

Journal of Marriage and Family

Volume 66 Number 1 February 2004

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Role of the Father-Adolescent Relationship in Shaping Adolescents' Attitudes Toward Divorce

The quality of father-adolescent relationships, especially for nontraditional fathers, has been neglected in investigating adolescents' beliefs. Closeness of father-adolescent relationships was examined as a predictor of adolescents' attitudes toward divorce. A sample of European and African American adolescents (N = 300) reported on the quality of father-adolescent relationships in 11th grade and their attitudes toward divorce at age 19. Boys who felt close to their biological custodial fathers, biological noncustodial fathers, and stepfathers felt less likely to divorce in the future than boys who did not feel close to their fathers. The same was not true for girls. Feeling close to a father—regardless of father type—is associated with boys' confidence in the stability of their future marriages.

A great deal of support exists for the intergenerational transmission of divorce. Although this connection is influenced by many factors, attitudes are one vehicle by which this phenomenon occurs. For example, it is well known that ado-

lescents who have experienced their parents' divorces tend to have more positive attitudes toward divorce (Amato & Booth, 1991; Greenberg & Nay, 1982). Evidence also suggests that attitudes toward divorce longitudinally predict marital quality. People who hold more positive attitudes toward divorce tend to experience a decline in marital quality, and people who hold less positive attitudes toward divorce tend to experience improvements in marital quality over time (Amato & Rogers, 1999). Given that about 50% of first marriages are expected to end in divorce (Cherlin, 1992), investigating factors that contribute to adolescents' attitude formation about marital relationships is timely and important.

Although factors in parents' marital quality and status have been associated with adolescents' attitudes toward divorce, parent-child relationships have not been explored in this area. Most research on parent-child relationships focuses on the mother-child dyad (Shulman & Seiffge-Krenke, 1997). Until recently, research on fathers and adolescents has been scant. No literature to date has examined how closeness in father-adolescent relationships—namely, the extent to which adolescents identify with, respect, and feel emotionally close to their fathers— influences adolescents' attitudes toward divorce. Further, we know little about how nontraditional father types (e.g., noncustodial fathers and stepfathers) influence adolescents' development (Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth, & Lamb, 2000), especially their beliefs about divorce. This is true for adolescents' relationships

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Key Words: adolescents' attitudes, father-adolescent relations,
gender differences, marital attitudes, noncustodial fathers,
stepfathers.

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with stepfathers whom they do not childbearing outside remarriage, it is not live in a father-adolescent. These changes in attitudes are attributed to the redefinition of different types of social relationships. The current research on different types of lives is beneficially geared toward improving fathers, especially adolescents' lives. With relationships with beneficial, however, examine how the relationships contribute to development will help these alternative families.

Much of the literature on relationships and attitudes is limited to cross-sectional studies of ethnically diverse samples. It is needed to understand how different family structures affect how adolescents view divorce. For instance, African Americans divorce rates than European Americans (Tucker, & Lewis, 1998). They have more positive attitudes toward divorce. A major goal of the current study is to compare noncustodial fathers' relationships with adolescents' attitudes toward divorce in ethnically diverse samples of African Americans and African Americans.

LITERATURE

According to Erickson's theory of development (1968), adolescents' attitudes are working through adolescence to late adolescence. Adolescents in this time because adolescents are beginning romantic relationships and are beginning to form relationships during this time. The current study and empirical literature on relationships should be able to explain attitudes toward marital relationships. Theories explain how relationships

with stepfathers and biological fathers with whom they do not live. Given current rates of childbearing outside of marriage, divorce, and remarriage, it is not uncommon for children to live in a father-absent or stepfamily situation. These changes in family structure have contributed to the redefinition of fatherhood to include different types of fathers, both biological and social. The current assumption is that having different types of fathers involved in children's lives is beneficial. Social policies have been geared toward increasing the involvement of fathers, especially noncustodial fathers, in adolescents' lives. We know little about whether relationships with other father types are actually beneficial, however (Amato, 1998). Research to examine how the quality of father-adolescent relationships contributes to adolescents' development will help to inform social policy for these alternative family forms.

Much of the literature on father-adolescent relationships and attitudes toward divorce is limited to cross-sectional studies that fail to use ethnically diverse samples. Longitudinal research is needed to understand attitude formation better. Additionally, different cultures have varied family structures and values that may influence how adolescents view marital relationships. For instance, African Americans have higher divorce rates than European Americans (Taylor, Chatters, Tucker, & Lewis, 1990), which may lead them to have more positive or negative attitudes toward divorce. A major goal of the present study, therefore, is to compare the influence of fathers—namely, biological custodial fathers, biological noncustodial fathers, and stepfathers—on adolescents' attitudes toward divorce over time in an ethnically diverse sample of primarily European Americans and African Americans.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Erickson's theory of psychosocial development (1968), a major task of late adolescence is working through intimacy issues. Middle to late adolescence is an important developmental time because adolescents are transitioning to adulthood and are beginning to establish long-term romantic relationships. Parents continue to be influential during this time period. Both the theoretical and empirical literature suggests that parent-child relationships should be related to adolescents' attitudes toward marital relationships. At least two theories explain how relationships with parents may

shape children's conceptions about intimacy. First, attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969/1982) emphasizes the role of mother-child relationships, and more recently, father-child relationships, in developing children's internal working models of relationships. These internal working models may be one mechanism by which attitudes about intimacy are transmitted. Current attachment theorists view parent-child relationships as important not only in childhood, but in adolescence as well (Fréeman & Brown, 2001). The link between attachment and intimacy in relationships in adolescence has been supported by research suggesting that securely attached adolescents are able to develop successful and satisfying relationships in adulthood (Roisman, Madsen, Henninghausen, Sroufe, & Collins, 2001).

Second, according to social learning theory, parents transmit ideas about opposite-sex relationships to their children via modeling. Although children may learn about intimacy from other sources such as the media, school, or friends, children's exposure to intimacy in relationships is modeled by observing their parents and in their relationships with their parents. Children and adolescents observe how their parents relate to them and use this experiential knowledge as part of a foundation for developing intimacy in their own relationships. It appears that adolescents who are raised in an environment in which their fathers treat them with warmth, are emotionally available, and provide structure may be better prepared for relationships and intimacy later in life (Gray & Steinberg, 1999).

