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The Antecedents and Consequences of Adolescents' Relationships With Stepfathers and Nonresident Fathers

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Abstract

Using data from a sample of 1,149 adolescents in the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health who have both a resident stepfather and a nonresident biological father, this study examines the prevalence, antecedents, and consequences of adolescents' closeness to their stepfathers and nonresident fathers. Findings demonstrate that adolescents vary greatly in their likelihood of having close relationships with one or both of their fathers, but when they do so, they appear to benefit. Close relationships with both stepfathers and nonresident fathers are associated with better adolescent outcomes, with ties to stepfathers being somewhat more influential than ties to nonresident fathers.

Keywords

adolescents; child well-being; nonresident fathers; relationship quality; stepfathers

Continued high rates of nonmarital childbearing, divorce, and remarriage over the past few decades have contributed to nonresident fathering and stepfathering becoming two increasingly common types of fathering experiences. Approximately half of all U.S. children will grow up apart from their biological fathers (Bianchi, 1990) and almost one third of all children will live in a stepfamily at some point in childhood (Bumpass, Raley, & Sweet, 1995). Based on these trends, White and Gilbreth (2001) estimate that about two thirds of children with a nonresident father will experience the later addition of a stepfather. The implications of these arrangements for children's well-being have been of increasing concern given previous findings on the disadvantages faced by children who grow up apart from their fathers (Amato, 2000) for both children of single mothers and children whose mothers remarry (Coleman, Ganong, & Fine, 2000).

Although research on nonresident fathers and stepfathers expanded greatly in the prior two decades, the literature on the consequences of children's relationships to nonresident fathers and to stepfathers is largely separate. Much of the research on stepfamilies ignores interactions with nonresident parents (Coleman et al., 2000), and studies assessing the effects on children of living with a stepparent tend to compare child outcomes among children living in different family structures (e.g., stepfamilies vs. two-biological parent families and single mother families). Research on nonresident fathers and their children tends at most to control for whether the resident mother has remarried, with little exploration of the implications of the quality of the relationship between children and their stepfathers for nonresident father involvement or of any benefits associated with it (e.g., Manning & Smock, 1999; Stewart, 2003). Thus, although researchers have examined issues such as the quality and consequences of the relationship between children and stepfathers or between children and nonresident fathers, we do not have a good understanding of how children simultaneously relate to both their nonresident fathers and their stepfathers. It is largely unknown how many children have close bonds to both a stepfather and a nonresident father, what factors allow them to do so, and the consequences of such bonds for child well-being.

This study employs nationally representative data on adolescents from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) and simultaneously considers adolescents' relations to their stepfathers and nonresident fathers to address three central questions: (a) How common are different patterns of closeness to stepfathers and nonresident fathers? That is, how many adolescents have close bonds to both stepfathers and nonresident fathers, how many are close to only one father, and how many are close to neither father? (b) What factors predict patterns of closeness to stepfathers and nonresident fathers? (c) What are the consequences for adolescent well-being of different patterns of relationships to stepfathers and nonresident fathers? Three important indicators of adolescent well-being are considered: internalizing problems, externalizing problems, and failing grades.

The current study is limited to a consideration of married stepfathers because the adolescents in Add Health who said that they were living with their mother and her cohabiting partner were not asked the stepparenting questions, which includes the key question regarding how close they are to the stepfather. Although it would be ideal to also consider children living with cohabiting stepfathers, the majority of stepfamilies, about three quarters, involve married couples (Bumpass et al., 1995). Stepfamilies that began as a cohabiting partnership but later married are included in the present study. Most cohabiting partnerships end relatively quickly in either marriage or disruption, and approximately half of all children who enter cohabiting stepfamilies will transition into a married stepfamily within a few years (Bumpass et al.).

Patterns of Closeness to Stepfathers and Nonresident Fathers

This study focuses on the closeness of the stepfather-child and nonresident father-child bond because research suggests that closeness is a particularly salient dimension of the father-child relationship that is associated with better outcomes for children (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; Pryor & Rodgers, 2001). High-quality relationships may be particularly important for child well-being because stepfathers and nonresident biological fathers who have close bonds with children can be more effective in monitoring, communicating with, and teaching children, thereby allowing the social capital (Coleman, 1988, 1990) inherent in the father-child relationship to be realized (Amato, 1998; King, Harris, & Heard, 2004). Further, high levels of social capital foster the transfer of parent's human, financial, and other types of resources to children (Nord & Zill, 1996).

It is unknown how many children have close bonds to both a stepfather and a nonresident father or conversely how many children lack close ties to either father because prior studies have not assessed how common such patterns are in the population. Studies that focus on children's relationships either to stepfathers or nonresident fathers suggest great variability. Although many stepfathers are characterized as disengaged in the literature (Hetherington, Bridges, & Insabella, 1998; Kurdek, 1994), it is also clear that many other stepfathers have close bonds to stepchildren (Furstenberg & Harris, 1992; Pryor & Rodgers, 2001). It has also been suggested that men who have become stepfathers more recently may be more involved with stepchildren than those in prior decades (Pryor & Rodgers).

Similarly, there is wide variation in relationships between nonresident fathers and their children. National studies report that about one third of children with nonresident fathers had not seen them at all in the prior year, but almost as many, around one fourth, saw their fathers at least once a week (King, 1994; Seltzer, 1991; Seltzer & Bianchi, 1988). Assessments of relationship quality exhibit similar patterns of variability (King & Sobolewski, 2006). The few studies to compare levels of closeness to stepfathers and to nonresident fathers generally find that children are closer on average to stepfathers (Harris & Ryan, 2004; White, 1994), although not always (Furstenberg & Harris, 1992; Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 2000), suggesting that we might expect more children to be close only to their stepfather than to be close only to their nonresident father.

Predictors of Stepfather and Nonresident Father Involvement

Although prior studies have not assessed the predictors of joint patterns of children's relationships to stepfathers and nonresident fathers, many studies have examined predictors of children's relationships to each father individually. Several factors have been noted to be similarly associated with nonresident father involvement and stepfather involvement, although there is some variation in findings that likely arise from the use of different samples and measures of father involvement. Socioeconomic resources, particularly the father's education, are generally associated with higher levels of stepfather and nonresident father involvement (Cooksey & Fondell, 1996; King et al., 2004). Better educated parents may be more likely to conform to social expectations of close ties between parents and children (Seltzer & Bianchi, 1988), and greater economic resources may allow fathers to incur the costs associated with active participation with children.

Studies of both nonresident father families (King, 2002; King et al., 2004) and stepfamilies (Coleman et al., 2000; Pasley & Moorefield, 2004) report closer bonds to fathers for boys than girls. Hetherington's research on stepfamilies suggests that girls are particularly likely to disengage from these families (Hetherington et al., 1998). Given these findings, girls may be particularly at risk of not being close to either their stepfather or their nonresident father.

Father involvement and parent-child closeness tend to decline during adolescence for both nonresident fathers (King et al., 2004) and stepfathers (Stewart, 2005) as adolescents increasingly desire greater autonomy and spend more time with peers, in extracurricular activities, and sometimes in after-school employment (Hosley & Montemayor, 1997). This pattern suggests that older adolescents may be most at risk of not being close to either their stepfather or nonresident father.

