

Journal of Family Issues

<http://jfi.sagepub.com/>

Father Contact Following Union Dissolution for Low-Income Children in Urban South Africa

Sangeetha Madhavan, Linda Richter and Shane Norris

Journal of Family Issues published online 7 May 2014

DOI: 10.1177/0192513X14532255

The online version of this article can be found at:

<http://jfi.sagepub.com/content/early/2014/05/06/0192513X14532255>

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

Additional services and information for *Journal of Family Issues* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://jfi.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://jfi.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

>> [OnlineFirst Version of Record](#) - May 7, 2014

[What is This?](#)

Father Contact Following Union Dissolution for Low-Income Children in Urban South Africa

Journal of Family Issues

1–23

© The Author(s) 2014

Reprints and permissions:

sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav

DOI: 10.1177/0192513X14532255

jfi.sagepub.com



Sangeetha Madhavan^{1,3}, Linda Richter^{2,4},
and Shane Norris³

Abstract

Black fathers in South Africa face enormous challenges remaining involved in their children's lives as a result of very high levels of unemployment and union instability. We use data from the Birth to Twenty (Bt20) cohort study to describe trajectories of father contact in the lives of children who have experienced a parental union dissolution and examine the influence of life stage of child at time of union dissolution and mother's entry into new union on nonresidential contact with fathers. We find that, in the first 5 years after dissolution (1) children who were in the 3 to 5 life stage at time of dissolution face substantially higher odds of having no contact compared with those who were in the 0 to 2 group and (2) children who were in the 6 to 11 group experienced lower odds of intermittent contact. Mother's entry into a new union increases the odds of having no and intermittent contact.

Keywords

fathers, children, South Africa, relationships

¹University of Maryland, College Park, MD, USA

²Human Sciences Research Council, Durban, South Africa

³University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

⁴University of KwaZulu Natal, Durban, South Africa

Corresponding Author:

Sangeetha Madhavan, University of Maryland, 1119 Taliaferro Hall, College Park, MD 20742, USA.

Email: smadhava@umd.edu

Black fathers in post-apartheid South Africa face enormous challenges remaining involved in their children's lives as a result of very high levels of unemployment and union instability. This is particularly difficult in the period following union dissolution when fathers do not normally reside with their children. In this analysis, we use data from the Birth to Twenty (Bt20) cohort study in the greater Johannesburg area to accomplish three objectives. The first is to describe trajectories of biological father involvement in the lives of children who have experienced a parental union dissolution using sequence analysis. Involvement, in this analysis, refers to contact with child and unions include formal marriage and nonmarital cohabiting relationships. The second is to examine the influence of (1) life stage of child at time of parental union dissolution and (2) mother's entry into new union on nonresidential contact after union dissolution. The third is to examine whether these effects differ by time since dissolution. These analyses contribute to the growing scholarship on father involvement in South Africa by viewing father involvement as a series of transitional processes that entail greater and lesser involvement, rather than as discreet categories of involved or not involved fatherhood. Moreover, it is one of the only analyses that we are aware of in the South African context that examines how factors associated with union dissolution affect father contact postdissolution. This work can help inform the development of policies to strengthen the role of fathers in their children's lives by identifying critical time periods in children's and fathers' lives in which fathers are more likely to disengage.

The South African Context

There is a rich descriptive literature on factors that have shaped Black men's parenting behaviors, in particular, labor migration and unemployment (Madhavan, Townsend, & Garey, 2008; Morrell & Richter, 2006; Swartz & Bhana, 2009). Whereas overall unemployment stood at 25.5% in 2012, Black unemployment was at 29% (Statistics South Africa, 2012). Labor migration, institutionalized under apartheid but still a defining feature of Black South African life, has resulted in households functioning as "stretched" residential units, with family members "dispersed" between different households for reasons of work, care, support, education, and housing (Murray, 1980). High rates of residential separation are particularly notable for fathers and their children. Moreover, poor employment prospects limit men's ability to pay bride price and afford a marriage, without which there are cultural restrictions on a couple living together. The lack of job prospects for men also serves as a disincentive for Black women to enter into and/or remain in formal unions (Hunter, 2009). The choice of some women to

remain unmarried or disengaged from the fathers of their children is likely to have a profound effect on fathers' ability to maintain a consistent relationship with their children (Wilson, 2006). Moreover, as in most societies in the world, South African mothers tend to gain custody of children following union dissolution (Khunou, 2006), which makes it even harder for men to maintain close relationships with their children, particularly if they do not pay any maintenance. Despite all these challenges, fathering remains a critical component of men's identity and family life in Black communities.

The value of this analysis is underscored by the current interest in South Africa to develop policies to strengthen the role of fathers in their children's lives in low-income communities particularly in light of declining marriage rates. Yet, fatherhood research, particularly quantitative, is still in early stages hampered, in part, by the limitations of existing datasets (Hosegood & Madhavan, 2012). According to the 2010 General Household Survey, only 34% of South African children live with both parents, 39% live with mothers only, 3.3% live with fathers only, and the rest without either parent (Statistics South Africa, 2011). In one of the only studies on paternal investment in children, Anderson and colleagues, using data from the Cape Area Panel Study, showed that men invest more in genetic offspring and the children of their current partner than in children of former partners (Anderson, Kaplan, Lam, & Lancaster, 1999). However, none of the available South African research has addressed two key questions: (1) What is the trajectory of father involvement over the course of childhood for children who experience parental union dissolution? (2) What are factors that may explain variation in these trajectories in the immediate and longer term periods following a parental union dissolution? Both these questions are addressed in this article.