Fathers also socialize their children to behave and think in particular ways that may later influence their expectations about intimacy and marriage. For instance, fathers who teach their children that divorce is negative are likely to raise adolescents who also view divorce negatively. Adolescents whose parents are nurturing and involved in their lives are likely to exhibit behaviors that are warm, supportive, and low in hostility in their romantic relationships over time. In turn, these competent behaviors are positively related to relationship quality in adolescents' romantic relationships (Conger, Cui, Bryant, & Elder, 2000).

Noncustodial Fathers and Adolescents' Attitudes Toward Divorce

High rates of divorce, remarriage, and single parenting have created a generation of children who experience family transitions on a regular basis. Because children are likely to reside with

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perienced their parents' more positive attitudes (Booth, 1991; Greenberg also suggests that attitudes longitudinally predict marital and more positive attitudes experience a decline in who hold less positive tend to experience quality over time). Given that about 50% expected to end in divorce contributing factors that contribute to formation about marriage and important.

parents' marital quality associated with adolescents' parent-child relationships explored in this area. Most relationships focuses on (Shulman & Seiffgen) recently, research on fathers is scant. No literature on closeness in father-relationships—namely, the extent to identify with, respect, and to their fathers—attitudes toward divorce. about how nontraditional custodial fathers and stepfathers' development (a, Bradley, Hofferth, & by their beliefs about adolescents' relationships

their mothers in the majority of divorce cases (Montgomery, Anderson, Hetherington, & Clingempeel, 1992), children often must negotiate maintaining relationships with noncustodial biological fathers. Following divorce, children's relationships with their noncustodial biological fathers are often compromised (Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991). Adolescents of divorce report feeling less close to their fathers (Maccoby, Buchanan, Mnookin, & Dornbusch, 1993) and tend to view their relationships with their noncustodial fathers less positively than do adolescents of nondivorced families (Fine, Moreland, & Schwebel, 1983). Adults who have experienced family transitions report being less positively attached to their fathers, and they view their fathers as less caring than adults from nondivorced families (Tayler, Parker, & Roy, 1995).

Although some research has examined adolescents' attitudes toward marriage and divorce following their parents' divorces, few studies, if any, have examined how the quality of the relationship with a noncustodial father can shape adolescents' attitudes toward divorce. We do know that noncustodial fathers who maintain relationships with their adolescent children can positively influence their adolescents' lives (White & Gilbreth, 2001). Emotional aspects of the father-child relationship involving attachment and high levels of involvement have beneficial effects, including reducing both emotional distress and participation in delinquent behavior (Furstenberg & Harris, 1993). Further, children's well-being is advanced when noncustodial fathers maintain positive relationships, participate in activities, and spend holidays with their children (Clarke-Stewart & Hayward, 1996). Taken together, these findings suggest that adolescents who feel close to their fathers—regardless of their custodial status—are better adjusted and may feel less likely to divorce than adolescents who do not feel close to their fathers.

Stepfathers and Adolescents' Attitudes Toward Divorce

With approximately 75% of men and 66% of women remarrying sometime following a divorce, many adolescents will live with a stepparent at some point in their lives (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1994). Adolescents growing up in stepfamilies may share a different kind of relationship with their stepfathers from the ones they share with their biological fathers. This relation-

ship may involve a different set of interpersonal dynamics and living circumstances. Because they are biologically related, biological fathers may be more invested than stepfathers in their relationships with their children.

At first, many adolescents display intense and sustained resistance to the entry of a stepfather into their lives (Hetherington & Jodl, 1994). These adolescents tend to exhibit noncommunicative behavior such as withdrawal and avoidance. If stepfathers continue to encounter resistance from their stepchildren, they tend to become distant, feel less closeness, and exhibit less warmth toward their stepchildren (Hetherington & Jodl). Nonetheless, some adolescents' relationships with stepfathers improve over time and become close (Hetherington, 1993).

Relatively little research has examined the effect of a close stepfather-stepchild relationship on adolescents' attitudes toward divorce. Some studies have indicated that having a close relationship with a stepfather can have positive implications for adolescents' adjustment. For instance, having a good relationship with a stepfather can bolster adolescents' self-esteem and their psychological well-being (Amato, 1986). Given this connection, stepfathers also may play a significant role in adolescents' attitudes toward divorce, especially if adolescents feel close to their stepfathers. Although adolescents may share a special or close bond with someone with whom they are biologically related, adolescents who feel close to their fathers—regardless of biological status—may feel less likely to divorce in the future.

Gender Differences in Adolescents' Attitudes Toward Divorce

Few studies have examined the role of fathers in influencing both adolescent boys' and girls' marital relationships. The few studies that have directly compared father-adolescent relationships for girls and boys have found that father-son relationships are more strongly linked to the quality of adolescent boys' later adult relationships than those of adolescent girls. For instance, boys who shared an affectionate and trustful relationship with their fathers in adolescence felt satisfaction with their romantic partners in midlife, but the same was not true for girls (Moeller & Stattin, 2001).

The empirical evidence, together with theory, suggests that fathers may be more important for

boys than for girls. Research on adolescents' attitudes toward marriage and divorce, and learning theorists' views on how divorce occurs throughout the life course, suggest that where girls and boys differ in their view of a parent as a way of expressing affection and masculinity, research by McHale (1995) indicates that boys view fathers rather than mothers as important. The developmental differences between adolescent boys and girls are more pronounced than adolescent girls (Galambos, Schuler, & Larson, 1993). In fact, previous literature suggests that boys play a stronger role in their parents' development (Furstenberg & Velasquez, Clark, & Furstenberg, 1993). Given this evidence, it is likely that fathers are more influential for boys than for girls in terms of intimacy and the development of relationships during adolescence.

AIMS OF THE STUDY

We know little about how fathers influence adolescent relationships. Research on adolescents' views about marriage and divorce, however, most of the research on this topic is solely on European adolescents and their children. Few studies have examined how fathers influence adolescents among these variables. Research on samples of adolescents from different ethnic groups such as African American and Hispanic is especially important given that research suggests that fathers are less likely to be involved with their children compared to European American fathers. However, noncustodial fathers are more likely to be involved with their children's lives than noncustodial mothers (Bowman & Furstenberg, 1992).

