



THE UNIVERSITY  
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at CHAPEL HILL

CENTER for COMMUNITY CAPITAL

# Residential and Nonresidential Fathers: Implications for Child Wellbeing

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# Importance of Father Research

- Diversity of fatherhood roles and types of interaction
- Much remains unknown regarding father-focused interventions
- Policy, practice, and research communities recognize work is needed
  - Obama proposes \$500 million to support **fatherhood**, marriage, and self-sufficiency in FY 2011
  - TANF Reauthorization 2010 - \$75 million
  - Calls for papers, proposals, workshops

# Fathering & Children

- Role of fathers in children's lives is instrumental
- Consequences of involvement vary by
  - Family structure
  - Co-residence
  - Type and quality of father behavior



# Child Behavior

- Important to measure range of child well-being indicators
- Understanding positive behavior is central to adult intervention efforts (e.g., social workers, parents, teachers)



# Research Aims & Questions

**Aim:** To assess the effect of father residency and father involvement on child outcomes

- **Question 1:** Is there a difference in positive child behavior between resident and nonresident fathers?
- **Question 2:** Is the quantity of time nonresident fathers spend with their child associated with positive behavior?



# Data and Sample

- Community Advantage Program (CAP): secondary-mortgage pilot program for low- and moderate-income households
- CAP survey began in 2004; quasi-experimental design comparing homeowners to renters
- Present analysis uses Wave 5 from 2008
- Final analytic sample N=833 (after deletion due to attrition, item missing, sample restricted to households with children 18 yrs of age or younger)



# Sample Characteristics

Variable	Resident ( <i>N</i> = 485)	Nonresident ( <i>N</i> = 348)
White	63.5%	50.6%
African American	10.5%	39.7%
Hispanic	22.7%	7.2%
Other	3.3%	2.6%
Male respondent	68.0%	14.7%
Married/cohabiting	92.4%	34.2%
Less than high school	13.4%	6.6%
High school/GED	24.5%	22.4%
Some college	34.9%	50.9%
College or more	27.2%	20.1%
Income (in \$1,000s)	54.9 (1.4)	37.9 (1.4)
Focal child's age	8.7 (.18)	11.8 (.22)

# Variables in the Analysis

➤ **Positive child behaviors:**

*compliance, social competence*

1=not at all like my child; 5=totally like my child

Dependent  
Variables

➤ **Question 1:** father residential status

➤ **Question 2:** father contact hours

Main  
Independent  
Variables

➤ **Demographics, household characteristics  
and socioeconomic status:**

Race\ethnicity, marital status, age, time in residence, child's age, child's gender, income, education, work status, alimony/child support, number of children, father figure in home

Control  
Variables



# Measures: Dependent Variables

- Social competence & compliance from Positive Behavior Scale (PBS)
- Short version of PBS used in CAPS (almost identical to what was used in Panel Study of Income Dynamics)
- **Social competence** ( $\alpha = .74$ ) :
  1. Cheerful & happy
  2. Curious
  3. Admired by other kids
  4. Gets over being upset quickly
  5. Gets along with others
- **Compliance** ( $\alpha = .75$ ):
  1. Waits turn
  2. Is not impulsive
  3. Usually does what is told
  4. Does neat careful work



# Main Predictor Variables

## Father Residence (full sample N=833)

- Father at home =1, Nonresident father = 0
- Full sample N= 833



## Father Contact (subsample N=344)

- Average contact hours/month

➤ **For Question 1:**

OLS regression models to predict social competence and compliance based on full sample

➤ **For Question 2:**

OLS regressions models to predict competence and compliance based on restricted sample of nonresident father households only



# OLS Models Father Residence

(N = 833 select variables)

Variable	Model 1: Social Competence		Model 2: Compliance	
	$\beta$	SE	$\beta$	SE
Resident father (vs. not home)	.147 *	.063	.229 **	.085
Black (vs. white)	.163 **	.057	.278 ***	.077
Hispanic (vs. white)	.162 *	.065	.454 ***	.089
Marital status	-.082	.065	-.149	.089
Months in residence	.002*	.001	.002*	.001
Focal child's age	-.027***	.006	.013	.008
Focal child is male	-.092*	.042	-.308***	.057
No high school (vs. college+)	.127	.089	.098	.119
High school/GED (vs. college+)	.004	.064	-.062	.087
Some college (vs. college+)	-.052	.056	-.192*	.075
Currently working	.089	.153	.153*	.084

\*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$



# OLS Models Father Contact

(N = 344 select variables)

Variable	Model 3: Social Competence		Model 4: Compliance	
	$\beta$	SE	$\beta$	SE
Father contact hours (monthly avg)	.002 **	.001	.004 ***	.001
Black (vs. white)	.218 **	.082	.362 **	.108
Hispanic (vs. white)	.071	.632	.381 *	.194
Other (vs. white)	.326	.231	.693 *	.304
Months in residence	.002*	.001	.002	.001
Focal child's age	-.028**	.010	.006	.013
Focal child is male	-.101	.078	-.353**	.102
No high school (vs. college+)	.304	.183	.322	.240
High school/GED (vs. college+)	-.065	.120	.005	.156
Some college (vs. college+)	-.053	.102	-.110	.133
Currently working	.076	.106	.255	.139
Father figure in the home	.219*	.082	.089	.410

# Summary of Findings

- **Father residency** is significantly associated with positive behavior in children
- Other important factors:
  - Race/ethnicity (+)
  - Time in residence (+)
  - Age & gender of child (-)
  - Education (-)
  - Work (+)



# Summary Continued

## *Among nonresident father households:*

- **Higher levels of father/child contact** are significantly related to positive behavior
- **Father figure** positively associated with social competence
- Other important factors include:
  - Race/ethnicity
  - Time in residence
  - Age & gender of child



# Discussion & Implications

- Both groups of fathers (resident/non-resident) play a valuable role in children's lives
- Magnitude of coefficients for contact hours is highly significant, yet small
  - $\beta = .002, p < .001; \beta = .004, p < .001$
  - Perhaps suggests that other dimensions of relationship may play a more important role (e.g., quality)
- Father figures in non-resident homes are important
  - Implications for interventions that support children with non-resident fathers & other father caregivers
  - Future research should explore further



# Limitations & Next Steps

- Limited child outcome variables
- Study could benefit from additional dimensions of paternal involvement & factors that reflect complexity of families' lives (e.g., quality of relationship, paternal incarceration, family structure changes)
- Employ imputation strategy to address loss of observations
- Expand analyses to make fuller use of longitudinal nature of data to examine whether father involvement early on has enduring effects

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