Inconsistent effects of race and ethnicity on father-child relationships are reported in the literature. For example, Black adolescents report being closer to their nonresident fathers than Whites (King et al., 2004) and some studies find that Black fathers have more contact with their nonresident children than White or non-Black fathers (King, 1994; Seltzer, 1991), but others find no differences (Seltzer & Bianchi, 1988). The few studies that examine racial or ethnic differences in stepfather-stepchild relationships also offer mixed findings (e.g., Hofferth & Anderson, 2003; Marsiglio, 1995). Thus, it is less clear whether adolescents' relationships to their stepfathers and nonresident fathers will differ for Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics.

Little is known about nonresident father-child relationships or stepfather-stepchild relationships in immigrant families. The process of migration and the differences between parents born and reared in another country and their U.S.-born children can be a source of intergenerational conflict (Chilman, 1993), suggesting that father-child ties may be less close in immigrant families. Family experiences of migration, which are particularly salient for Hispanic families in the United States, negatively affect nonresident father contact (Lanale & Oropesa, 2001). King et al. (2004) found that arguments between adolescents and their nonresident fathers are more likely when the father is foreign born, although immigration had no effect on adolescent reports of closeness to their nonresident fathers.

Important differences in nonresident father-child ties have been noted by whether the child is born outside of marriage and the length of time since the child lived with the father, both of which weaken children's ties to nonresident fathers (King et al., 2004). A longer time since the child lived with the nonresident father is likely to be associated with closer relationships to stepfathers as it is associated with a longer time that the step-father has been in the child's life and an earlier age at the formation of the stepfamily, factors associated with closer stepfather-child bonds (Hetherington, 1993).

A close mother-child relationship is a key factor in accounting for children's ties to their fathers. Studies report a positive correlation between closeness to mothers and closeness to nonresident fathers, and an even stronger correlation between closeness to mothers and to stepfathers (Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbusch, 1996; White & Gilbreth, 2001). Whether this means that mother-child closeness will equally benefit nonresident father-child ties and stepfather-child ties, or favor stepfather-child ties more, is less clear.

Frequent contact with nonresident fathers is likely to be an important predictor of having close ties to nonresident fathers (King & Sobolewski, 2006), but it is less clear what influence this will have on an adolescent's ties to a stepfather. Some have speculated that it might be difficult for children to have strong relationships to two fathers and that having a closer relationship with a nonresident father may preclude developing strong ties to a stepfather. This difficulty in having strong ties to both fathers may occur for three reasons: (1) because nonresident fathers interfere in the remarried family, (2) because children feel loyalty conflicts or are less willing to accept the authority of the stepfather, or (3) because stepfathers see less need or feel less desire to step in as a father figure when nonresident fathers are actively involved. Although a few studies report a negative correlation between nonresident father contact and stepfather-child relationship quality (Dunn, Cheng, O'Connor, & Bridges, 2004; MacDonald & DeMaris, 2002), several others conclude that the continued involvement of the nonresident father does not negatively influence the quality of stepfather-child bonds (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 2002; White & Gilbreth, 2001). Indeed, Marsiglio (2004) reports that some stepfathers act like an ally of the nonresident biological father, helping him remain active in his child's life (e.g., preventing or smoothing over problems, saying nice things about the biological father) while simultaneously making a concerted effort to be involved with the child as well. Similarly, some nonresident fathers are supportive of a stepfather's entry into the family.

A final factor considered in this study is the quality of the mother-stepfather marriage. Many studies report a positive link between marital quality and parent-child relationships (Erel & Burman, 1995), and studies that focus on stepfamilies support this premise (Fine & Kurdek, 1995; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Parents in supportive marriages may be more available to respond to children's needs. Moreover, a good marriage might encourage mothers to support a closer relationship between the stepfather and her children and may promote the child's acceptance of the stepfather (Hetherington & Kelly). Marsiglio (2004) reports that mothers play an important gatekeeping role in shaping the stepfather's involvement by encouraging or restricting a stepfather's access to their children. It is less clear how a strong mother-stepfather marriage will influence children's ties to nonresident fathers. Mothers in a happy marriage who are promoting ties between their new husband and children may be less inclined to support the nonresident father-child relationship.

A positive relationship between the mother and the nonresident father is likely to enhance a nonresident father's ties to his children, whereas frequent conflict between the biological parents could undermine it. Unfortunately, the Add Health data do not contain any information in this regard. Sobolewski and King (2005) found that nonresident fathers had higher quality relationships with adolescent children when the biological parents were able to engage in cooperative coparenting, although this arrangement was not very common. Interestingly, parental conflict was unrelated to nonresident father-adolescent relationship quality in this study. Levels of conflict tended to be quite modest, likely a consequence of a number of years having passed since many of the parents had separated. Levels of conflict between the mothers and nonresident fathers in the current study are likely to be similarly modest given that the adolescents reported last living with their biological father, on average, 10 years ago.

Consequences of Different Patterns of Closeness to Stepfathers and Nonresident Fathers

Because ties to stepfathers and nonresident fathers may not be equally important for all types of outcomes, it is important to consider multiple dimensions of child well-being. This study focuses on three important indicators of adolescent well-being. Internalizing problems (depressive symptoms and other symptoms of distress) and externalizing problems (antisocial or delinquent behavior) are central components of well-being that developmentalists have identified and studied extensively (Achenbach & McConaughy, 1997). A focus on both externalizing and internalizing behavior allows us to assess gender-typical problems for boys and girls. There are significant gender differences in mental health and emotional problems, with girls exhibiting higher rates of internalizing problems and boys exhibiting higher rates of externalizing problems (Skaggs & Jodl, 1999). Academic performance, as indexed by grades, is another core dimension of child well-being that is predictive of educational attainment and other outcomes, such as health, over the life course (Moore, Evans, Brooks-Gunn, & Roth, 2001; Ross & Wu, 1995).

Five alternative hypotheses are considered in predicting the consequences of closeness to stepfathers and nonresident fathers (see Table 1). One hypothesis (the additive hypothesis) is that children benefit equally from close ties to either father and the resources that they provide and that, further, children will benefit even more when they have close ties to both fathers by virtue of having access to the resources of two involved adults. Conversely, children will be worse off when they lack close ties to both fathers. This hypothesis predicts that children with close ties to both fathers will have the lowest levels of internalizing and externalizing problems and be least likely to receive failing grades, whereas children who are close to neither father will exhibit the highest levels of problem behavior and failing grades. Children with close ties only to a step-father or only to a nonresident father will show similar levels of problem behaviors and failing grades that will fall between the other two groups, being better off than children who are close to neither father but not doing quite as well as those who are close to both fathers.

A second possibility (redundancy) is that a close tie to one father is sufficient to promote child well-being, with a second close tie being largely redundant. Having close ties to a father may be important because children benefit from having a male role model in their lives and because fathers may provide different kinds of resources than mothers (Amato, 1998). Although having this primary identification with a father may be important for child well-being, there may be little additional advantage from having additional father figures in their lives, or any advantages may be cancelled out by potential disadvantages to the extent that children face loyalty conflicts or other difficulties maintaining strong relationships with two fathers (MacDonald & DeMaris, 2002). This hypothesis predicts that children will have lower levels of internalizing and externalizing problems, and be less likely to receive failing grades, if they have a close tie to either father than if they are close to neither father, but that there will not be any additional advantage from being close to both of them.