A major goal of this study is to examine longitudinal relationships between fathers and adolescents' closeness and attitudes toward divorce in a diverse sample of American and African American adolescents. We hypothesize that adolescents' relationships with their fathers in adolescence will predict their relationships with their noncustodial fathers in adulthood. We report at age 19 a longitudinal study of adolescents in the future. Second, we examine the relationships between adolescents' attitudes toward marriage and stepfathers and biological fathers. Regardless of the

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boys than for girls with respect to intimacy and attitudes toward divorce in adolescence. Social learning theorists posit that same-sex modeling occurs throughout childhood and adolescence whereby girls and boys look to their same-sex parent as a way of developing their femininity and masculinity, respectively (Crouter, Manke, & McHale, 1995). In this case, boys look to their fathers rather than their mothers for guidance. The developmental literature also suggests that adolescent boys report feeling closer to their fathers than adolescent girls do (Richardson, Galambos, Schulenberg, & Petersen, 1984). In fact, previous literature has suggested that fathers play a stronger role in sons' rather than daughters' development (Lamb, 1987; Synder, Velasquez, Clark, & Means-Christensen, 1997). Given this evidence, fathers also may be more influential for boys than girls in the domain of intimacy and the development of marital attitudes during adolescence.

AIMS OF THE PRESENT STUDY

We know little about how the quality of father-adolescent relationships might be related to adolescents' views about divorce over time. Moreover, most of the research in this area has focused solely on European American families and children. Few studies have investigated relations among these variables over time in diverse samples of adolescents and their families. Looking at ethnic groups such as African Americans is especially important given that African American fathers are less likely to reside with their children compared to European American fathers; however, noncustodial African American fathers are more likely to be involved in their children's lives than noncustodial European American fathers (Bowman & Forman, 1997).

A major goal of this study is to investigate the longitudinal relations between father-adolescent closeness and adolescents' attitudes toward divorce in a diverse sample of European American and African American adolescents. First, we hypothesize that adolescents who reported close relationships with their biological custodial and noncustodial fathers in the 11th grade would later report at age 19 a lower likelihood of divorcing in the future. Second, we expect that the pattern of relations between father-adolescent closeness and attitudes toward divorce would not differ for stepfathers and biological fathers over time. Regardless of the biological relationship and

custodial status, adolescents who feel close to their fathers should feel less likely to divorce than those who do not feel close to their fathers. Third, we predict a gender effect with the father-adolescent relationship being more important for adolescent boys than for adolescent girls. Specifically, we hypothesize that boys who reported close father-adolescent relationships in the 11th grade would later report at age 19 a lower likelihood of divorcing in the future.

METHOD

Sample

Participants were part of the Maryland Adolescent Development in Context study, a longitudinal study examining the influences of the home, neighborhood, school, and peer relationships on adolescents' academic, emotional, and social development. At Wave 1, the sample included 1,498 families. Five waves of data have been collected to date. The first wave of data was collected in the fall and winter of 1991–1992, when the adolescents were in the seventh grade (mean age of 12.78). Families were recruited for the study through the adolescents' public middle schools. In September 1991, there were 7,841 seventh-grade students in the district enrolled in the 23 middle schools we were studying. A total of 1,961 families expressed an interest in the study by signing a form permitting us to contact them. After the families were initially contacted, approximately 76% agreed to participate, and the remaining 24% refused to participate because of time constraints, problems with scheduling, or lack of interest. The sample included families living in rural, suburban, and urban neighborhoods of one large county, Prince George's County, located in Maryland.

At Wave 1, 49% of the adolescents participating in the study were girls. Approximately 30% identified themselves as White or European American, and 60% identified themselves as Black or African American. The remainder of the sample (10%) that included other ethnic groups (e.g., mixed race categories) was excluded from further analyses because of small group sizes. The mean family income level in 1991 was \$45,000–\$50,000 for African Americans and \$50,000–\$55,000 for European Americans. Additionally, a majority of the parents in the sample had graduated from high school and had

at least some college education (59% and 45% for African Americans and European Americans, respectively). About 32% of African American parents and 49% of European American parents had a college degree or some graduate or professional training. As a whole, the sample is somewhat wealthier and better educated than the average American family. Additionally, this sample is unique in its demographic features. Both groups of European American and African American adolescents are drawn from populations of almost comparable socioeconomic diversity, with neither group predominantly represented at the extremes of the socioeconomic spectrum. Taken together, these demographics present a unique opportunity to study the development of African American and European American adolescents in maximally comparable sociodemographic circumstances.

For this study, we used data from Waves 4 and 5 only. We selected these time periods because adolescents are beginning to form more permanent relationships in their lives during middle to late adolescence as they are beginning to transition to adulthood. The data from Waves 4 and 5 were collected when the adolescents were in the 11th grade (mean age of 16.52) and one year after high school, respectively. The sample at Wave 5 included 62% of the participants from the original sample at Wave 1 ($n=919$), an adequate retention rate given the length and nature of this study. Participants who dropped completely out of the study ($n=286$) tended to be the least well-functioning people in the initial sample. For example, the adolescents who dropped out were high risk, meaning that they exhibited high levels of problem behavior, low levels of academic achievement, and low levels of mental health. Boys were more likely to drop out of the study than girls. African Americans were more likely to drop out than European Americans. However, high-risk adolescents were more likely to drop out than low-risk adolescents. Notwithstanding that European Americans were more likely to be low risk than African Americans, there were no differences between African Americans and European Americans in the likelihood of being high risk. Moreover, African Americans in high-risk groups were no more likely to drop out of the study than European Americans in high-risk groups were. Thus, risk status rather than race seems to be important for predicting dropout. Dropping completely out of the study was best predicted by

grade point average (GPA). Between the full and retained samples, the differences were negligible on parent income and parent education.

Analyses conducted to compare our sample to the rest of the sample from the Maryland Adolescent Development in Context study at Wave 1 indicated significant differences on a variety of demographic variables, including total family income, parents' level of education, and youth's academic performance (i.e., GPA). Not surprisingly, adolescents in this subsample came from somewhat wealthier and better educated families and were doing better in school than the remaining adolescents from the Maryland Adolescent Development in Context sample. Consistent with the findings for those adolescents who dropped completely out of the study, our sample consisted of fewer boys and fewer African Americans than the sample at Wave 1. Although the differences are reliable, the effect sizes are relatively modest. To address our specific research objectives, we used data from only a subset of participants from the larger Maryland Adolescent Development in Context study. Depending on the question of interest, we limited the sample based on certain criteria. Our selection criteria and the demographic characteristics of each subsample are described in detail below.

