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**The Implications of Resident Mothers' Repartnering for Children's
Closeness and Involvement with Nonresident Fathers**

**APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

Supervisor:

Edward R. Anderson

Theodore H. Dix

Nancy L. Hazen-Swann

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by

Kathleen Anne Hurley, B.S.H.D.F.S.

Thesis

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Abstract

The Implications of Resident Mothers' Repartnering for Children's Closeness and Involvement with Nonresident Fathers

Kathleen Anne Hurley, M.A.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2011

Supervisor: Edward R. Anderson

With around 50 percent of all dissolving marriages consisting of families with children, and around half of residential parents reporting some experience with dating new partners within 60 days of filing for divorce, there is a need to understand the influences on children's relationships and the possible consequences or benefits that may be imposed on children due to not only divorce, but additional parental transitions such as repartnering. In this study, I used data from the Texas Families Project, a longitudinal, multi-informant, multi-method study, to examine the implications of mothers' repartnering for children's closeness and involvement with nonresident fathers. Resident mother's dating status alone does not seem to impact children's closeness and involvement with their nonresident fathers as much as the new relationship that children

are forming with their mothers' partners impacts these relationships. Mothers' and children's reports differ, providing competing results as to whether or not children's relationships with their mothers' partners is associated with changes in children's relationships with their fathers. Children report a positive relationship between involvement with their mothers' romantic partners and involvement with their nonresident fathers, suggesting that both children's biological fathers and their alternative caretaker play a valuable role in their lives. Mothers' reports show that there is a negative relationship between the amount of time spent with their mothers' romantic partner and positive involvement with children's nonresident father, suggesting that children could be substituting time with their fathers for time with their mothers' romantic partner. Although contact may decrease due to the child and mothers' romantic partner relationship, child's closeness to their father is not affected, supporting research that states that children may continue to feel close to their fathers even when contact is low.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The objective of the present study is to investigate how resident mothers' repartnering after divorce influences children's closeness and involvement with their nonresident fathers. With around half of all dissolving marriages consisting of families with children (Greene, Anderson, Forgatch, DeGarmo & Hetherington, in press), and around half of residential parents reporting some experience with dating new partners within 60 days of filing for divorce (Anderson, Greene, Walker, Malerba, Forgatch, & DeGarmo, 2004), there is a need to understand the influences on children's relationships and the possible consequences or benefits that may be imposed on children due to not only divorce, but additional parental transitions such as repartnering (i.e., the acquisition of new romantic partners). Nonresident father involvement, in particular, may be affected by maternal repartnering. It is possible that children's emerging relationships with their mothers' new romantic partners may displace ongoing involvement with nonresident fathers (White & Gilbreth, 2001). Alternatively, it is possible that children can develop relationships with their mothers' new romantic partners without negative consequences for nonresident father relationships. This study will test these alternative hypotheses using longitudinal data from multiple informants. This paper will first explore the ways in which nonresident fathers and their children's relationships change following divorce, what factors may contribute to feelings of closeness between children and their fathers, and how the addition of new father figures in a child's life affects relationships with nonresident fathers.

Chapter 2: Nonresident Father/Child Contact Following Divorce

Although research suggests that fathers' contact with children post-divorce is limited in the short term and declines steadily over time, even for fathers who were highly involved initially (Braver, Wolchik, Sandler, Fogas, & Zvetina, 1991; Shapiro & Lambert, 1999), researchers have noted that nonresident fathers in more recent cohorts appear to maintain more frequent contact with their children than earlier cohorts did and are more likely to request shared custody of their children than in the past (Amato & Gilbreth 1999). Braver et al. (1991) suggest that this may be due to changing sex roles and an increase in social disapproval of fathers who discontinue contact with their children. Although fathers and children alike report strong desires to stay involved and wish to increase visitation time with one another (Greene et al., in press; Wolchik, Fenaughty, & Braver, 1996; Amato & Gilbreth, 1999), there are circumstances in which visitation time may be out of the hands of fathers and children, despite their wishes. For example, Braver et al. (1991) reported that 20% of the custodial parents in their study said they saw no value in the noncustodial parents' visits and admitted attempting to personally sabotaging visits. Ex-spouses interfere with visitations to punish or get back at their ex-spouse, to express anger, to avoid conflict and painful visitations, or because they believe their ex-spouse should not be allowed to visit if they are not contributing financially (Braver et al., 1991; Wolchik et al., 1996; Seltzer, 1991). Contact is most likely to be maintained when parents can cooperatively coparent and report less conflict in their relationship, when the noncustodial parent believes they still have control in decisions that affect the child, and when noncustodial parents live closer distances to their

children and thus are more physically available (Sobolewski & King, 2005; Greene et al., in press; Seltzer, 1991; Seltzer & Bianchi, 1988).

Chapter 3: Feelings of Closeness

When relationships between fathers and their children do diminish post-divorce, children report feelings of loss and non residential fathers report feelings of guilt, frustration, anxiety, a sense of longing, sadness, and emptiness (Wolchik et al., 1996; Shapiro & Lambert, 1999). The outcomes of maintaining a strong bond and frequent contact between fathers and children after divorce are unclear. Some researchers find contact to be associated positively with children's well being, others find contact to be associated negatively, and some find no relationship (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999). Although frequent contact has been associated with children reporting better feelings toward mothers and fathers (Fabricus, 2003; Fabricius & Luecken, 2006), and placing less blame on their fathers as the cause of the divorce (Laumann-Billings & Emery, 2000), many researchers have suggested that frequency of contact may be less important than other relationship components, such as the strength of the emotional tie between children and fathers, feelings of closeness towards one another, and fathers' use of authoritative parenting (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; Sobolewski & King, 2005; King & Sobolewski, 2006). In addition, researchers have also noted that children may continue to feel close to their fathers even when contact is low (White & Gilbreth, 2001).

With these suggestions of a close relationship being more important than physical contact for the well being of children, it is crucial to further understand exactly what is contributing to children's feelings of closeness to their fathers. This, however, does not mean that contact should be ignored, but rather, as suggested by the existing literature, father-child contact should be viewed as having a valuable, but more indirect role in child

well-being by allowing higher quality father child relationships to develop (Sobolewski & King, 2005; Seltzer & Bianchi, 1988, King & Sobolewski, 2006). In this sense, contact plays a vital role in contributing to close relationships between fathers and children, but contact alone cannot guarantee a close relationship. Therefore there is a need to continue researching the variables that may be influencing the development of feelings of closeness and positive, high quality father-child relationships, as well as physical contact. One factor contributing to the closeness between fathers and their children post divorce is the role of stepfathers.

Chapter 4: New Father Figures

With about two thirds of children who have a nonresident father later experiencing the addition of a stepfather into their family (White & Gilbreth, 2001), it is valuable to consider what impact stepfathers have on children's relationships with their fathers. White & Gilbreth (2001) have proposed that there are different models, supported by prior research, for understanding the role that fathers play in their children's lives. One of these models is the accumulation model. This model suggests that children accumulate fathers, such that both children's biological fathers and their stepfathers play a valuable role in their lives. Contrary to the accumulation model, the substitution model proposes that children substitute, or replace, stepfathers for their biological father. Similarly, King (2006) has also proposed two models as competing hypotheses for the role of stepfathers in children's lives. The first of these she labels as the additive hypothesis, paralleling the accumulation model, in which children benefit equally from forming and maintaining close bonds with either father, and where children who have close relationships with both fathers benefit the most because they have access to the resources provided by two involved adults rather than just one. She refers to the alternative model as the redundancy hypothesis. This hypothesis suggests that children's well being is promoted by having a close relationship with one father, and that the addition of other father figures is redundant and offers no additional advantage. In support of the redundancy hypothesis, King (2006) found that having close ties with only their stepfather was as beneficial as having close ties to both fathers. Results from this study also suggest that, although it is possible to have close bonds with a nonresident father and a stepfather, the majority of

adolescents report being close to only a stepfather, supporting the substitution model. The author suggests that this may be due to the 'primacy of residence' hypothesis, which implies that, since stepfathers reside with children, they are more easily able to transmit resources that are beneficial to the child.