A third possibility (primacy of biology) is that children will benefit most from close ties to a nonresident biological father, with little or no benefit accruing from ties to a stepfather. Nonresident fathers may be more committed to the child's welfare either because investments in children are fostered by the biological tie (e.g., as suggested by evolutionary theory) or because of the importance of children's early attachments to caregivers (e.g., as suggested by attachment theory). Consistent with this premise, researchers have noted that many stepfathers are disengaged from their stepchildren (Hetherington et al., 1998) and rather than being an additional resource, stepfathers may compete with the child for the mother's time and attention (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). Thus, children with close ties only to nonresident fathers or those with close ties to both fathers will similarly have lower levels of internalizing and externalizing problems, and be less likely to receive failing grades, than children with close

ties only to a stepfather or to neither father, with the benefit of being close to both fathers deriving mainly from the tie with the nonresident father.

A fourth possibility (primacy of residence) is that children will benefit most from close ties to a resident stepfather, with little or no benefit from ties to a nonresident father. Fathers who do not coreside with their children are less able to transmit crucial economic, parental, and community resources that are instrumental to children's healthy development. Living in separate households makes it difficult for biological fathers to maintain affective bonds and to monitor their children's everyday activities. Even if visitation is frequent, which often it is not, many nonresident fathers engage in leisure activities such as taking children to restaurants and movies but fail to engage in authoritative parenting practices, such as talking about problems or setting limits, which are more likely to promote child well-being (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999). For stepfathers, coresiding with children and being available on an everyday basis may foster the transmission of the stepfather's resources when they are able to develop close bonds with their stepchildren. Thus, children with close ties only to a stepfather or to both fathers will benefit equally in terms of having fewer internalizing and externalizing problems, and being less likely to receive failing grades, compared to children who are close only to the nonresident father or to neither father. The benefit of being close to both fathers derives mainly from the tie with the stepfather.

A final possibility (irrelevance) is that both stepfathers and nonresident fathers are largely irrelevant for child well-being, either because neither father is sufficiently invested in the child's welfare or because other individuals (e.g., mothers) or resources (e.g., family income) are more important for child outcomes. Indeed, the disadvantages faced by children in single-parent and remarried households compared to their counterparts in two-biological parent households are thought to derive in part from the loss of social capital associated with the biological father's departure from the household, which is not compensated for by the entrance of a stepfather (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). Of the five hypotheses considered, this is the only one to posit that children will not be at a disadvantage when ties to both fathers are weak. Although the remaining four hypotheses differ with respect to which father may have more influence, or whether ties to both fathers are even better than ties to just one, all of them predict that children who are close to neither father will be one of the groups with the worst child outcomes. In contrast, this hypothesis predicts that the different groups of children will exhibit similar levels of internalizing and externalizing problems, and will be equally likely to receive failing grades.

Although prior research has not tested these competing hypotheses, studies of the influence of stepfathers or of nonresident fathers on child well-being have examined some aspects of them. Most studies of child well-being in stepfamilies compare children living in different family structures rather than assessing how the quality of stepfather-child relationships influences child well-being (Coleman et al., 2000). Given that children in stepfamilies often fare no better on child outcomes than children in single-parent families, this literature implies that stepfathers may have little influence on child well-being. Evidence is accumulating, however, that close bonds between stepfathers and stepchildren is associated with better child outcomes (Pryor & Rodgers, 2001), with some exceptions (Brand, Clingempeel, & Bowen-Woodward, 1988; Clingempeel & Segal, 1986), even after controlling for mother-child closeness (Amato, 1994). Bonds to nonresident fathers, however, are rarely simultaneously considered. Research has also found a positive association between nonresident father-child closeness and child well-being (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999), even after controlling for mother-child closeness, although the effects tend to be modest (King & Sobolewski, 2006). Again, however, bonds to stepfathers are not usually considered.

A notable exception to the separate literatures on the consequences of children's relationships to nonresident fathers and to stepfathers is a study based on the National Survey of Families

and Households by White and Gilbreth (2001). These researchers considered adolescent's relationships with both their stepfathers and nonresident fathers and found consistent evidence that good relationships with stepfathers were associated with significantly fewer internalizing and externalizing problems. The influence of nonresident fathers was less apparent. In the stepfamily sample, relationships with nonresident fathers were not significantly related to internalizing or externalizing problems, but a significant effect of the nonresident father-child relationship on both outcomes was found for the larger sample of adolescents with nonresident fathers (regardless of whether they had a stepfather). Given that there was no interaction between the quality of the nonresident father-child relationship and living in a stepfamily on child outcomes, they concluded that a good relationship with a nonresident father probably does have positive effects on adolescent outcomes in stepfamilies, albeit weaker effects than those associated with a close stepfather-child relationship. They attribute the difference between the findings in the two samples to the smaller sample size of the stepfamily sample. This study suggests that good relationships with both fathers are associated with better child outcomes but that ties to stepfathers are more influential than ties to nonresident fathers.

More recently, using data from Add Health, Berg (2003) found that both closeness to stepfathers and closeness to nonresident fathers were associated with adolescent self-esteem, with the influence of stepfathers only slightly stronger than the influence of nonresident fathers. This study did not adjust for the design effects of the Add Health data, however, which may have led to overestimating the significance of model estimates (Chantala & Tabor, 1999). In contrast, Dunn et al. (2004) report no association between either the quality of children's relationships to stepfathers or to nonresident fathers on children's internalizing or externalizing problems in a community sample in England.

Although these studies are noteworthy for considering children's relationships to both stepfathers and nonresident fathers, they do so by having separate measures of stepfather-child relationship quality and nonresident father-child relationship quality in models predicting child well-being. This approach does not address the issue of whether children benefit most when they enjoy close relationships with both stepfathers and nonresident fathers or whether close ties to at least one father is what makes the crucial difference. The present study addresses these issues by comparing adolescents who have close ties to both fathers to those who have close ties only to stepfathers, only to nonresident fathers, or to neither father.

In the analyses of child outcomes, I include as controls the variables discussed earlier that are likely related to the establishment of close ties to stepfathers and nonresident fathers because they are also likely to be associated with child well-being. These factors include parental education and family income (Bornstein & Bradley, 2003; Yeung, Linver, & Brooks-Gunn, 2002), race (Farkas, 2004) and immigrant status (Bankston & Zhou, 2002), adolescent's age and gender (Skaggs & Jodl, 1999), whether the adolescent was born in marriage (Seltzer, 2001), time since separation (Amato, 2000), mother-child closeness (King & Sobolewski, 2006), mother-stepfather marital quality (Kurdek, 1994), and nonresident father contact. Although contact does not generally have a strong direct link to child outcomes, it has been found to have significant indirect effects on child well-being through its strong association with nonresident father-child relationship quality (King & Sobolewski).

