant (69.49%) while far less reported being Catholic (6.78%).

With regard to education, 83 (19.67%) of the fathers had not graduated from high school. 174 (41.23%) had graduated from high school without pursuing additional education. 106 (25.12%) had completed one to three years of college while another 59 (13.89%) had earned a college degree. As a group, the African-American fathers had lower educational attainment than Caucasian fathers. Among African-Americans, 30 (25.64%) had failed to graduate from high school, 52 (44.44%) were high school graduates, 25 (21.37%) had completed one to three years of college, and 10 (8.55%) had earned a college degree.

In regard to income distribution, the fathers in the sample reported an average income of $24,250 in the past year. Forty-two (11.02%) reported earning less than
$5000, 35 (9.19%) reported earning between $5,000 and $9,999, 113 (29.67%) reported earning between $10,000 and $19,999, 75 (19.68%) reported earning between $20,000 and $29,999, 90 (23.62%) reported earning between $30,000 and $49,999, 21 (5.51%) reported earning between $50,000 and $99,999, and 5 (1.31%) reported earning over $100,000. Similar to patterns of educational attainment, African-American fathers earned less income than their Caucasian counterparts. African-American fathers reported an average income of $21,975 in the past year compared to $25,175 for Caucasian fathers. 10 (9.80%) reported earning less than $5,000, 13 (12.75%) reported earning between $5,000 and $9,999, 34 (33.33%) reported earning between $10,000 and $19,999, 21 (20.59%) reported earning between $20,000 and $29,999, 18 (17.65%) reported earning between $30,000 and $49,999, 5 (4.90%) reported earning between $50,000 and $99,999, and 1 (0.98%) reported earning over $100,000. Fathers who remained in the sample at Time 2 reported lower income than those fathers who dropped out of the sample. In terms of Time 1 income, fathers included in the Time 2 sample reported earning an average of $21,785 while those who dropped out of the sample reported Time 1 income of $25,164.

At Time 1, fathers reported having been married an average of 1.49 times with African-American fathers having married less often (1.31 marriages) than Caucasian fathers (1.60 marriages). These men lived separately from an average of 1.66 children with African-American fathers having slightly more children living elsewhere (1.73) than Caucasian fathers 1.61).
Among focal children, age patterns similar to those among fathers were evident. Children at Time 1 ranged in age from less than one year of age to age 17 with a mean age of 11.06 years. The children of African-American fathers averaged 10.52 years of age whereas the children of Caucasian fathers averaged 11.26 years of age. Similar to their fathers, children whose fathers remained in the sample at Time 2 were younger (mean = 9.22 years) than their counterparts whose fathers had dropped out of the sample at Time 2 (mean = 11.71 years).

Among all men in the sample, 222 (52.4%) of their focal children were female while 202 (47.6%) were male. African-American fathers had slightly more male children (50.8%) than female children (49.2%), whereas Caucasian fathers were more likely to have female children (52.9%) than male children (47.1%).

In addition to the above sample, a second sample of men who residentially separated from their children between Time 1 and Time 2 was also examined. The mean age for these men was 31.62 years, somewhat younger than their counterparts who lived separately from their children at Time 1. Seventy-one (75.53%) of the men were Caucasian with another 17 (18.09%) being African-American. In terms of educational attainment, these men were comparable to those in the Time 1 sample. They had achieved an average of 12.66 years of education with 11 (11.70%) failing to complete high school, 41 (43.62%) being high school graduates, 31 (32.98%) completing some college, 8 (8.51%) completing a bachelor’s degree, and 3 (3.19%) completing postgraduate education.
The newly-separated sample appeared very similar to the Time 1 sample in terms of income with a mean income of $24,076 (SD = $20,574). Twelve (14.12%) of these men reported earning below $5,000, 4 (4.71%) reported earning between $5,000 and $9,999, 25 (29.41%) reported earning between $10,000 and $19,999, 18 (21.18%) reported earning between $20,000 and $29,999, 20 (23.53%) reported earning between $30,000 and $49,999, 5 (5.87%) reported earning between $50,000 and $99,999 and 1 (1.18%) reported earning over $100,000.

The majority of this sample reported being Protestant (57.54%), with another 22.34% reporting being Catholic, 2.13% reporting being Jewish, and 8.51% reporting no religious affiliation. These men had been married an average of 1.21 times and had an average of 1.83 children living with residential mothers. 52.1% of the focal children were female and 47.9% were male.

Data Analysis

The relationship between the measures of contact and the various independent variables was analyzed through a path analysis utilizing LISREL (version 8.0). Structural equation modeling will allow for an assessment of causality within each of the proposed relationships as well as a powerful analysis of all the paths in the proposed model in relation to one another. These paths indicate hypothesized relationships between exogenous and endogenous variables. Exogenous variables are those hypothesized to have a causal influence on other variables while endogenous variables are those that explicitly exist as outcomes of such causal relationships within the model. Additionally, structural equation modeling allows for the analysis of complex path models and casts
such an analysis in the tradition of hypothesis testing (Kelloway, 1998).

The goal of structural equation modeling as utilized here is to explain patterns of covariance among the variables included in the model. It serves, then, to provide an explanation of why several variables may or may not be related (Kelloway, 1998). As a result, structural equation modeling serves as a powerful tool in assessing the fit between theoretical predictions and available data. The use of structural equation modeling allows for the drawing of causal inferences as long as three conditions are met: (a) association between variables, (b) inclusion of all relevant predictors in the model, and (c) the establishment of causal direction (Bollen, 1989).

The development of a theoretically derived model builds on three assumptions (Kelloway, 1998). First, it is assumed that all proposed causal relationships are linear. Second, the proposed path diagram is assumed to represent all the causal relations between the variables. Third, it is assumed that all causes of the variables in the model are included in the model. Thus, structural equation modeling does not allow for the consideration of alternative variables and relationships without the development and assessment of alternate path diagrams.

Models were assessed for three types of involvement: (a) face-to-face visits, (b) telephone/letter contact, and (c) participation in decision-making. The analysis was performed on four sample groups: (a) all nonresidential fathers at Time 1, (b) African-American nonresidential fathers at Time 1, (c) nonresidential fathers for whom longitudinal information is available, and (d) men who residentially separated from their children between Time 1 and Time 2.
A fourth key indicator of involvement is not included here. Provision of financial support has received considerable research and policy attention and would be a valuable addition to the present study. Unfortunately, the measures of provision of financial support within the NSFH survey are particularly problematic and, for this reason, financial support has not been included as a variable in the present study. Four particular problems have lead to this decision. First, although fathers are asked to indicate how much money they provide each year in financial support to their focal child, this amount is obviously a function of the father’s income level and socioeconomic status. Thus, the data does not allow for an adequate comparison of subjects. Second, items assessing the degree to which fathers are in arrears on child support payments are fraught with missing data to the degree to which this item is largely useless in the current analysis. Third, there are no measures of the provision of informal financial support to children. All survey items focus on the status of mandated child support payments. And finally, as has been suggested elsewhere (Seltzer, 1991; Smock & Manning, 1997), fathers’ reports of financial support typically differ from those of mothers and may not be wholly accurate. Based on all these factors, the inclusion of provision of financial support was deemed to be inappropriate.

Survey issues are also at the heart of the decision to exclusively incorporate observed variables in the model. For most of the variables, only one item within the NSFH addresses the hypothesized construct. In other cases, merging different items into a single latent variable is problematic because of the nature of the behaviors being assessed. For example, it is reasonable to assume that high levels of face-to-face contact
between fathers and children would result in lower levels of telephone/letter contact. For this reason, it was decided to examine each type of contact as distinct variables rather than utilizing a latent variable. Initial analyses incorporated all three indicators of involvement as distinct observed variables within the model. The basic model was also examined in relation to each indicator separately. For all sample groups, each of these analyses are included here.

Model Specification

Analysis utilizing structural equation modeling incorporates and proceeds through several stages (Bollen & Long, 1993). Because structural equation modeling is a technique best suited to the confirmation of hypothesized relationships, the first step in the analysis process is the specification of a model. The specified model serves to assess the fit of theoretically derived predictions to the data (Kelloway, 1998).

The models specified for the current analysis are shown in Figures 2 and 3. Figure 3 represents a model utilizing each of the three indicators of involvement as separate observed variables. It simultaneously incorporates each of the hypothesized relationships drawn from the Burr et al. (1979) model of role transitions as they are directed toward each of the three involvement indicators. Because of the complexity of this model, subsequent analyses were performed utilizing each of the three involvement indicators independently. These models, utilized for analyses of the data from each of the subject groups, are presented in Figure 2. Because the models serve as a test of a theorized model of role transitions, no attempt was made to revise the model away from the theorized relationships. These are recursive models in that all proposed relationships
incorporate one-way causal flow. Additionally, the models utilize only observed variables. Thus, there is no measurement model built into the analysis.

**Model Identification**

Once a model has been specified, it is necessary to ascertain whether it is identified. An identified model is one for which sufficient variance and covariance information from the variables is available to estimate unknown coefficients in the various structural equation matrices (Bollen, 1989). An under-identified model is one for which a solution cannot be obtained. Model identification is determined through one or more of four identification rules. Each of these rules is described below.

**T-rule.** The first of these is the t-rule. The t-rule states that a necessary but insufficient condition for model identification is that there cannot be more estimated parameters than there are unique elements in the covariance matrix (Bollen, 1989; Kelloway, 1998). Within a model including both exogenous (X) and endogenous (Y) variables and a number of estimated parameters or unknowns (z), then, the t-rule states that $z \leq (NX + NY)(NX + NY + 1)/2$. A model is “under-identified” if the number of estimated parameters is greater than the number of variables as determined by the above equation, a “just identified” model is one in which the number of estimated parameters is equal to the number of variables, and an “over-identified” model is one in which the number of estimated parameters is less than the number of variables. An over-identified model is one that offers a number of possible solutions, allowing for the selection of the one that comes closest to explaining the observed data within some margin of error (Kelloway, 1998). The models included in the present analysis meet the condition for
identification as specified by the t-rule. There were seven estimated parameters within the model. Based on the above equation, this number was below the threshold of 21 as determined by the presence of six variables.

**Recursive Rule.** The recursive rule states that models incorporating only one-way causal flow are identified. The analyzed models incorporated such a one-way flow and, as recursive models meeting the conditions of the t-rule, are over-identified. Thus, it was not necessary for the remaining two conditions to be met for the model to meet identification criteria. These are, however, described below.

**Null B Rule and Rank and Order Conditions:** The remaining two identification rules are the Null B rule and rank and order conditions. The Null B rule states that a model is identified if there are no predictive relationships between the endogenous variables. Two such relationships are included in the present model and, thus, the rule cannot be used to provide evidence for identification for these models. The Null B rule, however, is not a necessary condition for identification. Rank and order conditions only apply to non-recursive models and, as such, do not apply to the model examined within the present study.

**Model Estimation**

The purpose of the process of model estimation is to estimate the various unknown parameters so that the implied covariance matrix is as close as possible to the sample covariance matrix. With an over-identified model, there are an infinite number of possible solutions. The process of model estimation will examine various possible solutions and determine which of the iterations serves to best minimize the differences
between the implied and observed covariance matrices. The goal of this iterative estimation procedure, then, is to minimize the specified fitting function (Kelloway, 1998). Within LISREL 8.0, the number of iterations was set at 1,000 for the present study.

Model estimations build on analyses of covariance matrices of the data from each sample. The covariance matrix is appropriate to this analysis because it assures information is not lost in the process of standardizing variables into a correlation matrix. Also, the various hypothesis tests utilized within the structural equation modeling process assume the use of the covariance matrices. Analysis utilizing the covariance matrix is most appropriate to the theory testing at the heart of this analysis. Because it is a standardized variance/covariance matrix, the correlation matrix is better suited to research focused on understanding patterns of relationships among variables.

LISREL 8.0 also offers three fitting functions or estimators of fit. These are criteria established to determine when an iteration has achieved the closest fit possible between the implied and sample covariance matrices. The most commonly-utilized estimation technique is maximum likelihood estimation. Maximum likelihood is a process by which LISREL 8.0 determines the best system of structural equations by proceeding through a series of iterations. The use of maximum likelihood offers a number of advantages. First, maximum likelihood predictors are consistent and efficient in large samples (Bollen, 1989). Maximum likelihood also allows for the simultaneous estimation of all path values or model parameters simultaneously. Although there is a risk in such a full information approach in that an error in one value will be reflected in every estimated parameter, it is most appropriate to hypothesis testing such as that
incorporated in the present study.