In further support of the substitution model, Seltzer & Bianchi (1988) found that children living in households with an alternate caregiver, such as a step- parent, an adoptive parent, or another adult who is the same sex as the child's absent parent, were less likely to maintain frequent contact with their nonresident parent than children who do not live with a substitute caretaker. On the other hand, White & Gilbreth, (2001) found support for the accumulation model. Rather than 'substituting' a father figure for a nonresident father, children benefited from having a good relationship with both their stepfathers and fathers. Children who reported having good relationships with their nonresident fathers were more commonly found in stepfamilies than in families where mothers were not in a new marriage. To summarize, children's feelings of closeness are not necessarily related to physical contact, and it is unclear whether children are able to form bonds successfully with both stepfathers and nonresident fathers or when the development of a new father figure replaces a relationship with the child's nonresident father.

Nonresident fathers' involvement and closeness with their children may also be affected by their child's age, gender, and race. Previous research has noted, for example, that father involvement and father-child closeness tends to decline during adolescence (King, 2006; Sobolewski & King, 2005). King (2006) suggests this may be due to the fact that

adolescents are trying to establish independence, they are spending more time with friends, and participating in more extracurricular activities than when they were younger. While some researchers have found no support that children's age, gender, or race moderates the association between father involvement and children's well being (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999), some studies have reported that fathers have less frequent and shorter visits with daughters than sons (Sobolewski & King, 2005). This in turn may result in fewer opportunities for daughters to develop high quality relationships with their fathers than boys may have. Prior research has also noted that boys report closer bonds to both their nonresident fathers and their stepfathers than girls do and that girls may be at risk of not being close to either father (King, 2006). The effects of race and ethnicity have similarly been mixed. Some studies have found no effects (Seltzer & Bianchi, 1988), and others have found that Black adolescents report being closer to their nonresident fathers than White adolescents (King, Harris, & Heard, 2004).

Chapter 5: Repartnering

The literature thus far has focused primarily on stepfather relations, ignoring relationships with father figures that develop prior to remarriage. With about 1/3 of divorcing parents admitting to having a supportive, mutually caring, intimate relationship in place at the point of filing for divorce, and the majority of mothers dating within the first year following the filing (Greene et al., in press), there are multiple possibilities for children to build relationships with their parents' partners well before a child gains a stepparent. If relationships with a stepfather have the potential to influence contact and closeness between children and their nonresident fathers, it is reasonable to believe that mothers' romantic partners, whom children have met and begun to form relationships with, may also influence such relationships. To date, no study has looked at the variability in mother's repartnering and the influences it may have on children's closeness with their nonresident fathers. The present study aims to address this by investigating the following research questions:

- 1) *Does mom's repartnering status affect child's closeness and involvement with nonresident father (NRF)?*
- 2) *Does mom's repartnering affect contact with NRF?*
- 3) *Does the quality of the romantic partner (RP)/child relationship affect child's closeness and involvement with NRF?*
- 4) *Does the quality of the RP/child relationship affect contact with NRF?*

Because closeness is an important dimension of father-child relationships (Sobolewski & King, 2005; Amato & Gilbreth, 1999), this study examines how mother's repartnering influences children's feelings, or perceptions, of closeness. Not only does this study address the closeness between children and their nonresident fathers, but it also includes feelings of closeness towards their mother's romantic partner, while still considering the physical time spent with both NRF and RP. Much of the existing literature has relied on (a) data that was collected at only one time point and does not examine how changes are happening over time, (b) data based only on adolescents, and (c) data that utilize reports from only one source, usually the mother. The current study expands on the existing literature by using data collected at three waves over a two year time period. The data are from families with school-aged children ranging from ages 5 to 11 at baseline and were gathered from multiple informants. Because this study aims to understand the ways that children's contact and closeness with their nonresident fathers is changing over time, it is important to consider any group differences that may exist based on age, gender, or race. By considering these group differences this study will be able to better understand what changes are happening and whether or not these changes are associated with characteristics outside the father child relationship. For example, whether or not changes are occurring based on children's development at different ages. Therefore, these variables will also be considered in all of the research questions.

Given the mixed findings in previous research, this study has competing hypothesis for how variability in resident mother's repartnering after divorce will affect children's closeness and involvement with their nonresident fathers. Although research

suggests that alternative caretakers in children's lives tend to take away time from nonresident fathers (Seltzer & Bianchi, 1988) and thus diminish chances to build high quality relationships (Sobolewski & King, 2005; King and Sobolewski 2006), research also suggests that nonresident fathers' roles after separation is defined and stable over time (Seltzer, 1991; Wolchik et al., 1996). Furthermore, children can have high quality relationships with their fathers and alternative caregivers simultaneously (White & Gilbreth, 2001). This variability in findings leaves one to presume that children whose mothers are dating may form close relationships with their mothers' romantic partner. This could take away time and contribute to a decrease in feelings of closeness towards their father. On the other hand, despite developing new relationships, children and their fathers have a defined relationship that may remain stable over time regardless of new relationships in the child's life. This study hopes to shed light on this unfamiliar area of research and open doors for others to extend similar studies in the future and increase our awareness and understanding of nonresident fathers and children's relationships over time.

Chapter 6: Methods

Participants

This study is part of a multi-method, multi-informant longitudinal study of parental repartnering after divorce and its influence on child and family outcomes. Participants were obtained through divorce court records from a metropolitan area in the South Central U.S. Eligible families were those that contained an elementary-school aged child (i.e., Kindergarten through 5th grade) who resided with the mother at least 50% of each week. A total of 319 families participated in the baseline assessment. Mothers and children were first interviewed in their homes within 120 days of the divorce filing; legal divorce had occurred for 25% of the families by the baseline assessment. Marriage duration was calculated as the number of months couples lived together from the time of marriage up until the time of separation (or baseline assessment if the couple were still living together). Median length of marriage duration was 114 months (range 8 months to 321 months). Median length of separation from spouse was 6 months (range 0 to 103 months). Median age of mothers was 36.8 (range 21-53). Among mothers, 9% were African American, 27% were Hispanic, and 64% were Non-Hispanic White. Maternal education varied widely from less than high school (9.4%) to doctoral degree (1.3%), with the median education being a 2-year associates degree. Eighty-two percent of mothers were working in a paid position at least part time, and median household income in the year prior to the divorce filing was \$50,000 (income quartiles for the sample were: \$25K/\$50K/\$80K). Twenty-three percent of mothers were currently receiving means-tested government assistance. Seventy-four percent of couples had cohabited before

marriage. For 77% of mothers, this was their first divorce. In addition, 23% of mothers reported a history of criminal arrest, and 17% reported spending some time in jail or prison. With regard to repartnering status, 44.5% were in a relationship with a new partner (either casually dating, seriously dating, or engaged to be married), 26.5% were interested in dating, but had not yet met someone they would consider dating, and 29% were not interested in dating at this time.