As a final step to the analysis, I examine whether the benefits of adolescents' relationships to their stepfathers and nonresident fathers differ by the adolescent's gender. Researchers have speculated that boys might benefit more from both nonresident father involvement and from stepfather involvement than girls, although evidence for the differential effects of father involvement by gender has been decidedly mixed (Hetherington, Henderson, & Reiss, 1999; King & Sobolewski, 2006). The importance of adolescent gender as a moderator may vary by the outcome under consideration. In particular, prior research suggests that fathers may be

especially important in the development of externalizing problems among boys (Phares & Compas, 1992). For example, close and supportive father-child relationships are predictive of less delinquency and substance use (key components of our externalizing measure) among adolescents, even more so for sons than for daughters (Bronte-Tinkew, Moore, Capps, & Zaff, 2006; Johnson, 1987). Based on this research, I hypothesize that boys will benefit even more than girls will from closeness to stepfathers and closeness to nonresident fathers, exhibiting a stronger association between levels of closeness and levels of internalizing and externalizing problems, and failing grades. Further, I expect this gender difference to be most pronounced for externalizing problems.

Method

Data

Data for this study come from the first wave of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health). The full sample includes 20,745 high school and middle school students in 1995. When appropriate sample weights are used, these data are a nationally representative sample of adolescents in grades 7–12 in the United States. A parent or parent figure (usually the resident mother) of each adolescent also was asked to complete a questionnaire ($n = 17,670$; see Bearman, Jones, & Udry, 1997, for a detailed description of the data).

From the main sample of 20,745 adolescents, the analysis sample for this study was restricted to adolescents with valid sample weights who were 18 years old or younger and who reported that they were living with their biological mothers and a stepfather, and who also reported having a living nonresident biological father ($n = 1,152$). Three cases missing on reports of closeness to the nonresident father were excluded, resulting in a final sample of 1,149 adolescents.

Measures

Closeness to mothers, nonresident fathers, and stepfathers—In separate questions, adolescents reported how close they felt (1 = *not at all close*, 2 = *not very close*, 3 = *somewhat close*, 4 = *quite close*, 5 = *extremely close*) to their mothers, to their nonresident biological fathers, and to their stepfathers. To create the different family patterns, closeness to nonresident fathers and to stepfathers were first dichotomized into *close* (original scores of 4 or 5) and *not close* (original scores of 1, 2, or 3) and then cross-classified, resulting in four family patterns: *close to both fathers*, *close only to the stepfather*, *close only to the nonresident father*, and *close to neither father*. Closeness to mothers is retained as an ordinal variable in the analyses.

Independent variables—Race-ethnicity is measured as a set of dummy variables that includes non-Hispanic Whites (omitted reference group), non-Hispanic Blacks, Hispanics, and all others. The number of Asians, Native Americans, and other groups were too small to analyze separately. Adolescent's age is a continuous variable ranging from 11 to 18 years. Adolescent's gender is a dichotomous variable (1 = *male*, 0 = *female*). Nonmarital birth is a set of dummy variables based on the marital and fertility histories in the parent survey indicating whether the adolescent was born outside of marriage, within marriage, or unknown ($n = 214$). Immigrant is a dichotomous variable indicating whether the adolescent is an immigrant or the child of an immigrant (1 = *yes*, 0 = *no*). Income is a continuous variable reported in the parent survey that refers to the income in thousands of dollars of the household in which the adolescent lives. Missing cases ($n = 260$) were set to the mean, and a dummy variable was created to indicate missing cases. The log of this variable is used in the regression analyses to minimize skewness. Each parent's education is a set of dummy variables distinguishing whether the parent graduated from college, had less education, or education was unknown (for nonresident fathers, $n = 186$,

and stepfathers, $n = 42$). Alternative codings with a larger number of educational categories were examined in the models but did not change substantive results.

Years since lived with dad refers to the number of years since the adolescent lived with the biological father. For adolescents who never lived with their biological fathers, this variable corresponds to their age. For the few adolescents who had lived with their biological fathers but could not remember when they last lived with him ($n = 11$), the number of years that the step-father has lived with the adolescent was substituted as a proxy measure. In addition, the number of years that the stepfather has lived with the adolescent was considered as an alternative predictor in the models. Results are presented using years since lived with the nonresident father, with the few differences based on years living with the stepfather noted in the text. Given the high correlation ($r = .5$) between these two measures, as well as their more modest correlations with the adolescent's age, they are not included together in the multivariate models.

Contact with the nonresident father is the average of two items indicating how often in the past 12 months (0 = *not at all*, 5 = *more than once a week*) the adolescent has stayed overnight with the father, and how often the adolescent talked with the father in person, or on the telephone, or received a letter from him. Mother-Stepfather happiness is based on the parent's report (usually the mother) of how happy she is with their current relationship (1 = *completely unhappy*, 10 = *completely happy*). Missing cases ($n = 217$) were set to 0 and a dummy variable was created to indicate missing cases, which resulted mainly from the lack of a parent interview rather than from nonresponse to this particular question.

The inclusion of dummy variables to indicate missing and imputed values for several predictor variables noted above prevented deleting all these cases. In most instances, these variables were not significant in the regression models. One exception was the missing indicator for the stepfather's education. Adolescents who neither knew nor reported the stepfather's education were more likely to be close to neither father or close only to the nonresident father versus being close to both fathers (see Contrasts 1 and 2 in Table 5), indicating that their nonresponse reflected having poorer relationships with stepfathers.

Child outcomes—Three child outcome scales were created from adolescent reports and are based on factor analytic techniques. Externalizing problems are the average of three standardized sub-scales ($\alpha = .64$). Nonviolent delinquency is the average of 10 items ($\alpha = .78$) regarding whether adolescents engaged in certain delinquent behaviors in the past 12 months (0 = *never*, 1 = *one or two times*, 2 = *3 or more times*) including painting graffiti, damaging property, lying to parents about whereabouts, stealing from a store, taking a car without permission, stealing from a house or building, selling drugs, being rowdy in public, stealing something worth more than \$50, and stealing something worth fewer than \$50. Violence is the average of eight items ($\alpha = .82$) regarding whether adolescents engaged in or experienced violent behaviors in the past 12 months including serious fighting, hurting someone, using/threatening to use a weapon, group fighting (0 = *never*, 1 = *one or two times*, 2 = *3 or more times*), as well as using a knife or gun, physical fighting, being jumped, and knife/gun pulled on them (0 = *never*, 1 = *once*, 2 = *more than once*). Substance use is the average of six dichotomous items ($\alpha = .83$) tapping moderate to heavy use (as opposed to no use, or very infrequent/very modest use or experimentation that is fairly common in adolescence but that often abates by young adulthood, Hetherington & Kelly, 2002) including smoking cigarettes 5 or more days in the past 30 days, smoking two or more cigarettes on average when did smoke in past 30 days, drinking alcohol at least three times in the past year, binge drinking (five or more drinks in a row) at least three times in the past year, getting drunk at least three times in the past year, and using marijuana in the past 30 days.