Analysis of the covariance matrix utilizing maximum likelihood estimation assumes, however, that all utilized variables are measured continuously. Additionally, the use of maximum likelihood carries the assumption that the data are multinormal or, in other words, that all variables in combination are normally distributed. In the present study, both of these assumptions were violated. Several categorical variables were built into the path including each of the three separate involvement variables, the role salience variable, and role clarity variable.

The distribution of categorical variables generally differs from that of continuous variables. This difference contributes to violation of the covariance matrix structure and, ultimately, elevated chi-square scores and inflation of parameter estimates within the analyzed model (Joreskog & Sorbom (1989). Additionally, Pearson correlation coefficients between categorical variables are generally less than those for corresponding continuous variables. This disparity is greatest when the number of categories for each variable are less than five (Bollen, 1989), as is the case for each of the categorical variables utilized in the present study.

As a result, kurtosis and skewness are commonly present in categorical variable data. Indeed, this is the case for each of the categorical variables included in the present data and, to a lesser degree, also in the data drawn from continuous variables. The presence of kurtosis and skewness also adversely affect chi-square and z-tests of statistical significance as generated within maximum likelihood estimation. In fact, chi-square is more strongly affected by kurtosis and skewness than the number of categories
within a categorical variable (Bollen, 1989).

Thus, because of the use of categorical variables and kurtosis and skewness within the data, analysis of an ordinary sample covariance matrix was generally inappropriate. Because both categorical and continuous data are built into the analysis, it was necessary to use polyserial correlations rather than product-moment correlations. In order for LISREL 8.0 to analyze polyserial correlations, the asymptotic covariance matrix must be utilized. The asymptotic covariance matrix is derived from the asymptotic distribution—the limiting distribution of the variables. The asymptotic distribution serves as a reasonable approximation for the distribution of a random variable. In other words, it provides a mechanism for understanding the large sample behaviors of estimators that are not continuously measured or normally distributed (Bollen, 1989).

Analysis of the asymptotic covariance matrix requires the use of an estimator that allows for non-normality (Bollen, 1989). Such is not the case with the maximum likelihood estimator. The Weighted Least Squares (WLS) estimator meets this condition and, as such, is the appropriate estimator to use when working with the asymptotic covariance matrix. When using WLS estimation, values are selected that minimize the difference between observed and predicted covariances. WLS estimation makes minimal assumptions about the distribution of observed variables. A concern, however, is that it generally requires a larger sample size than does maximum likelihood estimation. When sample size is sufficiently large, however, WLS estimation generally outperforms maximum likelihood estimation when pronounced kurtosis and/or skewness exist and when categorical variables are utilized.
Evaluation of LISREL Solutions

LISREL 8.0 provides five pieces of evaluative information for assessing the adequacy of the assumed model. These are reports of the standard errors and correlations of the parameter estimates, measures of variation accounted for, overall goodness-of-fit measures, analysis of residuals, and model modification indices (Jöreskog and Sörbom, 1996). Each will be reported in the present analysis.

Reports of the standard errors and correlations of the parameter estimates: The report of standard errors indicates how accurately the values of the free parameters have been estimated. Smaller standard errors indicate more accurately estimated parameters. Along with standard errors, LISREL 8.0 also computes correlations of the parameter estimates.

Measures of variation accounted for: Included here are squared multiple correlations measuring the strength of each linear relationship separately and a coefficient of determination measuring the strength of all relationships jointly.

Goodness-of-fit measures: LISREL 8.0 includes four goodness-of-fit measures that provide an indication of the overall fit of the model to the data. The first of these is the chi-square ($\chi^2$) test incorporating a null hypothesis that states the sum of all residuals will be zero. When this hypothesis is not rejected, the indication is that the constraints placed on the model are valid. Ideally, then, a non-significant $\chi^2$ is desired. As a goodness-of-fit measure, large $\chi^2$ values indicate poorer fit whereas smaller values indicate better fit. Chi-square is, however, very sensitive to sample size with small samples creating the risk of finding goodness-of-fit when it doesn’t exist and large
samples increasing the risk of not finding goodness-of-fit when it does exist. The chi-square test also becomes more sensitive as the number of indicators rise. For this reason, it is appropriate to also utilize other measures of fit.

The goodness-of-fit index (GFI) represents the overall degree of fit (the squared residuals of the predicted equations compared to the actual data) but is not adjusted for the degrees of freedom. The GFI ranges from 0 which is an indication of poor fit to 1.0 which is an indication of perfect fit. It is generally accepted that a GFI of 0.9 or above is the threshold level for acceptability although there are no absolute rules concerning such a threshold.

The adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI) is an extension of the GFI adjusted by the degrees of freedom in the model. The AGFI ranges from 0 to 1 with values above 0.9 again considered to indicate a good fit to the data. Discrepancies between the GFI and AGFI typically indicate the presence of trivial or non-significant parameters.

The root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA) statistic is derived from an analysis of residuals between the predicted and observed covariances among the variables in the model. It is a measure that is not affected by sample size and, thus, provides a useful tool in assessing goodness-of-fit. Steiger (1990) suggests a value below 0.10 indicates a good fit to the data, whereas a value below 0.05 indicate a very good fit. Additionally, LISREL 8.0 provides a significance test for the RMSEA statistic. The PCLOSE statistic indicates whether or not the RMSEA statistic indicates a good fit to the data. A PCLOSE statistic below 0.05 indicates a significant RMSEA score and, consequently, lack of a close fit to the data.
A final goodness-of-fit indicator is the standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR). This is a standardized measure of the average of the fitted residuals and can serve to compare the fit of two different models to the same data. It is generally accepted that a value less than 0.05 indicates a good fit to the data (Steiger, 1990).

It should be noted that consideration of the individual parameters composing the model is important for assessing the accuracy of the model (Kelloway, 1998). The fit of the model says little about the individual relationships composing the model.

Analysis of residuals. LISREL 8.0 provides a summary of standardized residuals. Significant residuals (residual values greater than ±1.96) indicate a substantial prediction error for one of the covariances in the original data.

Model-modification indices. These are calculated for each non-estimated relationship and provide an indication of the degree to which chi-square would be reduced if the coefficient was estimated. In this way, they serve as indicators of the value of possible modifications to the model. Because the present analysis is an assessment of the strength of a theorized model, no modifications are being made.

Sample Size

Finally, a comment must be made about sample size. Although there are no universally accepted guidelines regarding appropriate sample size within structural equation modeling, a number of suggestions have been offered in this area. Marsh, Balla, and MacDonald (1988), for example, suggest that 200 observations is an appropriate minimum although somewhat fewer may be acceptable if no latent variables are utilized. Others have suggested that acceptable sample size is determined by the complexity of the
model being analyzed. Tanaka (1993) calls for a sample size of 4 subjects per free parameter, or at least 40 subjects for models using single involvement variables and at least 104 subjects for models incorporating three involvement variables. Bentler and Chou (1987) suggest that the ratio of sample size to estimated parameters should be between 5:1 and 10:1. According to this argument, an appropriate sample size for the present analysis would be between 115 and 230 subjects for the model incorporating all three measures of contact and between 65 and 130 subjects for the model incorporating single measures of contact. Perhaps most vague is the guideline suggested by Bollen (1989) who calls for a sample of several subjects per variable.

The sample sizes in the present study ranged from a low of 86 (fathers separated from children between Time 1 and Time 2), and 426 (all fathers living separately from children at Time 1). Thus, in most cases, the sample sizes fitted the parameters suggested by Bentler and Chou and by Tanaka. On the other hand, only one of the samples (all fathers living separately from children at Time 1) was larger than the 200 subject guideline suggested by Marsh et al. Ultimately, all the samples were utilized despite the ambiguous relationship between samples in the present study and the various suggested sample size guidelines. The decision to do so was made because of the less than clear-cut sample size guidelines and because of the unique nature of the analyses being performed and the value of examining the various sample groups. It was decided that some leeway in sample size was warranted by the fact the present study represents a unique application of Burr et al. ’s model to nonresidential fathers.
Sample size is also critical to the use of weighted least squares estimation using the asymptotic covariance matrix instead of maximum likelihood estimation using the ordinary sample covariance matrix. As mentioned above, WLS estimation generally requires a larger sample size than maximum likelihood estimation. Each of the samples were generally adequate for WLS estimation with the exception of the sample of fathers who were newly-separated from their children. In the face of small sample size, Joreskog and Sorbom (1989) suggest that using maximum likelihood estimation is more appropriate than WLS estimation despite the presence of categorical variables and lack of normality in the data.

Operationalization of Variables and Instrumentation

A number of items from the NSFH were utilized to measure the variables included in the model.

**Level of Involvement**

For all analyses, the outcome variable of primary interest was level of involvement between nonresidential fathers and children. Three items were utilized to measure this variable. These included assessments of face-to-face contact between fathers and children, telephone or letter contact between fathers and children, and fathers’ global influence in decision-making concerning the child. These items were selected because of the variety they offer in terms of defining involvement. Consistent with earlier calls for an expansion of the involvement construct (Seltzer, 1991; Stephens, 1996), they allowed for a definition that extended beyond mere face-to-face contact between a father and child to one that incorporated various means of operationalizing the
father role. Although fathers' provision of financial support is also a key indicator of involvement, and one of central importance to policy-makers and practitioners, the NSFH data preclude its inclusion here. Because of the large number of subjects for whom there are missing data in this area, the inclusion of provision of child support as a dependent variable would result in sample sizes too small to be utilized in the structural equation analysis.

At both Time 1 and Time 2, face-to-face contact was assessed through one item asking, “During the past twelve months, how often did you see the child?” Response options were 1-not at all, 2-about once a year, 3-several times a year, 4-one to three times a month, 5-about once a week, or 6-several times a week. Telephone/letter contact was assessed through one item asking, “During the past twelve months, about how often did you talk on the telephone or send the child a letter?” with the same response set as the face-to-face contact item.

Global influence in decision-making concerning the child was operationalized through one item asking “How much influence do you have in making major decisions about such things as education, religion, and health care?” with the respondent choosing from a response set including 1-no influence, 2-some influence, or 3-a great deal of influence.

Role Satisfaction

At both Time 1 and Time 2, role satisfaction was a measure of the subjects' satisfaction with three aspects of their parenting experience with the child: (a) satisfaction with the amount of time spent with the child, (b) satisfaction with the financial
contribution made to the child, and c) overall satisfaction with their family life. Response options included 4-very satisfied, 3-somewhat satisfied, 2-somewhat dissatisfied, and 1-very dissatisfied.

Role Salience

At Time 1, role salience was assessed through one item assessing agreement with the statement “It’s better for a person to have a child than to go through life childless” with subjects responding 5-strongly agree, 4-agree, 3-neither agree or disagree, 2-disagree, or 1-strongly disagree. At Time 2, role salience was assessed through one item stating “A man can have a fully satisfying life without having children” with the same response set as the item utilized at Time 1.

Role Clarity

Role clarity was assessed through the presence of legal agreements specifying aspects of custody, visitation, and provision of support. Because the nonresidential father role is one without strongly institutionalized societal norms (Cherlin, 1978), such an agreement often provides the only tangible clarification of the degree to which a nonresidential father is to be involved with his children. Subjects were asked to indicate whether legal agreements are in place specifically concerning visitation schedules, custody, and levels of child support.

Role Conflict

Conflict between expectations of the father and the former spouse regarding the father’s parenting role was the exclusive focus of this construct. Items addressing areas of potential conflict with the former spouse were aggregated into this variable. Included
were conflict over such issues as where the child lived, how the child was raised, how the nonresidential father and the residential mother spent money on the child, fathers’ visits with children, and fathers’ contribution to child support. Subjects reported levels of conflict with the child’s mother as being 1-no conflict, 2-some conflict, or 3-a great deal of conflict.

Role Compartmentalization

Role compartmentalization was measured as geographic distance from the child. Although this was a somewhat narrow operationalization of the role compartmentalization construct, geographic distance is the only measure within the NSFH data set that addresses the basic tenet of compartmentalization as described within the Burr et al. model. The fact of greater geographic separation between fathers and children was viewed as being indicative of the degree to which the father role was maintained in settings different than those of other roles assumed by the fathers in the sample.

