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## Single Custodial Fathers' Involvement and Parenting: Implications for Outcomes in Emerging Adulthood

*Using a sample of 3,977 youths from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY97), this study examines the unique characteristics of single-custodial-father families with adolescents and the effects of single fathers' involvement and parenting on outcomes in emerging adulthood. Findings suggest that single-custodial-father families are distinct from single-mother and 2-biological-parent families in terms of sociodemographic characteristics, parenting styles, and involvement. Parenting styles and involvement mediate the differences between single-father families and 2-parent families in terms of high school completion and disconnectedness and partially mediate differences for single-custodial-father families with a partner. Family and sociodemographic*

*characteristics are also associated with being disconnected for adolescents residing with a cohabiting custodial father.*

Consistently high rates of divorce and increasing rates of nonmarital childbearing in recent years have resulted in children residing in a number of diverse family structures (Bianchi & Casper, 2000). One family type that has become increasingly more common is single-custodial-father families in which fathers have primary responsibility for rearing their children (i.e., have sole custody). For example, in 1970, although 1.1% of children under age 18 lived in a single-custodial-father home, this number had climbed to 4.8% by 2005 (Current Population Survey, 2005).

Although much public and research attention has been paid to single custodial mothers, less attention has focused on single custodial fathers (Carlson & Corcoran, 2001). To date, there are few detailed analyses of single custodial fathers' involvement or parenting behaviors, particularly with their adolescent children, as early studies of single custodial fathers have focused mainly on the implications of children's separation from their mothers (Grief, 1985) and have compared outcomes for children in single-custodial-father families to children of

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two-parent and single-custodial-mother families (Downey, Ainsworth-Darnell, & Dufur, 1998). Few studies have described the ways single custodial fathers are involved with their adolescent children or their parenting styles. Moreover, a consideration of how single-custodial-father involvement and parenting matters for youths in the emerging adult years has not been the subject of previous inquiry.

Given these limitations in extant research, this study uses nationally representative longitudinal data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, 1997 (NLSY97) to examine differences in outcomes during emerging adulthood between offspring growing up in a single-custodial-father household compared to offspring growing up in other family structures. We address the following research questions: (a) Do the sociodemographic characteristics of single-custodial-father households with adolescents differ from other family structures? (b) How are single custodial fathers involved with adolescents, and what are their parenting styles compared to those of parents in other family structures? (c) Do fathers' involvement and parenting styles mediate the association between family structure and young adult outcomes (i.e., disconnectedness [neither enrolled in school nor employed] and high school completion) for youths in single-custodial-father households compared to other family configurations? and (d) Within single-custodial-father households, what are the specific aspects of involvement and parenting styles that influence young adult outcomes (e.g., disconnectedness, school completion)?

This study contributes to the burgeoning literature on single-custodial-father households and adolescent/young adult well-being in a number of ways. First, rather than mothers, the focus is on fathers and outcomes in emerging adulthood—a period characterized by considerable development and multiple transitions (Furstenberg, Rumbaut, & Settersten, 2005), which parenting during adolescence also affects (Aquilino, 1997). As such, this study complements prior research that has primarily focused on fathers of younger children during early and middle childhood (Lamb, 1987), to a lesser extent during adolescence (Bronte-Tinkew, Moore, & Carrano, 2006), with few exceptions during emerging adulthood (Aquilino, 1997; Schwartz & Finley, 2006). Second, given the relatively small numbers of single-custodial-father households that exist, many studies of single custodial fathers

are limited to small, unrepresentative samples (typically White, middle-class samples) of men and their children (Coles, 2001). This study uses large, nationally representative longitudinal data to examine the processes of single-custodial-father involvement and parenting during adolescence, thus expanding the understanding of the longer term consequences for youths living in a single-custodial-father family. Finally, we take into account the full complexity of single-custodial-father households by distinguishing between single-custodial-father households with and without a cohabiting partner, as well as levels of involvement and parenting styles in those households.

### *Theoretical Framework*

Two theoretical frameworks inform our analyses: a life course theory of family development (Elder, Liker, & Cross, 1984; Roberts & Bengtson, 1993) and social capital theory (Coleman, 1988). As it relates to parenting among single custodial fathers, the life course theory of family development posits that both recent and past experiences, as well as interactions and relationships with family members, contribute to current conditions and roles. For the present analyses, the life course theory of family development allows us to understand the single-custodial-father family in terms of its structural characteristics and the shifting nature of both father and adolescent relationships over the life span, as well as how these relationships change and adapt (i.e., the plasticity that may constitute family relationships over time) (Bengtson & Allen, 1993). This theoretical framework allows us to conceptualize the ways youths' experiences with single custodial fathers during adolescence are related to their experiences in emerging adulthood.

The social capital framework relates to the strength of ties and levels of closeness and involvement between single custodial fathers and their adolescent offspring. The social capital that offspring gain from single custodial fathers may be especially important in providing resources used for socialization and the development of skills that aid in social adjustment (Parcel & Menaghan, 1993). Social capital aids in the development of two additional forms of capital, financial capital (economic resources) and human capital (education and work skills), both of which are important in shaping well-being during emerging adulthood (MacMillan &

Copher, 2005). As it relates to the present analyses, the amount of time single custodial fathers spend with their children, the quality of relationships between single custodial fathers and offspring, and the level of single custodial fathers' involvement in their offspring's activities all constitute family social capital (Parcel & Menaghan, 1993). The extent to which single custodial fathers are able to provide social capital to adolescents has implications for outcomes in emerging adulthood. Elements of both life course theory of family development and social capital theory, therefore, provide a framework for the current analyses.

## BACKGROUND

### *Sociodemographic Context of Single-Custodial-Father Families*

Although some prior studies have suggested that single-custodial-father families are distinct from both two-biological-parent families and single-custodial-mother families (Brown, 2004; Eggebeen, Snyder, & Manning, 1996; Hawkins, Amato, & King, 2006), little is known of the specific sociodemographic characteristics of single-custodial-father families with adolescents. Previous research has suggested that single-custodial-father families are less likely to be poor and more likely to be in the paid labor force than female-headed families (Demuth & Brown, 2004; Downey et al., 1998). However, single-custodial-father families tend to be poorer and have lower labor force participation than families with married fathers (Eggebeen et al., 1996). Single custodial fathers also tend to be younger (younger than 30) than married fathers but not as young as single custodial mothers (Eggebeen et al., 1996). Single custodial fathers have fewer children than married fathers but more than single custodial mothers. Single custodial fathers are also more likely than married fathers to live in extended-family households but are significantly less likely to do so than single custodial mothers. Hispanic, Black, Asian, and Native American children are more likely than European American children to reside in single-custodial-father families (Eggebeen et al., 1996). On the basis of prior research, we hypothesize the following about single custodial fathers of adolescents (H1): Single-custodial-father families with adolescents are distinct from single-mother and two-parent families in terms of socioeconomic status (SES), race/ethnicity,

and family routines. Specifically, single-custodial-father families will have lower SES than two-biological-parent families but higher SES than single-mother families. Adolescents in single-father families are more likely to be Black or belong to another minority group than are adolescents in other family structures. Adolescents in single-father families with a cohabiting partner will have lower family routines than adolescents in other family structures, and single-custodial-father families will have smaller family sizes than other family structures.

