

**MOTHERING, FATHERING, AND DIVORCE: THE INFLUENCE
OF DIVORCE ON REPORTS OF AND DESIRES FOR
MATERNAL AND PATERNAL INVOLVEMENT***

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The present study investigated the extent to which young adults' reports of—and desires for—maternal and paternal involvement differed between intact and divorced families. An ethnically diverse sample of 1,376 young adults completed measures of reported and desired mothering and fathering across 20 parenting domains. Results indicated that both reports of and desires for father involvement differed sharply by family form (intact versus divorced), whereas few family form differences emerged for reported or desired mother involvement. These findings are discussed in terms of implications for custody and access decisions within the family court system.

Keywords: mothers; fathers; divorce; involvement; parenting; family form

**THE INFLUENCE OF DIVORCE ON REPORTS OF AND DESIRES FOR
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Parenting is crucial to the lives of children, adolescents, and young adults. Attachments to, and involvement from, both mothers and fathers are essential for healthy development throughout the lifespan (Parke, 2004). From socialization and play in early childhood to monitoring, supervision, and negotiation in adolescence, both mothers and fathers play critical guiding roles in the lives of their children (Maccoby, 1992; Sroufe, 2005; Steinberg, 2001). Children who receive “good enough” parenting are more likely to feel successful and competent, as compared to those who did not and who are more likely to suffer from low self-worth, depression, and other psychological symptomatology (Richaud de Minzi, 2006; Laible & Carlo, 2004).

Critically, children from divorced families and with nonresidential fathers may be least likely to receive the parenting—and especially the fathering—that they need (Fabricius, 2003; Finley & Schwartz, 2007; Marquardt, 2005). Fathers most commonly become nonresidential following divorce (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1999), and this nonresidential status has known consequences for children's lives (Riggio, 2004; Schwartz & Finley, 2005a). Moreover, the custodial and access arrangements following divorce have been shown to exert long-term effects on the father-child relationship (Ahrons & Tanner, 2003). Becoming a “visitor” in his child's life may well undermine the father's ability to remain active in important domains—such as caregiving, involvement in school, and facilitating emotional development (Kelly, 2007).

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However, the ways in which mothering is affected by divorce have been much less widely studied. Literature suggests that mothers may become more emotionally dependent on their children following divorce (Silverberg Koerner, Kenyon, & Rankin, 2006). However, it is not known whether (or how) these changes would affect the child's perception of the mother's involvement in her or his life. This is an area in need of further study.

Parental Involvement, Parental Roles, and the Impact of Divorce

There are separate literatures on parental roles and domains of parental involvement (Andrews, Luckey, Bolden, Whiting-Fickling, & Lind, 2004; Pleck, 1997), on involvement of mothers and fathers in intact families (Craig, 2006; Dienhart, 2002; Parke, 2004), on the impact of divorce on father involvement (Ahrons & Tanner, 2003; Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000) and on "missed opportunities" and "emotional longing" for a father-child relationship (Fabricius & Hall, 2000; Finley & Schwartz, 2007). However, the present study is among the first to study all of these variables simultaneously—and to include both mothers and fathers—in the service of understanding how young people's perceived parenting in different domains may differ between intact and divorced families. By extension, the present study has the potential to shed light on the degree to which young people from intact and divorced families believe that their "best interests" have been served by the family court system. It is important for custody and access decisions to be based on sound empirical research (Kelly & Lamb, 2000; Shulman, Scharf, Lumer, & Maurer, 2001).

Although many studies use general measures of parental involvement (e.g., Flouri & Buchanan, 2003; Sartor & Youniss, 2002), scholars have acknowledged that parents may be differentially involved in various aspects of their children's lives (e.g., Fan & Chen, 2001; Hawkins & Palkovitz, 1999). Some fathers may be perceived as involved in areas such as discipline, protection, and providing income, but as comparatively less involved in areas such as companionship and caregiving (Andrews et al., 2004; Bretherton, Lambert, & Golby, 2005). Further, certain domains of parenting may be more affected by divorce than others (Schwartz & Finley, 2005a). It has also been suggested that divorce may undermine the fathering role (through nonresident status and visitation policies) to a greater extent than it undermines the mothering role (Braver, 1999; Leite & McKenry, 2002; Marquardt, 2005). It is therefore important to understand exactly *which* domains of mothering and fathering (at least as perceived retrospectively by young adult children) are most different between intact and divorced families.

Some research has examined this issue with regard to fathers. For fathers, instrumental functions such as discipline, protection, and monitoring schoolwork—which cannot feasibly be carried out from outside the home—may be more strongly affected by divorce than expressive domains such as sharing activities, companionship, and facilitating emotional development (Schwartz & Finley, 2005b). Because many fathers from both intact and divorced families are less involved in expressive domains than in instrumental domains (Finley & Schwartz, 2006), and because divorced fathers tend to be less involved than fathers from intact families, expressive involvement from divorced fathers may be harmfully low (Schwartz & Finley, 2005a). Thus, there are reasons to expect that divorce would undermine different components of the father's role in different ways, and research is needed to ascertain the extent to which the same may be true for mothers.