Internalizing problems are the average of four standardized subscales ($\alpha = .76$). Depressive symptoms is the average of seven items ($\alpha = .83$) tapping feelings in the past week (0 = *never or rarely*, 1 = *sometimes*, 2 = *a lot, most, or all of the time*) including feeling bothered couldn't shake off the blues, depressed, that life has been a failure, lonely, sad, and that life is not worth living. Psychological distress is the average of eight items ($\alpha = .83$) regarding symptoms in the past 12 months (0 = *never*, 3 = *almost every day or every day*) including feeling physically weak for no reason, feeling very tired for no reason, waking up feeling tired, poor appetite, trouble falling or staying asleep, trouble relaxing, moodiness, and frequent crying. Negative outlook is the average of four items ($\alpha = .72$) tapping the absence of positive feelings in the past week including feeling as good as other people, hopeful about the future, happy, and enjoyed life (0 = *most or all of the time*, 3 = *never or rarely*). Low self-esteem is the average of six items ($\alpha = .90$) regarding disagreement with statements about the self including having a lot of good qualities, having a lot to be proud of, liking yourself, doing things right, feeling socially accepted, and feeling loved and wanted (1 = *strongly agree*, 4 = *disagree or strongly disagree*).

Failing grades is a dichotomous measure indicating whether, of four subject areas in school (English, mathematics, history or social studies, and science), the adolescent received one or more grades of D or lower (1 = *yes*, 0 = *no*) in the most recent grading period. This measure of poor academic performance is used over other possibilities (e.g., overall grade point average) because of the wide variability in grading systems across schools and in the types of classes that students take (Manning & Lamb, 2003).

Analytic Strategy

I begin by comparing levels of closeness between adolescents and each of their parents: mothers, stepfathers, and nonresident fathers. Next, patterns of closeness to stepfathers and nonresident fathers are considered simultaneously to determine how many adolescents are close to both fathers, close only to the stepfather, close only to the nonresident father, and close to neither father. To examine the predictors of these different closeness patterns, I begin by reporting frequencies or mean levels of each of the predictor variables by the four closeness groups. Then, each of the four groups is compared in a multivariate multinomial logistic regression framework. This model is appropriate when the dependent variable has more than two categories and there is no apparent ordering of the categories. The multinomial logit model estimates the log odds of one event occurring in contrast to some other event. With four patterns of closeness to fathers, six contrasts or comparisons result. Finally, the relationship between the different closeness patterns and adolescent well-being are examined before and after control variables are added. Ordinary least-squares regression is employed for the continuous outcomes of internalizing and externalizing problems, and logistic regression is employed for the dichotomous measure of having received a failing grade. To test for gender differences, a set of interaction terms between the groups of adolescents based on patterns of closeness to each father and the adolescent's gender are added to the final multivariate models.

All analyses are conducted using the Wave 1 sample weight to correct for the differential probabilities of sample selection. The survey (SVY) procedures in Stata (Stata Corporation, 2003) are used to adjust the standard errors of the model estimates for the clustered and stratified design of Add Health (Chantala & Tabor, 1999).

Results

How Close Are Adolescents to Their Mothers, Stepfathers, and Nonresident Fathers?

Table 2 reports three different ways of comparing adolescents' closeness to each of their parents. A very clear pattern emerges, with adolescents reporting being closest to their mothers

($M = 4.60$), followed by stepfathers ($M = 3.65$), and then nonresident fathers ($M = 2.99$). Whereas 91% of adolescents report being close (*quite or extremely*) to their mothers, only 60% report being close to stepfathers and 41% being close to nonresident fathers. At the extreme, 25% of adolescents report being not at all close to their nonresident fathers, compared with 6% not at all close to stepfathers, and a mere 0.1% not at all close to mothers.

That adolescents are closer to their stepfathers than to nonresident fathers results in part from the fact that some of these adolescents have little or no contact with their nonresident father. Even among adolescents who do have contact with their nonresident fathers, however, levels of closeness are still lower than for stepfathers. (Among adolescents who have had contact in the past year, levels of closeness to the nonresident father are $M = 3.32$; 48% are close; 13.5% are not at all close; vs. to the stepfather: $M = 3.61$; 59% are close; 7% are not close at all.)

How Many Adolescents Have Close Bonds to Both Stepfathers and Nonresident Fathers?

There is much variability in the patterns of closeness to stepfathers and nonresident fathers. As Table 3 reports, 25% of adolescents are close to both fathers. Almost as many, 24%, report being close to neither father. The most common family situation is one where adolescents report being close only to the stepfather, 35%, whereas only 16% of adolescents report being close only to the nonresident father.

What Factors Predict Patterns of Closeness to Stepfathers and Nonresident Fathers?

Race is not predictive of being in any of these groups (see Table 4); nor does immigrant status, family income, or mother's education distinguish these groups. The remaining family characteristics, however, do significantly vary by closeness patterns. Adolescents who are close to both step-fathers and nonresident fathers are most likely to be male, to be younger, to be closest to their mothers, and to be in families where mothers and step-fathers are in the happiest marriages. Adolescents who are close to neither father are more likely to be female and to be older, are most likely to have been born outside of marriage, and are least likely to have either college-educated nonresident fathers or stepfathers. They also score relatively low on contact with nonresident fathers, report the lowest levels of closeness to their mothers, and are in families where mothers and stepfathers are among the least happily married couples. It appears that forming close bonds to stepfathers and nonresident fathers is difficult when children face other disadvantages (e.g., having less educated parents or being born outside of marriage) or when other family relationships (e.g., mother-child) are weaker.

Adolescents who are close only to their stepfathers are distinguished by having the longest time elapsed since living with their nonresident father (which parallels the longest time that adolescents have lived with their stepfather) and have the least amount of contact with them. They are fairly similar to adolescents who are close to both fathers in terms of reporting higher levels of closeness to mothers and in having mothers and stepfathers with higher levels of marital happiness, suggesting that mothers may play an important role in promoting stepfather-child relations. They are more similar to adolescents who are close to neither father, however, in terms of being more likely to be female, to have the second highest rate of being born outside of marriage, and to have less educated parents.

Finally, adolescents who are close only to their nonresident fathers are most likely to have been born in marriage; are most likely to have college-educated parents, including stepfathers; have more recently lived with the nonresident father (and consequently lived a shorter time with stepfathers); and report the most contact with him. Similar to those who are close to neither father, adolescents who are only close to their nonresident fathers also tend to have poorer relationships with their mothers and to live in families where mothers and stepfathers are less

happily married. Perhaps these adolescents try to maintain closer bonds to nonresident fathers if they are available when relations with resident parents are not going well.

As Table 4 reveals, these family patterns are significantly associated with adolescent outcomes. Adolescents who are close to both fathers exhibit the highest levels of well-being (i.e., the fewest externalizing and internalizing problems and failing grades), whereas adolescents who are not close to either father have the poorest outcomes. We return to the issue of adolescent outcomes in the next section where group differences are considered in a multivariate framework.

To better understand the factors that differentiate patterns of closeness to both stepfathers and nonresident fathers, we turn to the results from the multinomial logistic regression model. Of all the comparisons, perhaps the most important bears directly to the concern of understanding which adolescents are likely to be most at risk for poor outcomes is Comparison 1 in Table 5 between adolescents who are close to neither father (who are potentially at greatest risk) versus those who are close to both fathers (and who potentially may benefit most in terms of well-being). The factors that significantly predict being close to neither father versus being close to both fathers include being female and older, having less contact with nonresident fathers, being less close to mothers, and having mothers who report less happy relationships with the stepfather. Thus, these adolescents are characterized by a family system with weaker ties among its members in that adolescents are less close to all their parents (mothers, stepfathers, nonresident fathers) and mothers and stepfathers are in less happy marriages. Conversely, adolescents with close ties to both fathers also enjoy closer ties to their mothers and live with mothers who report being more happily married to the stepfather.