### *Father Involvement and Parenting Styles in Single-Custodial-Father Families*

*Father involvement.* Father involvement is direct engagement with adolescents, including both behavioral and emotional domains, such as supportiveness, closeness, and shared interactions (Harris, Furstenberg, & Marmer, 1998). Prior research has suggested that adolescents report greater levels of single-custodial-father involvement than do adolescents with fathers from other family types (Demuth & Brown, 2004). Compared to married biological fathers and stepfathers, single custodial fathers spend significantly more time with their children engaging in activities, such as participating in leisure activities, talking, reading, and helping with homework (Cooksey & Fondell, 1996), which possibly results in a greater transfer of social capital resources from single custodial fathers to their offspring. However, adolescent reports show that single custodial fathers' levels of involvement, supervision, monitoring, and closeness are still less than that of single custodial mothers (Demuth & Brown, 2004). Similar research also has suggested that single custodial fathers participate in more traditionally mother-led activities, such as shopping and talking about social life and problems (Hawkins et al., 2006).

The presence of a cohabiting partner may also influence levels of involvement among custodial fathers, although findings are mixed. Hawkins et al. (2006) found that unpartnered custodial fathers had lower levels of engagement with their adolescent children in some domains of involvement (e.g., playing sports, helping with school projects) and lower levels of father-child closeness than did custodial biological fathers with partners. In contrast, other studies found that parental involvement tends to be lower in cohabiting (step) families relative to both single-parent

families and married two-parent families (Thomson, McLanahan, & Curtin, 1992). On the basis of this review, we hypothesize (H2) that single custodial fathers with adolescents will have greater involvement than biological fathers in two-parent intact families. Levels of single-custodial-father involvement will be more similar to mother involvement across all household types but will not be greater than single custodial mother involvement.

*Parenting styles.* Parenting styles are patterns of parental practice and behavior and have been characterized as permissive, authoritarian, authoritative, or uninvolved (Baumrind, 1967). Permissive parents respond to their children's desires and behavior in an accepting, affirmative, and nonpunitive manner (Baumrind, 1967). In both the uninvolved and the permissive parenting styles, parents exert little control over their children (Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991). Uninvolved parents are disengaged from their children and their parenting responsibilities, whereas permissive parents are responsive to their children and allow their children to regulate themselves. Authoritarian parents hold their children to an absolute standard of conduct and use punitive or forceful measures to ensure children abide by the approved code of conduct. Authoritative parents value both the allowance of children's self-will and discipline (Baumrind, 1967). Compared to all other parenting styles, authoritative parenting has been found to be associated with more positive child well-being (Amato & Fowler, 2002).

McLanahan and Booth (1989) reported that single parents are more likely to use ineffective parenting practices and provide less supervision, parental involvement, and control than married parents. Some research also has suggested that single custodial fathers' parenting may be different from that of single custodial mothers. For example, Hilton and Devall (1998) found that single custodial fathers were more likely to allow their children to participate in the activities of their peers and try activities on their own than were their single-mother counterparts.

Research suggests that parenting styles may vary by the presence of a cohabiting partner in a custodial father household. Given the life course principle that a network of linked family relationships may shape fathers' experiences and behaviors, the presence of a cohabiting partner may negatively influence single fathers'

parenting practices. Although cohabitation introduces a second adult to the household, unless the partner is also the biological parent of the child, some studies have suggested that it is unlikely that a partners' presence raises custodial fathers' levels of supportiveness (Brown, 2004). Similar to the effects of maternal cohabitation, fathers' cohabiting partners may undermine parenting effectiveness by competing with the child for the father's social capital resources, including attention and affection (Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbusch, 1996). As a whole, although this body of research has suggested differences in parenting styles across different family configurations, it is still underdeveloped. On the basis of available research, we hypothesize the following (H3): Single custodial fathers with adolescents will exhibit less authoritative methods of parenting and more permissive and uninvolved parenting styles than will parents in two-parent families but will be less permissive and uninvolved than single custodial mothers.

#### *Father Involvement and Parenting Styles as Mechanisms That Influence Offspring Outcomes*

Because parents influence their children in many multifaceted ways at all stages of the life course, the mechanisms that may explain the effect of different family configurations on young adult well-being are numerous. With regard to single-custodial-father households, we consider two primary mechanisms: parenting styles and quality of father involvement.

*School completion.* A key concept of the social capital framework is that parents' social relationships and resources are associated with children's school performance (Coleman, 1988). The majority of studies on father involvement have found that positive relationships between fathers and children are associated with positive academic outcomes in late adolescence (Harris, Furstenburg et al., 1998; Herman, Dornbusch, Herron, & Herting, 1997). Some evidence has suggested that children raised in single-custodial-father families their entire childhood tend to have lower school engagement and a significantly lower probability of graduating high school than children who had spent their entire childhood in mother-only and two-parent family structures (Downey et al., 1998; Garasky, 1995). However, these observed effects of family structure may be attributed to less parental

involvement and different parenting styles relative to two-parent families (Cooksey & Fondell, 1996; Demuth & Brown, 2004). The involvement of single custodial fathers may mitigate some of the negative effects of living in a single-parent home (Fass & Tubman, 2002). The evidence base, however, on this issue in general is still limited and has not focused on the influence of fathers' parenting styles. On the basis of limited available research, we hypothesize the following (H4): Offspring from single-custodial-father families will have lower odds of school completion than offspring from two-biological-parent families, but higher levels of father involvement will be associated with higher odds of school completion in emerging adulthood among offspring living with single custodial fathers.

*Disconnectedness.* Some evidence has suggested that adolescents from single-custodial-father households are more likely to be disconnected. Their disconnectedness could be attributed to the low levels of academic achievement, labor force attachment, and poor work habits associated with youths from disrupted or single-parent homes (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). Some studies have suggested that parent involvement (of both mothers and fathers) is associated with economic independence and performance of workplace tasks in late adolescence (Ryan & Deci, 2000), with closeness, autonomy, and support being positive predictors of healthy individuation, nondependence on parents, and self-regulation—all critical tasks for developing self-sufficiency (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Overmonitoring and restriction, or, alternatively, indulgence, have been found to have negative effects on self-sufficiency and economic independence because they are often associated with continued dependence on parents and general irresponsibility (Steinberg, 2001). Fathers may provide an important form of social capital, given that they themselves may work and have relevant contacts that are useful during the search for jobs. This has not been a widely explored topic, however. On the basis of limited evidence, we hypothesize the following (H5): Offspring growing up with single custodial fathers will have higher levels of disconnectedness than will offspring from two-biological-parent families, but father involvement and more positive parenting styles will reduce the negative effects of living with a single custodial father.

#### *The Influence of Other Sociodemographic Factors*

We account for a number of potentially confounding factors to better isolate the relationships we consider here. We consider a measure of parental educational attainment because fathers with higher levels of educational attainment are often more involved with their children, and children of more highly educated parents have more positive outcomes (Marsiglio & Cohan, 1997). We include family household income because lower household income is negatively associated with both parental involvement and youth outcomes (Coley & Hernandez, 2006). We consider family routines because spending more time in daily activities together may foster parent-child communication and closeness and may be a protective factor for older youths (Hair, Moore, Garrett, Ling, & Cleveland, 2008). We account for the number of children in the household because the number of children fathered is negatively associated with father involvement (Hofferth, 2003) and outcomes for children (Blake, 1981). We include nonresident mother contact because nonresident mothers are more involved than nonresident fathers and may have similar levels of involvement as single custodial fathers (Hawkins et al., 2006), and closeness to a nonresident mother during adolescence is associated with fewer internalizing and externalizing behaviors during adolescence (King, 2007).