Procedure

Sixty-two interviewers (60% African American, 40% European American; 89% women) participated in collecting data for Waves 1 through 4 of the study. At each wave, one of the 62 trained interviewers visited each family's home to conduct face-to-face interviews and give out self-administered surveys. Adolescents and their primary caregivers (usually the mothers) were interviewed using a face-to-face interview lasting 1 to 2 hours and a questionnaire lasting 30 to 60 minutes). A second caregiver (usually the father) also filled out a questionnaire. A caregiver was a person living in the home defined by the adolescent as primary or secondary. The questionnaires contained a broad range of items concerning adolescent development, such as peer relationships, environmental stressors, and family dynamics. The caregivers and adolescents were paid \$20 each for their participation in the study.

The fifth wave of data was collected in the summer of 1998, one year after the adolescents finished high school. For this wave, questionnaires

were mailed to participants about the job or schooling. Participants were successfully contacted by mail for questionnaires back

Scale construction
adolescent closeness scales were derived from all of the discrete items related to conceptualizations of fathers by researchers. Factor analyses to verify each scale yielded loadings of .5 or greater than .3 on any one factor were created for the construct. Derivations and surveys that included Michael, Malar, Meschke, Zweig, scales measuring and adolescents' good face and good internal states ranged from .78

Control variables
correlated with father-adolescent relationships is some evidence that those with low rates of divorce and those with high rates of divorce, for this reason, were created as a control variable (0 = African American) as controls were created for Wave 1.

Demographic variables
were measured using Wave 4 data. Data regarding family structure from questionnaires at Wave 4. The structure included nondivorced families, the home; stepfamilies in which the father had never married, cohabiting or live-in partner. Exclusion of an exclusive group of

. Between the full and differences were negligible at education.

compare our sample to from the Maryland Adolescent context study at Wave 1 differences on a variety of including total family education, and youth's (GPA). Not surprising subsample came from better educated families school than the remaining Maryland Adolescent sample. Consistent those adolescents who the study, our sample fewer African American Wave 1. Although the effect sizes are relatively our specific research from only a subset of Maryland Adolescent study. Depending on the cited the sample based selection criteria and the of each subsample v.

re
% African American, (39% women) participated Waves 1 through 4 of one of the 62 trained family's home to consents and give out self-adolescents and their (the mothers) were face interview lasting 15-20 minutes and a telephone interview lasting 30 to 60 minutes (usually the father) was completed. A caregiver was a caregiver as defined by the adolescent. The questionnaires items concerning adolescents' peer relationships, and family dynamics. Participants were paid \$20 for their participation in the study. Data was collected in the home of the adolescent after the adolescents' consent. At Wave 1, questionnaires

were mailed to the participants asking them questions about their romantic relationships and their job or schooling status, among other factors. Participants were sent a \$35 check in the mail after successfully completing and mailing the questionnaires back to the researchers.

Measures

Scale construction. Scales measuring parent-adolescent closeness and attitudes toward divorce were derived theoretically and empirically. First, all of the discrete items were organized according to conceptual constructs identified a priori by the researchers. Factor analyses then were conducted to verify each construct. Those items with factor loadings of .5 or better that did not load more than .3 on any other scale were retained. Scales were created by averaging the items for each construct. Derived from existing instruments and surveys that have been well validated (Jodl, Michael, Malanchuk, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2001; Meschke, Zweig, Barber, & Eccles, 2000), the scales measuring father-adolescent closeness and adolescents' attitudes toward divorce display good face and discriminant validity as well as good internal reliability. Cronbach's alphas ranged from .78 to .85 for this sample.

Control variables. Some variables are likely to be correlated with attitudes toward divorce and father-adolescent closeness. For instance, there is some evidence that non-European Americans and those with low education may be more tolerant of divorce than European Americans and those with high education (Amato, 1996). For this reason, we used total family income and ethnicity (0 = African American, 1 = European American) as control variables. These variables were created using interview data collected at Wave 1.

Demographic variables. Gender also was measured using Wave 1 data (0 = males, 1 = females). Data regarding family structure were obtained from questionnaires and face-to-face interviews at Wave 4. The categorical variable for family structure included five different types of families: nondivorced families with both parents living in the home; stepfamilies; and single-parent families in which the parents had divorced, were never married, or in which the parent had a live-in partner. Because we had a nonmutually exclusive group of adolescents who were living

in a stepfamily and reporting closeness to both a stepfather and a noncustodial biological father, we were unable to create one dummy-coded father type variable. Instead, we created two father type variables—custodial status, using the adolescents' reports of their noncustodial biological fathers, and biological status, using the adolescents' reports of their stepfathers. Custodial status has two dummy-coded predictors comparing custodial biological fathers of adolescents living in nondivorced families ($n = 230$) with (a) noncustodial biological fathers of adolescents living in stepfamilies with a stepfather ($n = 35$); and (b) noncustodial biological fathers of adolescents living in divorced families with a single-parent mother ($n = 35$). We did not create parallel variables for adolescents living in single-parent never married or single-parent with a live-in partner households because the sample contains so few adolescents—($n = 10$) and ($n = 4$), respectively. We then created a dummy-coded variable for biological status comparing custodial biological fathers of adolescents living in nondivorced families ($n = 230$) and stepfathers of adolescents living in stepfamilies ($n = 35$), based on a combination of family structure and the adolescent's relationship to the father of interest.

Father-adolescent closeness. Closeness of the adolescents' relationships with their biological fathers and stepfathers was assessed by the adolescents' reports of how close they felt to and how much they identified with each parent at Wave 4. Closeness involved respect, identification, and emotional closeness to a father from the adolescents' perspective. All of the questions concerning the adolescent's biological father (both custodial and noncustodial) and stepfather were parallel. Four items comprised each scale for all of the parental figures. For the questions "How much do you respect your (father/stepfather)?" and "How much do you want to be like the kind of person your (father/stepfather) is when you are an adult?" scores were reported on a 4-point Likert scale that ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 4 (*a lot*). For the question "How close do you feel to your (father/stepfather)?" responses were measured on a 4-point Likert scale that ranged from 1 (*not very close*) to 4 (*extremely close*). Finally, for the item "How often do you and your (father/stepfather) do things together that you enjoy?" scores were indicated by responses ranging from 1 (*almost never*) to 4 (*about once a week*). The composite

closeness measure was created by summing and averaging the items for the father and stepfather separately. Higher scores indicated a closer relationship with the parental figure. Cronbach's alpha was .80 for biological fathers. The alpha was .85 for noncustodial biological fathers and .85 for residential stepfathers.