In intact families, the mother's and father's roles may complement one another, such that the father may be primarily responsible for some functions and the mother for others

(e.g., Parke, 2002; Parsons & Bales, 1955). In divorced families, however, each parent is completely responsible for all of the child's needs during the time the child is in her or his care. Like intact families, divorced families are complex and multifaceted, and there are a number of factors that may influence a divorced parent's involvement with her or his children (Arditti & Keith, 1993; Ihinger-Tallman, Pasley, & Buehler, 1993). For example, divorced parents may be hampered by visitation policies, emotional distress, and continued conflict with their former spouse (Dudley, 1991). Visitation policies may limit the amount of time that a nonresidential father can spend with his children (Laasko & Adams, 2006; Pruett & Pruett, 1998), and divorced mothers and fathers may increase their workload and/or enter new romantic relationships, both of which can take them away from their children (Arditti & Madden-Derdich, 1997; Braver, 1999; Hawkins, Amato, & King, 2006). Some divorced fathers also choose to disinvest themselves from their children for a variety of reasons, but often because of reasons related to the adversarial nature of the family court system (Dudley, 1991). Given the many strains that many divorced mothers experience in becoming the sole custodial parent (Light & Ureta, 2004; Silverberg Koerner et al., 2006), mothers may also be less available to their children following divorce—and it is possible that desires for additional mother, as well as father, involvement may become salient.

Use of Retrospective Reports

In our program of research, we utilize retrospective reports of parenting from young adults. Young adults' retrospective reports of parenting are important to examine because they provide a mature perspective on the "receipt" of parenting (Finley & Schwartz, 2004, 2007; Sobol, Delaney, & Earn, 1998). That is, young adults can tell us in which areas their parents were involved and in which areas they were not—as well as the areas in which they *would have wanted* more or less parental involvement. In divorced families, desires for more fathering than one received can be taken as subtle indices of divorce-related distress, and therefore as outcomes of the divorce process (Finley & Schwartz, 2007; Laumann-Billings & Emery, 2000). It is yet to be determined whether the same is true of desires for additional mothering. Specifically, asking young adults from intact and divorced families how much involvement they received—and the extent to which this level of involvement met their perceived needs—can tell us how the divorce process and custody decisions might be changed in the service of creating the most favorable arrangements for children's long-term adjustment (Ahrons & Tanner, 2003; Fabricius & Hall, 2000; Finley & Schwartz, 2007). Perhaps most importantly, such research can tell us about the "best interests" of the child, from children's own long-term perspectives (Finley, 2002).

Although retrospective studies may be subject to recall bias, the retrospective method can be used to study young people's perceptions of and desires for parental involvement (Fabricius, 2003; Fabricius & Hall, 2000; Finley, 2006; Laumann-Billings & Emery, 2000; Marquardt, 2005; Shulman et al., 2001). The retrospective method has also supported research relating recollections of parental involvement (Finley & Schwartz, 2007; Schwartz & Finley, 2006) and of parental acceptance-rejection (Rohner & Britner, 2002) to psychosocial outcomes in adulthood. Because our retrospective measures assess the totality of the mother's or father's involvement, they allow the young adult to reflect back on her or his childhood and adolescence and to characterize each parent's involvement as a whole. Retrospective methods allow for sampling of young adults who are no longer minors and

who therefore may be more free to express their true feelings and opinions (Warshak, 2003). Additionally, young adults are likely to characterize their parents based not only on their years of experience with them, but also as they contemplate their own future parenthood (Arnett, 1998; 2000).

The Present Study

The present study was designed to extend our earlier work on father involvement to include mother involvement as well. In this study, we surveyed an ethnically diverse sample of young adults from intact and divorced families. We surveyed 20 domains of involvement (e.g., providing income, caregiving, companionship, discipline) based largely on the work of Hawkins and Palkovitz (1999), who have called for a more nuanced understanding of paternal involvement. In our prior work assessing only father involvement, we have found that these domains could be empirically grouped into “instrumental” and “expressive” clusters (Finley & Schwartz, 2004; 2006).

Hypotheses

We advanced two hypotheses. First, we hypothesized that perceptions of paternal involvement would differ more greatly by divorce than would perceptions of maternal involvement. Although maternal stress and financial burdens may increase following divorce (Arditti & Madden-Derdich, 1997), the same may be true of stress and financial burdens for fathers (Braver, 1999; Comanor, 2004). Moreover, the nonresident role most often assigned to fathers after divorce may serve to substantially reduce their involvement (cf. Fabricius & Braver, 2003; 2004; Finley, 2003).

Our second hypothesis was that young adults from divorced families would express significantly greater desires for more father involvement than would young adults from intact families, but that the corresponding finding for mothers would be much smaller, if not nonsignificant (cf. Finley, 2006). Prior research has found that divorce often leaves young people with feelings of regret and “missed opportunities” about their relationships with their fathers (Fabricius & Hall, 2000; Laumann-Billings & Emery, 2000; Schwartz & Finley, 2005a). In a national survey assessing such feelings about both mothers and fathers, far fewer individuals from divorced families expressed these feelings about their mothers than about their fathers (Finley, 2006; Marquardt, 2005).