We consider child's age because fathers are more involved with older children (Seltzer, 1991), although some studies have suggested no association (Cooksey & Craig, 1998), and others have suggested a decrease in father involvement as adolescents age. We include offspring gender because research has suggested that fathers are more involved with sons than with daughters (Bronte-Tinkew, Moore, Capps, & Zaff, 2006b; Bronte-Tinkew, Moore, & Carrano, 2006). In addition, the family processes associated with problem behaviors often differ by gender, and boys are at greater risk than girls for externalizing behaviors and conduct problems (Loeber & Hay, 1997). We consider race because father involvement varies by race (Pleck, 1997), and some studies have suggested more negative outcomes for children of minorities (Blum et al., 2000). We also include measures of offsprings' prior behaviors because earlier behaviors are often a predictor of ongoing and subsequent behaviors (Jessor,

Donovan, & Costa, 1991). Younger adolescents with higher academic achievement may develop an increased academic self-concept and sense of control as age increases, which, in turn, may result in more positive academic achievement and greater self-sufficiency in the early adult years (Ross & Broh, 2000).

## METHOD

### *Data*

Our analyses use data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97), a nationally representative survey created to document the transition from adolescence into adulthood. For the present study, we used data from Rounds 1, 3, 4, 5, and 7 of the survey. The data were collected between 1997 and 2003, and they include parent-specific demographic information collected at baseline as well as adolescent and young adult-specific information collected annually. One of the strengths of the NLSY97 is that it is a multitopic survey that taps many dimensions of household well-being and contains many family-process measures. In addition, it is longitudinal, which makes it possible to connect measures in early adolescence with outcomes measured in early adulthood. In the initial wave of the study, both parents and young adults were interviewed, and we used demographic data obtained from both parent and adolescent/young adult reports. In Round 1 of the survey, data were collected for 8,984 youths; in Round 3, for 8,208 adolescents; in Round 4, for 8,080 adolescents; in Round 5, for 7,883 adolescents; and in Round 7, for 7,754 young adults. The NLSY97 reports a retention rate of 87.9% for all participants, across Rounds 1–7 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2001).

### *Sample for Analyses*

Our final analytic sample consisted of 3,977 youths who lived continuously in the same family structure across Rounds 3, 4, and 5. We excluded a total of 3,520 cases from our final analytic sample because youths transitioned into different family types between Rounds 3 and 5. We excluded those cases to preserve a sample of adolescents who lived in a stable family context for an extended period of time during adolescence, which allows for estimation of the cumulative effects of residing with a single custodial father versus other family structures,

which would otherwise not be possible if family structure was measured at just one point in time (Garasky, 1995). In the final analytic sample of 3,977 youths, 91 lived continuously with a single custodial father between Round 3 and Round 5; 35, with a custodial father and partner; 945, with a single custodial mother; 116, with a custodial mother and partner; 2,412, continuously with two biological parents; and 378, in families consisting of a mother or a father, or both, and other adult family members between Rounds 3 and 5. We considered only residential parents (fathers and mothers) of respondents in these analyses. Youths living in single-custodial-father homes reported on contact with their nonresident mothers. Of the 126 respondents living with their custodial father and not their biological mother, 14.8% reported having no contact with their biological mother in the previous year at Round 3. Of the 85.2% of youths who reported having had contact with their biological mother, 31.2% reported seeing their biological mother never to less than twice a month, 37.6% reported seeing their biological mother less than once a month to twice a month, and 31.2% reported seeing their mother once a week to every day. Regrettably, similar measures were not reported for youths with a nonresident biological father.

An analysis of the cases that were lost to attrition indicates that participants not in the analytic sample were more likely to live in households with lower incomes (\$47,082 vs. \$49,900 in the analytic sample), have parents with lower educational attainment (79.6% with some college or more vs. 83.0% with some college or more in the analytic sample), a lower mean on the family routines measure (4.2 vs. 4.3 in the analytic sample), and (on average) fewer children younger than age 18 in the household (1.5 children vs. 1.8 children in the analytic sample). We recognize that, because our sample contains families that remained stable for at least three time points of observation, these families may represent more stable family structures. Because of our effort to preserve a sample of adolescents that lived in a stable family context for an extended period of time, there may be selectivity related to this sample because we excluded cases that experienced multiple family structure transitions from the final analytic sample, suggesting that entrance into the various family arrangements we observe is not random. Unfortunately, the NLSY97 lacks predictors of possible factors that propel adolescents and their parents into particular family

structures, and so we cannot account for these factors.

### Measures

#### Outcome Variables

*School completion.* School completion was measured at Round 7 (age 22) and assessed participants' completion of high school. Participants were coded as 1 = *completed high school* if they reported having finished the 12th grade or earned a General Education Diploma (GED) by Round 7, and 0 = *did not complete high school* if they had completed less than the 12th grade by Round 7.

*Disconnectedness.* We created this variable by combing participants' answers to two questions from Round 7 (age 22): enrollment in any type of educational institution and employment since the date of last interview. We coded respondents who indicated that they were neither enrolled in school nor employed as 1 = *disconnected* and those who indicated that they were either enrolled in school or employed as 0 = *connected*.

#### Primary Predictors

*Family structure.* We created six categories of living arrangements: (a) single-custodial-father families, or those in which the adolescent lived only with a custodial father at all three rounds (R3–R5) and the father reported no resident partners during this time; (b) custodial fathers with partner, or those in which the adolescent lived with the father at all three rounds (R3–R5) and the father had a live-in partner at one or more rounds; (c) single-custodial-mother families, or those in which the respondent lived with the single mother at all three rounds (R3–R5) and the mother had no partners; (d) custodial mothers with partner, or those in which the respondent lived with the mother at all three rounds (R3–R5) and the mother had a live-in partner at one or more rounds; (e) other, created by combining respondents who indicated that they lived continuously with a combination of their mother, father, and other adult relatives at all three rounds (R3–R5); and (f) two-biological-parent families, or those in which respondents reported living with both their biological mother and father at all rounds (R3–R5).

*Parenting styles.* The current study crosses two global dimensions of parenting—demandingness (e.g., strictness) and responsiveness (e.g., warmth, support)—to represent Baumrind's (1967) four categories of parenting styles: permissive, authoritarian, authoritative, and uninvolved. Authoritative parents are high on both demandingness and responsiveness; authoritarian parents are high on demandingness and low on responsiveness; permissive parents are low on demandingness and high on responsiveness; and indifferent or uninvolved parents are low on both demandingness and responsiveness.

The two items that comprise this measure were asked of youths at Round 3 (ages 14–18) and assess whether the parent "in general is very supportive, somewhat supportive, or not very supportive" and is "permissive or strict about making sure you did what you were supposed to do." The supportiveness responses were measured on a 3-point scale, ranging from *very supportive* to *not very supportive*. The strictness responses were measured on a 2-point scale, ranging from *permissive* to *strict*. We recoded responses of "not very supportive" and "somewhat supportive" on the supportiveness items as 0 (*nonresponsive*); we recoded responses of "very supportive" as 1 (*responsive*). We recoded responses of "strict" on the permissive/strictness item as 1 (*demanding*), and we recoded responses of "permissive" as 0 (*nondemanding*). We combined the two-level variables to produce a parenting style variable with four categories: uninvolved (permissive and not very or somewhat supportive), authoritarian (strict and not very or somewhat supportive), permissive (permissive and very supportive), and authoritative (strict and very supportive). Each category was dummy coded as 1 = *father uses parenting style* and 0 = *father does not use parenting style*. Both construct and predictive validity have been found to be good for these parenting styles (Moore, McGroder, Hair, & Gunnoe, 1999).

