Determinants of Non-resident Fathers' Involvement with Their Children in Eastern and Western Europe: Do the Patterns Differ?

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Short Abstract

The number of children growing up with one parent is growing and in most cases of union dissolution the child continues co-residing with the mother. The relationships between non-resident fathers and their children are increasingly heterogeneous. Here, we analyze the extent to which fathers' individual characteristics and policy-factors predict non-resident fathers' involvement with their children after parental separation. We use a unique dataset in which we link information obtained from fathers from 14 countries from the Generations and Gender Programme to policy-level indicators that are likely to affect non-resident fathers' involvement with their children. Our results contribute to the current literature as we differentiate individual- and policy-level factors and take the father's perspective. We apply ordered logistic regressions and find that fathers' individual characteristics both in socio-demographic and interpersonal terms are important predictors of father-child contact. At the policy-level, fathers' leave entitlements strongly predict father-child contact after parental separation.

Introduction

In the 1960s, profound changes related to family lives occurred in Western and Northern European countries, followed by Eastern European countries in the late 1980s and Southern European countries in the 1990s (Sobotka, 2008; Lesthaeghe, 2010). Fertility rates decreased, the divorce rates and the number of single parents increased and more and more children are growing up out of wedlock (OECD, 2011; Lesthaeghe, 2010; Spijker & Solsona, 2012; Régnier-Loilier, 2013). Most children of separated parents continue living with their mothers (OECD Family Database, 2011). Ideally, after parental union dissolution, parents will engage in effective co-parenting (Goldberg & Carlson, 2015). However, for many fathers the increase in divorce and single parenthood implies that less time is spent with their non-resident children (Rendall et al., 2001; Sorensen, 2000). Lack of time and financial resources are the most common reasons for this decrease in contact. Meanwhile, in a number of societies, fathers' involvement in family life and especially childcare have increased (Cabrera et al., 2000; Williams, 2008).

Currently, a 'new fatherhood' is witnessed, suggesting that a father is "more emotionally involved, more nurturing, and more committed to spending time with his children, during infancy and beyond" (Wall & Arnold, 2007, p. 509). When comparing resident fathers to non-resident fathers weaker normative expectations about their fatherly involvement are observed (Lindberg et al., 2017). Therefore, fathering practices are likely to differ among non-resident fathers.

Modern family configurations imply that fathers can take up several roles simultaneously. This holds particularly in case of separation with a partner. For example, fathers can have biological children living in another household. Therefore, in reality, fathers often find themselves in competing and complex roles. In this context, multi-partnered fertility and stepfamilies are a burgeoning area of research that helps understanding the implications of demographic changes for family life (Sweeney, 2010). Most parental union dissolutions between parents happen while the child is still relatively young (Goldberg & Carlson, 2015). For example, in the US two thirds of parents who are unmarried at the time of the birth of the child will not be living together on the child's fifth birthday (Carlson et al., 2008; Goldberg & Carlson, 2015). Therefore, it is important to understand how to support continuing father-child contact even after union dissolution. However, research on demands towards fathers who find themselves in multiple 'father roles' is only starting to emerge (Poole et al., 2013).

The aim of this study is to examine what kinds of factors influence fathers' involvement in their non-resident children's lives. Individual and country level predictors are considered. Learning

more about these factors is important for policy and program development and helps identifying factors that could be used for designing interventions supporting non-resident fathers' contact with their children.

To shed light on that question, we analyze data from the first wave[1] of the Generations and Gender Survey (GGS) and combine the GGS data with a unique dataset on diverse information countries' family policies and other country characteristics. The survey was conducted between 2004 and 2012 in 19 European and 4 non-European countries. We include all those 14 countries that asked questions about contacts with non-resident children (Bulgaria, Russia, Georgia, France, Italy, Romania, Austria, Estonia, Belgium, Australia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic and Sweden). Given we include Bulgaria, Russia and Georgia, Romania, Estonia and Lithuania in the analyses is an important novelty as, so far, there are no studies on non-residential fatherhood for these countries.

Literature overview and hypotheses

Previous research has focused on predictors of non-resident fathers' involvement with their children (e.g. socio-demographic backgrounds of mothers and fathers), parents' new commitments (e.g. new partnerships and children from the new partnerships) and child characteristics (e.g. their gender and age). In this paper, we account for these factors and a novelty, we also consider country-level predictors of non-resident fathers' involvement with their children. To that end, we involved as many countries as possible which differ in social norms, legal and policy backgrounds and how fathers participate in childcare activities.

Dimensions of non-resident fathers' involvement with their children

Seltzer (1991) refers to three key behaviors of non-residential fathers' involvement with their children: paying support, visiting and decision-making. In this study, we focus on personal contacts and also account for paying support.