Conceptual Background

Research on father involvement has grown rapidly in the past decade in the U.S. context. It has now been established that involvement is a multidimensional concept in both residential and nonresidential circumstances (Lamb, 2010; Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, & Levine, 1987). Time use studies have been particularly useful in providing more detailed accounting of how fathers spend their time with children (Bianchi, Robinson, & Milkie, 2007; Hofferth 2003), as have studies of fathers' views and perceptions (Gillies, 2009). Much of what is known about father involvement following dissolution comes from U.S.-based literature. Early scholarship on union status and father involvement showed that fathers disengaged from children following a divorce (Furstenberg & Harris, 1992; Mott, 1990; Seltzer, 1991). Union dissolution usually results in fathers physically moving away from their children making

it difficult to maintain consistent contact (Amato & Gilbreth, 1998; Furstenberg, Morgan, & Allison, 1987). In addition, men experience a shift in their identities as fathers, particularly in relation to their roles and responsibilities toward their children, which makes it difficult to maintain a meaningful relationship with their nonresident children (Cherlin et al., 1991; Ihinger-Tallman, Pasley & Buehler, 1993). Research has shown that most unmarried and nonresident fathers do not maintain consistent contact with their children (Argys et al., 2007; Argys & Peters, 2001), though postdivorce fathers have been found to have higher levels of involvement than postcohabitation fathers (Laughlin, Farrie, & Fagan, 2009).

Research on the determinants of post-dissolution father involvement has highlighted the positive effects of an amicable and cooperative relationship between the biological parents on paternal involvement (Ahrns, 1983; Carlson, McLanahan, & Brooks-Gunn, 2008). It has also been shown that new romantic relationships formed by biological mothers and fathers following union dissolution inhibit father involvement (Carlson, 2006; Carlson et al., 2008; Manning & Smock, 1999; Tach, Mincy, & Edin, 2010). Some research has focused specifically on the effect of age of child at parental union dissolution on subsequent paternal involvement. Stewart (1999) found that the younger a child at the time of separation, the less contact there is between father and child at later ages. More recent work by Aquilino (2006) confirms this finding. Another study by Hetherington and Stanley-Hagan (1986) found that nonresidential fathers are more involved with their adolescent children compared with younger children, but they don't provide information on whether there is an independent effect of the age of child at the time of dissolution. Bruce and Fox (1999) confirm this finding though the authors note that nonresidential fathers who place more value on the father role tend to be more involved with their adolescent children.

Less attention has been paid to immediate and longer term *trajectories* of father involvement post dissolution and the factors associated with variation in these trajectories. In one of the only studies of its kind, Cheadle, Amato, and King (2010) constructed trajectories of father involvement over a 14-year period using U.S. data and identified four distinct trajectory types including fathers who were either consistently highly or rarely involved. Moreover, they also found that fathers were more likely to have minimal contact with their children the younger the child was at the time of union dissolution. No such study that we are aware of has been done in a low- or middle-income country, where pressures on father involvement are both greater and different as a result of work migration and poverty. In South Africa, the volatility of the labor market for Black men and women and high levels of union instability result in ebbs and flows in father involvement. Whereas some children may experience a complete break with their fathers

in the aftermath of a dissolution, others may experience intermittent engagement, while still others experience no change in involvement.

Our approach to this issue is oriented broadly by a life course perspective that places emphasis on the interconnectedness of individual lives as they transition into new states in response to macro- and microlevel forces (Elder, 1985). We draw specifically on recent work on transitions *within* fatherhood across the life course by Palkovitz and Palm (2009). They define transition as having both internal (how individual understands himself and the world) and external (role arrangements, relationships with others) components and emphasize the time needed to reset equilibrium in relationships following points of disequilibria. They detail a number of triggers for transition but, in this analysis, we focus on (1) the changing needs of children as they move through various development stages (Galinsky, 1987), (2) family crises (e.g., divorce, job loss), and (3) countertransitional changes, or changes in fathering in response to other transitions. We operationalize child development needs by life stage of the child when the parental union dissolves and countertransitional changes by fathers' response to mothers' entry into a new union. Our focus on life stage instead of age of child at time of dissolution, as is found in much of the extant literature, offers a more nuanced alternative to considering father's roles in their children's lives by emphasizing developmental needs as opposed to time spent with child. A mother's new partner may use his relationship with his stepchildren to strengthen his relationship with the child's mother (Anderson et al., 1999), which in turn, is likely to trigger a response from biological fathers. In an effort to move away from a simplistic dichotomy of involvement, we examine three types of father contact—uninterrupted, intermittent, and none. To examine the processual nature of reestablishing equilibria in relationships with children, we focus on two time periods following dissolution: immediate 5 years and subsequent 5 years. Taken together, this perspective on transitions within fathering enables us to posit the following hypotheses about father contact following union dissolution:

1. Different life stages of children at parental union dissolution will engender different types of father contact as a result of fathers' perceptions of what children need, their time investment up to that point and children's own ability to maintain their fathers' involvement.
2. Mother's entry into a new relationship will increase the odds of children having no and intermittent contact with fathers as a form of countertransitional change by fathers.
3. Effects will be different across time periods as fathers adjust their involvement with their children and reestablish equilibria in their relationship to their children.

Data and Analysis

Data Description

Bt20 is a long-term birth cohort study in the greater Johannesburg-Soweto municipality that began in 1990. The majority of families live in socioeconomically disadvantaged circumstances. Bt20 was initiated as an observational, ecological study of human development, health and well-being, from before birth and has continued into young adulthood (Bt20). Prospective data collection began in the antenatal period and continued with yearly and some twice-yearly follow-ups until age 20. Data collection has covered a broad range of topics including, among others, anthropometric measures, nutrition, family composition, socioeconomic circumstances, child care, cognitive development, and social experiences at home, school, and in the community. Even though data have been collected through age 20, this analysis uses age 18 as the end point. Both prospective and retrospective data on fathering has been collected in Bt20. Most of the prospective data come from mothers, particularly in the early years as they are children's primary caregivers. A retrospective questionnaire specifically focusing on father involvement over the child's life course was administered at year 18 to fill in missing prospective data. Questionnaires were administered to the (1) biological mother if she was the main caregiver, (2) the biological father if mother was not available, and (3) the child's primary caregiver if neither. The questionnaires include detailed information on union histories of mothers and fathers, fathers' coresidence with the child, extent of contact if not coresident, provision of financial support, and other forms of interaction with the child over the life course. We privilege prospective data wherever possible and supplement with retrospective data only where the prospective data are missing.