For the purposes of the path analysis, all variables, both endogenous and exogenous, were operationalized as observed variables. For each subject group, the hypothesized path incorporating the various predictor variables was separately analyzed in relation to each of the three distinct measures of involvement (face-to-face visits, telephone/letter contact, global influence in decision-making).
CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH RESULTS

The proposed model of role transitions was examined in relation to four samples of nonresidential fathers. Four separate models were incorporated into the analysis. The first model utilizes three separate observed involvement variables: telephone and letter contact between father and child, face-to-face visits between father and child, and father's global participation in decision-making regarding the child. Three additional models, each utilizing one of the above indicators of involvement also were analyzed. Thus, 16 model analyses were conducted among the four sample groups within the present study. Summaries of the analyses for each of these models are provided here. Each of the four models were analyzed utilizing weighted least squares estimation and provided varying levels of fit to the data from each of the four sample groups. Fit indicators for each of the 16 model analyses are included in Table 2. Summarized below are results for each of the analyzed models as well as additional comparisons.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>( \chi^2 ) (df)</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>GFI</th>
<th>AGFI</th>
<th>SRMR</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
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Table 2: Model Fit Indicators for Each Sample Group
Nonresidential Fathers at Time 1

This analysis included 426 nonresidential fathers. All of these men were living separately from a minor-aged focal child at Time 1 of the NSFH data collection. In all cases, the focal child was residing with his/her mother. All model tests were based on the asymptotic covariance matrix and used weighted least squares (WLS) estimation as implemented in LISREL 8.0 (Jöreskog and Sörbom, 1996).

Model Incorporating Three Observed Involvement Indicators

The model incorporating multiple involvement indicators is presented in Figure 3. The model resulted in an $\chi^2(4) = 12.29$ ($p<.015$). The fact that the chi-square is significant ($p<.05$) suggests that the model may not provide a strong fit to the data. The chi-square score is highly susceptible to sample size influence, however, with large samples creating the possibility of falsely finding a significant chi-square score. Such a result implies that a model does not strongly fit the data when, in reality, it does. There is reason to believe that such an influence may exist in this case. A sample of 426 subjects is fairly large by all accepted standards of appropriate sample size (Bentler & Chow, 1987; Bollen, 1989; Marsh, Bella, & McDonald, 1988; Tanaka, 1993) and, as such, may influence the accuracy of the chi-square score. This view is supported by the strength of all other goodness-of-fit indicators. The goodness-of-fit index (GFI) is 1.00 while the adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI) is .97. Both of these values are well above the generally accepted level of .90 as an indicator of adequacy of fit. The root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA) statistic is 0.07, indicating a good fit to the data (Steiger, 1990). The PCLOSE statistic ($p<.05$) is 0.19, supporting an interpretation of
strong fit-to-data for this model. On the other hand, the standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR) score of 0.26 indicates something less than a strong fit to the data. Taken together, the various fit indicators suggest the model provides a strong but not outstanding fit to the data, suggested largely because of the presence of outliers in the covariance data.

**Model Incorporating Telephone/Letter Contact as Involvement Indicator**

The assessed model is presented in Figure 2. The model resulted in an $\chi^2(5) = 2.63$ ($p<.76$). The non-significant chi-square statistic suggests a strong model-to-data fit. This assessment is consistent with other, uniformly strong fit indicators. The GFI is 1.00 while the AGFI is .98. The RMSEA statistic is 0.00, indicating a strong fit to the data. The PCLOSE statistic ($p<.05$) is 0.85, supporting an interpretation of strong fit-to-data for this model. Unlike the previous model, the SRMR statistic of 0.11 suggests relatively few outliers, offering additional support for the strength of the overall model fit to the data.

The squared multiple correlations for structural equations indicate the model explains 39% of the variation in fathers’ telephone and letter contact with children, 18% of the variation in fathers’ satisfaction with the father role, and 0% of the variation in role clarity as assessed by the presence of legal agreements concerning the fathers’ relationships with their children.

**Model Incorporating Face-to-Face Visits as Involvement Indicator**

The assessed model is described in Figure 2. The model resulted in an $\chi^2(5) = 4.25$ ($p<.51$). As was the case with the model incorporating telephone/letter contact, the
non-significant chi-square statistic suggests a strong model-to-data fit. All other fit indicators support this interpretation. The GFI is .99 while the AGFI is .98. The RMSEA statistic is 0.00, again indicating a strong fit to the data. The PCLOSE statistic (p<.05) is 0.66, supporting an interpretation of strong fit-to-data for this model. The SRMR statistic stands alone as the only indicator of a less than strong fit to the data. The SRMR of 0.25 suggests the presence of outliers in the data. As a whole, however, the various fit indicators suggest the model provides a strong fit to the data.

The squared multiple correlations for structural equations indicate the model explains 86% of the variation in frequency of fathers' face-to-face visits with children, 21% of the variation in fathers' satisfaction with the father role, and 0% of the variation in role clarity as assessed by the presence of legal agreements concerning the fathers' relationships with their children.

Model Incorporating Fathers' Participation in Decision-Making as Involvement Indicator

The assessed model is depicted in Figure 2. The model resulted in an $\chi^2(5) = 9.06$ (p< .11). Again, then, the non-significant chi-square statistic suggests a strong model-to-data fit with all other fit indicators supporting this interpretation. The GFI is 1.00 while the AGFI is .99. The RMSEA statistic is 0.044, again indicating a strong fit to the data. The PCLOSE statistic (p<.05) is 0.52, supporting an interpretation of strong fit-to-data for this model. The SRMR of 0.065 suggests there are few outliers in the data, offering another indication of strong model-to-data fit. The various indicators, then, suggest a very strong model-to-data fit.
The squared multiple correlations for structural equations indicate the model explains 20% of the variation in frequency of fathers’ face-to-face visits with children, 19% of the variation in fathers’ satisfaction with the father role, and 0% of the variation in role clarity as assessed by the presence of legal agreements concerning the fathers’ relationships with their children. Thus, in terms of individual variables, this model holds less explanatory power when involvement is defined through participation in decision-making than when the other involvement indicators are utilized.

Summary

To summarize, among the 426 nonresidential fathers included in the sample at Time 1, each of the proposed models provided a strong fit to the data although the model incorporating three observed involvement indicators provided a slightly less adequate fit to the data than did the models incorporating single observed involvement variables. However, each of the models achieved accepted strength of fit standards. Information on weighted least square estimates and z values for each of the paths within the model is provided in Table 3.

Nonresidential Fathers Remaining in the Sample at Time 2

Because the NSFH includes two data waves, a subset of fathers were discretely examined at Time 2. A the second wave of data collection, 117 of the original 426 nonresidential fathers remained in the sample. Included in this group were men who continued to live separately from minor-aged focal children and for whom there was no missing data at Time 2 on the survey items utilized in the analysis. In all cases, the focal children continued to reside with her/his mother. Of the 309 subjects who dropped
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Path</th>
<th>All Fathers at Time 1 (n=426)</th>
<th>Fathers at Time 2 (n=117)</th>
<th>African-American Fathers (T1) (n=119)</th>
<th>Caucasian Fathers (T1) (n=307)</th>
<th>Fathers Sep. between T1 and T2 (n=86)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction to Telephone/Ltr.</td>
<td>.28 (1.18)</td>
<td>-.10 (-0.50)</td>
<td>-.02 (-0.08)</td>
<td>.35 (2.61)*</td>
<td>.17 (1.87)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction to Visits</td>
<td>.10 (0.43)</td>
<td>-.08 (-0.37)</td>
<td>-.13 (-0.54)</td>
<td>.16 (1.34)</td>
<td>.10 (1.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction to Decision-Making</td>
<td>.30 (5.33)*</td>
<td>.20 (1.28)</td>
<td>.15 (1.33)</td>
<td>.31 (5.10)*</td>
<td>.23 (3.01)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salience to Telephone/Letter</td>
<td>-.13 (-0.29)</td>
<td>.53 (1.78)*</td>
<td>.49 (1.10)</td>
<td>-.18 (0.24)</td>
<td>-.06 (-0.35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salience to Visits</td>
<td>.43 (1.13)</td>
<td>.18 (0.57)</td>
<td>.65 (2.03)*</td>
<td>-.05 (-0.18)</td>
<td>.05 (0.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salience to Decision-Making</td>
<td>.00 (0.02)</td>
<td>.13 (0.33)</td>
<td>.04 (0.14)</td>
<td>-.25 (-2.09)*</td>
<td>-.41 (-2.69)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity to Telephone/Letter</td>
<td>.55 (1.33)</td>
<td>.63 (1.77)*</td>
<td>.50 (1.08)</td>
<td>.50 (2.20)*</td>
<td>.03 (0.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity to Visits</td>
<td>.82 (2.57)*</td>
<td>.40 (1.13)</td>
<td>.57 (1.58)</td>
<td>.83 (4.90)*</td>
<td>.63 (1.76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity to Decision-Making</td>
<td>-.03 (-0.22)</td>
<td>.21 (0.50)</td>
<td>.09 (0.32)</td>
<td>.06 (0.38)</td>
<td>.16 (0.46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict to Telephone/Letter</td>
<td>.12 (0.44)</td>
<td>-.07 (-0.32)</td>
<td>-.03 (-0.10)</td>
<td>.16 (0.87)</td>
<td>-.29 (-0.84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict to Visits</td>
<td>.06 (0.27)</td>
<td>.01 (0.05)</td>
<td>-.05 (-0.18)</td>
<td>.08 (0.58)</td>
<td>-.01 (-0.45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict to Decision-Making</td>
<td>-.30 (-2.56)*</td>
<td>-.03 (-0.15)</td>
<td>-.18 (-1.06)</td>
<td>.03 (0.21)</td>
<td>.004 (0.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict to Satisfaction</td>
<td>-.38 (-3.74)*</td>
<td>-.42 (-4.12)*</td>
<td>-.35 (-3.62)*</td>
<td>-.40 (-6.57)*</td>
<td>-.22 (-6.41)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict to Clarity</td>
<td>.01 (0.03)</td>
<td>-.21 (-0.80)</td>
<td>-.02 (-0.12)</td>
<td>-.01 (-0.40)</td>
<td>.002 (0.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance to Satisfaction</td>
<td>-.24 (-2.66)*</td>
<td>-.24 (-2.50)*</td>
<td>-.16 (-1.73)*</td>
<td>-.26 (-4.77)*</td>
<td>-.14 (-1.98)*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- z value > 1.96 = p < .05

Table 3: Weighted Least Square Estimates and Z-Values for Paths in Models
out of the sample at Time 2, 130 did so because their focal child reached the age of 18 during the period between data waves while the remaining 179 dropped from the sample because of missing data at Time 2. The two groups did not significantly differ on any of the measured demographic variables. In comparison to the men who remained in the sample at Time 2, those who were missing were approximately four years older, were slightly more likely to be African-American, had slightly higher household income, and, as would be expected, had focal children who were slightly older. No other significant differences were observed. A comparison of these groups on each of the demographic measures is presented in Table 1.

Again because of the presence of categorical variables and issues concerning normality of distribution in some areas, all model tests were based on the asymptotic covariance matrix and used weighted least squares estimation as implemented in LISREL 8.0 (Jöreskog and Sörbom, 1996). Provided below are summaries for each of the four analyzed models at Time 2 and a comparison to the results for these men at Time 1.

Model Incorporating Three Observed Involvement Indicators

The model incorporating multiple involvement indicators is presented in Figure 3. The model resulted in an $\chi^2(4) = 6.24$ (p< .18). Unlike the chi-square statistic for this model at Time 1, this statistic suggests a strong model-to-data fit at Time 2. All other fit indicators are also strong. The GFI is 1.00 whereas the AGFI is .99. Both of these values are well above the generally accepted level of .90 as an indicator of adequacy of fit. The RMSEA statistic is 0.036, indicating a good fit to the data. The PCLOSE statistic (p<.05) is 0.59, supporting an interpretation of strong fit-to-data for this model. The SRMR
score of 0.11 indicates the presence of a number of outliers in the data yet far fewer than were present in the data from all fathers at Time 1. Taken together, the various fit indicators suggest the model provides a strong fit to the data.

Similar analyses were performed for this sub-sample of fathers at Time 1. Each of these fit indicators are similar to those achieved among this subsample of fathers at Time 1. Thus, among these fathers, each of the four models provided strong fits to the data at both Time 1 and Time 2 suggesting that the hypothesized relationships remain strong over time.

Model Incorporating Telephone/Letter Contact as Involvement Indicator

The assessed model is depicted in Figure 2. The model resulted in an $\chi^2(5) = 3.65$ ($p<.60$). The non-significant chi-square statistic suggests a strong model-to-data fit. This assessment is consistent with other, uniformly strong fit indicators. The GFI is 1.00 while the AGFI is .98. The RMSEA statistic is 0.00, indicating a strong fit to the data. The PCLOSE statistic ($p<.05$) is 0.73, supporting an interpretation of strong fit-to-data for this model. The SRMR statistic of 0.26 suggests the presence of numerous outliers in the data, suggesting one area of concern when assessing model fit. Despite the SRMR statistic, all other involvement indicators are very strong, suggesting a close model-to-data fit.

The squared multiple correlations for structural equations indicate the model explains 69% of the variation in fathers’ telephone and letter contact with children, 21% of the variation in fathers’ satisfaction with the father role, and 4% of the variation in role
clarity as assessed by the presence of legal agreements concerning the fathers’ relationships with their children.