Design and Procedures

Interviews took place in the families' homes at baseline, 12-month, and 24-month follow-up assessments. Two-person interview teams conducted structured interviews with the target child and the mother in separate areas of the home. The child interviewer also interviewed the romantic partner if one was present. During breaks in the interview (e.g., when the interviewers set up and took down the video equipment), mothers completed self-report questionnaires by themselves. In addition to the in-home interviews, mothers completed a reduced set of assessments through the mail and over the phone at 6 and 18 months after baseline. These five assessments comprised the standard assessments. Mothers also completed monthly diary assessments, either on-line or through the mail, in between the standard assessments. When mothers indicated on their diaries that a significant change in repartnering had occurred, an in-home supplemental assessment was scheduled to learn more about the transitions. The repartnering transitions that triggered an additional in-home assessment were: mother has a new serious relationship (i.e. she identified having a serious relationship with the same person

for three consecutive months); mother and partner began cohabitating full time (i.e. combined households); mother and partner became engaged; mother and partner married.

Overview of Measures

Mother's Repartnering Status

Mother's repartnering status was determined at each of the three in-home assessments (baseline, 12-month, and 24-month). Mothers were asked whether they were currently (1) interested in dating; (2) casually dating; (3) seriously involved in a romantic relationship; or (4) remarried. Table 1 presents the percentage of mothers in each partnering status for the baseline and final follow-up interviews, as well as the percentage of mothers who had ever reported experiencing each status.

Child's Physical Contact with Nonresident Father

Mothers were asked to complete a monthly diary in-between the standard assessments. Mothers were given the option of completing the diaries on-line through a password-protected website, or through the mail. The mean number of diaries completed was 13.13 (Md = 13; S.D. = 8.12; range = 1-28). 91% of mothers completed at least 3 diary assessments. Mothers were asked to complete two questions in each diary pertaining to their child's physical contact with their fathers. Mothers were asked to check one of five options, indicating during the past month how many nights the child in the study slept at her/his father's house and during the past month how many daytime or evening visits the child in the study had with her/his father, excluding any visits that were

part of an overnight stay. Choices included (0) no nights/no visits; (1) 1 night/visit this month; (2) 2-4 nights/visits this month; (3) 5-8 nights/visits this month; or (4) more than 8 nights/visits this month. The diary that was completed most recently, prior to each of the three standard assessments, was the diary used to assess children's physical contact with their fathers at each wave. The two items listed above were first standardized and then averaged together to come up with one score to assess physical contact with fathers. The most recent report was used because it would be most proximal to the child's report of contact with their fathers at the in-home assessments, and to equate measurement with the baseline assessment, which assessed only the prior month.

Child's Relationship with Nonresident Father

Positive Involvement. Children's positive involvement with their father was assessed using a 12-item scale based on the Expression of Affection scale (EAF; Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1992; Patterson, 1982). This shortened scale assessed children's report of whether they took part in activities with their father during the prior week. Sample items include whether their father had given them a hug or kiss, ate a meal with them, wanted to hear about something bothering them, or went with them to a meeting like boy scouts or girl scouts. Children answered by responding "yes" or "no". The number of times a child responded "yes" was summed to obtain a single score ranging from 0 to 12. Cronbach's alpha reliability of the 12-item measure over the three waves ranged from 0.82 to 0.83. The mean inter-item correlations ranged from 0.27 to 0.28.

Closeness/Rapport. Children's feelings of closeness and rapport with their fathers were assessed using a 4-item scale based on the Parent-Child Relationship scale (PCR; Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1992). This shortened scale assessed children's report of how they got along with their fathers. Sample items addressed issues such as how well they got along with their fathers, how much they care about what their dad thinks about them, and how much they enjoy spending time with their fathers. In order to assess closeness to their fathers, we developed a concrete three-dimensional display that involved different representations of quantity, using material with which we believed most children would be familiar: fast food French fry containers (see Figure 1). The different containers corresponded to small, medium, and large sizes and were labeled, laminated, and mounted on a display board. Using the 3-dimensional "fry board" display, children responded to questions such as "how much do you enjoy spending time with your dad" and "how well do you get along with your dad" by selecting the appropriate container ("a lot", "a medium amount", or "a little bit"). Cronbach's alpha reliability of the 4-item measure over the three waves ranged from 0.62 to 0.71. The mean inter-item correlations ranged from 0.29 to 0.39.

Child's Relationship with Mother's Romantic Partner

Child's Report:

Children were interviewed about their relationship with their mother's romantic partner if they met the following criteria: Mothers reported that the child was aware that mother and partner were in a serious relationship and that the child had met this person.

Positive Involvement. Children's positive involvement with their mother's romantic partner was assessed using the same 12-item scale described above to assess positive involvement with fathers. Children answered the questions by responding "yes" or "no" and a count of the number of times a child responded "yes" was summed to obtain a single score ranging from 0 to 12. Cronbach's alpha reliability of the 12-item measure over the three waves ranged from 0.83 to 0.86. The mean inter-item correlations ranged from 0.28 to 0.35.

Closeness/Rapport. Children's feelings of closeness and rapport with their mother's romantic partner were assessed using a 6-item scale based on the Parent-Child Relationship scale (PCR; Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1992). Similar to the scale described above to assess closeness/rapport with fathers, this shortened scale assessed children's report of how they got along with RP. Sample items included the same items as the scale for closeness with fathers, with the addition of two items addressing how much children like RP and how much fun they have with RP. Again, children responded to questions by selecting the appropriate container on the fry board ("a lot", "a medium amount", or "a little bit") for each item. Cronbach's alpha reliability of the 6-item measure over the three waves ranged from 0.79 to 0.85. The mean inter-item correlations ranged from 0.40 to 0.50.

Mother's Report:

Time Spent with RP. The time children spent together with their mother's romantic partner, with and without the mother present, was assessed using a 20-item scale based on the Expression of Affection scale (EAF; Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1992; Patterson, 1982). This shortened scale assessed mothers' reports of how often their child took part in activities with RP during the prior week. Sample items include whether or not RP had shared a meal with the child, showed physical affection for the child, participated in a playful activity together, or went to a meeting like boy scouts or girl scouts with the child. Choices included (7) More than once a day; (6) Every day; (5) 5-6 times in the past week; (4) 3-4 times in the past week; (3) 1-2 times in the past week; (2) Not at all in the past week, but at least once in the past month; or (1) Not at all in the past month. The scores were averaged to form one score to assess the child's time spent with RP. Cronbach's alpha reliability of the 20-item measure over the three waves ranged from 0.95 to 0.96. The mean inter-item correlations ranged from 0.48 to 0.56.

Enjoyment. Using a 4-item scale, based on the Parent-Child Relationship scale (PCR; Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1992), mothers reported how much they thought their child enjoyed the time spent doing joint activities with RP, and how enthusiastic the child seemed towards these joint activities. Choices in regard to child's enthusiasm included (5) Very enthusiastic; (4) Enthusiastic; (3) Somewhat enthusiastic; (2) Unenthusiastic; or (1) Very Unenthusiastic. Choices in regard to child's enjoyment included (5) Very much; (4) Moderately; (3) Somewhat; (2) A little; or (1) Not at all. If

mothers reported no activities, this assessment was left blank. The scores were averaged to form one score to assess child's enjoyment. Cronbach's alpha reliability of the 4-item measure over the three waves ranged from 0.84 to 0.90. The mean inter-item correlations ranged from 0.57 to 0.69.