There are two drawbacks that need to be acknowledged. One, most of the data on fathers comes from mothers or other caregivers. Research from the U.S. context has highlighted the potential biases in mothers' reports, which consistently show underreporting of father involvement (Coley & Morris, 2002). It is difficult to establish the extent of such bias in the Bt20 data but comparison of mothers' reports of father contact over the life course and fathers' reports of their own involvement suggest potential underreporting. Two, the use of retrospective data introduces problems associated with memory recall the farther back in time that data are sought. However, when we compared retrospective reports of father presence in the 0- to 2-year period with prospective data for the same time period, we found that 85% of reports matched.

Analytical Sample

Children born between April and June 1990 and resident for at least 6 months in the Soweto-Johannesburg municipality were enrolled into the study ($N = 3,273$). The initial enrollment rate for the Bt20 study was 60% (out of a total of 5,500 births). The Bt20 cohort includes Blacks, White, Indian, and colored (mixed ancestry) children based on the conventional racial classification system used in most data collection in South Africa. However, we limit this analysis to only the Black children who comprise the largest proportion of the cohort ($N = 2,567$). The term *colored* refers to children of mixed ancestry. Attrition over the course of the Bt20 study has been about 30%, mostly occurring during infancy and early childhood when women moved back to their rural homes after giving birth (Norris, Richter, & Fleetwood, 2007). A small number of children were lost to follow-up as a result of death, and there have been very few withdrawals from the study. The postattrition sample is 1,942 girls and boys followed up from birth to age 18 years, out of which, 1,557 were also administered the retrospective questionnaire. Given that union history data is critical in this analysis, and that the most complete data were collected for biological mothers and fathers, we exclude 315 children who lacked this module bringing the sample to 1,246. As our focus in this analysis is father contact post-union dissolution, our final analytical sample is 828 children who experienced a parental union dissolution at some point in their lives. Table 1 shows selected characteristics of the sample at time of birth.

The distributions of all variables are very similar to those of the full cohort of Black children (not shown) allaying concerns about selectivity. A little more than 40% of the sample is composed of first births and the mean age of mothers at birth of the child is 25. Mother's union status with the biological father is determined using union histories. Almost 44% of the mothers were "in union" defined as married or living together with the fathers of their children at the time of birth leaving 52% "not in union," which includes being in a casual relationship, divorced/separated, widowed, and not in any relationship. The majority of mothers have had at least some secondary school education. We find a similar distribution for fathers on educational attainment though there is a sizeable missing proportion. The household wealth index is computed as quintile rankings based on home ownership, access to regular electricity and ownership of car, TV, fridge, and phone. It ranges from 1 (*very poor*) to 5 (*relatively wealthy*) and shows highest proportions in the second and third quintile. Finally, we find that the majority of households are classified as having an extended family structure.

Table 1. Selected Characteristics of Analytical Sample at Time of Birth.

Sex of child (%)		Paternal education (%)	
Male	49.2	No schooling	0.4
Female	50.8	Some primary	1.2
Parity (%)		Completed primary	3.5
1	43.4	Some secondary	19.8
2	29.0	Completed matric	32.5
3	15.0	Postschool	11.5
4+	12.7	Missing	31.2
Maternal age (mean) years	24.9	Household wealth index	
Paternal age (mean) years	30.9	1	13.5
Mother's union status with the biological father (%)		2	17.5
Married	24.8	3	32.5
Living together	18.7	4	20.0
Divorced/widowed	0.8	5	9.5
Not in union	51.3	Missing	6.9
Missing	0.1	Household structure	
Maternal education (%)		Nuclear family	15.8
No schooling	0.7	Extended family	68.1
Some primary	4.0	Missing	16.1
Completed primary	5.1		
Some secondary	42.1		
Completed matric	34.7		
Postschool	7.4		
Missing	6.0		
N	828	N	828

Analysis

We focus on residential and nonresidential contact with child as our measure of father involvement for the sequence analysis and only nonresidential contact for the regressions. We chose this indicator for two reasons: (1) it has the best data quality and (2) it is highly correlated with the provision of financial support (not shown), another commonly used measure of father involvement. The contact variable is based on household rosters that established father coresidence and responses to the question "Was biological father in contact with child at x year?" that was asked in selected rounds of the prospective data and supplemented with responses to the same question on the retrospective questionnaire.

Our analysis proceeds in two steps. First, we use sequence analysis to describe, compare and group trajectories of children's contact with their fathers (residential and nonresidential) over the life course for children who experienced a parental union dissolution. The idea is to represent the trajectory of father contact in the course of childhood for each child (0-18) as a string of 0 (*not in contact*) or 1 (*in contact*) characters for every year from birth to year 18. We then group "similar" sequences of father involvement according to the sequencing of periods of involvement and noninvolvement by fathers in the lives of children. Second, we use multinomial logistic regression models to analyze the influence of two factors—life stage of child at time of dissolution and mother's entry into new union—on *nonresidential* father contact patterns in two time periods following union dissolution: immediate 5 years and subsequent 5 years. The samples for the two time periods are smaller than the original sample size of 828 because of the time constraints for time of dissolution, which are minimum of 5 years and 10 years, respectively, before the end of the study. Moreover, the sample sizes for the models that include "mother enters a new union" are further reduced because the data were only collected in the biological mother retrospective questionnaires.

To ensure adequate sample size, we collapse the full range of contact sequences into a parsimonious categorization of three involvement types for the dependent variables: (1) uninterrupted or full contact, (2) intermittent contact, and (3) no contact and treat full contact as the reference category. The first set of models examines the influence of life stage of child at parental union dissolution on father contact in the two time periods following the dissolution. Life stage of child at dissolution is composed of 4 dummy variables—0-2, 3-5, 6-11, 12-18—for the first 5-year period and 3 dummies—0-2, 3-5, 6-11—for the second time period because of the difference in exposure periods. The second set of models examines the effect of mother's entry into a new union (0/1 dichotomous variable) in the first 5 years after dissolution on father contact in the two time periods following union dissolution. We were unable to examine father's entry into new union because mothers could not provide accurate information on their former partner's current relationship status. Table 2 shows the distribution of our key variables of interest.