As was the case with the multiple involvement variable model, the various fit indicators at Time 2 compare very favorably to those for this subsample at Time 1. The chi-square statistic is slightly stronger at Time 2 while there appears to be fewer outliers at Time 1. All other fit indicators suggest a very strong fit to the data. In terms of individual variables, the model explains more variation in role satisfaction at Time 1 and more variation in involvement at Time 2 while accounting for the same amount of variation in role clarity at both times, suggesting the relationships associated with this variable remained relatively similar at Time 1 and Time 2.

Model Incorporating Face-to-Face Visits as Involvement Indicator

The assessed model is described in Figure 2. The model resulted in an $\chi^2(5) = 1.69$ (p< .89). The strength of fit suggested by this statistic is supported by other involvement indicators. The GFI is 1.00 while the AGFI is .98. The RMSEA statistic is 0.00, again indicating a strong fit to the data. The PCLOSE statistic (p<.05) is 0.94, supporting an interpretation of strong fit-to-data for this model. The SRMR statistic of 0.12 is consistent with these indicators, suggesting fewer outliers in the data associated with this model than were present for the model incorporating telephone/letter contact as the analyzed involvement indicator. As a whole, then, the various fit indicators suggest the model provides a strong fit to the data.

The squared multiple correlations for structural equations indicate the model explains 20% of the variation in frequency of fathers’ face-to-face visits with children,
17% of the variation in fathers' satisfaction with the father role, and 4% of the variation in role clarity as assessed by the presence of legal agreements concerning the fathers' relationships with their children. Thus, in terms of frequency of face-to-face contact between fathers and children, the model holds less explanatory power than it does for frequency of telephone/letter contact between fathers and children.

These indicators are generally stronger at Time 2 than at Time 1 for this subsample of fathers. At Time 1, a significant chi-square statistic was achieved, suggesting poor model-to-data fit. This was supported by the presence of numerous outliers in the data as indicated by a SRMR score of 0.24. At the same time, both the GFI of 1.00 and the AGFI of .98 suggest very strong model-to-data fit. Thus, for this subsample of fathers, the model appears to provide a reasonable yet not outstanding fit to the data at Time 1 and a better fit to the data at Time 2.

**Model Incorporating Fathers' Participation in Decision-Making as Involvement Indicator**

The assessed model is described in Figure 2. The model resulted in an $\chi^2(5) = 1.93$ ($p < .86$). Again, then, the non-significant chi-square statistic suggests a strong model-to-data fit with all other fit indicators supporting this interpretation. The GFI is 1.00 while the AGFI is .99. The RMSEA statistic is 0.00, indicating a strong fit to the data. The PCLOSE statistic ($p < .05$) is 0.92, supporting an interpretation of a particularly strong fit-to-data for this model. The SRMR of 0.08 suggests there are few outliers in the data, offering another indication of strong model-to-data fit. The various indicators, then, suggest a very strong model-to-data fit.
The squared multiple correlations for structural equations indicate the model explains 10% of the variation in frequency of fathers' decision-making, 18% of the variation in fathers' satisfaction with the father role, and 2% of the variation in role clarity as assessed by the presence of legal agreements concerning the fathers' relationships with their children. Thus, in terms of individual variables, this model holds less explanatory power when involvement is defined through participation in decision-making than when the other involvement indicators are utilized.

This model appears somewhat stronger for this subsample of fathers at Time 2 than it was at Time 1. Although the GFI (.99) and AGFI (.97) were strong at Time 1, the chi-square statistic was significant at Time 1, suggesting poorer model-to-data fit. Again, however, this could be attributed to the relatively large sample size. The RMSEA score was also significant at Time 1, however, weakening the argument that sample size alone accounted for the significant chi-square statistic.

Summary

To summarize, among the 117 nonresidential fathers included in the sample at Time 2, each of the proposed models provided a strong fit to the data on fathers' involvement with children. Both the model incorporating three involvement variables, the model of face-to-face visits between fathers and children, and the model of participation in decision-making provided stronger fits to the data at Time 2 although overall strength of fit was evident at both data waves. Information on weighted least square estimates and z values for each of the paths within the analyzed models is provided in Table 3.
Figure 4: Longitudinal Model of the Relationship between Aspects of the Father Role and Nonresidential Father Involvement with Children
Longitudinal Analysis

In addition to a discrete examination of fathers at Time 1 and Time 2, a model incorporating longitudinal relationships also was examined. This model is described in Figure 4. Unlike the discrete analyses described above, this model accounts for relationships between data at Time 1 and Time 2 for each of the six observed variables. Controlling for these relationships allows for a more direct interpretation of the relationship between aspects of the father role at Time 1 and father involvement with children at Time 2.

The longitudinal model was separately analyzed in relation to each of the three observed involvement variables. Because it would include 48 paths, a model incorporating all three observed involvement variables was not analyzed. This decision was made because the utilized sample of 115 subjects is far smaller than any generally accepted sample size criteria for such an analysis. All model tests were based on the asymptotic covariance matrix and used weighted least squares estimation.

Fit indicators for the three longitudinal models are provided in Table 4. Weighted Least Squares Estimates and Z-Values are provided in Table 5. As indicated by the GFI and AGFI statistics, all three longitudinal models provide strong fits to the data. However, chi-square statistics are all significant, indicating a poor fit to the data. The SRMR and RMSEA statistics for all three models also suggest adequate but not strong model-to-data fits. SRMR statistics for all three involvement indicators suggest the presence of numerous outliers in the data. Thus, although there are indications of strong model-to-data fit within the longitudinal model, the indicators are not as universally
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>( \chi^2 ) (df)</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>GFI</th>
<th>AGFI</th>
<th>SRMR</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>PCLOSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telephone/Letter Contact</td>
<td>74.39 (38)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.094</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-Face Visit Contact</td>
<td>67.07 (38)</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.084</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-Making</td>
<td>66.75 (38)</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.084</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Model Fit Indicators for Three Longitudinal Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Path</th>
<th>Telephone/Letter Contact Model</th>
<th>Face-to-Face Visits Model</th>
<th>Participation In Decision-making Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distance (T1) to Distance (T2)</td>
<td>.70 (11.03)*</td>
<td>.58 (9.99)*</td>
<td>.66 (10.21)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict (T1) to Conflict (T2)</td>
<td>.82 (9.80)*</td>
<td>.70 (7.96)*</td>
<td>.57 (6.62)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Salience (T1) to Role Salience (T2)</td>
<td>-.76 (-5.07)*</td>
<td>-.82 (-4.50)*</td>
<td>-.93 (-5.07)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Clarity (T1) to Role Clarity (T2)</td>
<td>.86 (7.76)*</td>
<td>.92 (5.95)*</td>
<td>.88 (7.33)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Conflict (T1) to Role Clarity (T2)</td>
<td>.34 (4.57)*</td>
<td>.32 (3.22)*</td>
<td>.23 (2.33)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Satisfaction (T1) to Role Satisfaction (T2)</td>
<td>.30 (2.35)*</td>
<td>.27 (2.25)*</td>
<td>.28 (2.50)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance (T1) to Role Satisfaction (T2)</td>
<td>-.04 (-0.46)</td>
<td>.00 (0.06)</td>
<td>-.15 (-2.01)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Conflict (T1) to Role Satisfaction (T2)</td>
<td>-.41 (-3.36)*</td>
<td>-.41 (-3.53)*</td>
<td>-.32 (-3.10)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement (T1) to Involvement (T2)</td>
<td>2.07 (1.77)</td>
<td>1.31 (1.60)</td>
<td>.78 (4.95)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Conflict (T1) to Involvement (T2)</td>
<td>.95 (1.43)</td>
<td>.11 (0.27)</td>
<td>-.02 (-0.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Salience (T1) to Involvement (T2)</td>
<td>.88 (1.24)</td>
<td>.33 (1.18)</td>
<td>.06 (0.67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Satisfaction (T1) to Involvement (T2)</td>
<td>.01 (0.02)</td>
<td>-.24 (-0.68)</td>
<td>.09 (1.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Clarity (T1) to Involvement (T2)</td>
<td>.00 (0.00)</td>
<td>-.04 (-0.07)</td>
<td>.19 (1.09)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* z value > 1.96=p<.05

Table 5: Weighted Least Squares Estimates and Z-Values for Paths in Three Longitudinal Models
strong as those for the analyzed models within the Time 1 sample of fathers.

The squared multiple correlations for structural equations are 2.12 for telephone/letter contact at Time 2, 1.20 for face-to-face visits at Time 2, and 0.82 for decision-making at Time 2. These somewhat problematic scores further suggest possible sample size issues within this analysis.

African-American Fathers at Time 1

Of the initial sample of 426 fathers, 119 were African-American. Thus, the data provided the opportunity to explore patterns of relationships among this under-studied group of men. As indicated in Table 1, these men differed in numerous ways from their Caucasian counterparts. The African-American fathers were somewhat younger than Caucasian fathers, earned less income, were less likely to have been married, and had fathered slightly more children. All model tests were based on the asymptotic covariance matrix and used weighted least squares estimation as implemented in LISREL 8.0 (Jöreskog and Sörbom, 1996).

Model Incorporating Three Observed Involvement Indicators

The model incorporating multiple involvement indicators is provided in Figure 3. The model resulted in an $\chi^2(4) = 11.40(p<.022)$. As was the case for all fathers at Time 1, this statistic suggests a less-than-adequate fit to the data for African-American fathers. All other fit indicators, however, are strong. The GFI is 1.00 while the AGFI is .97. Both of these values are well above the generally accepted level of .90 as an indicator of adequacy of fit. The RMSEA statistic is 0.066, indicating a good fit to the data. The PCLOSE statistic ($p<.05$) is 0.23, supporting an interpretation of strong fit-to-data for this
model. The SRMR score of 0.11 indicates the presence of a number of outliers in the data yet far fewer than were present in the data from all fathers at Time 1. Taken together, the various fit indicators suggest the model provides a strong fit to the data.

Each of these fit indicators were similar to those achieved among Caucasian fathers at Time 1. Thus, among fathers at Time 1, there did not appear to be substantial differences between African-Americans and Caucasians when all three involvement indicators are incorporated into the model.

**Model Incorporating Telephone/Letter Contact as Involvement Indicator**

The assessed model is depicted in Figure 2. The model resulted in an $\chi^2(5) = 3.04$ ($p < .60$). The non-significant chi-square statistic suggests a strong model-to-data fit. This assessment is consistent with other, uniformly strong fit indicators. The GFI is 1.00 while the AGFI is .98. The RMSEA statistic is 0.00, indicating a strong fit to the data. The PCLOSE statistic ($p < .05$) is 0.80, supporting an interpretation of strong fit-to-data for this model. The SRMR statistic of 0.20 suggests the presence of outliers in the data, although these do not seem to dramatically affect other fit indicators. Despite the SRMR statistic, all other involvement indicators are very strong, suggesting a close model-to-data fit.

The squared multiple correlations for structural equations indicate the model explains 49% of the variation in fathers’ telephone and letter contact with children, 14% of the variation in fathers’ satisfaction with the father role, and 0% of the variation in role clarity as assessed by the presence of legal agreements concerning the fathers’ relationships with their children.
As was the case with the multiple involvement variable model, the various fit indicators among models utilizing data from African-American fathers are very similar to those utilizing data from Caucasian fathers, suggesting little difference between the two groups. In terms of individual variables, the model explained slightly more variation in role satisfaction among Caucasian fathers and slightly more variation in telephone/letter contact among African-American fathers while accounting for little variation in role clarity for either group.

Model Incorporating Face-to-Face Visits as Involvement Indicator

The assessed model is described in Figure 2. The model resulted in an $\chi^2(5) = 2.94\ (p<.71)$. The strength of fit suggested by this statistic is supported by other involvement indicators. The GFI is 1.00 while the AGFI is .98. The RMSEA statistic is 0.00, again indicating a strong fit to the data. The PCLOSE statistic ($p<.05$) is 0.82, supporting an interpretation of strong fit-to-data for this model. The SRMR statistic of 0.27 again suggests the presence of outliers in the data, yet they do not significantly affect the other fit indicators. As a whole, then, the various fit indicators suggest the model provides a strong fit to the data.

The squared multiple correlations for structural equations indicated the model explained 76% of the variation in frequency of fathers' face-to-face visits with children, 16% of the variation in fathers' satisfaction with the father role, and 0% of the variation in role clarity as assessed by the presence of legal agreements concerning the fathers' relationships with their children. Thus, in terms of frequency of face-to-face contact between fathers and children, the model holds more explanatory power than it does for
frequency of telephone/letter contact between fathers and children among African-American fathers.