Looking more broadly at all the comparisons, we again see that race and immigrant status are not predictive of being in any of these groups. Income, and now parental education, are not strongly predictive in the multivariate model. With all other control variables in the model, time since lived with the nonresident father no longer distinguishes the different groups of adolescents. Additional analyses (not shown) substituting the number of years living with the stepfather, however, indicates that even with controls, a longer time living with a stepfather significantly predicts being close only to the stepfather versus being close to both fathers ($b = .06, p < .05$; Comparison 3) or to neither father ($b = .06, p < .01$; Comparison 6). The stepfather-child relationship appears to benefit from the passage of time or a child's younger age at the formation of the stepfamily (Hetherington, 1993).

Other factors remain significant in distinguishing among these groups and are consistent with the findings from Table 4. Boys are most likely to be either close to both fathers or only to the nonresident father, whereas girls are more likely to be only close to their stepfather or to neither father. Younger adolescents stand out as being most likely to enjoy close relationships with both fathers compared to only with one father or neither father. Age does not differentiate between adolescents who are only close to stepfathers and those who are only close to nonresident fathers, although adolescents who are only close to one father are still younger on average than those who are close to neither.

Adolescents who were born outside of marriage are most likely to be represented among adolescents who are close to neither father; although this pattern did not reach significance in Comparison 1, it does reach significance when adolescents who are close to one father are compared to those who are close to neither father (Comparisons 5 and 6).

Not surprisingly, contact with nonresident fathers is significantly associated with having closer ties to them and therefore decreases the likelihood of not being close to either father (Comparisons 1 and 5) or only to the stepfather (Comparisons 3 and 4). Although contact mainly appears to promote closeness to the nonresident father, it does not necessarily preclude

having close ties to stepfathers. As Comparison 2 reveals, more frequent contact does not distinguish between adolescents who are close only to the nonresident father and those who are close to both fathers.

Comparison 1 revealed that adolescents who were close to their mothers were more likely to be close to both fathers than to be close to neither. The additional comparisons reveal, however, that closeness to mothers seems to be even more strongly associated with promoting strong ties to stepfathers than to nonresident fathers. In a similar fashion, a happy mother-stepfather relationship appears to mainly promote strong ties to stepfathers.

Consequences for Adolescent Outcomes of Different Patterns of Relationships to Stepfathers and Nonresident Fathers

The view that adolescents would be worse off when they lacked close ties to both stepfathers and nonresident fathers, suggested by four of the five competing hypotheses (see Table 1), finds supportive evidence in Table 6. Adolescents who are close to neither father report the most externalizing and internalizing problems and are more likely to have recently received a failing grade compared to all other adolescents, although the difference between adolescents who are close to neither father and adolescents who are close only to their nonresident fathers reaches significance only for failing grades. The hypothesis that fathers are largely irrelevant for child well-being is most clearly refuted by these findings. In terms of the remaining hypotheses, the evidence most strongly (but not perfectly) supports the primacy of residence hypothesis for externalizing and internalizing problems. When considering failing grades, however, the redundancy hypothesis is supported.

Contrary to the additive hypothesis that adolescents would be best off when they enjoyed close ties to both stepfathers and nonresident fathers, results show that having a close tie to one's stepfather only is nearly as beneficial as having close ties to both fathers. Although the coefficient for closeness only to the stepfather is somewhat smaller in magnitude for all three outcomes, it is not significantly different from being close to both fathers. Adolescents close to both fathers do, however, exhibit fewer externalizing and internalizing problems than adolescents who are only close to their nonresident fathers (consistent with the primacy of residence hypothesis); there is no significant difference between these two groups in terms of receiving failing grades (consistent with the redundancy hypothesis). These findings suggest that ties to stepfathers are particularly important for adolescent outcomes, although the difference between being close only to stepfathers and being close only to nonresident fathers does not reach significance for any of the outcomes. (Given the strong correlation between nonresident father contact and closeness, a multivariate model that included all the predictor variables in Table 6 except nonresident father contact was also tested to examine whether the inclusion of contact influenced the findings for the association between closeness patterns and child outcomes; it did not. Results are similar regardless of whether contact is included in the models.)

In sum, adolescents are worst off when they are close to neither father. Having close ties only to a stepfather is as beneficial as having close ties to both fathers. Having close ties only to a nonresident father is not as beneficial as having close ties to both fathers in terms of externalizing and internalizing problems, although it is for avoiding failing grades. Of the five competing hypotheses considered, the evidence most strongly supports the primacy of residence hypothesis, at least for externalizing and internalizing problems, although evidence for the redundancy hypothesis is found when considering failing grades.

These results are consistent with White and Gilbreth's (2001) findings that ties to stepfathers are more influential than ties to nonresident fathers. As an additional step to explicitly compare these findings with their study, models that used separate indicators of closeness to the

nonresident father and to the stepfather (rather than the groups based on closeness patterns to both) were tested (results not shown). Closeness to the step-father significantly predicted all three outcomes, but closeness to the nonresident father only predicted failing grades. This lends further evidence for the stronger influence of stepfathers than nonresident fathers. An advantage of modeling the different patterns of closeness to both fathers, however, is the ability to consider the relative influence of being close to both, one, or neither father.

Results in Table 6 also reveal that ties to fathers are more influential than ties to mothers. Close ties to mothers are associated with fewer internalizing problems but are unrelated to externalizing problems or failing grades. Prior research has been mixed with regard to the relative salience of ties to mothers versus ties to fathers with some finding that mothers and fathers have a comparable influence on child well-being, whereas others find a stronger influence for one parent, sometimes the mother and other times the father (Videon, 2005). One likely reason for the relatively weaker effect of mothers in this study is that ties to mothers are almost uniformly high with much less variability than ties to fathers (see Table 2), limiting its predictive ability.

Interaction tests (results not shown) revealed only partial support for the hypothesis that boys would benefit more than girls from closeness to stepfathers and to nonresident fathers. A significant interaction existed for externalizing problems but not for internalizing problems or failing grades. The association between being close to both fathers or to stepfathers only (compared to being close to neither father) and externalizing problems was significant for both boys and girls, but the association was even larger for boys, suggesting that boys benefited even more from these close relationships than girls did in terms of exhibiting fewer externalizing problems. This finding is consistent with prior research suggesting that closeness to fathers may be especially important in the avoidance of delinquency and substance use among adolescent boys (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2006).

Conclusion

This study extends our knowledge regarding adolescents' relationships to both nonresident fathers and stepfathers. Results reveal that 25% of U.S. adolescents who have both a stepfather and a nonresident father enjoy close relationships with both of them. Almost as many (24%), however, report being close to neither father. The most common situation is one where adolescents report being close only to the stepfather (35%); only 16% of adolescents report being close only to the nonresident father. Thus, although it is certainly possible to have close bonds with two fathers, the majority of U.S. adolescents are not in this situation. Further, when adolescents have two fathers, they are more likely to be closer to their stepfathers than to their nonresident fathers.