*Parental involvement.* Involvement measures were assessed in Round 3 for residential fathers and resident mothers (for adolescents living with a single custodial mother or a custodial mother and her partner). If respondents lived with more than one parent, we used measures of father's involvement. Parental closeness as reported by adolescents was measured using a three-item index: "I think highly of my father/mother,"

“I want to be like my father/mother,” and “I enjoy spending time with my father/mother.” The responses were measured on a 5-point scale, ranging from 0 = *strongly disagree* to 4 = *strongly agree*. This measure has a range from 0 to 12 (mean = 8.7;  $\alpha = 0.86$ ). Higher scores indicate a closer parent-adolescent relationship.

Parental support as reported by adolescents was measured using a four-item index from Round 3. The items included the following: “How often does he/she praise you for doing well?” “How often does he/she help you do things that are important to you?” “How often does he/she cancel plans for no reason?” and “How often does he/she blame you for his problems?” Responses were measured on a 5-point scale, ranging from 0 = *never* to 4 = *always*. We reverse coded questions about cancelling plans and blaming for problems. This measure has a range from 0 to 16 (mean = 12.4;  $\alpha = 0.78$ ). Higher scores indicate higher levels of parent support.

We assessed parental awareness using four items used to capture parental awareness of adolescents: “How much does your father/mother know about your close friends?” “How much does your father/mother know about your close friends’ parents?” “How much does your father/mother know about who you are with when he/she is not home?” and “How much does your father/mother know about your teachers and school?” Respondents answered on a 4-point scale, ranging from 0 = *knows nothing* to 4 = *knows everything*. This measure has a range from 0 to 16 (mean = 8.7;  $\alpha = 0.84$ ) and reported strong psychometric properties (Moore et al., 1999). Higher scores indicate higher levels of awareness.

### Control Variables

*Family context.* Participation in family routines was measured at Round 3 as the number of days per week the participant ate dinner with his or her family. Responses ranged from 0 to 7 times per week (mean = 4.3). Number of children in the household was measured using a continuous variable measured at Round 3, which captured the number of children in the adolescent respondents’ household who were younger than age 18. Frequency of nonresident mother contact in the past year was measured as a scale with a range of 1–3 (mean = 1.7), with adolescents responding that they saw their

nonresident mother in the previous year less than twice a month, less than once a month to twice a month, and once a week to every day. Higher values represent more frequent contact between the respondent and the nonresident mother.

*Parent characteristics.* We coded parental education as a dichotomous variable measuring whether at least one resident parent had obtained some college education or more, as compared to the reference category, high school or less.

*Child characteristics.* Individual child characteristics included respondent self-reports of race measured in Round 1 and age measured in Round 3. We included a dummy variable identifying whether the adolescent was male or female. We coded race using four dummy variables identifying whether respondents were Black, White, Hispanic, or other. We also included a continuous measure of respondents’ age at initial participation.

*Baseline scores.* We included a measure of adolescents’ grade point average (GPA) from Round 3 in the final multivariate models for both outcomes (school completion and disconnected). We collected transcript data for NLSY97 respondents who had provided signed authorization for transcript collection. Grades were collected from high school transcripts and standardized into a uniform grading system. The GPA was calculated by dividing the total amount of grade points earned by the total amount of credit hours. Because all schools did not provide transcript data, GPA data were missing for 23.2% of respondents. For those cases that were missing transcript data, we relied on respondents’ self-report of grades. The two measures of school performance are highly correlated and supported by previous research comparing self-reported and transcript grades from adolescents in the NLSY97 (Datta & Krishnamurthy, 2008).

### Analytic Strategy

We first present descriptive statistics for our variables of interest. Second, we conducted chi-square and analysis of variance (ANOVA) analyses to examine differences in sociodemographic characteristics, parenting styles, and involvement across family type. Using logistic regressions, we examine the effects of residing in a single-custodial-father household

versus a two-biological-parent household on outcomes for young adults in two domains—school completion and disconnectedness—and whether father involvement and parenting styles mediate this association. We also examined the effects of residing in a single-custodial-father household compared to living with a single custodial mother (with and without a cohabiting partner). Finally, we limited our sample to only single-custodial-father families to examine how single fathers' parenting styles and involvement (controlling for nonresident mother contact) were associated with our outcomes of interest. Results are interpreted in terms of odds ratios.

## RESULTS

### *Question 1: Do the Sociodemographic Characteristics of Single-Custodial-Father Households With Adolescents Differ From Other Family Structures?*

Table 1 shows that, overall, 2.3% of respondents lived with their single custodial father, 0.9% of respondents lived with their custodial father and a partner, 23.8% lived with a single custodial mother, 2.9% lived with a custodial mother and a partner, 60.6% lived with two biological parents, and 9.5% of respondents lived in the other family category. Children in single-father families with and without a partner reported higher levels of disconnectedness than their counterparts in two-biological-parent family structures and reported lower levels of high school completion than their counterparts living with two biological parents.

Chi-square and ANOVA analyses (Table 1) indicate that single custodial fathers without a partner had significantly higher levels of education than did single mothers (92.3% of single custodial fathers had at least some college experience vs. 80.0% of single mothers). Adolescents in single-custodial-father households were more likely to be Black (20.8%) than adolescents living with both of their biological parents (13.4%) but less likely to be Black than adolescents living with a single custodial mother (44.2%). Adolescents living with a single custodial father were much less likely to be Hispanic (12.1%) than all other family types. Adolescents residing with a single custodial father experienced higher levels of family routines than those living with a single mother, but adolescents from single-father families with a partner present had the lowest level of family routines. Single-custodial-father families also had higher income levels

than single-mother families but lower levels of income than two-biological-parent families. Single custodial fathers (without a partner) also had fewer children than all other family types.

### *Question 2: How Are Single Custodial Fathers Involved With Adolescents and What Are Their Parenting Styles Compared to Parents in Other Family Structures?*

*Parenting styles.* Table 2 presents results from chi-square and ANOVA analyses showing significantly more adolescents living with a single custodial father reported having an uninvolved parent (27.5%) compared to adolescents living with a single custodial mother (18.5%), two biological parents (13.1%), or in an "other" family (12.7%). Respondents in single-custodial-father families were significantly less likely to indicate that their fathers were authoritative or authoritarian compared to respondents living with two biological parents. Offspring reported significantly more permissive parenting styles in single-custodial-father families (39.6%) than offspring living in "other" families (56.9%).

*Parental involvement.* Table 2 also shows levels of parental support were similar across all family types, with no significant differences reported. Adolescents reported significantly higher levels of closeness in all other family structures, including single-custodial-father families with no partner compared to single-custodial-father families with a cohabiting partner. Single custodial fathers (with no partner) also exhibited higher levels of parental awareness than single fathers with a partner (mean = 9.04 vs. 8.49) but lower awareness than fathers in two-parent families (mean = 9.44).