These indicators were generally stronger among African-American fathers than among Caucasian fathers. Among Caucasian fathers, a significant chi-square statistic was achieved, suggesting poor model-to-data fit. This was supported by an RMSEA statistic of .069, although not significant still somewhat higher than the RMSEA statistic for African-American fathers. At the same time, both the GFI of .99 and the AGFI of .97 suggest very strong model-to-data fit among Caucasian fathers. Thus, for this subsample of fathers, the model appears to provide a reasonable, yet not outstanding fit, to the data for Caucasian fathers with a strong fit to the data indicated for African-American fathers.

Model Incorporating Fathers' Participation in Decision-Making as Involvement Indicator

The assessed model is described in Figure 2. The model resulted in a $\chi^2(5) = 6.42$ (p < .27). Again, then, the non-significant chi-square statistic suggests a strong model-to-data fit with all other fit indicators supporting this interpretation. The GFI is .99, while the AGFI is .96. The RMSEA statistic is 0.05, indicating a strong fit to the data. The PCLOSE statistic (p < .05) is 0.42, supporting an interpretation of a particularly strong fit-to-data for this model. The SRMR of 0.083 suggests there are few outliers in the data, offering another indication of strong model-to-data fit. The various indicators, then, suggest a very strong model-to-data fit.

The squared multiple correlations for structural equations indicate the model explained 8% of the variation in frequency of fathers' participation in decision-making about children, 13% of the variation in fathers' satisfaction with the father role, and 0%
of the variation in role clarity as assessed by the presence of legal agreements concerning
the fathers' relationships with their children. Thus, in terms of individual variables, this
model holds considerably less explanatory power when involvement is defined through
participation in decision-making than when the other involvement indicators are utilized.

In its assessment of fit to data concerning participation in decision-making, this
model appears to provide a slightly better fit for Caucasian fathers than it does for
African-American fathers. Although the chi-square, GFI, AGFI, RMSEA, and SRMR
statistics were all within acceptable ranges, there was a slight difference in each when
comparing the two groups with the statistics for Caucasian fathers being slightly higher
than those for African-American fathers. Again, however, strong model-to-data fits were
achieved for both groups.

Summary

To summarize, among the 119 African-American nonresidential fathers included
in the sample at Time 1, strong fits to the data were provided by the proposed model
assessing levels of telephone/letter contact between fathers and children, the model
assessing frequency of face-to-face contact between fathers and children, and the model
assessing fathers' participation in decision-making concerning children. A model
incorporating all three indicators of involvement provided a reasonably strong fit to the
data. Other than patterns of face-to-face contact between fathers and children, there were
few observed differences between African-American and Caucasian fathers. Information
on weighted least square estimates and z values for each of the paths within the analyzed
models is provided in Table 3.
Fathers Residentially Separated From Children between Time 1 and Time 2

A final examination of the proposed models was undertaken utilizing data from fathers who had residentially separated from their children between the two data waves. Each of the 86 men in this sample, then, had lived separately from their children for five years or less. The relative recency of their move to nonresidential status suggests that, of the four analyzed groups, these men perhaps come closest to being engaged in a transitional period in terms of the father role.

Provided below are summaries for each of the four analyzed models at Time 2 based on tests of the asymptotic covariance matrix using weighted least squares estimation.

Model Incorporating Three Observed Involvement Indicators

The model incorporating multiple involvement indicators is presented in Figure 3. The various fit indicators suggest this model provides a poor fit to the data. The model resulted in a $\chi^2(4) = 227.72 \ (p<.000)$. This level of significance suggests a very poor fit to the data. Additionally, the chi-square to degrees freedom test indicates this score is problematic. This test resulted in a score of 56.93, well above the range of 2 to 5 considered to be an acceptable ratio. The poor fit indicated by the chi-square statistic is also suggested by the goodness-of-fit index and adjusted goodness-of-fit index. Although the GFI of .95 is above the level of .90 generally considered as indicative of adequate fit, the AGFI was only .52, considerably below the minimum acceptable level. The lower AGFI score is associated with the high chi-square statistic. The RMSEA statistic of 0.36, again indicates a poor fit to the data. The PCLOSE statistic ($p<.05$) was 0.00, indicating
the RMSEA statistic is significant, supporting the interpretation of poor fit-to-data for this model. The SRMR score of 0.11 indicates the presence of a number of outliers in the data. Taken together, the various fit indicators suggest the model provides a poor fit to the data.

Model Incorporating Telephone/Letter Contact as Involvement Indicator

The assessed model is described in Figure 2. As was the case with the multiple involvement indicator model, the model incorporating telephone/letter contact as the sole involvement indicator provided a poor fit to the data. The model resulted in a $\chi^2(5) = 36.32 (p< .000)$. The significant chi-square statistic again suggests a poor model-to-data fit, and this indication is supported by the high ratio statistic reported by the chi-square to degrees freedom test (7.26) which again lies outside commonly accepted bounds. This assessment is consistent with other, uniformly weak fit indicators. The GFI was .94 while the AGFI was .76. The RMSEA statistic was 0.28 and achieved significance as indicated by the PCLOSE statistic ($p<.05$) of 0.000, supporting an interpretation of poor fit-to-data for this model. The SRMR statistic of 0.25 suggests the presence of outliers in the data which may contribute to the overall poor model-to-data fit.

Model Incorporating Face-to-Face Visits as Involvement Indicator

The assessed model is described in Figure 2. The model resulted in a $\chi^2(5) = 36.81 (p< .000)$. Thus, the chi-square statistic again suggests a poor model-to-data fit. The chi-square statistic is also outside the acceptable range on the chi-square to degrees freedom test, achieving a ratio of 7.36. The GFI was .94 while the AGFI was .76. These again suggest a somewhat inadequate model-to-data fit. The RMSEA statistic was 0.28,
again indicating a poor fit to the data. Additionally, the PCLOSE statistic \((p < .05)\) of 0.000 was significant indicating that the RMSEA statistic is indicative of problematic model-to-data fit. The SRMR statistic of 0.24 again suggests the presence of outliers in the data. As was the case with the previous two models for this sample of fathers, the model incorporating the face-to-face visit variable fails to provide a strong fit to the data.

**Model Incorporating Fathers' Participation in Decision-Making as Involvement Indicator**

The assessed model is described in Figure 2. The model resulted in a \(\chi^2(5) = 38.14\) \((p < .000)\). The significant chi-square statistic again suggests a poor model-to-data fit, and this indication is supported by the high ratio statistic reported by the chi-square to degrees freedom test (7.63) which again lies outside commonly accepted bounds. The GFI was .94, while the AGFI was .74. The RMSEA statistic was 0.28, indicating a poor fit to the data. The PCLOSE statistic \((p < .05)\) was 0.000, supporting an interpretation of a particularly poor fit-to-data for this model. The SRMR of 0.22 also supports this interpretation through its suggestion of the presence of outliers in the data. The various indicators suggest a poor model-to-data fit.

The poor model-to-data fits provided by each of the models for fathers separated from children between data waves may be indicative of problems with the use of weighted least squares estimation. Jöreskog and Sörbom (1996) suggest that use of weighted least squares estimation in the face on non-normal data and categorical variables is problematic if sample size is small. In this case, maximum likelihood remains the preferred estimation technique. Because this sample of fathers fails to
achieve any of the commonly-accepted standards for sample size, maximum likelihood estimation may provide better indicators of fit for this sample of fathers.

**Maximum Likelihood Estimation of Models for Fathers Recently Separated from Children**

With the exception of the model incorporating telephone/letter contact as the single observed involvement variable, maximum likelihood estimates suggest strong fits to the data. This is the case for the model incorporating all three observed involvement variables ($\chi^2(5)=2.16$, $p<.71$, GFI=.99, AGFI=.95, SRMR=.08), the model incorporating the face-to-face contact involvement variable ($\chi^2(4)=3.00$, $p<.70$, GFI=.99, AGFI=.95, SRMR=.12), and the model incorporating fathers’ participation in decision-making as the observed involvement variable ($\chi^2(4)=3.72$, $p<.5$, GFI=.99, AGFI=.94, SRMR=.13).

**Summary**

Largely because of sample size, then, the fit indicators are somewhat ambiguous for models assessing patterns of contact among fathers who residentially separated from their children between data waves. Weighted least squares estimation addresses categorical variables but requires a larger sample size. As a result of the small sample of fathers separated from their children between data waves, the fit indicators achieved through this method are suspect. Sample size, then, may contribute to the overall poor fit indicators achieved through the use of this estimation technique. Although maximum likelihood indicators are preferred because of the relatively small sample size, they are poorly suited to an analysis of models including categorical variables or data violating the assumption of normal distribution. Thus, although maximum likelihood estimation
indicates strong fits for three of the four models, the fit indicators are again somewhat suspect because of the nature of the variables and data utilized. Information on weighted least square estimates and z values for each of the paths within the analyzed models is provided in Table 3.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: The proposed path models will significantly account for variance in father involvement at Time 1 as measured by face-to-face contact, telephone/letter contact, and global influence in decision-making concerning the child.

Each of the four analyzed models provided very strong fits to the data for all fathers at Time 1, providing support for the acceptance of this hypothesis. All GFI and AGFI statistics were well above the minimum acceptable level for strong fit (.90) and each of the chi-square statistics, the RMSEA statistics, and the SRMR statistics support the assessment of strong model-to-data fit. Strong fits were achieved for the Time 1 sample as a whole as well as for subsamples of African-American fathers and Caucasian fathers.

Hypothesis Two: The proposed path models will significantly account for variance in longitudinal patterns of father involvement as measured by face-to-face visits, telephone and letter contact, and global influence in decision-making concerning the child.

This hypothesis is also accepted based on the strong fits-to-data provided by each of the four analyzed models for those fathers remaining in the sample at Time 2. Each of the four chi-square scores failed to achieve significance and the GFI and AGFI scores all indicate strong model-to-data fits. Additionally, for each of the three models
incorporating single observed involvement variables, the model provided a stronger fit to the data at Time 2 than it did for these subjects at Time 1. Again, the presence of a large number of outliers is not indicated, providing additional support for the overall strength of model fits.

**Hypothesis Three:** The proposed path models will significantly account for variance in father involvement as measured by face-to-face contact, telephone/letter contact, and global influence in decision-making concerning the child among men who resided with their child(ren) at Time 1 and lived separately from their child(ren) at Time 2.

This hypothesis is only partially supported by the data. When maximum likelihood estimation was utilized, models incorporating three observed involvement indicators and both face-to-face contact and participation in decision-making as single observed involvement variables provided strong fits to the data. When weighted least squares estimation was utilized, all four models provided poor fits to the data. Thus, only equivocal support was provided for this hypothesis.

**Hypothesis Four:** The proposed path models will significantly account for variance in African-American father involvement at Time 1 as measured by face-to-face contact, telephone/letter contact, and global influence in decision-making concerning the child.

Strong support for this hypothesis was provided by each of the four analyzed models. Each achieved strong GFI and AGFI statistics and chi-square statistics that failed to achieve significance. Strengths of fit among models of African-American father involvement were very similar to those achieved for models of Caucasian father
involvement with the model of face-to-face contact between African-American fathers and children fitting somewhat better than the similar model for Caucasian fathers.

In addition to the above hypotheses, a number of hypotheses addressing individual relationships within the models were also developed. Table 3 summarizes weighted least squares estimates and t-scores for fathers at Time 1, fathers at Time 2, and African-American fathers and maximum likelihood estimates and t-scores for fathers separated from their children between data waves.

**Hypothesis Five:** Levels of role satisfaction will positively contribute to levels of involvement between fathers and children for all sample groups.

Levels of role satisfaction positively contributed to all types of involvement among fathers at Time 1 and newly-separated fathers at Time 2 and to levels of participation in decision-making for fathers at Time 2 and African-American fathers at Time 1. There was no significant effect on telephone/letter contact and face-to-face visits among fathers in the two latter groups. Thus, this hypothesis was partially supported.

**Hypothesis Six:** Levels of role salience will positively contribute to levels of involvement between fathers and children for all sample groups.

Role salience positively contributed to frequency of face-to-face visits among all fathers at Time 1 and among African-American fathers at Time 1, and frequency of telephone/letter contact among fathers at Time 2, but negatively contributed to participation in decision-making among fathers separated from children between data waves. Thus, only minimal support was provided for this hypothesis.
Hypothesis Seven: Higher role clarity as measured through the presence of legal custody and visitation agreements will positively contribute to levels of involvement between fathers and children for all sample groups.

Clarity positively contributed to frequency of telephone/letter contact and frequency of face-to-face visits among all fathers at Time 1, African-American fathers at Time 1, and all fathers still in the sample at Time 2 as well as to frequency of face-to-face visits among fathers separated from their children between data waves. In no case did clarity contribute to patterns of fathers’ participation in decision-making. Consequently, only partial support for this hypothesis was obtained.