METHOD

Participants

Participants in the present study were 1,376 young adult university students (76% female; mean age 19.81, $SD = 3.35$, 92.1% between 18 and 29). The sample used in the present analyses represents 80.2% of the total sample collected. Half of all participants (50%) were freshmen, with the remainder being sophomores (19%), juniors (17%), seniors (12%), or graduate students (2%). In terms of ethnicity, 59% of participants were Hispanic, 23% were non-Hispanic White, 12% were non-Hispanic Black, 5% were Asian, and 3% were of mixed ethnicity. The majority (80%) of data were gathered at a public university in

Miami where the majority of students are Hispanic. To increase the number of non-Hispanics in the sample, additional data were gathered at another public university in northern Florida that serves a largely non-Hispanic White student population.

The majority (74%) of participants were born in the United States, whereas the majority of mothers (70%) and fathers (69%) were born abroad. The most common countries of origin for immigrant participants and parents were Cuba, Colombia, Nicaragua, Haiti, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic. Of those participants reporting socioeconomic status (during the participant's adolescence), 13% of participants reported annual family incomes below \$30,000; 23% between \$30,000 and \$50,000; 38% between \$50,000 and \$100,000, 16% between \$100,000 and \$150,000, and 10% above \$150,000. Forty-three percent of fathers and 38% of mothers were college graduates, whereas 13% of fathers and 8% of mothers had not graduated high school.

For the present analyses, we used only participants from intact or divorced families and who identified their biological mothers and fathers as the most important parent figures in their lives. Among participants from divorced families, we restricted the sample to those whose fathers had been strictly nonresidential following divorce—that is, individuals who did not reside with their fathers at any point following their parents' divorce. Fathers whose children live with them following divorce often differ sharply in involvement from fathers who are strictly nonresidential (Schwartz & Finley, 2005b). Cases where the child resides with the father following divorce do not represent the majority of custody and access decisions made by family courts.

Of the 1,376 participants included in the present analyses, 75% ($n = 1,037$) were from intact families, and 25% ($n = 339$) were from divorced families. Among participants from divorced families, the mean participant age at the time of divorce was 8.2 years ($SD = 5.2$, range 0 to 22). Participants from the full data set that were excluded from the present analyses included those who resided with their fathers following divorce (4.0%; $n = 69$), those reporting the death of one or both parents (2.2%; $n = 39$), those rating a non-biological mother or father figure (9.5%; $n = 162$), those reporting that their parents had never been married (0.5%; $n = 8$), and those who did not provide family form data (3.5%; $n = 60$).

Measures

Demographics. We assessed a number of demographic variables, including age, gender, year in school, annual household income (during the participant's adolescence), and the mother's and father's level of education. Participants were asked whether they and their parents were born in the United States, and if not, where they or their parents were born. Individuals from divorced families were asked how old they were when the divorce occurred, and what their living arrangements were following the divorce.

Maternal and Paternal Involvement. Mother and father involvement were each assessed in 20 domains of parenting drawn primarily from Hawkins and Palkovitz (1999): intellectual involvement, emotional involvement, social involvement, ethical/moral development, spiritual development, physical involvement, career development, developing responsibility, developing independence, developing competence, leisure/fun/play, providing income, sharing activities, mentoring, caregiving, being protective, advising, discipline, school/homework, and companionship. Within each domain, we asked participants to indicate, on a scale of 1 (*not at all involved*) to 5 (*extremely involved*), how involved their mothers and fathers had been during the participant's childhood and adolescence. Within each domain,

we also asked participants to indicate, on a scale of 1 (*much less involved*) to 5 (*much more involved*), how involved they would have wanted their mothers and fathers to be (relative to the level of involvement reported). A sample item from this scale reads, “_____ developing competence _____,” where the participant is instructed to indicate reported involvement on the left side and desired involvement on the right.

Procedure

At the Miami site, participants came to a laboratory and completed the assessment in groups of eight to ten. At the Northern Florida site, participants completed the assessment during class. The average completion time ranged from 20 to 30 minutes. Data were collected between September 2004 and January 2006.

RESULTS

Demographic Descriptives

To examine the extent to which studying college students may have resulted in a comparatively advantaged sample, we compared the socioeconomic distribution of the sample to that of the U.S. population as a whole. Given the well-known ethnic disparities in socioeconomic status, we examined the extent to which socioeconomic status in our sample (indexed by annual family income and parent education) differed by ethnicity. We examined only Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics, because sample sizes in the Asian and mixed-ethnicity groups were too small to analyze. Among those individuals who reported knowing their family's annual household income (77% of the sample), family income differed significantly by ethnicity, $\chi^2(10, N = 1050) = 83.33, p < .001, \phi = .28$. Only 4% of White participants, compared to 25% of Blacks and 14% of Hispanics, reported annual family incomes below \$30,000. Conversely, 39% of Whites, compared to 12% of Blacks and 22% of Hispanics, reported family incomes above \$100,000 per year. Summary data from the U.S. Census Bureau (2001, Table 764) indicate that, in 1998, 37% of American families reported family incomes less than \$25,000, 29% between \$25,000 and \$49,999, 25% between \$50,000 and \$99,999, and 9% over \$100,000. Comparing the present sample with the national statistics suggests that White respondents were somewhat more affluent than the census averages, but that Blacks and Hispanics were not.