We control for individual attributes of child (sex and birth order coded as 0 for *first birth* and 1 for *later births*), father and mother characteristics (age at birth of child, educational attainment at birth of child coded as 1 for *completed secondary school/postschool* and 0 for *no education through some secondary*), union status of parents at time of birth (1 for *in union* and 0 for *not in union*) and household wealth status at time of birth (1-5 wealth quintiles). We also control for kin involvement because kin play an important role in

Table 2. Distribution of Key Variables of Interest.

	n (%)
Life stage of child at time of union dissolution	
0-2	473 (57.1)
3-5	209 (25.2)
6-11	88 (10.6)
12-18	58 (7.0)
Mother entered new union	
Yes	205 (24.8)
No	589 (71.1)
Missing	34 (4.1)
<i>N</i>	828

child rearing in the African context (Madhavan & Roy, 2012; Mkhize, 2006; Nsamenang, 2010) and mediate the relationship between fathers and children particularly in the aftermath of a dissolution. To address this, we use the presence of nonparental breadwinners at time of dissolution as a proxy. Nonparental breadwinner includes grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other adults, who are reported as providing most of the financial support to the household. In addition, we control for contact in first time period for the models predicting involvement in the subsequent time period. We distribute the father involvement categories of those children whose fathers died after dissolution according to their involvement type before the time of death. Children whose mothers or fathers died before dissolution are not included in the analysis and are treated as never having experienced a parental dissolution. Six children experienced a maternal death after dissolution.

Survival Bias

In our quest for maximizing sample size by integrating retrospective data with the prospective data, the analytic sample is composed of only those children who “survived” in the study until year 18. It is possible that those children who were lost to follow-up might had weaker links to their fathers which would, in turn, contribute to an overestimation of father involvement in our analysis. We examined this issue by comparing the means of duration of father contact for children who dropped out and those who did not by age of attrition. With the exception of two attrition periods: 6 months to 2 years and 12 to 13 years, none of the differences are significant, suggesting that our estimates of father contact in this analysis are not seriously affected by survivor bias.

Results

The sequence analysis produced 27 different strings for children’s contact (residential and nonresidential) trajectories over the course of childhood. Each string type, shown in Table 3, recorded only changes in the contact sequence (as opposed to the number of years spent in the state).

Table 3. Distribution of Sequence Types of Father Contact (N = 828).

Sequence	n	%
0	23	2.8
01	9	1.1
010	12	1.4
0101	10	1.2
01010	10	1.2
010101010	1	0.1
01010101010	1	0.1
01012	2	0.2
0102	7	0.8
012	3	0.4
02	4	0.5
1	256	30.9
10	175	21.1
101	71	8.6
1010	80	9.7
10101	4	0.5
101010	22	2.7
1010101	1	0.1
10101010	13	1.6
1010101010	1	0.1
101010102	2	0.2
10101012	1	0.1
101012	6	0.7
10102	10	1.2
1012	18	2.2
102	42	5.1
12	44	5.2
Total	828	100

Note. 1 = in contact; 0 = not in contact; 2 = father deceased; 101 is interpreted as in contact/not in contact/in contact.

The two most common trajectories are uninterrupted contact (1) and contact followed by noncontact (10). We see that just more than 30% of children

experience uninterrupted contact throughout the 18 years, and another 21% experience a sequence that starts with contact followed by no contact until age 18. Almost 28% of children experience a sequence that starts with contact followed by a period of no contact followed by at least another period of contact. Interestingly, we also find that 6.5% of children experience a sequence that begins with no contact but is followed at some point by at least one period of contact. The percentage of children who have never had contact with their fathers is 2.8% (0). Almost 16% of children experience a paternal death at some point in early childhood (sequences that include 2).

At this descriptive level, we find that most children who have experienced a parental union dissolution have contact with their fathers, either uninterrupted or intermittent, throughout their lives. We know that parental union status is one of the largest contributors to explaining variation in father involvement patterns over the life course (Madhavan & Roy, 2012) mainly driven by a change in residence. However, there is likely to be variation in the trajectories of father contact in the years following the dissolution. To examine some of the reasons why children might experience different types of father contact trajectories in the immediate and later time periods following union dissolution, we turn to the regression models.

Child's Life Stage at Parental Union Dissolution and Father Contact Postdissolution

Our first analysis examines whether different life stages of children at time of union dissolution engenders different types of contact patterns and how this varies by time since dissolution (Table 4).

There are two significant life stage effects, both found in the first 5 years after dissolution. First, children who were 3-5 at the time of dissolution are nearly 5 times as likely to experience no contact in the first 5 years after dissolution compared with those who were 0-2 at the time of dissolution. Second, children who were 6-11 at the time of dissolution face lower odds of experiencing intermittent contact compared with those who were in the earliest life stage. It is also interesting to take note of the change in the direction of effects, albeit not significant, for both types of contact patterns across the two time periods. In the immediate 5-year period, children who were at later life stages at dissolution face higher odds of no contact but lower odds of intermittent contact compared with children who were 0-2 at time of dissolution; this is reversed in the subsequent 5-year period. Children whose biological parents were in union at the time of birth experience higher odds of intermittent contact only in the immediate 5-year period. We also find that the presence of a

Table 4. Effect of Life Stage of Child at Parental Union Dissolution on Nonresidential Father Contact Post Union Dissolution.