Hypothesis Eight: Role incompatibility will negatively contribute to role satisfaction for all sample groups.

This hypothesis was accepted in that role incompatibility as measured by distance from children significantly and negatively contributed to role satisfaction in each of the sample groups and within the longitudinal analysis.

Hypothesis Nine: Role conflict will negatively contribute to levels of involvement between fathers and children for all sample groups.

Role conflict provided a significant negative contribution to participation in decision-making among all fathers at Time 1 and African-American fathers at Time 1 and to frequency of telephone/letter contact among fathers separated from their children between data waves. No other significant contributions were found and, thus, this hypothesis was only minimally supported.
Hypothesis Ten: Role conflict will negatively contribute to levels of role satisfaction for all sample groups.

This hypothesis was accepted in that role conflict significantly and negatively contributed to role satisfaction for each of the four sample groups and within the longitudinal analysis.

Hypothesis Eleven: Role conflict will negatively contribute to role clarity for all sample groups.

Conflict significantly contributed to reduced levels of role clarity for fathers at Time 2 but not for any of the other three sample groups. Thus, only partial support was obtained for this hypothesis.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Introduction

Research on the father role has taken on greater significance as researchers and policy makers have directed increasing attention to explicating and encouraging positive father involvement in the lives of children (Marsiglio, Day, & Lamb, 1997). This attention arises out of increasing societal expectations for the father role through the latter part of the Twentieth Century (Bronstein & Cowan, 1988).

Defining fatherhood in the United States, however, is complicated by presence of many factors contributing to the way fathers are perceived and the way they behave (NICHD Working Group Reports, 1997). Societal definitions of fatherhood are poorly defined compared to those for motherhood (Pleck, 1998), and the relative ambiguity of these definitions is magnified by the degree to which men’s fathering opportunities and sense of identity as fathers are structured by popular culture, the legal system, and various societal institutions (Marsiglio et al., 1997).

Such ambiguity is magnified in the case of nonresidential fathers. Because of a lack of clear societal norms for nonresidential fathers, men often find it difficult to move
into a role for which there are no clear guidelines concerning enactment of that role. This study explored relationships between various factors associated with men's enactment of the nonresidential role and nonresidential father involvement with children. Building on a theoretical model of role transitions developed by Burr et al. (1979), the basic premise of the study was that levels of nonresidential father involvement with children are predicted by factors contributing to the ease with which a man transitions into the nonresidential father role. Specifically, Burr et al. suggest that the successful negotiation of the transition into a role contributes to positive functioning within the role, while a difficult transition into a role may contribute to higher levels of role confusion and impaired role enactment.

A modified version of the theoretical model presented by Burr et al. (1979) was examined in relation to several samples of nonresidential fathers drawn from the National Survey of Families and Households. Included were a sample of fathers in the first data wave of the NSFH, a subsample of African-American fathers, a subsample of fathers who remained in the survey at Time 2, and a sample of fathers who residually separated from a child(ren) between the first and second data waves. These samples allowed for discrete analyses of data drawn from each of the sample groups as well as a longitudinal analysis of data drawn from men in the sample at both Time 1 and Time 2.

This study incorporated several important factors into the examination of the relationship between aspects of nonresidential father role enactment and contact between fathers and children. Utilizing data from the NSFH allowed for an examination of fathers' responses. This is important in that fathers themselves still largely remain a missing
voice in the research on nonresidential father involvement and its outcomes (Braver & O’Connell, 1998, Kruk, 1991). Use of the NSFH data also allowed for an exploration of larger, non-clinical samples of fathers. Although nonresidential fathers are underrepresented in the NSFH data (Sorenson, 1997), and there are concerns about the accuracy of fathers’ reports of levels of involvement (Arditti & Keith, 1993), the survey still provides one of the few opportunities to explore nonresidential father behaviors and attitudes on a large scale.

This study also represents one of the few direct examinations of theory as it applies to the behaviors and attitudes of nonresidential fathers. As such, it represents an important step in a process of theory testing in relation to this population. This is an important consideration in light of the largely atheoretical nature of much of the prior research on nonresidential fathers (Kurdek, 1996). As a test of theory, the study also offers a unique causal analysis that moves beyond a tradition of correlational research in this area. Causal relationships were explored both within discrete analyses at Time 1 and Time 2 and within a longitudinal analysis of a subsample of men who remained in the sample at both times.

Finally, consistent with recent considerations of the father role (Marsiglio et al., 1997; Pleck, 1997; Seltzer & Brandreth, 1994), this study considers several dimensions of contact between fathers and children. Such an approach allows for a broadening of the concept of father involvement beyond mere measurement of face-to-face visits. Although the analysis did not include provision of financial support to children, it did broaden the measure of involvement to include contact via telephone and/or letters and father’s
participation in decision-making concerning a child. This conceptualization of involvement is consistent with the recommendations of others conducting scholarly work in this area (Palkovitz, 1997; Seltzer, 1991).

Primary Findings

This analysis provides support for the model of role transitions developed by Burr et al. (1979). As such, it serves as one of the few direct tests of the relationships hypothesized within the Burr et al. model of role transitions. Although the present analysis examined selected aspects of the hypothesized model as they relate specifically to nonresidential fathers, the support offered here suggests that both the full model and various elements incorporated within it warrant further study. It is further suggested that the model holds considerable explanatory power in relation to patterns of involvement between nonresidential fathers and children.

Although role strain was not specifically operationalized within the analyzed model, these results provide a model for understanding how such strain may exist for nonresidential fathers. Role strain may be defined as the stress generated within a person when she/he either cannot comply or has difficulty complying with the expectations of a role (Goode, 1960). Burr et al. (1979) propose that the greater the perceived role strain that results from performing a role, the less the ease in making a transition into the role. Umberson and Williams (1993) report that nonresidential fathers report higher levels of parental role strain than do residential fathers. The present study offers a model for understanding the potential source of such heightened role strain for nonresidential fathers. Among the fathers analyzed here, it may be argued that role strain arises out of
ongoing conflict with residential mothers, greater geographic distance from children, and a lack of clarity concerning enactment of the father role. Such strain may be magnified by the fact that men’s definitions of the father role may remain stable following separation (Seltzer, 1991). In other words, men may retain a definition of fatherhood based on a residential model even in the face of increased barriers to involvement encountered following residential separation from children. Although levels of involvement between fathers and children were analyzed here, the proposed models also may serve as effective predictors of levels of role strain experienced by fathers.

These results are also consistent with other research attention to elements of role enactment as they relate to father involvement with children (Hetherington, 1993; Kruk, 1991; McKenry et al., 1992; Pasley & Minton, 1997; Stone & McKenry, 1998). Although focusing on a model different than those explored in these earlier studies, the present research offers support for many of the basic constructs explored in those studies.

Minton and Pasley (1996) suggest, for example that nonresidential fathers experience lower levels of role satisfaction than do their residential counterparts. These results suggest that this reduced level of satisfaction largely arises out of conflict with children’s mothers and the degree of geographic separation of from children. Minton & Pasley’s argument that father role satisfaction is constrained by mothers who serve as gatekeepers and restrictive visitation agreements is supported here.

Support is also offered for Kruk’s (1991) argument that nonresidential fathers may withdraw from contact with their children as a result of both structural constraints and a psychological response to the loss of their children. These results suggest that

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nonresidential fathers who succeed in finding satisfaction in the father role are more likely to maintain higher levels of contact with children.

This body of work, then, suggests the need for further research attention to aspects of father role enactment and nonresidential father attitudes and behaviors. The results achieved in the present study provide substantial support to the calls of others (Braver & O'Connell, 1998; Doherty et al., 1998; Marsiglio & Cohan, 1997; Palkovitz, 1997; Parke & Brott, 1999; Pasley & Minton, 1997) for greater attention to barriers to father role enactment that may exist in the lives of nonresidential fathers. Clear support is offered for the causal influence of barriers to father role enactment on nonresidential fathers’ involvement with children.

The basic premise of this research was that the hypothesized model addressing the ease with which one transitions into a new social role would significantly explain patterns of involvement between nonresidential fathers and children. A number of hypotheses addressing the relationships between various aspects of nonresidential father role enactment and patterns of involvement between fathers and children were tested through analyses of models incorporating single and multiple involvement variables. All of the original model hypotheses were supported as were several hypotheses concerning bivariate relationships within the analyzed models. The hypothesized models received substantial support among three of the four sample groups.

**Fathers at Time 1**

Among the 426 fathers included in the sample at Time 1, both the model incorporating three observed involvement variables and each of three separate models...
incorporating single observed involvement variables provided strong fits to the data. This suggests that the hypothesized model substantially explains levels of nonresidential fathers’ face-to-face and telephone/letter contact with children as well as the degree to which nonresidential fathers participate in decision-making concerning children.

Three of the utilized fit indicators are based on comparisons of the observed covariance matrix to one estimated on the assumption that the model being tested is true. These include the goodness-of-fit indicator (GFI), the adjusted goodness-of-fit indicator (AGFI) and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) statistic. Each of the model GFI and AGFI indicators were very strong. In all cases, the GFI provides an indication of the percent of observed covariances explained by the covariances implied by the model. For this sample, the GFI statistics were all 0.99 or 1.00 suggesting that the model accounts for all or nearly all of the observed covariances. Additionally, all AGFI scores were above 0.97, suggesting a nearly perfect model-to-data fit. The SRMR statistic is an indication of the average difference between the predicted and observed covariances in the model. A lower SRMR statistic indicates better model-to-data fit. Among fathers at Time 1, a strong SRMR statistic was achieved by the model assessing fathers’ participation in decision-making concerning the child while adequate SRMR statistics were achieved by each of the other three models.

The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) statistic is also based on a comparison of predicted versus observed covariances but also accounts for the degree of parsimony between the number of parameters to estimate and the number of variables and relationships in the model. A strong fit was indicated for the models incorporating
telephone/letter contact, face-to-face visits, and participation in decision-making as single observed involvement variables. In each case, the RMSEA statistic was less than 0.10. The model incorporating all three observed involvement variables achieved an adequate yet not strong RMSEA statistic.

The PCLOSE statistic provides a test of whether the RMSEA statistic indicates lack of a close fit to the data. A PCLOSE statistic of less than .05 indicates that the RMSEA statistic suggests a poor model-to-data fit. Among all fathers at Time 1, the PCLOSE statistics for each of the assessed models support the conclusion of strong fits to the data. In sum, then, the various fit indicators suggest a very strong model-to-data fit for each of the assessed models among the 426 fathers included in the sample at Time 1.

Although the model proposed by Burr et al. (1979) originally addressed a period of transition into a social role, the relationships supported here appear to address ongoing patterns of role enactment. A substantial number of men in this sample had held the nonresidential father role for many years, suggesting that they had moved beyond a period of transition into a new social role. Although time since separation from children was not controlled in this analysis, there are indications that factors contributing to the ease with which men enact the nonresidential father role as explored here continue to exist as significant forces in the lives of these men as they maintain the role.

Again, this is consistent with other research supporting the salience of role enactment to patterns of father involvement with children (Baruch & Barnett, 1986; Ihinger-Tallman et al., 1993; Pleck, 1997). It has been suggested that such role identification is complicated by the degree to which men are given greater latitude in
relation to commitment to, identification with, and competence in the father role (Daly, 1993, Doherty et al., 1998). Certainly, nonresidential fathers experience even greater latitude because of the lack of clear societal norms for this role.

While the primary focus of this analysis was consideration of overall explanatory power of the analyzed models, the data also suggest a number of significant bivariate relationships within the hypothesized models for all fathers at Time 1. Both role satisfaction and role clarity were significantly associated with fathers’ participation in decision-making while role clarity was also significantly associated with frequency of face-to-face visits. Of interest here is the lack of significant bivariate relationships between role salience and any of the three observed involvement variables. The relationship between role salience and nonresidential father involvement has been documented elsewhere (Ihinger-Tallman et al., 1993; Minton & Pasley, 1996) and, thus, the lack of a bivariate relationship here might be indicative of a problematic role salience variable.

Additionally, in all models, both distance and levels of conflict were significantly associated with levels of role satisfaction. Although satisfaction has been identified as contributing to levels of father involvement with children (McKenry et al., 1992; Minton & Pasley, 1996), there has been little scholarly attention to factors contributing to levels of satisfaction among fathers. These data suggest that conflict with a child’s mother not only directly influences fathers’ involvement with children, but also is an important factor in the degree of satisfaction men experience in the father role. In fact, the significant relationship between conflict and participation in decision-making among fathers at Time 130
is the only significant relationship between conflict and any of the involvement variables among any of the sample groups. This suggests that the relationship between inter-parental conflict and levels of father involvement with children is a mediated one with conflict contributing to role satisfaction which, in turn, contributes to involvement with children. This provides a further clarification to the growing literature on inter-parental conflict as a factor associated with nonresidential father-child contact.