Table 2 presents correlations across the seven variables of child report of activity with father, rapport with father, activity with partner, rapport with partner, mother's report of child's enjoyment and time spent with partner, and mother's report of contact with father. As shown, mothers and children show low to modest correlations when reporting on similar measures.

Chapter 7: Analytic Plan

Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) was used for all analyses. Following Singer and Willett (2003), a sequence of longitudinal models was evaluated for each research question. The first model was an unconditional means model, which simply partitioned the variance in barriers into within-person and between-person components. It was used as a baseline model from which to compare alternative models. The second model was an unconditional growth model, in which time since separation was used as the metric for time. This model partitioned each individual's time trajectory into initial status and slope components. The third model included the time-invariant covariates of child age, child gender, and child race (using two dummy variables indicating Black or Hispanic race/ethnicity, respectively), along with the time-varying covariate of contact with nonresident father. The time-invariant covariates were used as predictors of both initial status and rate of change. These first three models were identical across all four research questions. When addressing whether variation in mom's re-partnering status affects child's closeness and involvement with NRF (Research Questions 1 & 2), the final model added time-varying predictors of mothers' dating status (i.e., interested in dating, casually dating, seriously involved, remarried). When addressing whether variation in the quality of the romantic partner/child relationship affects child's closeness and involvement with NRF (Research Questions 3 & 4), the final model added the time-varying predictors of mother's report of time with R/P, mother's report of child's enjoyment, child's report of rapport with RP, and child's report of RP involvement.

Model fit was evaluated using three standard criteria: the Deviance statistic and the AIC and BIC Information Criteria. Support for subsequent models was indicated by whether there was significant improvement in fit across all three criteria. The analyses for Research Questions 3 and 4 used only those families in which the child had an opportunity to have a relationship with their mother's new romantic partners (N=174 children; (55%) met the criteria and reported on their relationship with mother's partner).

Chapter 8: Results

Does variation in mom's repartnering status affect child's closeness and involvement with NRF?

Research Question 1: Does mom's repartnering status affect child's closeness and involvement with NRF?

Hierarchical linear models of change over time in NRF positive involvement predicted by dating status are presented in Table 3. These analyses comprise three waves of data from the annual in-home assessments and the most recent monthly diary for contact. All models use full information maximum likelihood estimation using all available longitudinal data. Following Singer and Willett (2003), I used a sequential model-building strategy to evaluate fit. Model A (unconditional Means Model) is a baseline model from which to evaluate the inclusion of additional predictors, and simply partitions the variance into within-person and between-person components. Fifty-nine percent of the total variation lies within-person, indicating significant variability in non-residential father involvement over time.

Model B (Unconditional Growth Model) adds the component of time, using time since separation (in months) as the ruler for change. The fixed effect for slope is not significant, indicating that changes in nonresident father involvement are situational rather than developmental. In other words, although there is significant change, as indicated by the larger within-person variation, change is not following a straight-line pattern. In addition, both the AIC and BIC fit indices show a deterioration in fit, indicating that linear change does not add significantly to the model.

Model C enters the time varying covariates related to mother's dating history. None of the variables representing whether or not the mother is interested in dating, casually dating, in a serious relationship, or remarried, were significant. As in Model B, the AIC and BIC fit indices indicated a deterioration in fit.

Model D includes the time-invariant covariates of child age, child gender, and child race (using two dummy variables indicating Black or Hispanic race/ethnicity, respectively), along with the time-varying covariate of contact with nonresident father. The time-invariant covariates were used as predictors of both initial status and rate of change, as well as the predictors of mothers' dating status. All three fit indices showed an improvement in fit, indicating that inclusion of the covariates led to improvement in the model. Inspection of the individual coefficients suggested that most of the improvement was due to the significant relation between child's contact with father and positive involvement. Moreover, the effect of contact on positive involvement was significantly greater for Black children compared to white or Latino children.

Results of model fitting for closeness/rapport with NRF predicted by dating status are given in Table 4. Similarly to the results for positive involvement, there was no evidence that mothers' repartnering was related to children's reports of closeness/rapport with their nonresident fathers. Fit statistics across subsequent models showed deterioration in fit with the exception of contact with fathers significantly predicting closeness/rapport. Thus, results of model fitting for Research Question 1 indicate that mothers' repartnering efforts have little to do with either positive involvement or felt

closeness. What appeared to matter more to these outcomes was ongoing contact with the nonresident father.

Research Question 2: Does mom's repartnering affect contact with NRF?

As shown in Table 5, the fit indices do not demonstrate a clear improvement in fit across subsequent models. Thus, there is little evidence from these models that mothers' dating status affects children's contact with their nonresident fathers. There was some suggestion, however, that mother's casual dating had a negative impact on NRF contact for black children relative to white or Hispanic children. Because the fit statistics showed no significant improvement, this result should be viewed with caution.

Does variation in the quality of the romantic partner/child relationship affect child's closeness and involvement with NRF?

Research Question 3: Does the quality of the RP/child relationship affect child's closeness and involvement with NRF?

Hierarchical linear models of change over time in NRF positive involvement predicted by RP/child relationship are presented in Table 6. As in prior models, there was no significant effect for rate of change. There was, however, a significant improvement in fit moving to Model C. Inspection of the coefficients indicated some apparently contradictory findings. Mothers' reports of time spent with RP were negatively associated with NRF positive involvement. Children's reports of positive involvement with partners, however, were associated with higher levels of NRF positive involvement. Addition of

covariates in Model D added to the model by two of the three fit criteria, but was associated with a deterioration in fit using the BIC. There was some evidence of gender and racial differences in NRF positive involvement, with girls reporting higher levels of positive involvement, and black children reporting lower levels of positive involvement. In addition, there was some evidence that race interacted with closeness to RP and enjoyment of activities with RP. The negative relation between closeness with RP and involvement with NRF was stronger for black children than other children. Also, the positive relation between enjoyment and NRF involvement was stronger for black children than other children. These results should be viewed with caution due to the small number of black children who were aware that their mothers had repartnered ($n = 12$).

Results of model fitting for closeness/rapport with NRF predicted by RP/child relationship are given in Table 7. As in the prior Research Questions, Model B (i.e., adding rate of change) did not improve model fit. Model C, however, was a significant and substantial improvement over Model B by all fit criteria, indicating that adding measures of RP relationship quality led to greater prediction of NRF rapport. Specifically, children's report of felt closeness to RP was associated with higher levels of NRF rapport.

Moving to Model D, there was some evidence that the effects of closeness with RP and contact with dad on NRF rapport interacted with gender of the child. Specifically, the multi-level equation for male children was $(.60 + .33*RPcloseness + .17*contact)$, but for females the equation was $(1.44 + .02*RPcloseness - .02*contact)$. This result suggests that male children's rapport with their fathers is positively associated with greater contact

with their dad and with greater closeness to RP. Girls' rapport and closeness with their fathers are higher than boys' initially, but do not appear to be affected by changes in contact with their dad or with RP closeness. However, the AIC and BIC indices indicated a deterioration in fit for Model D relative to Model C. Most of the other covariates were not significantly related to NRF rapport, so the deterioration may reflect the inclusion of several non-significant predictors.

Research Question 4: Does the quality of the RP/child relationship affect contact with NRF?