Attitudes toward divorce. Modified from earlier work by the authors (e.g., Meschke et al., 2000), our dependent variable assessed adolescents' attitudes toward divorce at Wave 5, when the adolescents were approximately 19 years old. Adolescents' attitudes toward divorce were derived from the adolescents' predictions about how likely they thought their own marriages would end in divorce. As before, adolescents responded to two items designed to tap their attitudes toward divorce. The questions "How likely do you think you are to get divorced?" and "How likely do you think you are to marry more than once?" were measured on a common 4-point Likert scale 1 (*very unlikely*) to 4 (*very likely*). These items were summed and averaged to create a composite measure for adolescents' attitudes toward divorce. Higher scores on this scale indicated that the adolescents felt that their future marriages were more likely to end in divorce. For this scale, Cronbach's alpha was .78.

RESULTS

Plan of Analysis

A series of hierarchical linear regressions was performed to test the association between father-adolescent closeness (including biological custodial fathers, biological noncustodial fathers, and stepfathers) and adolescents' attitudes toward divorce. Multiple regression was selected over other methods because it offers a straightforward way to examine main effects and interactions. Hierarchical regression was used to determine whether the variables of interest predicted above and beyond the effects of the control variables (e.g., ethnicity and income).

Two separate regressions were conducted to test biological status and custodial status because of the lack of mutually exclusive groups in the created predictors. Using attitudes toward divorce as the outcome variable, the predictor variables were entered in four separate blocks in accordance with the procedures outlined by Cohen and Cohen (1983). We entered the demographic

variables (i.e., ethnicity and income) in Step 1 to control for their potential association with attitudes toward divorce. Subsequently, we added the variables of primary interest (i.e., adolescent reports of the closeness of the father-adolescent relationship, gender, and father type (custodial status or biological status), depending on the question of interest) in Step 2. In Steps 3 and 4, respectively, we tested for the possibility of interactions among the variables of interest by including the two-way interactions (gender X closeness, gender X father type, and father type X closeness), and subsequently the three-way interaction (gender X father type X closeness). We entered these higher order effects (i.e., two-way and three-way interactions) in the latter steps to partial-out lower order effects (Cohen & Cohen). Creation of the interaction terms and posthoc tests of the significant interactions were conducted following techniques prescribed by Cohen, Cohen, West, and Aiken (2003). The father-adolescent closeness variable was centered prior to forming the product terms of the interaction to reduce multicollinearity among the predictors. Posthoc tests assessed the simple slope of the continuous predictor across levels of the categorical predictor.

Analysis 1

To investigate the relative influence of biological fathers living in and out of the home on adolescents' attitudes toward divorce, we selected a subsample of the original sample that included only adolescents and their biological custodial and noncustodial fathers at Wave 4. This subsample ($n = 300$) was limited to adolescents living with their biological fathers in nondivorced homes (i.e., custodial; $n = 230$) and adolescents who were not living with their biological fathers (i.e., noncustodial) in either a divorced family ($n = 35$) or a stepfamily ($n = 35$) situation. The resulting sample consists of slightly more girls than boys (58% and 42%, respectively). Fifty-three percent of the adolescents were African American, and 47% of the adolescents were European American.

A hierarchical regression was performed to compare the relative influence of biological custodial and noncustodial fathers on adolescents' attitudes toward divorce over time. Specifically, we examined both the closeness of the father-adolescent relationship and custodial status as predictors of youths' attitudes toward divorce.

That is, adolescents should feel less likely to divorce whether the father is biological or noncustodial. We also investigated whether the father's closeness to the adolescent was stronger than the father's status as biological or noncustodial.

In Step 1, we entered control variables such that European American adolescents were more likely to report close relationships with their biological fathers ($\beta = .03$) and noncustodial biological fathers ($\beta = .02$) such that adolescents living in the home reported closer relationships with their biological fathers than adolescents living out of the home ($\beta = .02$). We found a significant main effect for adolescents' gender ($\beta = .02$) such that adolescent boys who were noncustodial biological fathers reported a greater likelihood of divorce in the future than did not have a biological father. A significant main effect was

TABLE 1. PREDICTORS

Predictors	
Ethnicity	
Family income	
<i>Main effects</i>	
Gender	
Custodial versus noncustodial	
Custodial versus out of home	
Closeness to father	
<i>2-way interactions</i>	
Gender X closeness	
Custodial versus noncustodial X closeness	
Custodial versus out of home X closeness	
Custodial versus noncustodial X gender	
Custodial versus out of home X gender	
<i>3-way interactions</i>	
Custodial versus noncustodial X gender X closeness	
Custodial versus out of home X gender X closeness	

R^2
F for change in R^2

Note: $^{\dagger}p < .10$. $^*p < .05$.

ome) in Step 1 to
 ciation with atti-
 tively, we added
 t (i.e., adolescent
 father-adolescent
 r type (custodial
 depending on the
 In Steps 3 and 4,
 ossibility of inter-
 nterest by includ-
 nder X closeness,
 er type X close-
 e-way interaction
 ss). We entered
 e., two-way and
 e latter steps to
 ects (Cohen &
 ction terms and
 interactions were
 es prescribed by
 ken (2003). The
 able was centered
 rms of the inter-
 y among the pre-
 e simple slope of
 ss levels of the

That is, adolescents who feel close to their fathers should feel less likely to divorce regardless of whether the fathers live with the adolescents. We also investigated the role of gender in these analyses. We expect the father-son effect to be stronger than the father-daughter effect.

In Step 1, ethnicity was a significant predictor such that European American adolescents felt more likely to divorce than African American adolescents ($\beta = .18, p < .01$). The main effect for custodial status in Step 2 was significant such that adolescents living in a stepfamily and reporting closeness to a biological father not living in the home felt more likely to divorce than adolescents living in a nondivorced home and reporting closeness to a biological father living in the home ($\beta = .14, p < .05$). In Step 3, we found a significant interaction between the adolescents' gender and father-adolescent closeness for attitudes toward divorce (Table 1). Adolescent boys who felt close to their custodial or noncustodial biological fathers in the 11th grade reported at age 19 that they were less likely to divorce in the future than adolescent boys who did not have a close relationship with their biological fathers ($\beta = -.31, p < .01$). No significant effect was found for girls ($\beta = .01, p = .87$).