	Immediate period		Later period	
	No contact versus full contact	Intermittent contact versus full contact	No contact versus full contact	Intermittent contact versus full contact
	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Life stage of child at parental union dissolution				
0-2				
3-5	4.595 (0.686)*	0.443 (0.440)	0.621 (0.496)	2.140 (0.616)
6-11	2.528 (0.716)	0.285 (0.493)*	0.531 (0.620)	1.390 (0.672)
12-18	1.668 (0.849)	0.623 (0.558)	xxxxx	xxxxx
Union status of biological parents at time of birth	1.895 (0.686)	2.783 (0.403)*	1.416 (0.444)	0.894 (0.583)
Sex of child (ref: female)	0.910 (0.225)	0.737 (0.175)	0.782 (0.214)	0.730 (0.234)
Birth order of child	0.727 (0.294)	0.568 (0.234)**	0.749 (0.291)	1.511 (0.314)
Father's age at birth of child	0.967 (0.026)	0.974 (0.021)	0.982 (0.026)	.994 (0.026)
Father's educational attainment at birth of child	0.874 (0.241)	0.827 (0.187)	0.874 (0.228)	0.682 (0.248)
Mother's age at birth of child	1.077 (0.031)*	1.082 (0.026)**	1.058 (0.031)*	0.966 (0.034)
Mother's educational attainment at birth of child	0.890 (0.242)	0.800 (0.186)	0.913 (0.226)	1.381 (0.244)
Household wealth index at birth of child	1.147 (0.100)	1.110 (0.078)	0.979 (0.096)	0.997 (0.103)
Presence of nonparental breadwinner	2.567 (0.278)**	1.798 (0.209)**	3.088 (0.249)**	1.474 (0.2827)
Contact in previous period	xxxxx	xxxxx	0.018 (0.495)**	0.069 (0.526)**
Log-likelihood (Full model vs. intercept only)	1302.43***	1302.43***	1053.371***	1053.371***
N	702	702	628	628

Note. Values are given as odds ratios (standard errors).
 * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

nonparental breadwinner at the time of dissolution significantly increases the odds of children having no contact and intermittent contact with their fathers in both time periods. Predictably, having had contact in the first 5-year period decreases the odds of having no or intermittent contact (compared with full) in the second 5-year period but the key point is that the other effects remain even after controlling for contact in previous period. Moreover, we ran sensitivity tests using the same sample for both time period and confirmed that the difference in effects is not an artifact of sample compositional differences. Figure 1 shows predicted probabilities of father contact for both time periods holding all other covariates at the mean.

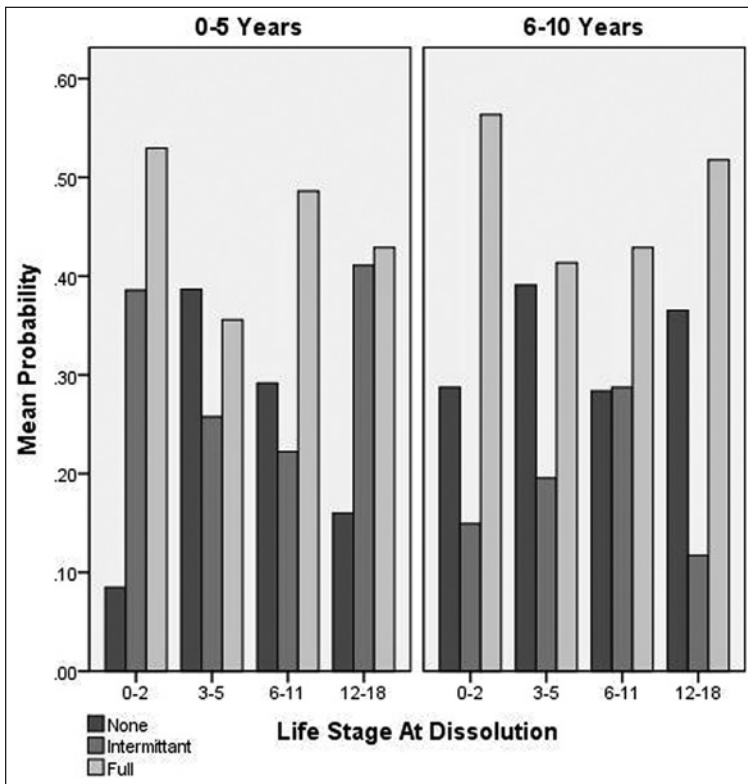


Figure 1. Predicted probabilities of father contact types postdissolution by life stage of child at dissolution.

The graph shows that specific life stage effects are different by time period. While the probabilities of intermittent contact are lower at later life stages in the immediate 5-year period, they follow an opposite pattern in the second time period with the exception of the last life stage. No contact, on the other hand, is higher at later life stages in the first period and lower in the second. The patterns suggest that the process of readjusting one's relationship with a child postdissolution may be a protracted one influenced by other life transitions such as mother's entry into new unions.

Mother's Entry Into New Union and Father Involvement Postdissolution

Table 5 shows the results of models that tested our second hypothesis that mother's entry into a new relationship will increase the odds of children having no and intermittent contact with fathers as a form of countertransitional change by fathers.

Mother's entry into a new union nearly triples the odds of children having no contact with biological fathers and increases the odds of having intermittent contact 3.5 times relative to having full contact in the immediate 5 years. In the later time period, similar effects are evident though the strength and magnitude of intermittent contact is less. The effects of life stage and union status of parents at time of birth continue to hold. We also find a positive effect of mother's age at birth of child on the odds of children having no contact and intermittent contact compared with having full contact in the first time period. Once again, we find a strong positive effect of the presence of a nonparental breadwinner on the odds of having no or uninterrupted contact with father in both time periods. These results hold even after controlling for contact in the first 5-year period that decreases the odds of having no or intermittent contact (compared with full) in the second period. Sensitivity tests using the same sample for both time periods confirmed that the difference in effects is not an artifact of sample compositional differences. Figure 2 shows predicted probabilities of father contact in both time periods holding all other covariates at the mean.

It is clear that mother's entry into a new union has a profound effect on fathers' involvement with their children made evident by the significantly higher probabilities of having no contact and intermittent contact in both time periods. However, it is notable that not all fathers respond with complete withdrawal from their children and instead attempt to establish some form of communication even in the immediate aftermath.

Table 5. Effect of Mother's Entry Into New Union on Nonresidential Father Contact Post Union Dissolution.