Of greatest concern are the one quarter of adolescents who lack close ties to either father. These adolescents exhibit the most externalizing and internalizing problems and are most likely to have received failing grades in school. The hypothesis that both stepfathers and nonresident fathers are largely irrelevant for child well-being is clearly refuted by these findings. Results further revealed that these adolescents are characterized by a family system with weaker ties between its members. That is, these adolescents tend to be less close to all their parents, including their mothers, they have less frequent contact with their nonresident fathers, and their mothers and stepfathers are in less happy marriages. Despite having three parents, the weak ties between family members may put these adolescents at most risk for poor outcomes. Certainly, the social capital inherent in parent-child relationships does not appear to accrue to children in these families. Girls and older adolescents are more at risk of being in such a family system. Conversely, adolescents with close ties to both fathers tend to also enjoy close ties to their mothers and to live with mothers who report being happily married to the stepfather. The

high social capital in such families bodes well for children. Boys and younger adolescents are overrepresented in this family system.

No differences were found, however, by the adolescent's race-ethnicity or whether the adolescent is from an immigrant family. Indeed, these two factors failed to distinguish any of the closeness patterns. Few prior studies of adolescent's relationships to stepfathers or nonresident fathers examine the influence of immigration, but these results are consistent with another study based on Add Health data that reported that immigrant status had no effect on adolescent reports of closeness to their nonresident fathers (King et al., 2004); apparently, this extends to having close relationships to stepfathers and nonresident fathers simultaneously. Prior studies of racial-ethnic differences in children's relationships to stepfathers and nonresident fathers offer mixed findings and also fail to simultaneously compare children's relationships to both fathers. This study suggests that White, Black, and Hispanic adolescents are similar in their likelihood of simultaneously having close bonds to stepfathers and nonresident fathers. Certainly, future research would benefit from greater attention to how race-ethnicity and immigration influence other aspects of children's relationships with stepfathers and nonresident fathers.

In terms of the adolescent outcomes examined, having a close tie only to a stepfather is nearly as beneficial as having close ties to both fathers, and both groups of adolescents are significantly better off than those who lack close ties to both fathers. The advantages of a close tie only to the nonresident father are less apparent. On the one hand, adolescents who have a close tie only to their nonresident father are significantly less likely to have received a failing grade in school compared with those who are close to neither father, and they are doing as well in this regard as their counterparts who are only close to their stepfather or who are close to both fathers. This finding is in accord with the redundancy hypothesis that predicts positive outcomes for children who have a close tie to either the nonresident father or the stepfather. On the other hand, adolescents who are close only to their nonresident fathers show no advantage over those who lack close ties to either father in terms of externalizing and internalizing problems, and they exhibit significantly more problems than adolescents who enjoy close relationships with both fathers. For these two outcomes, the evidence supports the primacy of residence hypothesis, which predicts that closeness to stepfathers is more influential for child outcomes than ties to nonresident fathers. These findings for adolescent outcomes were similar for boys and girls with the only exception being that boys benefited even more than girls from close relationships to both fathers and to stepfathers in terms of exhibiting fewer externalizing problems.

These results are consistent with prior research that suggests that good relationships with both fathers are associated with better outcomes but that ties to stepfathers are somewhat more influential than ties to nonresident fathers (White & Gilbreth, 2001). It appears that coresiding with children and being available on an everyday basis make it easier for the social capital inherent in the stepfather-child relationship to be realized when stepfathers are able to develop close bonds with their stepchildren. Living in separate households may not only make it more difficult for nonresident fathers to maintain affective bonds with their children; even when they do, the social capital inherent in this relationships is less easily realized in terms of its association with adolescent outcomes.

Closeness to mothers and a happy mother-stepfather relationship stand out as important factors associated with adolescents having close ties to stepfathers, suggesting that mothers may play a particularly important role in fostering stepfather-stepchild relationships (see also Marsiglio, 2004). Nonresident father contact is an important factor associated with adolescents having close ties to nonresident fathers. Future studies would benefit from considering additional family and individual characteristics that might be important in fostering close ties between

children and their stepfathers and nonresident biological fathers, such as the nature of the relationship between the mother and nonresident father, and between the stepfather and nonresident father. A new spouse or partner of the nonresident father, along with new children or parenting obligations, may also be an important influence (Manning & Smock, 1999; Manning, Stewart, & Smock, 2003).

Prior research has questioned whether stepfathers contribute to child well-being, given the many studies showing that children in stepfamilies generally have lower well-being than children in two-biological parent households, and little or no advantage over children in single-parent households. If stepfathers were important, this research suggests, then children in stepfamilies should at least have better outcomes than children in single-parent families. But these studies ignore the quality of the relationship that children have with their stepfathers and nonresident fathers. Findings from this study underscore the need to go beyond examining family structure differences and to take the quality of children's relationships to all their parents, regardless of residence, into account (see also White & Gilbreth, 2001). Whether children have a stepfather or nonresident father may matter less than the kind of relationship that they have with them. When children enjoy close bonds with their mothers, stepfathers, and nonresident fathers, the social capital inherent in these relationships can be more fully realized. Perhaps children who have close bonds to stepfathers and nonresident fathers fare as well as children living with both biological parents; it remains for future research to explore this possibility.

This study is limited by examining the relationship between children and their stepfathers and nonresident fathers at a single point in the child's life. Although the findings are based on national data, they are limited to families with older children, most of whom are adolescents. Future research would benefit from a life course perspective that would focus on children's relationships to their nonresident fathers and stepfathers as they evolve over time. Further, the reciprocal nature of the relationship between children and their fathers needs to be examined. The models in this study assume that stepfather-child closeness and nonresident father-child closeness affect adolescent outcomes, but it is also possible that the adolescent's behavior affects the father-child relationship such that children who exhibit fewer problems and who are doing well in school more easily elicit the warmth and supportiveness of stepfathers and nonresident fathers. This possibility cannot be ruled out in this study because it relies on cross-sectional data.

Future research would benefit also from considering relationships between children and cohabiting stepfathers for child outcomes. It is unclear whether these relationships will be as positively associated with child outcomes as those reported here for married stepfather families given some of the disadvantages cohabiting stepfamilies experience (Manning & Lamb, 2003). Finally, the finding that close ties to nonresident fathers is more strongly associated with adolescent grades than with externalizing or internalizing problems suggests the need to consider multiple indicators of child well-being in future research assessing the influence of father-child ties in order to better understand the ways in which all fathers contribute to their children's development.

A significant number of U.S. children have both stepfathers and nonresident biological fathers. This study makes important contributions toward understanding how adolescents simultaneously relate to both fathers and what consequences this has for their well-being. In particular, this study provides new evidence on the prevalence, antecedents, and consequences of adolescents' closeness to their stepfathers and nonresident fathers. Findings demonstrate that adolescents vary greatly in their likelihood of having close relationships with one or both of their fathers, but when they do so, they appear to benefit. Close relationships with both stepfathers and nonresident biological fathers are associated with better adolescent outcomes, with ties to stepfathers being somewhat more influential than ties to nonresident fathers.