Similarly, there were ethnic differences in the father's education, $\chi^2(8, N = 1350) = 46.02, p < .001, \phi = .19$; and in the mother's education, $\chi^2(8, N = 1354) = 16.00, p < .05, \phi = .11$. Twenty-one percent of Black fathers, compared to 14% of Hispanic fathers and 7% of White fathers, had not completed high school—whereas 29% of Black fathers, 41% of Hispanic fathers, and 54% of White fathers had at least a college degree. For mothers' education, the primary difference was in the percentage of mothers who had not completed high school (11% of Black mothers, 9% of Hispanic mothers, and 4% of White mothers).

Reported Involvement by Domain, Parent, and Family Form

Because of the ethnic diversity in the sample, we first sought to determine the impact of ethnicity on the reported involvement results. We conducted a four-way

Domain \times Parent \times Family Form \times Ethnicity analysis of variance (ANOVA) on reported parental involvement, focusing on the four-way interaction effect. All but one of the Asian participants were from intact families, so we conducted this analysis using only White, Black, and Hispanic participants. Results indicated that the four-way multivariate interaction effect was not statistically significant, Wilks' $\lambda = .96$, $F(38, 2500) = 1.27$, $p = .12$, $\eta^2 = .02$.

We also conducted the Domain \times Parent \times Family Form ANOVA with young adult gender as an additional independent variable. Although some of the effects involving young adult gender were statistically significant because of the large sample size, none of the main effects or interactions involving gender exceeded an effect size of .02. We conducted similar analyses for mothers' and fathers' countries of origin (using countries from which at least 25 families had immigrated), socioeconomic status, and parents' work schedules. None of these variables interacted significantly with domain, parent, and family form vis-à-vis involvement ratings. We therefore concluded that the patterns of involvement ratings by domain, parent, and family form were consistent across gender, ethnicity, countries of origin, and parental work schedules. As a result, we conducted the remaining analyses without these additional independent variables.

A 20 (Domain) \times 2 (Parent) \times 2 (Family Form) analysis of variance conducted on the reported involvement scores produced a significant three-way interaction, Wilks' $\lambda = .93$, $F(19, 1336) = 5.74$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .08$. To explore the three-way interaction, we conducted a series of follow-up univariate analyses of variance to explore the extent to which reported maternal and paternal involvement in each parenting domain differed by family form (see Table 1). For fathers, all univariate effects were significant at $p < .001$, and effect sizes (partial η^2) ranged from .04 (leisure/fun/play) to .21 (providing income). Consistent with Finley and Schwartz (2006), the five domains associated with the strongest family form differences were in the instrumental domain cluster. For mothers, involvement in only 10 of the 20 domains differed significantly by family form, and all effect sizes were .01 or below. Although the significant differences in mother involvement for half of the domains suggest that there may also be important differences in reports of maternal involvement between intact and divorced families, the corresponding differences in reports of paternal involvement are clearly larger.

As a post-hoc analysis, within divorced families, we computed correlations between the participant's age at the time of divorce and each of the parental involvement ratings (see Table 2). For paternal involvement, the largest correlations with age at the time of divorce were primarily with involvement in instrumental domains such as discipline, providing income, developing responsibility, and ethical/moral development. What this suggests is that the father's perceived involvement in instrumental functions is related to the amount of time during which he resided in the child's home. The effect of the number of years of coresidence with the child was less evident for many expressive domains, such as sharing activities, leisure/fun/play, companionship, emotional development, and social development—as well as for advising and for being protective. For mothers, providing income was the only domain in which the respondent's age at the time of divorce was related to young adult reports of involvement. This correlation was negative, indicating that the longer the father had been out of the household, the more involved the mother was perceived to have been in providing income. This finding is consistent with research (Light & Ureta, 2004) suggesting that the demands on mothers to generate income increase following divorce.