	Immediate period		Later period	
	No contact versus full contact	Intermittent contact versus full contact	No contact versus full contact	Intermittent contact versus full contact
Mother's entry into new union	2.829 (0.363)**	3.544 (0.331)***	2.367 (0.384)**	2.551 (0.397)**
Life stage of child at parental union dissolution				
0-2	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
3-5	4.348 (0.698)*	0.379 (0.463)*	0.605 (0.509)	1.244 (0.629)
6-11	2.426 (0.730)	0.182 (0.543)**	0.446 (0.640)	1.284 (0.708)
12-18	1.741 (0.868)	0.503 (0.608)	xxxxx	xxxxx
Union status of biological parents at time of birth	1.857 (0.698)	2.630 (0.424)*	1.246 (0.458)	0.820 (0.593)
Sex of child (ref: female)	0.954 (0.230)	0.782 (0.182)	0.798 (0.217)	0.667 (0.243)
Birth order of child	0.745 (0.302)	0.536 (0.243)**	0.762 (0.294)	1.615 (0.326)
Father's age at birth of child	0.974 (0.026)	0.964 (0.023)	0.983 (0.027)	0.994 (0.027)
Father's educational attainment at birth of child	0.869 (0.245)	0.838 (0.193)	0.887 (0.231)	0.659 (0.257)
Mother's age at birth of child	1.082 (0.032)*	1.100 (0.027)***	1.055 (0.032)	0.965 (0.035)
Mother's educational attainment at birth of child	0.905 (0.247)	0.852 (0.192)	0.917 (0.228)	1.563 (0.253)
Household wealth index at birth of child	1.167 (0.103)	1.122 (0.082)	0.998 (0.098)	1.022 (0.107)
Presence of nonparental breadwinner	2.718 (0.279)***	1.890 (0.217)**	3.011 (0.253)***	1.521 (0.291)
Contact in previous period	xxxxx	xxxxx	0.012 (0.500)**	0.026 (0.535)**
Log-likelihood (Full model vs. intercept only)	1230.233***	1230.233***	1011.831***	1011.831***
N	673	673	608	608

Note. Values are given as odds ratios (standard errors).
 * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

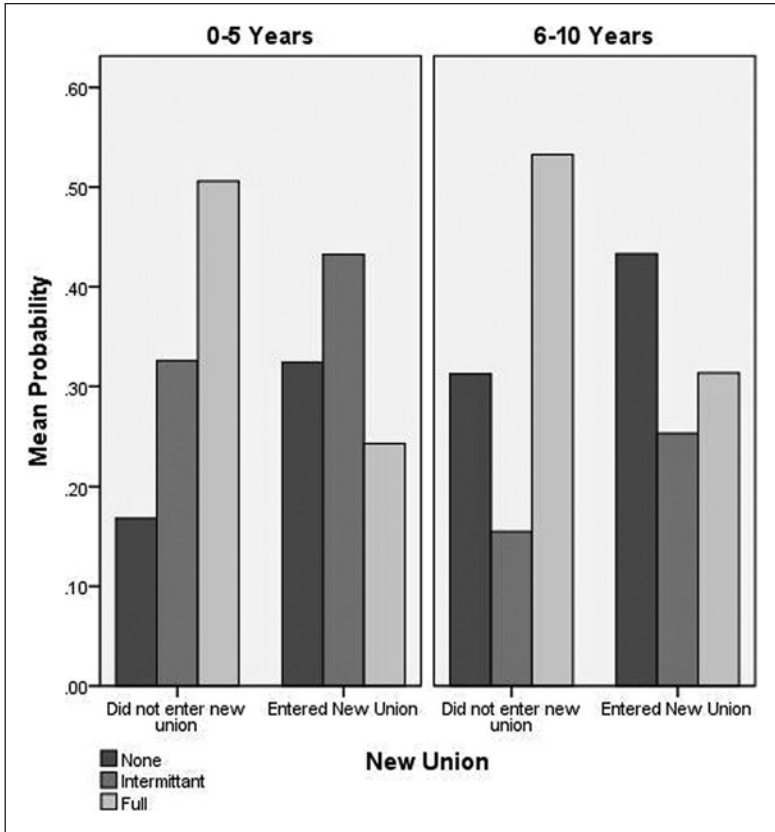


Figure 2. Predicted probabilities of father contact types post dissolution by mother’s entry into new union.

Discussion

In this analysis, we set out to examine two understudied processes related to father involvement in the lives of children who have experienced parental union dissolution. One, we described trajectories of father contact over childhood. Two, we examined how specific issues related to parental union dissolution—life stage of child at dissolution and mother’s entry into a new union—influences these trajectories in the immediate and subsequent 5-year periods following parental union dissolution. We highlight our key findings. One, most children in our sample who experience a parental union dissolution have uninterrupted or intermittent contact with their fathers for most of

their early lives. Two, even though we did not find many significant effects of life stage of child in either time period, it is notable that the direct of effects for each type of contact pattern takes on a distinct pattern in each time period. Whereas later life stage of child at time of parental union dissolution increases the odds of experiencing no contact and decreases the odds of intermittent contact in the immediate period, this pattern is reversed for the subsequent period. Three, mother's entry into a new union soon after the union dissolution increases the odds of children having no contact and intermittent contact with fathers in both time periods. We also found that the presence of a nonparental breadwinner increases the odds of having no contact and intermittent contact with fathers in both time periods following dissolution.