As shown in Table 8, there is evidence from these models that children's relationships with their mother's romantic partner do relate to children's contact with their nonresident fathers, as indicated by the significant improvement in fit of Model C compared to Model B. Specifically, time spent with RP and positive involvement with RP were both associated with lower contact with fathers. It should be noted, however, that the fixed effects for both variables, while significant, are small in magnitude. The addition of covariates in Model D led to a deterioration in fit relative to Model C using the AIC and BIC indices. The fixed effect for mother's report of time spent with RP, however, increased in magnitude, although the fixed effect for child's report of RP involvement became nonsignificant. As with Model D in Research Question 3, most of the other covariates were not significantly related to NRF rapport, so the deterioration may reflect the inclusion of several non-significant predictors. In addition, the fixed effects in Model D suggested differential effects for gender and Hispanic ethnicity, but

the BIC and AIC fit indices did not support the addition of all covariates. Thus, these effects are likely small in magnitude.

Chapter 9: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to understand how resident mothers' repartnering after divorce influences children's closeness and involvement with their nonresident fathers. To my knowledge, this is the first study to investigate whether or not mothers' romantic partners play a role in children's relationships with their nonresident fathers post divorce. Although past research does not focus specifically on romantic partners as alternative caregivers, there is research that suggests that alternative caretakers in children's lives, such as stepfathers or adoptive parents, tend to take away time from nonresident fathers (Seltzer & Bianchi, 1988) and thus diminish chances to build high quality relationships (Sobolewski & King, 2005; King and Sobolewski 2006). On the other hand, research has also shown that nonresident fathers' roles after separation is defined and stable over time (Seltzer, 1991; Wolchik et al., 1996) and that children can have high quality relationships with their fathers and alternative caregivers simultaneously (White & Gilbreth, 2001). Because of this variability in findings, it was unknown whether children whose mothers are dating would form close relationships with their mothers' romantic partner and whether or not this new relationship would decrease time spent with nonresident fathers or contribute to a decrease in feelings of closeness towards their father.

This study addressed four research questions to understand how mothers' repartnering influences children's closeness and involvement with their nonresident fathers. The first of these questions addressed whether variation in mothers' dating status affects children's closeness and involvement with nonresident fathers. As indicated in

Table 3 and Table 4, it appears that mothers' repartnering efforts have little to do with either positive involvement or felt closeness. What appeared to matter more to these outcomes was ongoing contact with the nonresident father. This may be partially due to the fact that many of the measures for positive involvement, such as whether or not a father gave their child a kiss or a hug, ate a meal with them, or did an activity with them, required that the child physically be with their father for the activity to be able to happen. Some of the measures may have been able to happen over a phone or in writing, but in most cases physical contact was necessary. The measures for closeness/rapport, however, did not require physical contact and the results show that contact was still an important component for the reported outcomes. This seems to highlight the idea, noted in previous research, that father-child contact has a valuable, but more indirect role in child well-being by allowing higher quality father child relationships to develop (Sobolewski & King, 2005; Seltzer & Bianchi, 1988, King & Sobolewski, 2006).

The second research question followed up on this finding by looking at whether or not mothers' repartnering affects children's contact with NRF. The results, as shown in Table 5, provide little evidence that mothers' dating status affects children's contact with their nonresident fathers. Because these first two research questions focus solely on whether or not mothers are dating and pay no attention to how aware the child is of their mother's romantic partner, how close the child is to the partner, or how much time the child spends with the partner, it was necessary to explore whether or not these variables made a difference in children's closeness and involvement with their fathers. More importantly, because the competing hypotheses that this study has adopted are based on

research of stepfathers or alternative caregivers living with children, it seemed imperative to take into consideration that it may be the new relationships and the increased time with another person that takes away from or adds to the feelings of closeness and involvement with nonresident fathers, and not merely the fact that a mother has a new dating partner in her life.

To address this need for further investigation, the third research question focused specifically on how the relationship between the mother's romantic partner and her child affects the child's closeness to their father. The findings, as shown in Table 6, indicate differing results depending on the reporter. According to children, there is a positive relationship between involvement with RP and involvement with NRF. Contrary to White & Gilbreth's (2001) substitution model, in which children substitute, or replace, stepfathers for their biological father, children's reports show support for the accumulation model (White & Gilbreth, 2001), or the additive model (King, 2006), in which both children's biological fathers and their alternative caretaker play a valuable role in their lives. Opposite to children's reports, mothers' reports show that there is a negative relationship between the amount of time spent with RP and positive involvement with NRF, suggesting that children could be substituting time with their fathers for time with RP.

These differing results may be due to differences in measurement between mothers' report and children's report and should be considered more closely in future studies to clarify these findings. Specifically, mothers reported on time spent with RP by answering how many times an activity had occurred in the last week, whereas children

responded either “yes” or “no” to indicate only if it had occurred, even if it only happened once. Mothers’ reports focus more on the actual amount of time spent doing activities with RP whereas children’s reports do not provide as clear a measurement of physical time spent doing the activity and instead focus on aspects of ‘felt’ closeness. For example, a child may remember that RP said something nice to them that made them feel good, yet it has nothing to do with a physical amount of time spent with one another. Children’s report of felt closeness and rapport with RP were also associated with higher levels of NRF rapport, as shown in Table 7, indicating again that children are not reporting a negative effect on their closeness with NRF based on their positive relationship with their mothers’ romantic partners.

Additionally, differences in mothers’ reports and children’s reports might be due to reporter biases. Sobolewski & King (2005) state that without the availability of father reports, children’s reports are the best source of information on father involvement because mother’s perceptions of father involvement may reflect her own relationship with the father. So for instance, if mothers and their ex-spouses do not have a positive relationship, mothers’ reports may reflect the negative co-parental relationship and inaccurately portray father involvement. Because of this, children may be in better positions to accurately report on father child relationships than their mothers are. Braver et al. (1991) also point out that there are considerable differences between custodial parents’ and non-custodial parents’ reports, such that parents tend to report themselves in a favorable light and their ex-spouses in an unfavorable light. It may be possible that, in this study, mothers are reporting their ex-spouses involvement and contact in a negative

light, and thus are not as accurate as children at reporting on the father/child relationship. Because this study does not include fathers' reports it is difficult to determine the accuracy of the mother's report alone and thus highlights the importance of including the child's report in this study. Mothers may also be reporting their new romantic partners in a more favorable light than their ex-spouses because their reports may be based off their current relationships with each individual. Presumably, mothers would portray themselves as having more positive relationships with their current romantic partner and in turn may rate themselves and their romantic partners more favorably than their ex-spouses.

These results suggest that the closer children report that they are with their mother's partner, the closer they report being to their fathers. White & Gilbreth (2001) found that children who reported having good relationships with their nonresident fathers were more commonly found in stepfamilies than in families where mothers were not in a new marriage. Similarly, there is evidence from this study that children's relationships with their fathers may also benefit from being close to their mother's romantic partner. However, one important thing to consider when interpreting the results of this study is what the actual benefits to children are. For example, White and Gilbreth (2001) report that children benefit from having a good relationship with both their stepfathers and fathers. They, however, are measuring child outcomes, such as internalizing and externalizing problems and thus have solid measures of physical benefits to children. In this particular study, our results do not speak to child outcomes or child well-being but rather focus on felt closeness and contact. Although the results show that children do not

appear to be substituting their relationship with their mother's romantic partner for their relationship with their nonresident father, further studies must be done to determine if children are actually benefitting from having close relationships with both father figures.