### *Question 3: Do Fathers' Involvement and Parenting Styles Mediate the Association Between Family Structure and Young Adult Outcomes (i.e., Disconnectedness and School Completion) for Youths in Single-Custodial-Father Households Compared to Other Family Configurations?*

Our third objective was to test for mediation in models comparing two-biological-parent families to all other types. We also ran comparable models to compare single-custodial-father families with single-mother families but found no significant differences, and so we do not report these results.

Table 1. *Sample Characteristics by Family Structure, NLSY 1997 (Rounds 1–7)*

	$F/\chi^2$	Single Custodial Father	Single Custodial Father With Partner	Single Custodial Mother	Single Custodial Mother With Partner	Fathers in Two- Biological- Parent Families	Fathers in Other Family Types
Dependent variables (R7)							
High school completion	173.01***	84.6%	74.3%	78.2%	80.9%	92.8% <sup>a,b</sup>	78.3%
Disconnectedness	92.20***	18.9%	25.7%	20.2%	19.0%	9.5% <sup>a,b</sup>	21.4%
Family context							
Frequency of family routines (family dinner) (R3) (range: 0–7)	7.87***	4.4 <sup>b</sup>	3.4 <sup>a</sup>	4.0 <sup>a,b</sup>	4.2 <sup>b</sup>	4.4 <sup>b</sup>	4.2 <sup>b</sup>
Gross household income, in thousands (R1) (range: 0–246.5)	90.79***	38.8	43.7	31.3 <sup>a,b</sup>	31.8	58.6 <sup>a,b</sup>	39.7
Number of coresident children under age 18 (R3) (range: 0–12)	3.89**	1.3 <sup>b</sup>	2.0 <sup>a</sup>	1.8 <sup>a</sup>	1.9 <sup>a</sup>	1.8 <sup>a</sup>	1.8 <sup>a</sup>
Parental characteristics (R1)							
Highest parental educational attainment	95.20***						
Some college or more (High school or less)		92.3% 7.7%	88.6% 11.4%	80% <sup>a</sup> 20% <sup>a</sup>	89.7% 10.3%	87.4% 12.6%	57.9% <sup>a,b</sup> 42.1% <sup>a,b</sup>
Child characteristics (R1)							
Gender	11.89*						
Male (Female)		56.0% 44.0%	65.7% 34.3%	48.3% <sup>b</sup> 51.8%	46.6% <sup>b</sup> 53.5%	52.4% 47.6%	55.6% 44.4%
Race/ethnicity	562.68***						
Black		20.8%	20.0%	44.2% <sup>a,b</sup>	21.6%	13.4% <sup>a</sup>	50.0% <sup>a,b</sup>
Hispanic		12.1%	20.0%	20.6% <sup>a</sup>	25.0% <sup>a</sup>	21.4% <sup>a</sup>	22.2% <sup>a</sup>
Other (White)		7.7% 58.2%	0.0% 60.0%	1.8% <sup>a</sup> 33.1% <sup>a,b</sup>	2.6% 50.9%	4.2% 60.7%	5.3% 22.5% <sup>a,b</sup>
Age (Range: 12–16)	1.96	14.1	14.0	14.0	13.7 <sup>a</sup>	13.9	14.1
Baseline characteristics							
GPA (R3) (range: 0–4)	41.99***	2.8	2.5	2.7	2.7	3.0 <sup>a,b</sup>	2.7
$N$ (%)		91 (2.3%)	35 (0.9%)	945 (23.8%)	116 (2.9%)	2,412 (60.6%)	378 (9.5%)

Note: For continuous variables, the  $F$  statistic is computed from a one-way analysis of variance. Chi-square analyses were conducted for categorical variables.

<sup>a</sup> $p < 0.05$ , two-tailed  $t$  test, comparing all other family types to single custodial fathers. <sup>b</sup> $p < 0.05$ , two-tailed  $t$  test, comparing all other family types to single custodial fathers with partners.

\* $p < 0.05$ . \*\* $p < 0.01$ . \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

*High school completion.* Model 1 of Table 3 shows the direct effect of family structure on high school completion. Adolescents raised in all other family structures, including single-custodial-father families, had significantly lower odds of graduating from high school than did adolescents who lived with two biological parents. In Model 2 of Table 3, the unstandardized coefficient for single-custodial-father families with no cohabiting partner decreased from .85 to .81 when we added parenting styles to the model,

resulting in a 5% reduction ( $[(0.85 - 0.81)/0.85]$ ) in this association. Similarly, there was a 6% reduction in this association ( $[(1.50 - 1.41)/1.50]$ ) for single fathers with a cohabiting partner. In Model 3, with the addition of the measures of parental involvement, the association between living in a single-father family (no cohabiting partner) and school completion reduced by an additional 26% to nonsignificance. The coefficient for single-custodial-father families with a cohabiting partner reduced by 14% but remained

Table 2. Differences in Parenting Styles and Involvement by Family Structure, NLSY 1997

	<i>F</i> / $\chi^2$	Family Structure					
		Single Custodial Father	Single Custodial Father With Partner	Single Custodial Mother	Single Custodial Mother With Partner	Fathers in Two-Biological-Parent Families	Fathers in Other Family Types
Parenting styles	138.68***						
Uninvolved		27.5%	28.6%	18.5% <sup>a</sup>	22.4%	13.1% <sup>a,b</sup>	12.7% <sup>a,b</sup>
Authoritarian		8.8%	20.0%	14.7%	18.1%	17.6% <sup>a</sup>	10.3%
Permissive		39.6%	34.3%	35.5%	33.6%	32.7%	56.9% <sup>a,b</sup>
Authoritative		24.2%	17.1%	31.3%	25.9%	37.0% <sup>a,b</sup>	20.1%
Parental involvement							
Closeness							
Closeness index (range: 0–12)	3.71**	8.74 <sup>b</sup>	8.13 <sup>a</sup>	8.78 <sup>b</sup>	8.58 <sup>b</sup>	8.73 <sup>b</sup>	8.70 <sup>b</sup>
Support							
Support index (range: 0–16)	1.15	12.70	11.99	12.55	12.44	12.63	12.44
Awareness							
Awareness index (range: 0–16)	19.77***	9.04 <sup>b</sup>	8.49 <sup>a</sup>	9.55 <sup>b</sup>	9.44 <sup>b</sup>	9.44 <sup>a,b</sup>	9.36 <sup>b</sup>
<i>N</i>		91	35	945	116	2,412	378

Note: For continuous variables, the *F* statistic is computed from a one-way analysis of variance. Chi-square analyses were conducted for categorical variables.

<sup>a</sup>  $p < 0.05$ , two-tailed *t* test, comparing all other family types to single custodial fathers. <sup>b</sup>  $p < 0.05$ , two-tailed *t* test, comparing all other family types to single custodial fathers with partners.

\*  $p < 0.05$ . \*\*  $p < 0.01$ . \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

significant. Model 4 continued to show significant family structure differences for single-father families with a cohabiting partner and single-custodial-mother families (no cohabiting partner) after accounting for parenting styles, parental involvement, and the control variables. Adolescents living with a single custodial father with a partner were significantly less likely to complete high school than were adolescents living with two biological parents (odds ratio [*OR*] = 0.38). The results suggest that parenting styles and involvement completely mediated the association between residing in a single-custodial-father family (with no partner) versus an intact two-biological-parent family and the odds of high school completion. However, a portion of offsprings' lower odds of high school completion remained unexplained for offspring that resided with custodial fathers with cohabiting partners, reflecting partial mediation.