Negative relationships between geographic separation and father involvement have been well documented (Arditti, 1992; Arditti & Keith, 1993; Dudley, 1991a; McKenry et al., 1991; Seltzer, 1993; Stephens et al., 1993). The present data also suggest a strong negative causal relationship between geographic distance and levels of role satisfaction although this relationship is more difficult to interpret. Without information concerning the reasons behind how near or far a father may reside from his children, a more complete understanding of this relationship is not possible. For example, it is reasonable to expect that the relationship between distance and role satisfaction might be partially determined by which parent may have moved to create increased separation of fathers and children, the reasons for greater geographic separation, or any number of other factors associated with residential location.

**African-American Fathers at Time 1**

A second analysis of 119 African-American fathers included in the sample at Time 1 resulted in very similar findings. Each of the four assessed models achieved similar fit statistics to those reported for the entire Time 1 sample, although this might be expected as these men were included in that sample. More enlightening, however, is a
comparison of African-American fathers with their Caucasian counterparts in the Time 1 sample. The African-American fathers in the Time 1 sample appeared very similar in terms of the model incorporating all three observed involvement variables and the model assessing telephone/letter contact. The model provided a slightly better fit to the data on face-to-face visits for African-American fathers than it did for Caucasian fathers and a slightly better fit to the data on participation in decision-making for Caucasian fathers than it did for African-American fathers although fit indicators suggest an overall strong fit for both groups on each of these models.

This analysis represents one of the few comparisons of African-American and Caucasian fathers in terms of enactment of the father role among nonresidential fathers. African-American fathers were slightly younger, slightly less educated, had been married slightly less often, and had less family income than their Caucasian counterparts, and there are indications of strong model-to-data fit for both groups. The similarity of results for African-American and Caucasian fathers suggest that issues surrounding role enactment are salient for both groups of men. This finding is consistent with the view that aspects of role enactment are central to patterns of involvement between nonresidential fathers and children. Although it may be assumed that men of different ethnic and social class groups might face differing social barriers to involvement with children, the explanatory power of the elements of role enactment included here are consistent across both groups. Indeed, African-American fathers have been shown to hold strong commitments to the father role (Mott, 1990), and the strength of such commitments might offset the greater structural barriers to involvement these men might
In terms of the specific paths within the model, however, there were a number of differences between African-American and Caucasian fathers. Role satisfaction and role clarity did not significantly contribute to any of the involvement variables among African-American fathers. Role satisfaction did significantly contribute to levels of telephone/letter contact and participation in decision-making and role clarity significantly contribute to frequency of telephone/letter contact and face-to-face visits among Caucasian fathers. This pattern appears to be consistent with both the demographic characteristics of the African-American sample and Mott's (1990) report of high role commitment among African-American fathers. Although the NSFH survey does not allow for a distinction between divorced and never married nonresidential fathers, differences may be assumed in light of the fact that African-American fathers were younger, less educated, lower paid, and reported fewer marriages than their Caucasian counterparts. These differences might be interpreted as suggesting that African-American fathers were less likely to have been married when their children were born. As such, they would be less likely to hold legal agreements specifying aspects of the father role. At the same time, a heightened commitment to the father role suggests that involvement would be less contingent on levels of role satisfaction in that such commitment would facilitate involvement despite lower levels of role satisfaction.

Role salience was significantly associated with frequency of visits among African-American fathers and participation in decision-making among Caucasian fathers. Interestingly, the relationship between role salience and all three involvement variables
was negative for Caucasian fathers and positive for African-American fathers. A similar pattern was also evident in the relationships between role conflict and each of the involvement variables. These patterns suggest that African-American fathers are more likely to be involved with their children when the father role is more salient for them and when they experience lower conflict with the mother of their children, whereas Caucasian fathers are more likely to be involved with their children when the father role holds less salience for them and when they experience higher levels of conflict with the mother of their children. These findings are somewhat counterintuitive and suggest the need for further study of these complex relationships.

Fathers at Time 2

Among the 426 fathers included in the sample at Time 1, 117 remained in the sample at Time 2. At Time 2, the model incorporating all three observed involvement variables and each of three separate models incorporating single observed involvement variables provided strong fits to the data. Chi-square statistics indicate a strong fit to the data for each model and each of the models resulted in a GFI statistic of 1.00 and all AGFI indicators were above 0.98, also suggesting very strong model-to-data fits for each of the four analyzed models. The RMSEA and PCLOSE statistics also indicated a strong fit for each of the four models. Additionally, each of the SRMR statistics indicated good to strong fits to the data.

Fit indicators at Time 2 compare very favorably to the indicators for these men at Time 1 for three of the four models. All fit indicators for the model incorporating all three observed involvement variables and for the model incorporating telephone/letter
contact as a single involvement were very similar to those at Time 2 and the indicators for
the model incorporating face-to-face visits as a single observed involvement variable
slightly improved at Time 2. The indicators for the model incorporating participation in
decision-making as the single observed involvement variables declined slightly at Time 2
although the GFI and AGFI remained well above the generally accepted threshold of 0.90
indicating strong fit to the data. The fact that the models continue to achieve strong fits to
the data five years following the initial data wave again suggests that the relationship
between elements of role enactment and father involvement with children extends well
beyond the period of transition into the role. This is consistent with other research
exploring the explanatory power of role theory in relation to nonresidential father
attitudes and behavior (Minton & Pasley, 1996; Stone, 1994; Umberson & Williams,
1993).

These results suggest, then, that men who do not remain involved with their
children over time may experience declining levels of role enactment as incorporated into
the analyzed models. However, such a decline may also be associated with elements of
the initial Burr et al. model not analyzed here. For example, the presence of substitute
gratifications such as stepchildren may serve to negatively influence involvement.
Suggested here is the need for further research attention to elements of the full Burr et al.
model in relation to nonresidential father involvement with children.

It is important, also, to consider the degree to which such declines in involvement
actually occur. Recent examinations of child support data suggest that many more
nonresidential fathers contribute financial support to their children than was previously
believed (Parke & Brott, 1999; Smock & Manning, 1997). It has been suggested that earlier research in this area relied almost exclusively on mothers' reports and failed to account for inaccuracies in reporting mechanisms (Braver & O'Connell, 1998). Similar concerns have been raised about earlier reports of declining visitation contact between fathers and children. Again, more recent data suggest that such declines have traditionally been over-reported (Braver & O'Connell, 1998; Doherty et al., 1998). Indeed, it is reasonable to assume that observed declines in nonresidential father involvement with children over time may model similar declines evident in the behaviors of residential fathers as children age (Marsiglio et al., 1997; Parke & Brott, 1999).

Weighted least squares estimates and z-scores for each of the paths within the hypothesized model also remained consistent at both Time 1 and Time 2. As was the case with fathers at Time 1, the relationships between both conflict and distance and role satisfaction achieved significance at $p = .05$. Also, the relationships between role salience and role clarity and telephone/letter contact both were significant. No other relationships within the model achieved significance.

In addition to the discrete analyses described above, fathers who remained in the sample at Time 2 served as the subjects for the assessment of three longitudinal involvement models. These models are portrayed in Figure 4. Each model included one of the three observed involvement variables. A model incorporating all three of the observed involvement variables was not included in this analysis because of the number and complexity of the resultant paths.
The models of frequency of face-to-face visits, frequency of telephone/letter contact, and fathers’ participation in decision-making achieved strong fits to the data based on the GFI and AGFI statistics. Other fit indicators were not as strong, however. Based on these results, the longitudinal relationships are not as clearly indicated as those specified within the discrete analyses of these fathers at Time 1 and Time 2. The chi-square statistics, while significant, may be a function of the sample size used in this analysis. This is suggested by the chi-square to degrees freedom test which results in a statistic outside the range of 2 to 5 which is generally considered as acceptable. This statistic was below 2 for all three of the models. Both the SRMR and RMSEA statistics suggest good but not strong fits for all three models. Thus, there are indications of meaningful longitudinal patterns, however, these results also suggest the need for further exploration in this area in an effort to overcome potential sample and data issues that may have contributed to the fit indicators reported here.

In a general sense, these results offer further support for the ability of the hypothesized model to account for levels of involvement longitudinally. Again, this suggests that the relationship between father involvement and various elements of nonresidential father role enactment sustains itself over time. These results also offer further support to those who call for further longitudinal explorations of nonresidential father involvement with children.

**Fathers Residentially Separated from Children between Time 1 and Time 2**

As discussed earlier, fit indicators for this sample of fathers were problematic. Although analysis of the asymptotic covariance matrix with weighted least squares
(WLS) estimation was warranted because of the presence of categorical variables, WLS estimation is highly susceptible to sample size effects with small samples leading to misleading indications of poor model-to-data fit. Because the sample employed in this analysis (86 subjects) was well below all recommended sample size criteria, this was the case in the present analysis. All fit indicators suggested a poor model-to-data fit for each of the four analyzed models.

Because of the sample size issue, maximum likelihood estimation was also utilized with this sample of fathers. This technique was much more appropriate to the sample size but failed to account for the presence of categorical variables within the model. Thus, although maximum likelihood estimation resulted in strong fit indicators for three of the four analyzed models, they must be viewed somewhat dubiously. This is unfortunate in that these recently separated fathers come closest to being actively engaged into the role transition originally described by Burr et al. (1979).

Implications

Implications for Research

Because the present study incorporated selected elements of the Burr et al. model, a potential area for future research is the further exploration of the hypothesized model with other samples and instrumentation. Such examinations would provide the opportunity for more robust operationalization of the various concepts within the Burr et al. model and expansion of the involvement construct to include both provision of financial resources and qualitative dimensions. Further explorations should also include attention to the relationship between several variables not included within the theoretical
model and nonresidential fathers’ role enactment. Included here are variables such as remarriage, ages of children, time since separation from children, and pre-separation father-child relationship quality. Further, these explorations should utilize standardized and multi-item instruments.

These explorations should explore possible links between the model hypothesized by Burr and colleagues and those suggested by others examining elements of role enactment among nonresidential fathers. As the research in this area continues to grow, efforts should be made to synthesize results into a more cohesive view of enactment of the nonresidential father role.

If, indeed, the Burr et al. (1979) model may be viewed as extending its explanatory power beyond a period of transition into a new social role, efforts should be made to explore the model’s relevance to aspects of residential father involvement. Certainly, the father role is not a static one. As father-child relationships change across the life course, ongoing revisions to role definitions are likely to occur. The strong fits between a model of role enactment and aspects of fathers’ behavior in the present study suggest that similar relationships might exist across a broad spectrum of father attitudes and behaviors.

These relationships may also contribute to levels of well-being among nonresidential fathers (Coleman & Ganong, 1990; King, 1994). Research attention to the relationship between elements of the father role and nonresidential father well-being has been sparse, and there is a need for more extensive analyses in this area. It would be interesting, for example, to consider whether the Burr et al. model holds similar
explanatory power in relation to father well-being.

The relationships considered here are complex ones. This complexity is difficult to assess through purely positivistic approaches. There is a need for qualitative approaches to the relationships described here as a mechanism for developing a greater sense of the depth and complexity that surrounds that father role. Such approaches would provide a richness of understanding that is currently lacking. Such understanding would inform numerous areas of future research and would serve to more fully explore the contexts within which these relationships exist.

A part of this complexity is the relationship between various aspects of the legal process associated with divorce and their impact on perceptions of role satisfaction, role salience, and role strain. There has been considerable research, for example, on the relationship between legal factors such as mediated divorce agreements and joint legal custody and levels of nonresidential father participation with children (Donnelly & Finkelhor, 1992; Dudley, 1991; Hetherington & Stanley-Morgan, 1997, Stephen et al., 1993). Although it has been suggested that men's satisfaction with the legal system is associated with patterns of involvement (Braver & O'Connor, 1998), little scholarly attention has been paid to the relationships between aspects of the legal divorce process and issues surrounding men's enactment of the father role.

Much as the present study strongly suggests that the relationship between interparental conflict and nonresidential father involvement is mediated by role satisfaction, other mediating relationships may also be hypothesized to exist. It is also appropriate to further explore the impact of divorcing parent education programs on involvement. The
data discussed here suggest that as such programs are more frequently incorporated into
divorce procedures, it is important to understand how they contribute to strengthening
aspects of the nonresidential father role. Initial research attention to these programs
suggest that they may, indeed, positively contribute to ongoing relationships between
nonresidential fathers and children although long-term impacts are not clear (Arbuthnot &
Gordon, 1996; McKenry, Clark, & Stone, 1999).