King (2006) suggests, in regard to the additive model, that children who have close relationships with both fathers benefit the most because they have access to the resources provided by two involved adults rather than just one. Again, because King's study measures child outcomes, it is difficult from this study to determine if children are experiencing benefits by having close relationships with additional father figures or if they are following an additive or accumulative model. An important finding of this study is that it does show that it is possible to form positive relationships with an additional father figure without experiencing a decrease in feelings of closeness towards a child's father. However, it is possible that although children are not experiencing a decrease in closeness with their NRF due to forming new relationships with their mothers' romantic partners, having additional relationships may still prove to be redundant, or provide no additional benefits for children, thus supporting King's (2006) redundancy hypothesis.

The last research question in this study focused on whether or not children's relationships with their mother's romantic partner affected contact with their nonresident father. As shown in Table 8, there is evidence that time spent with RP and positive involvement with RP are both associated with lower contact with fathers. It should be noted, however, that the fixed effects for both variables, while significant, are small in magnitude. Because time is finite, it makes sense that children who are close with an additional father figure and like to spend time with them, would therefore be giving up

some time with their fathers to accommodate this additional relationship. It is valuable to note that although contact may decrease due to the child/RP relationship, child's closeness to their father is not affected, supporting the research that states that children may continue to feel close to their fathers even when contact is low (White & Gilbreth, 2001).

Another important aspect of this research that one should consider in regard to the benefits for children is what kind of activities happen when children spend time with their fathers. Just because children are still spending time with their fathers despite a new relationship, may not mean that this time spent is benefitting children. Research has shown that the activities shared by nonresident fathers and their children may be enjoyable, but these activities, in the absence of authoritative parenting, contribute little to children's development (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999). Future research is needed to determine what kind of activities are most beneficial to children's development so that the time spent with fathers is used to maximize positive outcomes for children. This study opens doors for this future research by showing that, regardless of mothers' dating after divorce, fathers can still maintain close relationships and contact with their children and continue to have opportunities to contribute to their children's successful development.

For all research questions, an unconditional growth model added the component of time, using time since separation (in months) as the ruler for change. Only for the variable of father-child contact was the fixed effect for slope significant, and even in that instance, the coefficient was very small. Although previous research suggests that fathers' contact with children post-divorce is limited in the short term and declines

steadily over time, even for fathers who were highly involved initially (Braver, Wolchik, Sandler, Fogas, & Zvetina, 1991; Shapiro & Lambert, 1999), the results of this study do not indicate consistent declines in contact during the first two years after divorce filing. Thus, the results of this study are consistent with other past research that suggests that nonresident fathers' roles after separation is defined and stable over time (Seltzer, 1991; Wolchik et al., 1996). Nevertheless, although there were no consistent linear declines in contact, the hierarchical linear models did show substantial within-individual change. This result indicates that changes in nonresident father involvement do occur over time, but are situational rather than developmental. In other words, substantial changes are occurring in contact with nonresident fathers, but the scores at any particular time are due to concurrent factors rather than indicative of a general pattern of change.

At the same time, there was a lack of effects for child age in this study, which contrasts some of the prior research suggesting that father involvement and father-child closeness tends to decline during adolescence (King, 2006; Sobolewski & King, 2005). One important way this study differs from much of the prior research is that the families are first interviewed at the time of filing for divorce. Most prior research has studied families well after the divorce has been finalized, or use children's retrospective reports years after the divorce. The lack of age differences could be attributed to the fact that the families in this study are in the midst of transitioning to new circumstances. Child age at the time of separation or filing for divorce, compared with their age at the time of the official divorce, is something that may be valuable for future studies to take into account.

One limitation to this study is that it does not include fathers' report on any of the measures. As mentioned previously, noncustodial parents' reports can differ greatly from custodial parents' reports. For example, research has shown that noncustodial parents report significantly more visits with their children than custodial parents report (Braver et al., 1991). Because this study relies solely on mothers' report of contact, it is important to understand that the findings may have been different if fathers' reports were included. Another limitation to this study is that it does not include information about the father/child relationship prior to divorce. In order to better understand how children's relationships with their fathers change after divorce, measures before and after divorce would provide more accurate portrayals of the changes occurring over time. According to Shapiro (1999), fathers who have positive pre-divorce evaluations of their relationship with their children may be more likely to maintain those relationships after divorce. This study can not account for these selection effects without having measurements before and after divorce. This is an important measure that future studies should consider.

Some of the models suggested that the findings may vary by gender and race/ethnicity. For example, male children's rapport with their fathers is positively associated with greater contact with their dad and with greater closeness to RP, whereas girls' rapport and closeness do not appear to be affected by changes in contact with their dad or with RP closeness. This is consistent with prior research showing that boys report closer bonds to both their nonresident fathers and their stepfathers than girls do (King, 2006). However, in this study, girls' rapport and closeness with their fathers are higher than boys' initially, suggesting that girls do report having close relationships with their

fathers, going against prior research that states that girls may be at risk of not being close to either father (King, 2006) and that sons report being closer to their non-resident fathers than daughters do (Sobolewski & King, 2005). It is unclear why boys' rapport with their fathers is positively associated with greater closeness to RP, but it is possible that boys simply identify more with their mothers' male partners than girls do and are therefore able to connect with them in different ways. The father figures in male children's lives may be especially important role models for them and may be a more desirable relationship for boys to build than for girls. King & Sobolewski (2006) suggest that a social learning perspective, which views identification and imitation as crucial processes in child socialization and development, may be one reason boys might be affected differently than girls by their relationships with their fathers. For the findings concerning race and ethnicity, the fit statistics did not consistently support the inclusion of the covariates, thus results concerning race and ethnicity should be viewed with caution. Future studies with larger subsamples of ethnic groups might be able to shed greater light on any subgroup differences.

Despite these limitations, this study has greatly improved on previous research by providing insight on the importance of considering the relationships that occur during the transitional period between a divorce and remarriage, an area left largely unexplored. Because most of the existing literature has relied on data that was collected at only one time point and does not examine how changes are happening over time, this study expands on current research by including 3 waves of data over a 2 year time period. In addition, this study advances the current literature by focusing on a larger age range of

children. By including children as young as 5 years old through adolescence, this study enhances our understanding of developmental changes that may affect children's relationships with their nonresident fathers. Additionally, this study utilizes reports from multiple informants rather than only one source. More importantly, this study includes and assesses children's feelings and views on their relationships rather than relying solely on an outside reporter such as the mother. This study has opened doors for future research to continue to build on these advances and expand on the knowledge gained from this longitudinal, multi-informant, multi-method study.

Knowing that it is possible for children to form positive relationships with an additional father figure, without experiencing a decrease in feelings of closeness towards their biological father, is an important thing for families to be aware of. Fathers who do not live close to their children or who feel as though they may be being replaced by their ex-spouse's new partner may feel comforted that even when changes in contact occur, children's closeness to their father is not necessarily affected negatively. Future studies on how children's relationships with their nonresident fathers may be affected by repartnering after divorce can continue to build on these findings, helping families to better understand how to successfully transition between marriage, dating, and remarriage while maintaining strong relationships between family members.

Tables

Table 1.

Percentage of mothers in each partnering status for the baseline interview, final follow-up interview, and mothers who ever reported experiencing each dating status

Mothers' Dating Status	Baseline	Final Follow-up	Ever Experienced
Interested	26.3 %	26.5 %	46.4 %
Casual	17.9 %	12.5 %	34.2 %
Serious	27.0 %	35.2 %	34.2 %
Remarried	0 %	13.6 %	13.5 %
Total number of participants	319	287	319

Table 2.