Analysis 2

To compare the roles of biological custodial fathers and stepfathers in shaping adolescents' attitudes toward divorce, a subsample of the Maryland Adolescent Development in Context sample was selected to include only those adolescents living with their biological fathers and stepfathers at Wave 4. The subsample ($n = 265$) is limited specifically to adolescents living with their biological fathers in nondivorced homes ($n = 230$), and adolescents living with their stepfathers and biological mothers in remarried families ($n = 35$). The subsample is composed of more girls than boys (59% and 41%, respectively). Fifty-one percent and 49% of the adolescents were African American and European American, respectively.

A hierarchical regression was conducted to assess how the closeness of the father-adolescent relationship (defined here as the adolescents' relationships with their biological custodial fathers and stepfathers) predicts adolescents' attitudes toward divorce. In this instance, we examined father-adolescent closeness and the relation between biological status and attitudes toward divorce. Adolescents who feel close to their

TABLE 1. PREDICTING ADOLESCENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD DIVORCE AS A FUNCTION OF FATHER'S CUSTODIAL STATUS 2 YEARS EARLIER ($n = 300$)

Predictors	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Ethnicity	.24	.08	.18**	.23	.08	.17**	.22	.08	.17**	.22	.08	.17**
Family income	.00	.01	.03	.01	.01	.06	.01	.01	.06	.01	.01	.04
<i>Main effects</i>												
Gender				.01	.08	.01	-.03	.09	-.03	-.06	.09	-.04
Custodial versus step				.28	.12	.14*	.36	.18	.17*	.39	.18	.19*
Custodial versus divorced				-.03	.13	-.01	-.15	.19	-.07	-.20	.19	-.10
Closeness to father				-.11	.06	-.11	-.30	.09	-.31**	-.36	.10	-.38***
<i>2-way interactions</i>												
Gender X closeness							.31	.12	.25**	.42	.13	.34**
Custodial versus step X closeness							.02	.21	.01	.39	.29	.14
Custodial versus divorced X closeness							.03	.19	.01	.40	.33	.14
Custodial versus step X gender							-.10	.26	-.04	-.34	.30	-.13
Custodial versus divorced X gender							.24	.25	.09	.23	.25	.09
<i>3-way interactions</i>												
Custodial versus step X closeness X gender										-.74	.41	-.22 [†]
Custodial versus divorced X closeness X gender										-.58	.40	-.16
R ²	.03			.07			.10			.12		
F for change in R ²	5.16**			3.09*			1.83			2.40 [†]		

Note: [†] $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

ence of biological
 home on adoles-
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 toward divorce.

TABLE 2. PREDICTING ADOLESCENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD DIVORCE AS A FUNCTION OF FATHER'S BIOLOGICAL STATUS 2 YEARS EARLIER ($n = 265$)

Predictors	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Ethnicity	.24	.09	.18**	.24	.09	.18**	.25	.08	.18**	.25	.08	.19**
Family income	-.00	.01	-.01	.00	.01	.01	.00	.01	.00	.00	.01	.00
<i>Main effects</i>												
Gender				-.00	.09	-.02	-.00	.09	-.01	-.01	.09	-.01
Biological versus step				.18	.17	.07	.60	.25	.23*	.60	.25	.23*
Closeness to father				-.10	.06	-.10	-.37	.10	-.39***	-.36	.10	-.37***
<i>2-way interactions</i>												
Gender X closeness							.45	.12	.35***	.43	.13	.33**
Biological versus step X closeness							.25	.22	.07	.11	.28	.03
Biological versus step X gender							-.65	.34	-.19	-.61	.34	-.18 [†]
<i>3-way interactions</i>												
Biological versus step X closeness X gender										.36	.46	.07
R^2			.03			.05			.12			.12
<i>F</i> for change in R^2			3.99*			1.22			6.71***			.60

Note: [†] $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

fathers—biological fathers and stepfathers alike—should later report that they are unlikely to divorce in the future. As before, we also investigated the role of the adolescent's gender in these analyses. We expect the effect for fathers and adolescent boys to be stronger than the effect for fathers and adolescent girls.

Results are presented in Table 2. In Step 1, ethnicity was a significant predictor such that European American adolescents felt more likely to divorce than African American adolescents ($\beta = .18, p < .01$). In Step 3, one significant gender X closeness interaction was observed. Boys who felt close to their biological fathers and stepfathers as 11th-graders felt less likely at age 19 to later divorce ($\beta = -.39, p < .001$). The same effects were not found for girls ($\beta = .08, p = .32$). Taken together, these results are consistent with the inference that the closeness of the father-son relationship influences adolescent boys' attitudes toward divorce, both in the case of boys living with their biological fathers and of boys living with their stepfathers.

DISCUSSION

In this study, we examined how the closeness of father-adolescent relationships is associated with adolescents' attitudes toward divorce over time. First, we hypothesized that adolescents who reported close relationships with their biological

custodial and noncustodial fathers in the 11th grade would later report at age 19 a lower likelihood of divorcing in the future. We found that in measuring adolescents' attitudes toward divorce, custodial status did not matter—a finding consistent with our hypothesis. Boys who shared a close relationship with both custodial and noncustodial fathers in the 11th grade also felt at age 19 less likely to divorce. One reason for this finding is that closeness in the father-adolescent relationship may be a positive influence on adolescents' attitudes toward divorce, even though the adolescents may have experienced divorce in their family situations. Attachment theory lends support to this notion such that adolescents who are securely attached to their parents are likely to feel attached to their romantic partners in early adulthood (Roisman et al., 2001). In addition, social learning theory suggests that boys who learn how to have successful close relationships with their fathers also expect successful close romantic relationships later in life. Sharing a close relationship with a father may be a protective factor for boys' faith in their own marital relationships. Conversely, not sharing a close relationship with a father may be less promising for boys' beliefs in their future marriages.