Table 1
Reported Paternal and Maternal Involvement by Domain and Family Form

Domain	Fathers			Mothers				
	Intact M (SD)	Divorced M (SD)	F Ratio	Partial η^2	Intact M (SD)	Divorced M (SD)	F Ratio	Partial η^2
Providing Income	4.68 (0.76)	3.51 (1.47)	359.23***	.21	4.26 (1.09)	4.42 (0.91)	6.05*	.00
Discipline	4.22 (1.03)	3.09 (1.50)	239.82***	.15	4.34 (0.91)	4.21 (1.05)	4.93*	.00
Ethical/Moral Development	4.12 (1.03)	3.06 (1.42)	218.30***	.14	4.54 (0.76)	4.39 (0.90)	8.37**	.01
Developing Responsibility	4.20 (1.01)	3.15 (1.50)	213.56***	.14	4.43 (0.85)	4.42 (0.91)	0.02	.00
Being Protective	4.40 (0.97)	3.41 (1.43)	201.26***	.13	4.63 (0.69)	4.53 (0.81)	4.66*	.00
Developing Competence	3.95 (1.06)	2.99 (1.43)	171.91***	.11	4.08 (1.01)	4.16 (1.00)	1.37	.00
Caregiving	3.91 (1.19)	2.91 (1.41)	163.01***	.11	4.76 (0.60)	4.62 (0.73)	12.54***	.01
Companionship	3.60 (1.18)	2.67 (1.39)	144.08***	.10	4.26 (0.97)	4.11 (1.07)	6.15*	.00
Mentoring/Teaching	3.71 (1.18)	2.82 (1.39)	129.99***	.09	4.00 (1.07)	3.79 (1.17)	9.09**	.01
Career Development	3.85 (1.19)	3.00 (1.45)	128.92***	.09	3.89 (1.10)	3.87 (1.14)	0.08	.00
Advising	3.97 (1.10)	3.16 (1.39)	120.01***	.08	4.35 (0.86)	4.32 (0.93)	0.33	.00
Intellectual Development	3.88 (1.11)	3.08 (1.35)	116.39***	.08	4.14 (0.96)	4.14 (0.99)	0.01	.00
Developing Independence	3.85 (1.17)	3.01 (1.48)	111.08***	.08	3.90 (1.23)	4.08 (1.15)	6.56*	.01
Spiritual Development	3.11 (1.40)	2.27 (1.33)	93.25***	.06	3.98 (1.16)	3.76 (1.24)	8.72**	.01
Social Development	3.31 (1.17)	2.59 (1.28)	91.46***	.06	3.92 (1.02)	3.89 (1.03)	0.22	.00
Sharing Activities/Interests	3.51 (1.14)	2.81 (1.29)	87.14***	.06	3.72 (1.09)	3.61 (1.11)	2.92	.00
School/Homework	3.39 (1.31)	2.62 (1.38)	85.14***	.06	3.93 (1.18)	3.68 (1.22)	11.06**	.01
Emotional Development	3.30 (1.14)	2.64 (1.23)	80.19***	.06	4.24 (0.93)	4.18 (0.94)	1.18	.00
Physical Development	3.32 (1.24)	2.61 (1.34)	79.08***	.06	3.74 (1.12)	3.64 (1.21)	2.03	.00
Leisure/Fun/Play	3.56 (1.21)	2.94 (1.34)	62.91***	.04	3.75 (1.08)	3.63 (1.11)	2.92	.00

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

Table 2
Relations of Participant Age at Divorce to Reported and Desired Parental Involvement

<i>Domain</i>	<i>Father</i>	<i>Mother</i>
Discipline	.34***	-.18**
Intellectual Development	.31***	-.12*
Providing Income	.30***	-.24***
Developing Responsibility	.29***	-.06
Ethical/Moral Development	.27***	-.13**
Physical Development	.24***	-.18**
Developing Competence	.24***	-.08
School	.24***	-.09
Spiritual Development	.22***	-.07
Career Development	.22***	-.02
Developing Independence	.21***	-.06
Caregiving	.19***	-.10
Mentoring/Teaching	.18**	-.11*
Social Development	.17**	-.07
Emotional Development	.17**	-.12*
Being Protective	.17**	-.13*
Companionship	.16**	-.03
Leisure/Fun/Play	.15**	-.10
Sharing Activities/Interests	.15**	-.07
Advising	.15**	-.13*

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

Desired Involvement by Domain, Parent, and Family Form

We then proceeded to conduct analyses on the desired involvement data. The response scale for desired fathering is curvilinear (cf. Finley & Schwartz, 2004), with “just right” (3) representing the highest level of satisfaction with the involvement received. Responses of “desired less” (1) and “desired more” (5) both indicate dissatisfaction with the amount of involvement received. Analyses of variance, as well as other parametric statistics, assume that the dependent variable is linear and continuous (Cohen, 1988)—which is not the case for our desired involvement variables. Therefore, we analyzed the desired involvement data so as to take this curvilinearity into account. As we have done in our prior work (Finley & Schwartz, 2007), we divided the response scale into its component parts—desired less, “just right,” and desired more—and conducted chi-square analyses by family form. We conducted separate analyses for desired maternal and paternal involvement responses. As shown in Table 3, family form differences in desires for additional involvement were highly significant and strong for fathers, but were weak and largely nonsignificant for mothers. When domains are ordered according to the percentage of participants from divorced families who desired additional involvement from their fathers, the top six domains listed are all in the expressive domain cluster. However, four of the five fathering domains with the strongest family form differences in desired parenting were in the instrumental domain cluster. What this suggests is that, although young adult children of divorce express the *greatest desires* for expressive involvement from their fathers, the reported *differences by family form* were largest for some of the instrumental domains. Most critically, these results together suggest that children of divorce perceive having suffered greater levels of both expressive and instrumental paternal deprivation, relative to children of intact families. As