*Disconnectedness.* Table 4 shows models predicting disconnectedness. Model 1 of Table 4 shows that adolescents in all family structures had significantly higher odds of being disconnected than those in two-biological-parent

households. In Model 2, with the addition of parenting styles, the coefficients for single-father families without a cohabiting partner were reduced by 4% (from .79 to .76). For single-father families with a cohabiting partner, coefficients were reduced by 6% (from 1.19 to 1.12). Adding parental involvement to the model (Model 3) reduced to nonsignificance the association between living with a single father (no cohabiting partner) and a single mother with a cohabiting partner (translating into reductions of 29% and 20.5%, respectively). In Model 4, net of controls, there were no significant differences in disconnectedness between children in two-biological-parent families and single-custodial-father families. This suggests that father involvement and parenting styles completely mediated the association between living in a single-custodial-father household without a cohabiting partner and disconnectedness and partially mediated the association for single-father households with a partner. Family and sociodemographic characteristics accounted for most of the differences in offsprings' chances of being disconnected between single-custodial-father households with a partner

Table 3. Coefficients and Odds Ratios for Logistic Regression Analysis of the Effects of Family Structure, Father Involvement and Parenting Style on High School Completion in Emerging Adulthood, NLSY 1997

	High School Completion											
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	$\beta$	SE	Odds Ratio	$\beta$	SE	Odds Ratio	$\beta$	SE	Odds Ratio	$\beta$	SE	Odds Ratio
Family structure (R3-5)												
Single custodial father, no cohabiting partners	-0.8543	0.30	0.43**	-0.812	0.30	0.44**	-0.5996	0.34	0.55	-0.4715	0.39	0.62
Single custodial father, cohabiting partners	-1.4983	0.39	0.22***	-1.4098	0.40	0.24***	-1.2132	0.43	0.30**	-0.9805	0.49	0.38*
Single custodial mother, no cohabiting partners	-1.2801	0.11	0.28***	-1.2704	0.11	0.28***	-1.0528	0.20	0.35***	-0.5473	0.23	0.58*
Single custodial mother, cohabiting partners	-1.1175	0.25	0.33***	-1.07	0.25	0.34***	-0.8589	0.30	0.42**	-0.4775	0.35	0.62
Other family types (Two biological parents, married or unmarried)	-1.2789	0.15	0.28***	-1.3575	0.15	0.26***	-1.3559	0.17	0.26***	-0.2811	0.24	0.76
Parenting style (R3)												
Uninvolved				-0.5625	0.14	0.57***	-0.4053	0.16	0.67**	-0.3796	0.17	0.68*
Permissive				0.17	0.13	1.19	0.17	0.13	1.18	0.08	0.15	1.08
Authoritarian (Authoritative)				-0.367	0.15	0.69*	-0.1896	0.16	0.83	-0.1393	0.18	0.87
Parental involvement (R3)												
Closeness index							-0.0413	0.03	0.96	-0.0306	0.04	0.97
Support index							0.06	0.06	1.06*	0.02	0.03	1.03
Awareness index							0.04	0.03	1.04	0.02	0.03	1.02
Control variables												
Family context (R3)												
Frequency of family routines (family dinner)							-0.00424	0.03	1.00	0.00	0.00	1.00***
Gross household income (R1), in thousands										-0.1391	0.04	0.87***
No. of coresident children under age 18												
Parental characteristics												
Highest household educational attainment (R1)										0.57	0.14	1.77***
Some college or more (High school or less)												
Child characteristics												
Gender (R1)												
Male										-0.3652	0.11	0.69**

Table 3. Continued

	High School Completion											
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	$\beta$	SE	Odds Ratio	$\beta$	SE	Odds Ratio	$\beta$	SE	Odds Ratio	$\beta$	SE	Odds Ratio
(Female)												
Race/ethnicity (R1)												
Black							-0.2928	0.15				0.75*
Hispanic							-0.1995	0.16				0.82
Other (White)							-0.1612	0.35				0.85
Age (R1)							0.18	0.06				1.20**
Baseline characteristics												
GPA (R3)							1.01	0.07				2.73***
-2 log likelihood (df)		2,844.5 (5)			2,811.0 (8)			2,797.2 (14)			2,251.5 (26)	
N		3,950			3,950			3,950			3,950	

\*  $p < 0.05$ . \*\*  $p < 0.01$ . \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

and two-biological-parent families (reflecting complete mediation).

*Question 4: In Single-Father Households, Do Specific Aspects of Involvement and Parenting Styles Influence Outcomes During Emerging Adulthood?*

Table 5 (Model 1) shows that in single-custodial-father households neither parenting style nor involvement was associated with odds of high school completion. More frequent contact with the nonresident mother, however, was associated with a 70% reduction in the odds of high school completion (Model 2). With regard to disconnectedness, adolescents with an uninvolved father were almost four times more likely to be disconnected compared to adolescents with authoritative fathers (Table 5, Model 3). Aspects of the family environment such as family routines and demographic characteristics such as race also explained this outcome.

DISCUSSION

Using a life course theory of family development and social capital theory, we analyzed longitudinal data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97) to examine the consequences of single custodial fathers' parenting style and involvement on outcomes for youths in emerging adulthood. We discuss our findings in more detail below.

*Differences in Sociodemographic Characteristics of Single-Custodial-Father Families Versus Other Family Structures*

This study found that although some sociodemographic indicators are strikingly similar across family types, single-father families differ from single mother and two-parent families with adolescents on a number of sociodemographic characteristics. These findings provide partial support for our first hypothesis. Single-father families were less disadvantaged in terms of socioeconomic resources (income) than single mothers, which supports prior research showing that single-father families do not experience the same financial strains of single parenthood as single mothers (Downey et al., 1998; Demuth & Brown, 2004) and were no different from two-parent families in terms of fathers' level of

Table 4. Coefficients and Odds Ratios for Logistic Regression Analysis of the Effects of Family Structure, Father Involvement, and Parenting Style on Being Disconnected in Emerging Adulthood, NLSY 1997.