Little research has examined attitudes toward divorce in an ethnically diverse sample such as this one. Examining ethnic groups in this domain is important because African Americans tend to

differ somewhat from European Americans. For example, African Americans are less likely to remarry after divorce (Forman, 1997). In addition, African Americans are more likely to be involved in remarriages compared to European Americans (Forman, 1997). The findings of this article, however, suggest that ethnicity such as African American is not likely to divorce. In fact, the finding is counterintuitive in that non-European Americans are more prevalent of divorce. The rates indicate that African Americans are more likely to divorce than European Americans (Taylor et al., 1997). It might be that African Americans are more religious than European Americans and believe in a more conservative marriage. Another explanation is that African American adolescents are more likely to be involved in either remarriages or second marriages due to a lack of role models for successful marriages among their parents and adolescents.

Second, we found that adolescent closeness to biological fathers and stepfathers predicted adolescents' attitudes toward divorce. Although a relationship between closeness to biological fathers and stepfathers and adolescents' attitudes toward divorce may be qualitatively different, the pattern of results suggests that the pattern of adolescent closeness to biological fathers and stepfathers and adolescents' attitudes toward divorce are consistent with each other. Boys who felt close to their biological fathers and stepfathers at age 19 to later divorce are consistent with the notion that adolescents who feel close to their parents, have better relationships, and are more likely to be involved in the prospect of marriage.

Adolescents who feel close to their biological fathers and stepfathers are more likely to be involved in marriages than adolescents who feel less close to their biological fathers and stepfathers. Divorced home with biological fathers and stepfathers who have experienced divorce and remarriage is unpredictable. However, the finding is unpredictable and is not surprising. It is less predictable that adolescents who feel less confident in their marriages. Nonetheless, the findings of this study suggest that the future reflects the current. Given current divorce rates, it is not surprising that adolescents who feel less confident in their marriages are more likely to be involved in unhappy marriages.

BIOLOGICAL STATUS 2

Model 4		
B	SE B	β
.25	.08	.19**
.00	.01	.00
-.01	.09	-.01
.60	.25	.23*
-.36	.10	-.37***
.43	.13	.33**
.11	.28	.03
-.61	.34	-.18†
.36	.46	.07
		.12
		.60

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differ somewhat in family structure from European Americans. Further, African American fathers are less likely to reside with their children but are more likely to be involved in their children's lives compared to European American fathers (Bowman & Forman, 1997). Although ethnicity is not the focus of this article, we did find a significant effect for ethnicity such that European Americans felt more likely to divorce than African Americans. This finding is counterintuitive. Previous studies have found that non-European Americans tend to be more tolerant of divorce (Amato, 1996). In addition, divorce rates indicate that African Americans are more likely to divorce than European Americans (e.g., Taylor et al., 1990). One explanation for this finding might be that African Americans tend to be more religious than European Americans, leading them to believe in a strong commitment to marriage. Another explanation could be that the African American adolescents, disproportionately living with either married or never-married parents, had a lack of role models of divorce relative to other adolescents.

Second, we examined relations among father-adolescent closeness, biological status, and adolescents' attitudes toward divorce over time. Although a relationship with a stepfather may be qualitatively different from a relationship with a biological father, we hypothesized that the pattern of associations between father-adolescent closeness and adolescents' attitudes toward divorce would not vary for biological fathers and residential stepfathers. As expected, boys who felt close to their biological fathers or their stepfathers in the 11th grade felt less likely at age 19 to divorce in the future. These findings are consistent with the previous findings: Boys who feel close to their fathers, regardless of biological status, have better attitudes about intimacy and the prospect of their own married lives than boys who do not feel close to their fathers.

Adolescents who were living in a stepfamily with their stepfathers felt more likely to divorce than adolescents who were living in a nondivorced home with their biological fathers. Adolescents who have experienced their parents' divorces and remarriages may feel that marriage is unpredictable and unstable. Thus, they may feel less confident about their own future marriages. Nonetheless, feeling likely to divorce in the future reflects realistic ideas about divorce given current divorce rates, and it may imply that adolescents do not feel condemned to remain in unhappy marriages (Barber & Eccles, 1992).

We found no differences between stepfathers and biological fathers in the way closeness is related to boys' attitudes toward divorce. This finding is interesting because, given the length of time a boy has known his biological father, a close relationship with a biological father might be different or perhaps more intimate than a relationship with a stepfather. Future research should explore the process whereby children develop close relationships with their stepfathers and whether closeness in biological father-son and stepfather-stepson relationships differs. Similarly, developing a close relationship with a stepfather seems to be important for boys' attitudes toward divorce in light of the finding that adolescents living with their mothers and stepfathers tend to feel more likely to divorce than adolescents living with both biological parents. Having a close relationship with a stepfather may offset some of the negativity about marriage and its durability felt by adolescents who have witnessed their parents' divorces.

An additional goal of the study was to explore gender differences. In accordance with social learning theory, we expected to find a stronger effect for fathers and sons than for fathers and daughters. Our findings support this hypothesis because we did not find any effects for girls, but we found effects for fathers and boys. A close father-adolescent relationship may foster more positive attitudes toward intimacy in adult romantic relationships for boys because boys are socialized to be more autonomous and nonexpressive as a part of their masculine identity. In contrast, because girls are socialized to be more interpersonal and nurturing as a part of their feminine identity and to see the roles of wife and mother as more central to their adult lives, a close father-adolescent relationship may not be necessary to promote positive attitudes about marriage (Cooper & Grotevant, 1987). In other words, because adolescent girls generally feel more positively about marriage and the role of wife and mother as a result of their socialization, fathers are less likely to influence girls' attitudes. Others have found intimacy to be correlated with family tolerance for separateness in women and family cohesion in men. Specifically, adolescent boys and girls who reported more intimacy in their relationships also come from families that encouraged bonding in boys and separateness in girls, respectively (Feldman, Gowen, & Fisher, 1998). Adolescents growing up in these types of families may not be socialized according to

typical masculine and feminine stereotypes. For girls, other mechanisms such as an ability to remain independent in father-adolescent relationships may better predict their attitudes toward divorce. Future research should explore this possibility.

Additionally, father-adolescent relationships may not influence girls' attitudes toward divorce because they have more role models of intimacy and marriage as the ideal in their environments than boys do, especially in the media (Ward, 1995). Television programs, magazines, and music depict women involved in social relationships more often than men—especially romantic relationships—within the context of marriage. Boys have fewer role models of intimacy in their environments outside of their families. Hence, fathers may be especially important as role models of interpersonal skills for boys.