Table 3
Desired Paternal and Maternal Involvement Categories X Family Form

Domain	Fathers				Mothers			
	Desired Less (Int, Div)	Just Right (Int, Div)	Desired More (Int, Div)	χ^2 (ϕ)	Desired Less (Int, Div)	Just Right (Int, Div)	Desired More (Int, Div)	χ^2 (ϕ)
Providing Income	3.3%, 2.4%	72.4%, 39.8%	24.3%, 57.9%	130.71*** (.31)	4.7%, 2.4%	73.4%, 68.2%	21.9%, 29.4%	10.38** (.09)
Caregiving	1.5%, 2.7%	60.2%, 31.0%	38.3%, 66.4%	87.25*** (.25)	1.9%, 0.0%	77.7%, 74.2%	20.3%, 25.8%	10.47** (.09)
Being Protective	26.0%, 19.6%	57.0%, 40.1%	16.9%, 40.4%	79.53*** (.24)	31.7%, 24.4%	54.0%, 59.5%	14.3%, 16.1%	6.48* (.07)
Ethical/Moral Development	5.2%, 6.2%	65.7%, 41.5%	29.0%, 52.2%	64.65*** (.22)	5.7%, 4.5%	74.4%, 71.1%	19.9%, 24.4%	3.51 (.05)
Developing Responsibility	7.3%, 5.9%	65.1%, 43.0%	27.7%, 51.0%	62.95*** (.21)	7.5%, 7.7%	68.6%, 67.4%	23.9%, 24.9%	0.19 (.01)
Developing Competence	3.2%, 4.2%	68.1%, 45.1%	28.7%, 50.7%	57.95*** (.21)	2.7%, 1.2%	71.5%, 74.1%	25.7%, 24.7%	2.89 (.05)
Career Development	6.5%, 8.0%	57.8%, 36.2%	35.7%, 55.8%	48.60*** (.19)	7.0%, 6.8%	60.9%, 57.9%	32.1%, 35.3%	1.22 (.03)
Companionship	1.7%, 3.6%	53.5%, 32.3%	44.7%, 64.1%	46.71*** (.19)	2.7%, 3.6%	70.7%, 63.5%	26.6%, 32.9%	6.17* (.07)
Discipline	20.9%, 17.9%	62.4%, 48.2%	16.7%, 33.9%	45.60*** (.18)	20.0%, 18.1%	63.7%, 62.6%	16.2%, 19.3%	1.91 (.04)
Advising	6.3%, 8.0%	59.4%, 38.6%	34.3%, 53.4%	45.11*** (.18)	10.1%, 9.8%	65.3%, 60.5%	24.7%, 29.7%	3.38 (.05)
Mentoring/Teaching	3.2%, 5.6%	56.9%, 36.5%	39.9%, 57.9%	42.96*** (.18)	3.5%, 2.4%	65.9%, 59.2%	30.6%, 38.5%	7.65* (.08)
Social Development	5.1%, 5.9%	54.6%, 34.4%	40.3%, 59.6%	42.33*** (.18)	10.4%, 7.7%	61.6%, 55.6%	27.9%, 36.7%	9.95** (.09)
Emotional Development	3.9%, 4.5%	47.1%, 27.9%	49.0%, 67.7%	38.75*** (.17)	5.8%, 5.0%	63.6%, 58.2%	30.6%, 36.8%	4.56 (.06)
Physical Development	4.6%, 6.6%	60.8%, 42.1%	34.7%, 51.3%	35.81*** (.16)	5.4%, 4.7%	63.0%, 62.0%	31.6%, 33.2%	0.46 (.02)
Spiritual Development	6.3%, 8.3%	52.4%, 33.6%	41.3%, 58.0%	35.76*** (.16)	9.3%, 7.7%	61.6%, 57.4%	29.1%, 34.9%	4.34 (.06)
Intellectual Development	2.6%, 3.9%	55.6%, 37.1%	41.8%, 59.1%	34.89*** (.16)	2.8%, 2.1%	64.4%, 61.2%	32.8%, 36.7%	2.07 (.04)
Developing Independence	9.0%, 8.0%	56.3%, 40.4%	34.7%, 51.6%	31.53*** (.15)	11.3%, 8.0%	52.0%, 60.8%	36.7%, 31.2%	8.53* (.08)
School/Homework	7.9%, 8.3%	54.1%, 37.7%	38.0%, 54.0%	29.22*** (.15)	9.2%, 5.0%	59.7%, 57.9%	31.1%, 37.1%	8.33* (.08)
Leisure/Fun/Play	1.5%, 3.9%	47.9%, 32.9%	50.5%, 63.2%	26.90*** (.14)	4.5%, 3.6%	56.0%, 50.0%	39.5%, 46.4%	5.29 (.06)
Sharing Activities/Interests	1.3%, 3.6%	46.9%, 34.1%	51.8%, 62.3%	21.87*** (.13)	2.5%, 1.5%	57.8%, 52.2%	39.7%, 46.3%	5.32 (.06)

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

shown in Table 3, all of the family form differences in desired fathering were above Cohen's (1988) cutoff for a small effect size (.10), whereas *none* of the effect sizes in desired mothering reached this cutoff.