	Disconnectedness											
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	$\beta$	SE	Odds Ratio	$\beta$	SE	Odds Ratio	$\beta$	SE	Odds Ratio	$\beta$	SE	Odds Ratio
Family structure (R3-5)												
Single custodial father - no cohabiting partners	0.79	0.28	2.21**	0.76	0.28	2.15**	0.54	0.31	1.74	0.30	0.33	1.35
Single custodial father - cohabiting partners	1.19	0.39	3.29**	1.12	0.39	3.08**	0.89	0.42	2.43*	0.56	0.44	1.75
Single custodial mother - no cohabiting partners	0.88	0.11	2.40***	0.86	0.11	2.37***	0.62	0.18	1.86***	-0.0552	0.20	0.95
Single custodial mother - cohabiting partners	0.80	0.25	2.22**	0.76	0.25	2.14**	0.52	0.29	1.68	0.03	0.31	1.04
Other family types (Two biological parents—married or unmarried)	0.95	0.14	2.59***	0.99	0.15	2.68***	0.85	0.16	2.35***	0.15	0.21	1.16
Parenting style (R3)												
Uninvolved				0.41	0.10	1.50**	0.24	0.15	1.28	0.24	0.16	1.27
Permissive				-0.0605	0.09	0.94	-0.0912	0.12	0.91	-0.0249	0.13	0.98
Authoritarian (Authoritative)				0.24	0.08	1.28	0.07	0.16	1.07	0.02	0.13	1.02
Parental involvement (R3)												
Closeness index				0.00	0.04	1.00	0.00	0.04	1.00	-0.00338	0.04	1.00
Support index				-0.0708	0.02	0.93**	-0.0708	0.02	0.93**	-0.0457	0.03	0.96*
Awareness index				-0.00256	0.03	1.00	-0.00256	0.03	1.00	-0.0051	0.03	1.00
Control variables												
Family context (R3)												
Frequency of family routines (Family dinner)				0.04	0.03	1.04	0.04	0.03	1.04	0.04	0.03	1.04
Gross household income (R1)—in thousands				-0.00002	0.00	1.00***	-0.00002	0.00	1.00***	-0.00002	0.00	1.00***
# of coresident children under age 18				0.07	0.04	1.08*	0.07	0.04	1.08*	0.07	0.04	1.08*
Parental characteristics												
Highest household education attainment (R1)												
Some college or more (High school or less)												
Child characteristics												
Gender (R1)												
Male												
				-0.0871	0.10	0.92	-0.0871	0.10	0.92	-0.0871	0.10	0.92

Table 4. Continued

	Disconnectedness											
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	$\beta$	SE	Odds Ratio	$\beta$	SE	Odds Ratio	$\beta$	SE	Odds Ratio	$\beta$	SE	Odds Ratio
(Female)												
Race/Ethnicity (R1)												
Black							0.52	0.13	1.68***			
Hispanic							0.08	0.14	1.08			
Other							-0.2704	0.35	0.76			
(White)												
Age (R1)							-0.0704	0.06	0.93			
Baseline characteristics												
GPA (R3)							-0.5776	0.07	0.56***			
-2 log likelihood (df)	3056.2 (5)			3041.6 (8)			3028.7 (14)			2755.3 (26)		
N	3,386			3,386			3,386			3,386		

\*  $p < 0.05$ . \*\*  $p < 0.01$ . \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

education. However, single-father families with adolescents did have fewer financial resources than two-biological-parent families, which may limit single fathers' ability to provide the same economic and material resources as two-parent families, possibly resulting in compromised outcomes during emerging adulthood. The composition of single-father households also differed from all other household comparisons, with single fathers having the fewest number of children younger than age 18 in the household. In keeping with the social capital perspective, these findings suggest that adolescents in single-father families may benefit from greater levels of per capita financial and social resources provided by fathers through their interactions and involvement with children, as there are fewer children to receive these resources (Blake, 1981).

Custodial-father families in which a partner was coresident had the lowest levels of family routines, which suggests that adolescents in such single-father contexts are the least likely to participate in regular family activities such as eating dinner together on a weekly basis. These results are consistent with previous research that has shown that the presence of a partner in cohabiting unions may weaken parental involvement and positive parenting practices, and they reinforce the hypothesis that social resources may be limited or diluted when fathers reside with a partner, given that fathers may spend less time with their children and may interact with them in less positive ways (Brown, 2004), which prevents the transfer of valuable resources which aid in offsprings' development.

*Parenting styles in single-custodial-father families versus other family structures.* We found significant differences in parenting styles between single fathers and other family arrangements. Single custodial fathers exhibited less authoritarian and authoritative parenting than did two-parent families and were less involved than parents in single-mother, two-parent, and other families. These results partially support our second hypothesis—single custodial fathers exhibit less authoritative methods of parenting and more permissive and uninvolved methods—and support prior research that suggests that single parents may be more likely to use ineffective parenting practices and may be less capable of providing supervision and control than parents in two-parent families (McClanahan & Booth, 1989). We also hypothesized that

Table 5. Odds Ratios for Logistic Regression Analysis of the Effects of Parenting Style and Father Involvement in Single Father Families on High School Completion and Disconnectedness in Emerging Adulthood, NLSY 1997

	High School Completion						Disconnectedness					
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		Model 4			
	$\beta$	SE	Odds Ratio	$\beta$	SE	Odds Ratio	$\beta$	SE	Odds Ratio	SE		
Parenting style (R3)												
Uninvolved	0.04	1.01	1.04	-0.015	1.04	0.99	1.58	0.91	4.84 <sup>+</sup>	1.36	0.86	3.90 <sup>+</sup>
Permissive	1.05	0.92	2.86	1.28	0.98	3.59	0.11	0.78	1.11	-0.1719	0.73	0.84
Authoritarian (Authoritative)	0.98	1.23	2.67	0.49	1.25	1.64	-0.8072	1.21	0.45	-0.5509	1.16	0.58
Parental involvement (R3)												
Closeness index	-0.0626	0.19	0.94	-0.0357	0.20	0.97	-0.0257	0.19	0.98	0.04	0.18	1.04
Support index	-0.1858	0.21	0.83	-0.2424	0.22	0.79	-0.00927	0.17	0.99	-0.0578	0.16	0.94
Awareness index				0.11	0.14	1.11	-0.0681	0.13	0.93	-0.0039	0.12	1.00
Control variables												
Family context (R3)												
Frequency of family routines (family dinner)	0.13	0.18	1.14	0.16	0.19	1.18	0.23	0.09	1.25*	0.42	0.18	1.52*
Gross household income (R1), in thousands	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	-0.02	0.01	0.98	-0.00000114	0.00	1.00
No. of coresident children under age 18	-0.1884	0.28	0.83	-0.2105	0.29	0.81	0.03	0.24	1.03	-0.04	0.24	0.96
Parental characteristics												
Highest household educational attainment (R1)	0.66	0.86	1.93	0.53	0.91	1.70	0.07	0.91	1.08	-0.6302	0.85	0.53
Some college or more (High school or less)												
Child characteristics												
Gender (R1)												
Male (Female)	0.11	0.67	1.12	0.36	0.74	1.43	-0.7327	0.55	0.48	-0.6932	0.53	0.50
Race/ethnicity (R1)												
Black	-0.6933	0.94	0.50	-0.7837	0.94	0.46	1.19	0.77	3.29 <sup>+</sup>	1.42	0.78	4.14 <sup>+</sup>
Hispanic	-0.3457	0.83	0.71	0.09	0.92	1.09	0.89	0.72	2.44	1.19	0.74	3.30 <sup>+</sup>
Other	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.50	1.21	1.65	0.71	1.22	2.04

Table 5. Continued

	High School Completion						Disconnectedness					
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	$\beta$	SE	Odds Ratio	$\beta$	SE	Odds Ratio	$\beta$	SE	Odds Ratio	$\beta$	SE	Odds Ratio
(White)												
Age (R1)	0.82	0.39	2.26*	0.88	0.40	2.41*	-0.0958	0.32	0.91	-0.2527	0.31	0.78
Baseline characteristics												
GPA (R3)	1.45	0.44	4.27**	1.74	0.51	5.70***	-0.5817	0.54	0.56	-0.4581	0.34	0.63
Frequency of contact with nonresident mother (R3)	—	—	—	-1.1694	0.57	0.31*	—	—	—	-0.3603	0.41	0.70
-2 log likelihood (df)		83.4 (17)			116.3 (18)			105.3 (19)			107.6 (19)	
N		126			126			125			125	

+ < 0.10. \*  $p < 0.05$ . \*\*  $p < 0.01$ . \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

single custodial fathers would be more involved than single custodial mothers but found higher numbers of uninvolved single custodial fathers than single custodial mothers. Previous research shows that single fathers exert less control (in the form of supervision, monitoring, and closeness) over their children than single mothers, which may result in more negative outcomes among children from single-father families (Demuth & Brown, 2004).