Correlations across mothers' and children's reports of closeness and involvement with nonresident fathers and new romantic partners

	NRF Rapport [*]	NRF Activity [*]	RP Rapport [*]	RP Activity [*]	Enjoyment	Meantime
NRF Activity [*]	.26**					
RP Rapport [*]	.18**	.15*				
RP Activity [*]	.07	.42**	.40**			
Enjoyment	-.07	-.03	.34**	.17**		
Meantime	-.06	-.08	.16**	.39**	.18**	
Contact	.10**	.17**	-.05	-.15**	.06	-.24**

Note. NRF = Nonresident Father; RP = Mother's Romantic Partner. Boxed cells indicate correlations across reporter. Variables with a superscript are reports from children.

Table 3.
Longitudinal models of change in NRF positive involvement predicted by dating status
(n=319)

	Model A: Unconditional Means	Model B: Unconditional Growth	Model C: Current Dating Status	Model D: Add Covariates
Fixed Effects				
Average Initial Status	6.81*** (.15)	6.67*** (.21)	6.47*** (.29)	6.15*** (.46)
Age				-.14 (.15)
Gender				.61 (.59)
Black				.25 (.91)
Latino				-1.11 (.70)
Rate of Change		.01 (.01)	.00 (.01)	.02* (.01)
Age				-.00 (.00)
Gender				-.02 (.01)
Black				-.01 (.02)
Latino				.02 (.02)
Interested			.19 (.32)	-.52 (.51)
Age				.11 (.16)
Gender				1.13 (.64)
Black				.57 (1.09)
Latino				1.24 (.78)
Casual			.41 (.37)	.02 (.57)
Age				-.08 (.19)
Gender				-.31 (.76)
Black				2.10 (1.67)
Latino				2.04* (.92)
Serious			.33 (.33)	-.21 (.55)
Age				.10 (.16)
Gender				.48 (.67)
Black				.81 (1.20)
Latino				.94 (.76)
Remarried			.38 (.50)	.76 (.97)
Age				.30 (.23)
Gender				-1.02 (1.07)
Black				.56 (2.11)
Latino				1.00 (1.14)
Contact w/ Dad				.50* (.25)
Age				.29*** (.08)
Gender				-.16 (.31)
Black				1.73** (.59)
Latino				.20 (.35)
Variance Components				
Level 1:	5.24	5.15	5.19	4.86
Within person				
Level 2:	3.67	4.52	4.32	3.99
In initial status				
In rate of change		.00	.00	.00
Goodness of fit				
Deviance	3346.7	3345.2	3343.7	3100.8
AIC	3352.7	3357.2	3363.7	3178.8
BIC	3364.0	3379.8	3401.4	3325.6
df	3	6	10	39

Note. * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$; *** = $p < .001$

Values in the table are unstandardized maximum likelihood estimates of model parameters; values in parentheses are standard errors.

Table 4.
 Longitudinal models of change in NRF closeness/rapport predicted by dating status
 (n=319)

	Model A: Unconditional Means	Model B: Unconditional Growth	Model C: Current Dating Status	Model D: Add Covariates
Fixed Effects				
Average Initial Status	1.59*** (.02)	1.57*** (.03)	1.54*** (.04)	1.58*** (.07)
Age				-.02 (.02)
Gender				-.10 (.09)
Black				.05 (.14)
Latino				.05 (.10)
Rate of Change		.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)
Age				-.00 (.00)
Gender				-.00 (.00)
Black				.00 (.00)
Latino				-.00 (.00)
Interested			.05 (.04)	-.02 (.07)
Age				.01 (.02)
Gender				.05 (.09)
Black				-.02 (.14)
Latino				.17 (.11)
Casual			.01 (.05)	-.07 (.08)
Age				.01 (.03)
Gender				.12 (.10)
Black				-.16 (.16)
Latino				.03 (.13)
Serious			.07 (.04)	.05 (.08)
Age				.02 (.02)
Gender				.03 (.09)
Black				-.19 (.15)
Latino				.13 (.11)
Remarried			.10 (.06)	.11 (.13)
Age				-.01 (.03)
Gender				-.05 (.14)
Black				-.18 (.28)
Latino				.09 (.15)
Contact w/ Dad				.12*** (.03)
Age				.02 (.01)
Gender				-.09* (.04)
Black				-.12 (.07)
Latino				-.04 (.04)
Variance Components				
Level 1:	.12	.12	.12	.11
Within person				
Level 2:	.09	.12	.12	.14
In initial status				
In rate of change		.00	.00	.00
Goodness of fit				
Deviance	1012.7	1004.6	1000.3	919.6
AIC	1018.7	1016.6	1020.3	997.6
BIC	1030.0	1039.2	1058.0	1144.4
df	3	6	10	39

Note. * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$; *** = $p < .001$

Values in the table are unstandardized maximum likelihood estimates of model parameters; values in parentheses are standard errors.

Table 5.
Longitudinal models of change in NRF contact predicted by dating status (n=319)

	Model A: Unconditional Means	Model B: Unconditional Growth	Model C: Current Dating Status	Model D: Add Covariates
Fixed Effects				
Average Initial Status	.04 (.04)	.16** (.05)	.09 (.07)	.24* (.11)
Age				-.00 (.03)
Gender				-.22 (.14)
Black				-.25 (.22)
Latino				-.12 (.16)
Rate of Change		-.00** (.00)	-.00* (.00)	.00 (.00)
Age				-.00 (.00)
Gender				-.00 (.00)
Black				-.00 (.01)
Latino				-.00 (.00)
Interested			.07 (.07)	-.04 (.12)
Age				-.03 (.04)
Gender				.26 (.15)
Black				-.31 (.23)
Latino				.03 (.17)
Casual			.17* (.08)	.11 (.13)
Age				.01 (.04)
Gender				.25 (.17)
Black				-.68** (.26)
Latino				.02 (.21)
Serious			.05 (.08)	-.08 (.12)
Age				.03 (.04)
Gender				.23 (.15)
Black				-.42 (.26)
Latino				.16 (.17)
Remarried			-.07 (.12)	-.18 (.22)
Age				-.02 (.06)
Gender				.42 (.24)
Black				-.61 (.49)
Latino				-.27 (.25)
Variance Components				
Level 1: Within person	.31	.29	.29	.29
Level 2: In initial status	.41	.39	.37	.32
In rate of change		.00	.00	.00
Goodness of fit				
Deviance	1954.0	1937.6	1930.9	1882.0
AIC	1960.0	1949.6	1950.9	1950.0
BIC	1971.3	1972.2	1988.6	2078.0
df	3	6	10	34

Note. * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$; *** = $p < .001$

Values in the table are unstandardized maximum likelihood estimates of model parameters; values in parentheses are standard errors.