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Alternative Hypotheses of the Consequences of Closeness to Stepfathers and Nonresident Biological Fathers for Adolescent Well-Being

Table 1

Hypothesis	Prediction for Adolescent Well-Being					Predicted Group Differences
	Close to Neither Father (N)	Close Only to Nonresident Biological Father (F)	Close Only to Stepfather (SF)	Close to Both Fathers (B)		
Additive	0	+	+	++	B > SF, F > N	
Redundancy	0	+	+	+	B, SF, F > N	
Primacy of biology	0	+	0	+	B, F > SF, N	
Primacy of residence	0	0	+	+	B, SF > F, N	
Irrelevance	0	0	0	0	B = SF = F = N	

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Table 2
Adolescents' Closeness to Mothers, Stepfathers, and Nonresident Biological Fathers

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

Note: All values are weighted. $N = 1,149$.

^aRange from 1 to 5; all means differ from one another at $p < .001$.

^bScores of 4 (*quite close*) or 5 (*extremely close*).

^cScores of 1 (*not at all close*).

Table 3
Percentage of Adolescents Close to Stepfathers and Nonresident Biological Fathers

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

Note: All values are weighted. $N = 1,149$.

Table 4 Characteristics of Family Patterns Based on Adolescent's Closeness to Stepfathers and Nonresident Biological Fathers (% or M)

Characteristics	Family Pattern				<i>F</i> ^a
	Close to Both Fathers	Close to Neither Father	Close Only to Stepfather	Close Only to Nonresident Father	
Race					
White	76	72	71	81	
Black	12	14	15	9	
Hispanic	9	11	10	6	
Other	4	2	4	4	.80
Male	60	42	41	55	6.45***
Age (in years)	14.9	15.8	15.5	15.3	9.98***
Nonmarital birth	22	47	37	17	8.85***
Immigrant	11	10	10	9	.11
Income	\$52,000	\$50,000	\$47,000	\$53,000	.78
Mother college	23	20	20	32	2.15**
Nonresident father college	32	19	20	32	4.12**
Stepfather college	35	23	24	37	3.08*
Years since lived with father	8.3	11.0	11.4	8.0	26.58***
Contact with father	3.0	1.3	1.0	3.4	110.74***
Closeness to mother	4.9	4.2	4.8	4.3	34.10***
Mother-stepfather happiness	8.8	8.0	8.7	8.0	7.96
Adolescent outcomes					
Externalizing problems	-1.6	.23	-.12	.11	9.53***
Internalizing problems	-2.5	.29	-.04	.17	15.22***
Failing grades	27	46	33	32	4.96

Note: Imputed cases excluded. All values are weighted. *N* = 1,149.

^aDesign-based *F*.

* *p* < .05.

** *p* < .01.

*** *p* < .001.

Unstandardized Coefficients From a Multinomial Logistic Regression Predicting Family Patterns of Adolescent's Closeness to Stepfathers and Nonresident Biological Fathers

Table 5

	Close Neither Versus Close Both	Close Biological		Close Step		Close Biological		Close Step	
		Only Versus Close Both	Only Versus Close Neither	Only Versus Close Both	Only Versus Close Neither	Only Versus Close Both	Only Versus Close Neither	Only Versus Close Both	Only Versus Close Neither
Black ^a	-.40	-.10	.30	-.43	.33	-.43	.30	-.43	-.03
Hispanic ^a	-.11	-.41	-.31	-.45	.04	-.45	-.31	-.35	-.35
Other ^a	-.44 *	-.02	.43	.11 **	-.13	.11 **	.43	.55	.55
Male	-.60 ***	-.18 *	.42	-.89 ***	.72 *	-.89 ***	.42	-.29	-.29
Age	.34 ***	.16 *	-.04	.20	-.04	.20	-.18 *	-.14 *	-.14 *
Nonmarital birth	.71	-.34	-.18 *	.12	-.46	.12	-.18 *	-.58 *	-.58 *
Immigrant family	-.02	.38	-.04	-.05	.43	-.05	-.104 **	-.03	-.03
Income	.42	.13	-.02	-.02	.16	-.02	-.29	-.45 *	-.45 *
Mother college	.08	.72 *	.30	.42	.30	.42	.64	.34	.34
Nonresident father college	-.37	-.59	-.22	-.38	-.21	-.38	-.22	-.01	-.01
Stepfather college	-.19	-.10	.12	-.22	.12	-.22	.09	-.04	-.04
Years since lived with father	.01 ***	-.01	-.06 ***	.05 ***	-.06 ***	.05 ***	-.02 ***	.04	.04
Contact with father	-.93 ***	.15	1.32 ***	-1.17 ***	1.32 ***	-1.17 ***	1.08 ***	-.24	-.24
Closeness to mother	-1.70 ***	-1.57 ***	-.45 *	-.13	-1.45 *	-.13	.12	1.57 ***	1.57 ***
Mother-stepfather happiness	-.35	-.33	-.23 *	-.10	-.23 *	-.10	.02	.25	.25

Note: Dummy variables indicating missing or unknown values for income, nonresident father's education, stepfather's education, nonmarital birth, and mother-stepfather marital happiness are also in the model, but coefficients are not shown. All values are weighted. $N = 1,149$. $F = 5.38$ ***.

^aOmitted category is White.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

Unstandardized Coefficients From Regressions Predicting Adolescent Outcomes From Family Patterns and Control Variables

Table 6

	Externalizing Problems ^a	Internalizing Problems ^a	Failing Grades ^b
Close to both fathers (B)	-.40 ^d ***	-.37 ^d ***	-.98 ^d ***
Close only to stepfather (SF)	-.36 ^d ***	-.54 ^d ***	-.83 ^d ***
Close only to nonresident father (F)	-.12 ^b	-.33 ^b ***	-.55 ^c *
Close to neither father (N)	—	-.12 ^b	-.59 ^d *
Black ^c	-.07	-.04	—
Hispanic ^c	.34*	-.05	.20
Other ^c	.09	-.03	.56
Male	.25***	-.34***	.15
Age	.05	.06	.66***
Nonmarital birth	.08	-.04	.07
Immigrant family	-.20	.07	-.34
Income	.02	-.01	-.21
Mother college	-.01	-.11	-.12
Nonresident father college	-.18*	.13	-.62***
Stepfather college	-.13	-.18**	-.23
Years since lived with father	-.01	-.02	-.38
Contact with father	.01	-.01	-.02
Closeness to mother	.03	-.14***	.01
Mother-stepfather happiness	-.04*	-.03	-.08
Differences ^d	B, SF > F, N	B > SF, F, N; SF > N	B, SF, F > N
<i>n</i>	1,146	1,149	1,112
<i>R</i> ²	.05	.07	.18

Note: For each closeness group, coefficients within a column that do not share subscripts differ at $p < .05$. Dummy variables indicating missing or unknown values for income, nonresident father's education, stepfather's education, nonmarital birth, and mother-stepfather marital happiness are also in the model, but coefficients are not shown. All values are weighted except *n*.

^a Ordinary least-squares regression.

^b Logistic regression.

^c Omitted category is White.

^d Significant differences at $p \leq .05$ between groups on well-being summarized.

[†] $p = .05$.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.