DISCUSSION

The present study explored differences between intact and divorced families in terms of young adults' reports of—and desires for—maternal and paternal involvement across 20 parenting domains. Reported involvement reflects young adults' perceptions of the extent to which their mothers and fathers were active participants in their lives, and these perceptions have been found to be uniquely predictive of individuals' psychosocial outcomes (Rohner & Britner, 2002; Rohner, Khaleque, & Cournoyer, 2005). Desired involvement represents “missed opportunities” and “emotional longing” for parent-child relationships (Fabricius & Hall, 2000; Laumann-Billings & Emery, 2000), and these desires have been shown to serve as outcomes of divorce for young adults (Finley & Schwartz, 2007).

Reported Involvement

The first substantive contribution of the present study is that—even when perceived mother involvement is also considered—the strongest differences by divorce continue to emerge for perceived father involvement. Consistent with Hypothesis 1, across all 20 domains, paternal involvement differed more strongly by divorce than did maternal involvement. Some of the differences in domains of mother involvement reached significance because of the large sample size. However, on the basis of effect sizes, the present results suggest that differences in mother-child relationships between intact and divorced families are small. These findings are consistent with other results suggesting that perceptions of the mother-child relationship are similar between intact and divorced families (Brenner & Hyde, 2006). The absence of the father from the household thus does not appear to affect the mother's involvement to a considerable extent.

By contrast, and consistent with prior research (e.g., Ahrons, & Tanner, 2003; Marsiglio et al., 2000), the differences in perceived father involvement by divorce were striking. Reported involvement in instrumental domains such as providing income, discipline, ethical/moral development, and being protective differed most strongly by family form. Although expressive domains differed less strongly by family form, absolute levels of reported involvement in many expressive domains were relatively low in both intact and divorced families. In divorced families, young adults rated their fathers as “rarely involved” and “sometimes involved” in many expressive domains.

Taken together, these patterns of findings raise significant concerns about the father's role—and the father-child relationship—following divorce. Although fathers in intact families tend to be less involved than their wives in their children's lives (Craig, 2006; Dienhart, 2002), this disparity between parents is exacerbated in divorced families for nearly all domains of parenting. Nonresident status decreases the extent to which children perceive their fathers as involved in their lives, largely because visitation schedules often limit fathers' meaningful contact with their children to weekends and occasional weekdays (Finley, 2003).

Desired Involvement

Because we include reports of and desires for both mother and father involvement, a second substantive contribution of the present study is that divorce is often associated with increased desires for father involvement, but to a much lesser extent for mother involvement. Consistent with Hypothesis 2, the results for desired involvement also suggest stronger differences by family form for fathers than for mothers. The differences in percentages of participants desiring more involvement from their fathers and from their mothers are presented in Table 4. Of particular note are the *differences* in these desired involvement percentages between fathers and mothers: 41% for caregiving; 31% apiece for companionship and emotional development; more than 20% for 11 other domains; and more than 14% for the remaining six domains. This suggests that young adults from divorced families missed their fathers' involvement more than they missed their mothers' involvement—and, importantly, that this difference between parents was most pronounced within specific domains of parenting.

The present findings for desired parenting are consistent with those of Marquardt (2005; see also Finley, 2006), whose national survey results indicate that 61% of participants from divorced families, compared to 34% of participants from intact families, reported having missed their fathers. The corresponding percentages for participants reporting having missed their mothers in Marquardt's study were 32% and 28%, respectively. Similar results for desired fathering have been reported by others (e.g., Braver, Ellman, & Fabricius, 2003; Fabricius & Hall, 2000; Laumann-Billings & Emery, 2000), where many young adult

Table 4

Percent of Participants from Divorced Families Desiring More Involvement from Mothers and Fathers

<i>Domain</i>	<i>Father</i>	<i>Mother</i>	<i>Difference</i>
Caregiving	66.4	25.8	40.6
Companionship	64.1	32.9	31.2
Emotional	67.7	36.8	30.9
Income	57.9	29.4	28.5
Ethical/Moral	52.2	24.4	27.8
Responsibility	51	24.9	26.1
Competence	50.7	24.7	26.0
Protection	40.4	16.1	24.3
Advising	53.4	29.7	23.7
Spiritual	58	34.9	23.1
Social	59.6	36.7	22.9
Intellectual	59.1	36.7	22.4
Career	55.8	35.3	20.5
Independence	51.6	31.2	20.4
Mentoring	57.9	38.5	19.4
Physical	51.3	33.2	18.1
School	54	37.1	16.9
Leisure	63.2	46.4	16.8
Activities	62.3	46.3	16.0
Discipline	33.9	19.3	14.6
<i>Average</i>	55.5	32.0	23.5

children of divorce expressed regrets about not having had more of a relationship with their fathers while growing up.

Intriguingly, the present results further indicate that some expressive domains, such as sharing activities, participating together in leisure pursuits, and encouraging social development, were less strongly endorsed than other domains for both mothers and fathers. These were many of the same domains in which participants reported the greatest desires for additional maternal and paternal involvement. These “leisure-time” functions were not highly endorsed for either parent, and participants seemed to want more involvement in these areas. This may be a function of the amount of time that many American parents spend at work. In recent decades, the number of hours that adults spend at work, including time spent commuting, has increased dramatically (Sayer, 2005). To the extent that this interpretation is accurate, these increases may have deleterious implications for some emotional and expressive aspects of parental involvement and for their long-term impact on children. These findings stress that any way in which the family court system can foster increases in the involvement of both parents in children’s lives would be in the best interests of children at all stages of the life cycle.