How do we make sense of these results using Palkovitz and Palm's (2009) framework for understanding transitions within fathering? On a descriptive level, our analysis underscores the importance of capturing the dynamism of father involvement rather than basing involvement on a measure at one point in time. The sequence analysis shows that a large number of children transition in and out of contact with their fathers throughout their lives, not particularly surprising for Black men in the context of urban South Africa where they face a long list of challenges in remaining engaged with their children. However, it is an important finding because, in conjunction with the sizeable number who have uninterrupted contact with their fathers, it challenges conventional impressions that children who have experienced a parental union dissolution have minimal contact with their fathers. Moreover, the way in which fathers remain in contact with their children varies and does so over time. We found that children who were 3-5 at the time of dissolution are more likely than those who were 0-2 to experience no contact with fathers in the immediate aftermath of a dissolution. This may be due to a particular convergence of factors that facilitate complete disengagement. One, fathers perceive this age-group of children to be out of their most vulnerable phase and therefore not needing them; two, fathers have not made as much of a time and emotional investment (as they would have with older children); and three, this age-group is not old enough to keep their fathers engaged. The absence of any such effect in the subsequent time period, where we actually see higher odds of intermittent contact (though not significant), suggests that fathers may reestablish contact with their children after a period of readjustment. A somewhat different set of factors may help understand why children who were 6-11 at the time of dissolution face lower odds of intermittent contact in the immediate aftermath. Fathers may be more motivated to retain full contact because (1) they have invested substantial time and emotion into the relationship and (2) they may perceive this age-group to have specific needs that they can address.

All this is further complicated by other life transitions such as mothers' entry into new unions. While the results clearly show that children in these circumstances experience either no or intermittent contact with their fathers in both time periods, it is important to note that there is room for fathers to engage. While they may be ambivalent about their paternal identity and are also responding to maternal gatekeeping pressures, they are, nonetheless, in a process of reestablishing equilibria with their children in light of a new stepfather or father figure in the household. In this sense, our narrative is consistent with the "package deal" model (Tach et al., 2010; Townsend, 2002) in which fathers' relationship with their children depends on their relationship with the mothers of their children. Our results suggest that in such a deal, fathers may enact a countertransitional strategy of both total disengagement and having intermittent contact with their children in response to their former partner's new romantic relationship. In all this, the involvement of extended kin, who are most likely related to the mother, as breadwinners, appears to inhibit children's contact with fathers in both time period. On one hand, this finding may reflect the indirect effect of fathers' inability to play the provider role, which in turn, is likely to increase "kin gatekeeping" power. In this sense, our results are in-line with some of Swartz and Bhana's (2009) findings that kin actively discourage contact between young fathers and their children. On the other hand, however, our results are not consistent with the idea of kinwork supporting fathering in low-income communities (Madhavan & Roy, 2012) suggesting that cultural norms legitimizing unions, such as the payment of bridewealth, continue to be critical factors in influencing fathers' involvement in their children's lives. Either way, it appears to be a part of a complex process through which biological fathers attempt to recalibrate their relationship with their children following a union dissolution with biological mothers.

In assessing these results, it is important to note several limitations of data and analysis. First, our measure of contact does not capture quality or intensity of contact both of which matter for children's outcomes (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999). Second, our measure of men's labor market potential is not ideal given that we use a time constant proxy—educational attainment. Third, we do not have a measure of parental relationship quality following dissolution, a critical factor in supporting father involvement (Carlson & McLanahan, 2004). Finally, small sample sizes prevented us from modeling relationship dynamics that would offer a more nuanced approach to understanding the implications of union status on father contact. For example, some of the new unions that mothers enter inevitably dissolve, which may, in turn, enable biological fathers to reestablish contact. We also limited the time period of entry into new union to the first 5-years leaving the effects of entry in the second 5

years after dissolution unknown. Despite these limitations, however, we believe that these analyses make an important contribution to the growing scholarship on fathers and fathering in the South African context. Much of the research on father involvement thus far has been driven by a concern for child and adolescent well-being, particularly in the context of “father absence.” In contrast, far less attention has been paid to the ways in which men reconfigure fathering roles after the dissolution of a relationship with mothers. This is not only important in its own right but is also an important part of understanding the pathways of effects on children’s well-being.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful for comments from participants at the International Perspectives on Family Structure conference, McGill University, Montreal, Canada, November 30 to December 2, 2012. We would like to acknowledge invaluable assistance provided by Mike Wagner and Mark Gross, University of Maryland, in preparing the data for analysis. We would like to acknowledge the contributions of Victoria Hosegood in the questionnaire development.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This study was supported by the Wellcome Trust (WT - 092097/Z/10/Z) the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Center for Child Health and Human Development (Grant R24-HD041041) and Maryland Population Research Center.

References

- Ahrons, C. (1983). Predictors of paternal involvement post-divorce: Mothers’ and fathers’ perceptions. *Journal of Divorce*, 6(3), 55-69.
- Amato, P. R., & Gilbreth, J. G. (1999). Nonresident fathers and children’s well-being: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 61, 557-573.
- Anderson, K., Kaplan, H., Lam, D., & Lancaster, J. (1999). Paternal care by genetic fathers and stepfathers II: Reports by Xhosa high school students. *Evolution & Human Behavior*, 20, 433-451.
- Aquilino, W. S. (2006). Noncustodial father-child relationships from adolescence into young adulthood. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68, 929-946.
- Argys, L. M., Peters, E., Cook, S., Garasky, S., Nepomnyaschy, L., & Sorenson, E. (2007). Measuring contact between children and nonresident fathers. In