*Parental involvement in single-custodial-father families versus other family structures.* We found few significant differences between single custodial fathers and other family arrangements with regard to the nature of their involvement, which provides partial support for our third hypothesis. Stable single-father families represent a unique type of family structure in which fathers appear to be similar to both mothers in single-mother families and fathers in two-parent families on certain dimensions of father involvement.

However, single-custodial-father families with a partner had lower levels of closeness and awareness than did parents in all other family types. The quality of the father-child relationship (closeness) and fathers' ability to monitor their adolescent offsprings' behavior (awareness) may suffer as a result of fathers' repartnering. These findings reinforce results from one previous study that showed that father involvement was greater in single-custodial-father families than in families in which the custodial biological father had repartnered, especially in activities such as communicating about problems (Hawkins et al., 2006). In keeping with the social capital perspective, custodial fathers may have even fewer social resources to transmit to their children through shared interactions and relationship closeness if a partner is also present in the household. The addition of a cohabiting partner to a single-custodial-father household may disrupt the interactions between a father and his children as the father attempts to divide his attention and involvement between his children and his partner, thereby diluting the resources available to children. The presence of a cohabiting partner may also increase the amount of conflict between all family members, thus resulting in more negative interactions and strained relationships (Brown & Booth, 1996; Nock, 1995). Finally, cohabiting unions can be unstable, and custodial fathers may transition

into and out of such relationships, which results in a greater number of family structure transitions during adolescence. Given the life course tenet that the timing and sequencing of early life course transitions influences later stages of development, the stress and instability spurred by these family structure transitions may negatively affect the development and well-being of offspring throughout their childhood, adolescence, and into young adulthood (Aquilino, 1996; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Musick & Mare, 2006).

*Involvement and parenting styles as mediators of the association between family structure and outcomes in emerging adulthood.* The results from this study suggest that father involvement and parenting styles are key mechanisms that explain differences in outcomes for offspring residing with a single custodial father versus offspring living with two biological parents. However, we also found that offspring who reside with a custodial father and their cohabiting partner may face additional challenges and unique circumstances that cannot be fully explained (mediated) by differences in father involvement and parenting styles. We found that custodial father families in which fathers coreside with a partner also differed from other family types in terms of household income, race/ethnicity, and family size, all of which mediated the association between residing with a cohabiting custodial father and offspring's likelihood of being disconnected (neither enrolled in school nor employed) during emerging adulthood.

Family structure differences in rates of high school completion persisted after accounting for differences in parent involvement, parenting styles, family context, and parent and child characteristics. Prior research that examined female-headed households also found persistent differences in outcomes for offspring living with a single mother (both with and without a nonbiological cohabiting partner) compared with those residing with two biological parents even after accounting for potential mediators such as levels of parenting stress, monitoring, and relationship closeness across these various family structures (Brown, 2004; Manning & Lamb, 2003). Results from these studies suggest that single-parent families may lack other types of resources (e.g., social support) or have additional characteristics not measured here that prevent offspring from these families from achieving academically in

the early adult years. Such factors for which we could not account may include parenting stress on the part of fathers and maternal mental health or substance use, which limit the social resources that parents provide during adolescence, which may ultimately lower well-being in emerging adulthood.

*Outcomes for youth in single-custodial-father families.* We found few significant findings for our within-group analysis of single-custodial-father families. We attribute this to small sample sizes. We did, however, find marginal evidence of a positive association between uninvolved parenting and disconnectedness. In keeping with the social capital framework, the findings suggest that having an uninvolved single custodial father may translate into fewer social capital resources for offspring, which may limit offsprings' ability to generate human capital (Donati & Prandini, 2007), thereby resulting in higher odds of being disconnected (neither enrolled nor employed) during emerging adulthood. These findings are also in keeping with the life course theory of human development, which suggests linkages between the strength and closeness of earlier family relationships, later changes and transitions, and their effects on development later in the life course (Elder et al., 1984).

#### *Study Limitations*

These data could not address how selection into marriage may have influenced the family structure and associated processes we observed (Seltzer, 2000). As such, we could not disentangle whether observed differences in single-custodial-father families and two-parent families are a function of the characteristics correlated with the selection into marriage or are a benefit of marriage. We do not know what factors contributed to the formation of the single-custodial-father families in our sample. Our sample is also unique in that the adolescents lived in the same family structure over the assessment period. Some of these families may represent select families given that single parenthood and cohabiting unions tend to be less stable forms of unions (Bumpass & Lu, 2000; Ryan, Franzetta, Schelar, & Manlove, 2009). Offspring that experience instability because of family-structure transitions may exhibit an even greater likelihood of not completing high school and being disconnected during emerging adulthood.

In terms of measurement, our measures of parenting styles are from adolescent reports and may represent only adolescents' perceptions of parenting styles. As such, there is the possibility that same-source bias may have affected some of our results. Ideally, reports from both parents and adolescents would be best. Our data did not contain variables that would allow us to measure the possible negative influences of parents' own behaviors on young adult outcomes. In the same vein, we acknowledge the possibility that when an adolescent succeeds academically, it may make it easier for the father to become involved and engage in more authoritative parenting. Our analysis did not consider these potential reciprocal effects. For within-group analysis, we were unable to consider single custodial fathers with partners separately from single fathers with no cohabiting partners. Although the NLSY97 does include some limited information on nonresident biological mothers and their involvement, similar measures for nonresident father contact were not collected and so we could not make comparisons.

Finally, these data support the conclusion that entrance into the various family arrangements may not be random. For example, if entrance is not random, then more troublesome boys may wind up in father custody, and this could be responsible for differences in outcomes between single-father families and other family structures. Future research could explore potential interaction effects among family structure, race, and income that may contribute to variance in the outcomes examined in the current study.

#### *Contributions of the Present Study*

Using nationally representative longitudinal data, the present study serves as a first glimpse at the extent to which single-father involvement and parenting styles may contribute to young adult well-being. We demonstrate that single custodial fathers' involvement, parenting styles, sociodemographics, and family context are different from both single-custodial-mother families and two-parent families, and those differences represent important mechanisms through which family structure differences in high school completion and disconnectedness operate. Our study provides an understanding of young adult well-being in a family context that is becoming increasingly more common.

#### *Implications for Policy and Practice*

This study provides continuing evidence that single fathers and their involvement and parenting styles play a role in the well-being of youths, and those effects may extend to early adulthood. The significance of parenting styles and involvement as mediators emphasizes the important role of early family process in influencing outcomes during young adulthood and provides insight into the complementary nature of the associations between structure and process. This suggests that any holistic policy or program to promote well-being in the early adult years should consider fathers from diverse family configurations when feasible. It is particularly important for policies or programs to provide support to custodial father families where a cohabiting partner is present, given the unique circumstances and challenges this type of family structure experiences. Work aimed to improve the measurement and collection of the single father-adolescent/father–young adult relationship data in nationally representative surveys and including single fathers in analytical work is also warranted.

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