Limitations

The present findings should be considered in light of at least four important limitations. First, the use of a university student sample raises generalizability issues and may have screened out individuals with emotional, social, or academic difficulties. It should be noted, however, that a number of studies informing family court practices have been conducted with university student samples (e.g., Braver et al., 2003; Fabricius & Braver, 2003; Fabricius & Hall, 2000; Finley & Schwartz, 2007; Laumann-Billings & Emery, 2000). Moreover, concerns about generalizability of the present results may be somewhat tempered by the comparability of socioeconomic status between census averages and the annual family incomes reported by the Blacks and Hispanics in our sample.

Second, although the use of retrospective reports allows young adults to reflect back on their relationships with their parents from a more “mature” perspective, this method is also vulnerable to recall biases (Ebner-Priemer et al., 2006). Participants’ current circumstances, and their current relationships with their parents, may affect their responses to the retrospective items. Although we believe that the retrospective method provides uniquely valuable information regarding children’s “best interests,” this limitation should be kept in mind when interpreting the results.

Third, we do not have data on the frequency with which participants saw their fathers following divorce. Clearly, a child who sees her or his father once per week is likely to report different desires for additional fathering than is a child who sees her or his father once or twice per year. This type of data is important to collect in future studies.

Fourth, the use of a largely ethnic minority and immigrant sample is simultaneously a limitation and an advantage. As a limitation, the sample is not representative of the current distribution of ethnic groups in the United States. In the present sample, Hispanics are overrepresented and Whites are underrepresented. As an advantage, the sample may reflect the growing representation of minorities and immigrants in the United States. Eight of the 10 top countries of birth for immigrants arriving between 1990 and 2000 were located in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Asia (Schmidley & Deardorff, 2001), and Hispanics accounted for half of the U.S. population increase between 2000 and 2006 (Bernstein, 2007; Huntington, 2004). Huntington argues that Miami represents what other regions of

the United States may look like by the middle of this century, suggesting that the present sample may provide a glimpse into the future of American families. Moreover, the finding that ethnicity did not play a significant role in the present results may temper limitations concerning the use of a largely ethnic minority and immigrant sample.

Conclusions and Implications for Family Court Practice

Despite these limitations, the present study provides critically important information on differences in parent-child relationships between intact and divorced families. The present results indicate small differences by divorce in perceived maternal involvement, but comparatively larger differences in perceived paternal involvement. Instrumental fathering functions, such as discipline, mentoring, and developing responsibility, cannot be feasibly carried out within traditional visitation arrangements. These tasks require the father's involvement in most or all of the child's activities. Further, perceived paternal involvement in expressive fathering functions appears to be especially low in divorced families. At best, the nonresident status that most often accompanies the father's postdivorce role is not conducive to a positive and nurturant father-child relationship, and at worst it can marginalize or sever the father-child relationship (Ahrons & Tanner, 2003; Finley, 2003).

The present results are consistent with those from other studies—all of which indicate that young adult children missed their fathers and wanted more involvement from them (e.g., Arditti & Prouty, 1999; Fabricius & Hall, 2000; Laumann-Billings & Emery, 2000; Marquardt, 2005). Further, desires for additional father involvement may serve as a subtle index of divorce-related distress. The present findings indicate that divorce leaves young people with strong feelings of “missed opportunities” and “emotional longing” for a father-child relationship—feelings that remain salient for years after the divorce has been finalized. No similar pattern emerged for mothers.

The absence of the father from the household appears to be the most likely explanation for these effects. Because both mothers and fathers are essential in children's lives (Sroufe, 2005; Steinberg, 2001), it is essential that custody and access decisions facilitate frequent contact between the child and both parents. Placing fathers into a “visitor” role clearly does not provide children and adolescents with the fathering that they desire or require (Kelly, 2007).

The present results thus are consistent with calls for family law reform mandating that children spend equal amounts of time with their mothers and fathers following divorce (cf. Fabricius & Hall, 2000; Kelly, 2007). This type of post-divorce custody arrangement appears to be most strongly desired by young adult children of divorce (Fabricius, 2003). However, it is important for future research to study young people who have lived in equal-shared parenting arrangements, and to examine the extent to which these arrangements provided children with the maternal and paternal involvement that they wanted and needed. Such research can address the question as to whether other variables, beyond custody arrangements per se, contribute to young people's reactions to the amount and degree of parenting that they received.

These findings also emphasize the need to listen to the voices of young adult children from intact and divorced families when rendering custody and access decisions. Although retrospective reports from young adults cannot change the experiences of the person providing the retrospective report, they can be used to understand the perspectives of children whose future life situations are determined by the family court system. In our view,

the viewpoints of children themselves should prevail over those of others—including judges, attorneys, custody evaluators, mothers, and fathers.

NOTE

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