A major strength of this study is that it is longitudinal in nature. Few studies have investigated such factors in relation to adolescents' attitudes toward divorce, and even fewer studies have examined these factors using a longitudinal design. Nevertheless, although longitudinal studies allow for the opportunity to examine potentially causal processes better than cross-sectional research, causal conclusions cannot be drawn from these findings because the study is not experimental in nature. An additional shortcoming to the study is that the measures used here were self-report given by the adolescents. Self-report measures may not accurately assess attitudes because of response bias. In addition, common method variance is a limitation given that all reports are from the adolescents. Future research should employ other methods of measurement from varying sources.

An additional strength of this study is the ethnic diversity and socioeconomic status of the sample. Few studies have examined father-adolescent closeness in an ethnically diverse sample such as this one. This is unfortunate because attitudes toward divorce are influenced by family structure, which is not similar among racial and ethnic groups. Although African Americans and middle-class families are represented, people of different ethnic origins and socioeconomic groups have been excluded. Future research should explore how father-adolescent relationships influence adolescents' attitudes toward divorce in samples that include people with a greater variety of ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Attrition is an issue of concern in the present study. Although this is a problem common to

nearly all longitudinal studies, it is an issue that warrants consideration because it may limit our interpretation of the data as well as the generalizability of the findings. This is especially important because those who dropped out of the study tended to be lower functioning, and were more likely to be African American and male than the rest of the sample. It is unclear whether closeness would have been more or less important if more boys would have remained in the study. Because risk status rather than ethnicity better predicted the likelihood of dropping completely out of the study, it is perhaps more important to reflect on how having high-risk adolescents in the sample may have changed the study's results. The high-risk adolescents who dropped out may have had less close relationships or more unstable family lives, and might have felt more likely to divorce than those who remained in the study. Perhaps a close relationship with a father would have been more important for these adolescents because it may have helped them function more effectively.

Few studies have examined the quality of father-adolescent relationships, especially for noncustodial fathers and stepfathers. Although we have a better understanding of how these relationships influence adolescents' beliefs, we do not know whether these findings are specific to fathers or whether findings with mothers would have been similar. We also do not know whether child gender would have moderated these findings or whether the mother-adolescent relationship would have moderated the father-adolescent relationship. Future research should investigate such relations.

In the current study, the closeness of adolescents' relationships with their fathers was examined as a predictor of adolescents' attitudes toward divorce. Our analyses lend support to the hypothesis that closeness in father-adolescent relationships influences boys' attitudes toward divorce over time. Boys who feel close to their fathers—regardless of custodial or biological status—report a lower likelihood of divorcing in the future. These findings suggest that both biological and social fathers matter, and that having them involved in their adolescents' lives is important, especially for boys.

Fatherhood has been redefined over the past decade. Traditionally, the role of the father in families has been that of a breadwinner. More recently, the father's role has expanded to that of caregiver and coparent, especially given high rates of maternal employment. Similarly, the

concept of fatherhood, both biological and social, may help to date the difference in father-adolescent relationships (i.e., custodial vs. noncustodial) in this study. The father as a caregiver and social father may be important to the study.

Recent legislation such as paid paternity leave and custody laws may be more important to the study (Tamis-LeMonda, 1995). This area may help to date the difference in father-adolescent relationships. To better understand the future research from fathers' perspectives evolves over time, a multimethod approach, unique and conjoint, may be important to the study. Studying father figures such as stepfathers, and grandfathers, may be important to the study. Two types of fathers, biological and social, may be important to the study. Better adolescent relationships with fathers close to only one type

This research was supported by the National Endowment for Family Foundation Research on Child Development Among Youth. I would like to thank Jacquelynne S. Eccles for her support and advice. I would like to thank Tom Chatman, Diane Early, Karen Kuhn, Karen McCarth, Kate Rosenblum, Erica Taylor, Cindy White, and Stephen Peck for their statistical advice. We would like to thank Malanchuk and Math for their assistance on this project.

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it is an issue that it may limit our all as the general- especially impor- out of the study and were more and male than the whether closeness important if more the study. Because better predicted completely out of the tant to reflect on ts in the sample results. The high- out may have had e unstable family likely to divorce study. Perhaps a would have been scents because it more effectively. d the quality of , especially for fathers. Although ng of how these ents' beliefs, we dings are specific gs with mothers also do not know have moderated mother-adolescent erated the father- research should

ness of adoles- fathers was exam- scents' attitudes nd support to the father-adolescent attitudes toward eel close to their al or biological d of divorcing in ggest that both matter, and that adolescents' lives s. ned over the past of the father in eadwinner. More expanded to that cially given high t. Similarly, the

concept of fatherhood has been expanded to include both biological and social fathers and to accommodate the differences in fatherhood in varying family structures (i.e., custodial and noncustodial). The findings in this study support the importance of the father as a caregiver and of both biological and social fathers for adolescents' development.

Recent legislation and policy development, such as paid paternal leave, paternity establishment, and custody laws, are encouraging fathers to be more involved in their children's lives (Tamis-LeMonda & Cabrera, 1999). Research in this area may help to maximize the effectiveness of social policy programs geared toward fathers. To better understand fatherhood and its trajectory, future research should explore fatherhood from fathers' perspectives, as well as how it evolves over time. Future research should use multimethod approaches to examine fathers' unique and conjoint contributions to their adolescents' lives. Studies should include fathers and father figures such as single-parent fathers, adoptive fathers, and grandfathers. Moreover, it will be important to determine whether being close to two types of fathers, biological and social, signals better adolescent adjustment than does being close to only one type of father.

NOTE

This research was supported by a grant from the MacArthur Foundation Research Network on Successful Adolescent Development Among Youth in High-Risk Settings awarded to Jacquelyne S. Eccles and by a grant from NICHD awarded to J. S. Eccles and A. Saeroff. The authors would like to thank Todd Bartko, Elaine Belansky, Celina Chatman, Diane Early, Kari Fraser, Ariel Kalil, Linda Kuhn, Karen McCarthy, Leslie Morrison, Dairia Ray, Kate Rosenblum, Robert Roeser, Sherri Steele, Erica Taylor, Cindy Winston, and Carol Wong. A special thanks to Stephen Peck and Lowell Gaertner for their expert statistical advice. We would also like to thank Oksana Malanchuk and Matthew Basch for their invaluable assistance on this project.

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