Table 6.
Longitudinal models of change in NRF positive involvement predicted by RP/child relationship (n=167)

	Model A: Unconditional Means	Model B: Unconditional Growth	Model C: RP/Child Relationship Quality	Model D: Add Covariates
Fixed Effects				
Average Initial Status	7.04*** (.20)	6.96*** (.29)	6.80*** (.94)	4.16* (1.83)
Age				.04 (.47)
Gender				3.92* (1.97)
Black				-7.91* (3.70)
Latino				-1.45 (1.91)
Rate of Change		.00 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.02)
Age				.00 (.01)
Gender				-.00 (.01)
Black				-.08 (.06)
Latino				.00 (.02)
Time Spent with RP			-.70*** (.21)	-1.00** (.35)
Age				-.07 (.12)
Gender				-.07 (.42)
Black				1.60 (1.21)
Latino				.59 (.48)
Involvement with RP			.45*** (.06)	.50*** (.10)
Age				-.04 (.03)
Gender				-.19 (.12)
Black				-.02 (.31)
Latino				.17 (.13)
Closeness with RP			-.49 (.37)	-.43 (.66)
Age				-.05 (.19)
Gender				.64 (.79)
Black				-5.94** (2.03)
Latino				.38 (.74)
Enjoyment			-.22 (.26)	.50 (.44)
Age				.11 (.15)
Gender				-.88 (.51)
Black				4.95* (1.96)
Latino				-.32 (.56)
Contact w/ Dad				.13 (.42)
Age				.18 (.12)
Gender				-.23 (.47)
Black				1.31 (1.58)
Latino				.53 (.48)
Variance Components				
Level 1:	4.83	4.82	3.97	2.93
Within person				
Level 2:	3.54	4.74	3.63	1.43
In initial status				
In rate of change		.00	.00	.00
Goodness of fit				
Deviance	1830.3	1828.5	979.2	845.6
AIC	1836.3	1840.5	999.2	923.6
BIC	1845.7	1859.2	1030.4	1045.3
df	3	6	10	39

Note. * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$; *** = $p < .001$

Values in the table are unstandardized maximum likelihood estimates of model parameters; values in parentheses are standard errors.

Table 7.
Longitudinal models of change in NRF closeness/rapport predicted by RP/child relationship (n=167)

	Model A: Unconditional Means	Model B: Unconditional Growth	Model C: RP/Child Relationship Quality	Model D: Add Covariates
Fixed Effects				
Average Initial Status	1.59*** (.03)	1.58*** (.05)	1.39*** (.15)	.60* (.28)
Age				-.01 (.08)
Gender				.84** (.31)
Black				-.22 (.61)
Latino				.26 (.32)
Rate of Change		.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)	.01* (.00)
Age				-.00 (.00)
Gender				-.01* (.00)
Black				-.01 (.01)
Latino				-.01* (.00)
Time Spent with RP			-.02 (.03)	.01 (.05)
Age				-.01 (.02)
Gender				-.04 (.06)
Black				-.19 (.11)
Latino				.03 (.06)
Involvement with RP			.00 (.01)	.00 (.02)
Age				-.01 (.01)
Gender				-.01 (.02)
Black				-.04 (.05)
Latino				-.01 (.02)
Closeness with RP			.14* (.05)	.33** (.10)
Age				.01 (.03)
Gender				-.31* (.12)
Black				-.06 (.30)
Latino				.07 (.12)
Enjoyment			.04 (.04)	.09 (.07)
Age				.02 (.02)
Gender				-.03 (.08)
Black				.42 (.28)
Latino				-.04 (.08)
Contact w/ Dad				.17** (.06)
Age				.01 (.02)
Gender				-.19** (.07)
Black				-.02 (.22)
Latino				-.04 (.07)
Variance Components				
Level 1:	.13	.12	.12	.12
Within person				
Level 2:	.08	.18	.14	.10
In initial status				
In rate of change		.00	.00	.00
Goodness of fit				
Deviance	619.2	609.7	357.4	307.2
AIC	625.2	621.7	377.4	385.2
BIC	634.6	640.4	408.6	506.9
df	3	6	10	39

Note. * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$; *** = $p < .001$

Values in the table are unstandardized maximum likelihood estimates of model parameters; values in parentheses are standard errors.

Table 8.
Longitudinal models of change in NRF contact predicted by RP/child relationship
(n=167)

	Model A: Unconditional Means	Model B: Unconditional Growth	Model C: RP/Child Relationship Quality	Model D: Add Covariates
Fixed Effects				
Average Initial Status	.00 (.06)	.15* (.08)	.30 (.26)	.81 (.49)
Age				.16 (.14)
Gender				-.95 (.54)
Black				-1.18 (1.01)
Latino				.12 (.55)
Rate of Change		-.01* (.00)	-.01** (.00)	-.00 (.00)
Age				-.00 (.00)
Gender				-.00 (.01)
Black				-.02 (.01)
Latino				-.01* (.01)
Time Spent with RP			-.12* (.05)	-.25** (.09)
Age				-.02 (.03)
Gender				.14 (.11)
Black				.06 (.20)
Latino				.05 (.11)
Involvement with RP			-.04* (.02)	-.01 (.03)
Age				.02 (.01)
Gender				-.05 (.03)
Black				-.05 (.08)
Latino				.05 (.03)
Closeness with RP			.02 (.10)	.04 (.17)
Age				-.03 (.05)
Gender				.10 (.21)
Black				-.56 (.47)
Latino				-.13 (.20)
Enjoyment			.07 (.07)	-.10 (.11)
Age				-.04 (.04)
Gender				.27* (.13)
Black				.69 (.41)
Latino				.02 (.14)
Variance Components				
Level 1:	.32	.29	.29	.28
Within person				
Level 2:	.45	.37	.33	.27
In initial status				
In rate of change		.00	.00	.00
Goodness of fit				
Deviance	1141.7	1126.7	674.3	642.9
AIC	1147.7	1138.7	694.3	710.9
BIC	1157.1	1157.4	725.5	817.0
df	3	6	10	34

Note. * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$; *** = $p < .001$

Values in the table are unstandardized maximum likelihood estimates of model parameters; values in parentheses are standard errors.

Figures

Figure 1: French Fry Board



Appendix

Full Sample (not including estranged dads): Does variation in mom's repartnering status affect child's closeness and involvement with NRF?

Research Question 1:

Does mom's repartnering status affect child's closeness and involvement with NRF?

IV:

1. Interested in dating
2. Casually dating
3. Seriously involved
4. Remarried

DV:

1. Child's report of positive involvement with NRF (#39-50)
2. Child's report of closeness/ rapport with NRF (#15-18)

Control for: physical contact with NRF, child's age, child's gender, and child's race

*Baseline, 1-year, 2-year, supplemental

Research Question 2:

Does mom's repartnering affect contact with NRF?

IV:

1. Interested in dating
2. Casually dating
3. Seriously involved
4. Remarried

DV:

1. Mother's report of child's physical contact with NRF (from Diary)

Control for: child's age, child's gender, and child's race

*Baseline, 1-year, 2-year, supplemental

Subsample of repartnered moms: Does variation in the quality of the romantic partner/child relationship affect child's closeness and involvement with NRF?

Research Question 3:

Does the quality of the RP/child relationship affect child's closeness and involvement with NRF?

IV:

1. Mom's report of time with RP (#82-90 and #98-108)
2. Child's report of positive involvement with RP (#51-62)
3. Child's report of closeness/rapport with RP (#20-25)
4. Mom's report of child's enjoyment (#93, 96, 110, 112)

DV:

1. Child's report of positive involvement with NRF (#39-50)
2. Child's report of closeness/ rapport with NRF (#15-18)

Control for: physical contact with NRF, child's age, child's gender, and child's race

*Baseline, 1-year, 2-year, supplemental

Research Question 4:

Does the quality of the RP/child relationship affect contact with NRF?

IV:

1. Mom's report of time with RP (#82-90 and #98-108)
2. Child's report of positive involvement with RP (#51-62)
3. Child's report of closeness/rapport with RP (#20-25)
4. Mom's report of child's enjoyment (#93, 96, 110, 112)

DV:

1. Mother's report of child's physical contact with NRF (from Diary)

Control for: child's age, child's gender, and child's race

*Baseline, 1-year, 2-year, supplemental

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