Although the focus of this project was on assessing overall model fits, a number
of bivariate relationships are suggested by the data that bear further examination.
Constructs such as geographic distance between fathers and children have received little
scholarly attention thus far (Marsiglio et al., 1997). Considerable support is offered here
for the importance of directing greater attention to the relationships, both direct and
indirect, between these factors and patterns of father involvement with children.

It has been suggested that divorced nonresidential fathers exhibit different patterns
of involvement with their children than unmarried nonresidential fathers (Braver &
O’Connell, 1998; Minton & Pasley, 1996; Seltzer, 1991). Further research attention to
these differences is warranted. Because the present study does not distinguish between
the two groups, there is a need to further explore the strength of the hypothesized model
in each domain on nonresidential fatherhood.

Finally, these results strongly suggest the need for further attention to how
visitation and custody policies and programmatic interventions may contribute to
variations in the success with which men enact the father role while living separately
from their children. This research should include attention to effective alternatives to
current policy and practice models.

Implications for Policy

First and foremost, these results indicate the importance of pursuing policy positions that move beyond simplistic views of nonresidential fathers and their involvement with their children. Clearly, the data here suggest that the “deadbeat dad” is an overly-simplistic and often inaccurate portrayal. As such, these data support the claims of others that such portrayals are, in reality, largely myths (Braver & O'Connell, 1998; Doherty et al., 1998; Parke & Brott, 1999). Rather, the results provide support for the argument that policies focused on punishing or coercing fathers into providing support and maintaining contact should be eliminated (Marsiglio et al., 1997). Suggested here is the need for a policy shift to a focus on encouraging nonresidential fathers’ active participation in the lives of their children. Such policy should pay attention to discrepancies in men’s perceptions concerning the father role and their ability to satisfactorily enact that role while residing separately from their children. In doing so, there is a need for policy and programmatic interventions focused on helping both fathers and mothers understand barriers to role enactment faced by nonresidential fathers.

There is also a need for more explicitly delineated definitions of nonresidential fathers’ roles in the lives of their children. Presently, when proceeding through the legal system, fathers receive little more than a determination of how many hours per week they may spend with their children. Unfortunately, this does little to effectively address the societal lack of clarity concerning the nonresidential father role. The present data suggest that men with a greater sense of father role clarity are more likely to remain involved in
the lives of their children. At present, legal agreements concerning nonresidential father involvement with children often only serve to clarify the role of “visitor” and “distant provider” for these men. These agreements often fail to clarify the role of father as co-parent which has evolved as an ideal in our society (Doherty et al., 1998). Based on Cherlin’s (1978) concept of incomplete institutionalization, it is even more imperative that the legal system address the ambiguity encountered by men as they transition into the nonresidential father role.

These results also support earlier calls for policy and interventions aimed at reducing inter-parental conflict (Fine, Moreland, & Schwebel, 1983; Hetherington et al., 1982; Johnston et al., 1989; Seltzer & Brandreth, 1994). Indeed, conflict over aspects of the father role was not only shown to be strongly associated with levels of involvement, but also as contributing to levels of role satisfaction and role clarity as defined by the presence of legal agreements concerning custody, visitation, and child support.

Esposito (1995) claims that the strongest predictor of nonresidential father involvement with children is the relationship between parents. Ongoing efforts to utilize mediation in divorce, paternity, and custody proceedings are a step in the right direction. However, more attention must be paid to reducing inter-parental conflict outside the legal domain. Along with co-parenting education programs, both mothers and fathers should have access to information on nonresidential fathers’ roles in the lives of children. The present results also suggest value in attending to conflict resolution skills within parent education programs or other activities associated with legal custody procedures.
With the increasing incidence of nonresidential fatherhood among young, unmarried men (Mott, 1990), there is a need for innovative paternity establishment programs that include attention to elements of role enactment examined here. Specific approaches should be developed that allow young nonresidential fathers to gain a greater identification with the father role and to derive a greater degree of role satisfaction through contact with their children. These programs should be structured so as to support, rather than hinder young fathers in their enactment of the father role and should include elements such as job training and education designed to facilitate integration of the father role with other life roles (Marsiglio & Cohan, 1997). Concurrently, there is a need to broaden child support definitions to include forms of resource provision accessible to young nonresidential fathers so that they might develop a greater sense of satisfaction from filling a provider function in the lives of their children. Such broadened definitions of child support are also likely to reduce interparental conflict over men's lack of compliance with unrealistic child support awards.

Because divorce and custody proceedings still most often result in mothers retaining residential custody of children (Depner & Bray, 1993; Doherty, 1997), these proceedings should be followed with education and support for fathers as they move into a nonresidential role which they may have previously resisted. Along with this, there is a need to explore policy aimed at ensuring compliance with visitation schedules similar to efforts made to assure compliance with child support awards. The call for such policy has grown in recent years and many states have begun to explore strategies for achieving such compliance. Enactment of such policy would likely result in a reduction of conflict...
over visitation similar to the reduction in conflict over child support compliance following the introduction of mandatory child support collection programs.

These results also provide support for the increasing preference for joint custody awards among domestic relations courts. As others have documented (Arditti & Keith, 1993; Dudley, 1991b; Kruk, 1991; Stephens, 1996, Stephens et al., 1993), joint custody is positively associated with ongoing levels of nonresidential father involvement with children. The present data suggest that this relationship is a result of the fact that joint custody tends to elevate a father above the role of mere "visitor" in his children’s lives. As such, he is able to retain a greater sense of contact with elements of the father role and retain a greater sense of influence over his children’s lives.

However, these results also suggest that the heightened clarity achieved through joint legal custody and other aspects of legal agreements largely arises out of levels of interparental conflict that exist. In other words, joint legal custody is more likely to occur when inter-parental conflict is low and, as such, joint legal custody may be viewed as mediating the relationship between interparental conflict and father involvement with children. In this respect, these data provide a degree of clarity concerning the relationship between interparental conflict and joint legal custody (Arditti & Keith, 1993; Braver, 1996; Dudley, 1991b).

Research indicates that the proportion of nonresidential fathers interested in playing a more active role in children’s lives is increasing while the proportion of fathers who are disengaging from paternal involvement is also rising (Furstenberg et al., 1987; Marsiglio et al., 1997). These patterns suggest that nonresidential fathers may move
away from involvement with their children despite a desire to actively embrace the father role, supporting the importance of an adequate transition into and enactment of the role. Hetherington and Stanley-Hagan (1997) suggest that policy in this area should encourage parental responsibility, minimize conflict, and encourage constructive involvement of both parents in the lives of children. To do so will require a fundamental shift in policy views of nonresidential fathers. The data reported here provide foundational support for such a shift.

Limitations of the Study

The design of this study addresses a number of issues present in earlier scholarly work on nonresidential father involvement with children and overcomes many of these limitations. At the same time, there are also a number of limitations of this research. Chief among these are issues surrounding the secondary analysis of data collected through the NSFH. Although use of the NSFH data set offers a number of advantages, it necessarily requires use of a set of survey items not designed to directly address concepts being analyzed. This was the case in the present study. A number of the constructs within the original model of role transitions hypothesized by Burr and his colleagues (1979) were defined much more broadly than the operational definitions used in the present study. As a result, role incompatibility was narrowed to geographic separation from children, role clarity was narrowed to the presence of visitation, custody and child support agreements and role salience was narrowed to a single indicator of a subject’s global assessment of the importance of having children. Such revisions were necessary in order to gain access to the benefits offered by the NSFH data but these concessions also
clearly indicate the need for further study of the models and relationships analyzed here.

A second issue associated with the use of NSFH data is the fact that nonresidential fathers are under-represented in the NSFH sample (NICHD Working Group Reports, 1997; Seltzer, 1991). A number of factors contributed to this under-representation, including a) the exclusion from the NSFH survey of individuals living in institutionalized or group living situations, (b) the survey's reflection of U.S. Census undercounts of certain populations, and (c) men being less likely to report having children living elsewhere (Sorenson, 1997). In addition to being under-represented, nonresidential fathers were also much more likely than other groups to drop from the sample at Time 2. While some men dropped from the sample because their child(ren) reached age 18 between the two data waves, a larger issue is that of men not being re-surveyed at Time 2. This raises the issue of a greater selectivity bias at Time 2 in that the second data wave only includes men who chose to remain in the sample.

Thirdly, the NSFH data does not allow for analysis of reports from multiple family members. Although both nonresidential fathers and residential mothers are included in the sample, the two groups are not linked. Thus, issues raised about the differences between father and mother reports (Hoffman, 1995; Kitson, 1992; Seltzer & Brandreth, 1994) cannot be addressed. This raises a concern about the validity of the data reported here. The models analyzed here are based on fathers' subjective experiences and may not accurately reflect levels of involvement or elements of role enactment. Conversely, the relative lack of father reports in earlier research (Braver et al., 1991; Greif, 1995; Kruk, 1991; Kurdek, 1986; McKenry et al., 1992) suggests a value in
focusing on father reports within the present study. Reliance on subjects’ subjective views is also somewhat consistent with a role theory perspective on father involvement in that the “father role” is subjectively constructed by men who enact it. At the same time, research on father involvement will be strengthened by the inclusion of multiple family members in analyses.

Finally, the structure of the NSFH survey is also problematic in some ways. Typically, constructs are measured through only one or two items, limiting the degree to which those utilizing the data can structure variables (NICHD Working Group Reports, 1997). In terms of father involvement, the survey includes little in the way of information on qualitative aspects of father/child relationships. Thus, its use mandates a focus on quantifiable aspects of father involvement, an extension of earlier concerns about research in this area (Seltzer, 1991; Stephens, 1996). Such a reliance necessarily limits the degree of complexity which may be built into an analysis.

Also, the structure of the NSFH survey does not allow for a reliable consideration of provision of child support as an involvement variable. Not only is the structure of the child support items problematic, but a very large portion of the sample of nonresidential fathers in the sample did not respond to these items. Furthermore, items assessing provision of child support were structured differently at Time 1 and Time 2. For this reason, child support was excluded as one of the assessed involvement variables. Although this narrowed the scope of the analysis, it also removed a number of confounding issues from the data interpretation. Although numerous researchers have documented a relationship between provision of child support and the involvement
variables utilized here (Dudley, 1991; Furstenberg et al., 1987; Grief, 1995; Seltzer, 1991), this documented relationship does not justify assumptions concerning the veracity of the analyzed models in relation to provision of such support. Rather, it suggests the importance of research that applies the analyzed models directly to patterns of provision of child support.

The issue of differently constructed survey items at the two data waves is also present in other areas of the survey. As a result, the role salience measure utilized at Time 2 is different than that used at Time 1. This difference may contribute to fit issues encountered within the longitudinal analysis.

In addition to issues associated with the data set, there are also a number of other limitations inherent in this research. Because the study focused on theory testing, the analyzed models did not include a number of other variables that may have, indeed, contributed to patterns of involvement. As discussed in Chapter 2, factors such as time since divorce, age of the child, quality of the father-child relationship prior to residential separation, and father and mother remarriage status have been identified elsewhere as potentially contributing to patterns of involvement but these were excluded from the present study. Although the fit indicators generally suggest the models hold high explanatory power without the inclusion of these variables, they warrant further study in terms of their association with men’s enactment of the nonresidential father role.

It is also important to acknowledge that interpretation of these results would be strengthened by examination of similar relationships among residential fathers. There continues to be a lack of clarity concerning the degree to which observed behaviors are
consistent with patterns present among residential fathers or to which they are associated with nonresidential status (Marsiglio et al., 1997). Addressing this issue should be a component of future scholarly attention to the father role.

A final issue revolves around the cross-sectional nature of the samples. All men included in the NSFH data set were identified as subjects over ten years ago. The sample pool excludes an entire cohort of men who have entered the father role after the development of the NSFH sample group. Thus, the data may not accurately reflect the attitudes and experiences of younger fathers. As policy-makers and practitioners continue to assess nonresidential father involvement in the face of ever changing societal barriers, the absence of younger fathers from data sets such as the NSFH will become more problematic.

Men in younger cohorts experience nonresidential fatherhood within an environment characterized tougher laws and stronger norms concerning their status as nonresidential parents. Recently, for example, joint legal custody has become the preferred alternative in many states. Although not fully, explored, it may be reasonable to assume that a causal relationship exists between joint custody and levels of nonresidential father involvement with children.

Despite the limitations enumerated above, this study offers a valuable contribution to the literature on nonresidential father involvement with children. It supports and extends the calls of scholars for a more extensive understanding of the relationship between father involvement and elements of men's enactment of fatherhood as a social
role. It is hoped that this research will contribute to that understanding in a way that will enhance future research and policy development.
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