- S. Hofferth & L. Casper (Eds.), *Handbook of measurement issues in family research* (pp. 375-398). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Argys, L. M., & Peters, H. E. (2001). Patterns of nonresident-father involvement. In R. T. Michael (Ed.), *Social awakening: Adolescent behavior as adulthood approaches*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Bianchi, S., Robinson, J., & Milkie, M. (2007). *Changing rhythms of American family life*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Bruce, C., & Fox, G. (1999). Accounting for patterns of father involvement: Age of child, father-child co-residence and father role salience. *Sociological Inquiry*, 69, 458-476.
- Carlson, M. (2006). Family structure, father involvement, and adolescent behavioral outcomes. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68, 137-154.
- Carlson, M., & McLanahan, S. (2004). Early father involvement in fragile families. In R. Day & M. E. Lamb (Eds.), *Conceptualizing and measuring father involvement* (pp. 241-271). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Carlson, M., McLanahan, S., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2008). Coparenting and nonresident fathers' involvement with young children after a nonmarital birth. *Demography*, 45, 461-488.
- Cheadle, J., Amato, P., & King, V. (2010). Patterns of nonresident father contact. *Demography*, 47, 205-225.
- Cherlin, A., Furstenberg, F., Jr., Chase-Lansdale, P. L., Kiernan, K., Robins, P., Morrison, D., & Teitler, J. (1991). Longitudinal studies of effects of divorce on children in Great Britain and the United States. *Science*, 252, 1386-1389.
- Coley, R. L., & Morris, J. E. (2002). Comparing father and mother reports of father involvement among low-income minority families. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 64, 982-997.
- Elder, G. H. (1985). Perspectives on the lifecourse. In G. Elder (Ed.), *Lifecourse dynamics: Transitions and trajectories* (pp. 23-49). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Furstenberg, F. F., Jr., & Harris, K. M. (1992). The disappearing American father? Divorce and the waning significance of biological fatherhood. In S. J. South & S. E. Tolnay (Eds.), *The changing American family* (pp. 197-223). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Furstenberg, F. F., Jr., Morgan, S. P., & Allison, P. D. (1987). Paternal participation and children's wellbeing. *American Sociological Review*, 52, 695-701.
- Galinsky, E. (1987). *The six stages of parenthood*. New York, NY: Perseus Books.
- Gillies, V. (2009). Understandings and experiences of involved fathering in the United Kingdom: Exploring classed dimensions. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 24, 49-60.
- Hetherington, M., & Stanley-Hagan, M. (1986). Divorced fathers: Stress, coping and adjustment. In M. Lamb (Ed.), *The father's role: Applied perspectives* (pp. 103-134). New York, NY: Wiley.
- Hofferth, S. L. (2003). Race/ethnic differences in father involvement in two-parent families: Culture, context, or economy. *Journal of Family Issues*, 24(2), 185-216.

- Hosegood, V., & Madhavan, S. (2012). Understanding fatherhood and father involvement in South Africa: Insights from surveys and population cohorts. *Fathering: A Journal of Theory, Research, and Practice about Men as Fathers*, 10, 257-273.
- Hunter, M. (2009). The changing political economy of sex in South Africa: The significance of unemployment and inequalities to the scale of the AIDS pandemic. *Social Science & Medicine*, 64, 689-700.
- Ihinger-Tallman, M., Pasley, K., & Buehler, C. (1993). Developing a middle-range theory of father involvement post-divorce. *Journal of Family Issues*, 14, 550-571.
- Khunou, G. (2006). Fathers don't stand a chance: Experiences of custody, access, and maintenance. In R. Morrell & L. Richter (Eds.), *Baba: Men and fatherhood in South Africa* (pp. 265-281). Cape Town, South Africa: HSRC Press.
- Lamb, M. E. (2010). *The role of the father in child development* (5th ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Lamb, M. E., Pleck, J. H., Charnov, E. L., & Levine, J. A. (1987). A biosocial perspective on paternal behavior and involvement. In J. B. Lancaster, J. Altmann, A. S. Rossi, & L. R. Sherrod (Eds.), *Parenting across the lifespan: Biosocial dimensions* (pp. 111-142). New York, NY: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Laughlin, L., Farris, D., & Fagan, J. (2009). Father involvement with children following marital and non-marital separations. *Fathering: A Journal of Theory, Research, and Practice About Men as Fathers*, 7, 226-248.
- Madhavan, S., & Roy, K. (2012). Securing fathering through kinwork: A comparison of Black fathers and families in South African and the U.S. *Journal of Family Issues*, 33, 801-822.
- Madhavan, S., Townsend, N., & Garey, A. (2008). Absent breadwinners: Fathers' connections and paternal support in rural South Africa. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 34, 647-663.
- Manning, W. D., & Smock, P. J. (1999). New families and nonresident father-child visitation. *Social Forces*, 78, 87-116.
- Mkhize, N. (2006). African traditions and the social, economic and moral dimensions of fatherhood. In R. Morrell & L. Richter (Eds.), *Baba: Men and fatherhood in South Africa* (pp. 193-198). Cape Town, South Africa: HSRC Press.
- Morrell, R., & Richter, L. (Eds.). (2006). *Baba: Men and fatherhood in South Africa*. Cape Town, South Africa: HSRC Press.
- Mott, F. L. (1990). When is a father really gone? Paternal-child contact in father-absent homes. *Demography*, 27, 499-517.
- Murray, C. (1980). Migrant labor and changing family structure in the rural periphery of southern Africa. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 6(2), 139-156.
- Norris, S., Richter, L., & Fleetwood, S. (2007). Panel studies in developing countries: Case analysis of sample attrition over the past 16 years within the birth to twenty cohort in Johannesburg, South Africa. *Journal of International Development*, 19, 1143-1150.
- Nsamenang, A. (2010). Fathers, family, and children's well-being in Africa. In M. E. Lamb (Ed.), *The role of the father in child development* (3rd ed., pp. 1-18, 309-313). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

- Palkovitz, R., & Palm, G. (2009). Transitions within fathering. *Fathering: A Journal of Theory, Research, and Practice About Men as Fathers*, 7, 3-22.
- Seltzer, J. A. (1991). Relationships between fathers and children who live apart: The father's role after separation. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 53, 79-101.
- Statistics South Africa. (2011). *General household survey*. Pretoria, South Africa.
- Statistics South Africa. (2012). *Labor force survey*. Pretoria, South Africa.
- Stewart, S. D. (1999). Nonresident mothers' and fathers' social contact with children. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 894-907.
- Swartz, S., & Bhana, A. (2009). *Teenage tata: Voices of young fathers in South Africa*. Cape Town, South Africa: HSRC Press.
- Tach, L., Mincy, R., & Edin, K. (2010). Parenting as a "package deal": Relationships, fertility, and nonresident father involvement among unmarried parents. *Demography*, 47, 181-204.
- Townsend, N. (2002). *The package deal: Marriage, work and fatherhood in men's lives*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Wilson, F. (2006). On being a father and poor in Southern Africa today. In R. Morrell & L. Richter (Eds.), *Baba: Men and fatherhood in South Africa* (pp. 26-37). Cape Town, South Africa: HSRC Press.