Non-resident fathers' individual and interpersonal characteristics

Non-resident fatherhood and socio-demographic background

Previous research has shown that fathers' socio-demographic backgrounds are associated with the level of fathers' involvement (see for example: King et al., 2004; Seltzer, 1991; Skevik, 2006) with most of the studies indicating that a higher socio-economic background is positively related to the intensity of father-child contacts (e.g. Seltzer, 1991). The *socioeconomic*

[1] So far, there have been two rounds of data collection.

advantaged perspective stipulates that contact with children requires financial resources, for example the cost of travelling. As a consequence, fathers with fewer financial means may have less contacts than fathers in better financial situations **(**Skevik, 2006). On the other hand, fathers with more financial resources are more likely to spend more time in labor market work, so that they have less available time for parenting activities.

Education is another important predictor of fathers' involvement with their non-resident children (Goldberg & Carlson, 2015). Lower educated fathers typically consider the father's main role to be that of a financial provider, so if they fail to provide financial support they tend to perceive contact with their children as useless. At the same time, higher educated fathers may hold more complex attitudes toward fatherhood, a potential reason being that they are more likely to accept new social norms about the importance of father involvement in children's lives. Thus, they are more committed to maintain social contact with their children. Furthermore, well-educated fathers also may have higher financial resources that facilitate contact, especially if the child lives at some distance from its father (Cheadle, Amato & King, 2010).

Finally, fathers' age matters: younger fathers, especially teenagers and those in their twenties, tend to be less involved with their children than do older fathers (Goldberg & Carlson, 2015). One explanation is that many births to young parents are unplanned (Barber & Evans, 2006) and at the age, fathers are often emotionally immature, have relatively low levels of education, earn low income, and are unmarried to their children's mothers (Cheadle et al., 2010).

While the above-described socio-economic factors play an important role in non-resident fathers' involvement with their children, better co-parenting after union dissolution is not a function of higher socio-economic status (Goldberg & Carlson, 2015).

Non-resident fathers' interpersonal characteristics

Fathers' interpersonal relationships have been shown to be important predictors of their involvement with their non-resident children. This holds for past and present relationships (Goldberg & Carlson, 2015). The quality of the parents' past relationship has also been found to be an important and consistent predictor of father involvement after break-up (Goldberg & Carlson, 2015).

Recently, LAT (living apart together relationships) involving children became more popular. At the same time, the prevalence of marital instability and single parenthood is increasingly associated with an increase in re-partnering (Ermisch, 2002; Sweeney, 2010).

According to the *marital involvement perspective* (Furstenberg et al., 1983; Seltzer, 1991; Stephens, 1996; Skevik, 2006) fathers' commitment to family life depends on their commitment to the partnership and it is argued that marriage requires higher commitment than a cohabiting

relationship. Thus, those men who have fathered children within marriage are more likely to be more committed to their children than men who were not married to their children's mother or who did not live together with her (see also Seltzer, 1991). The quality of the parents' past relationship has also been found to be an important and consistent predictor of father involvement after break-up (Goldberg & Carlson, 2015). Another stream of the *marital involvement perspective* does not differentiate marriage and cohabitation but emphasizes the importance of living together with the children for a certain period (Skevik, 2006). These ambivalent results might be due to the fact the marriage and the concept thereof differs across countries. The *Second Demographic Transition* (SDT) emphasizes the postponement of life events such as first marriage and childbearing, increased rate of births outside marriage and the rate of union dissolution in most European societies. These demographic developments were observed in Western and Northern European countries in the 1960s and underwent rapid dispersal in other European countries as well. SDT started after the political and economic transformation in the late 1980s in Central and Eastern European countries and in the 1990s in Southern Europe although countries in Eastern and Southern Europe have not yet advanced as far (Sobotka, 2008; Lesthaeghe, 2010). For example, the out of wedlock rate is above 50% in Denmark, Sweden and Norway in 2014 while it is below Romania, Italy and Poland in 2014 (OECD Family Statistics, 2014).

Besides the type of the previous partnership the current partnership status affects fathers' commitment to their non-resident children's lives. This is because many non-resident fathers engage in new partnerships (Murinkó & Szalma, 2016) and face competing roles (Skevik, 2006). Re-partnering (either through marriage or cohabitation) is associated with a decline in nonresident father contact (Meggiolaro & Pongaro, 2015; Gibson & Davis, 2008) because a new cohabiting relationship often imposes time constraints on fathers. Furthermore, the new relationship can be formed with a partner who has children from a previous relationship and thereby create complex family patterns. Having children in the household is likely to imply social fathering roles to fulfill the emotional needs of children living in the household, which is called the social-parenting perspective**.** Furthermore, new relationships frequently result in new biological children from the father and his new partner (Murinkó & Szalma, 2015). Due to time constraints, fathers might be more involved with their children from the actual partnership than in their children from a failed relationship.

Fathers' multipartnered fertility with a new partner is negatively associated with their involvement with non-resident children (Goldberg & Carlson, 2015). It seems that in those cases fathers often disengage from their children from previous relationships to invest more

time in their co-residential children (Edin & Nelson, 2013; Manning & Smock, 1999, 2000; Goldberg & Carlson, 2015).

Regarding child support most studies show that father child contact is positively associated with paying child support (for example: Amato et al., 2009; Furstenberg et al., 1983). So far, the evidence on the direction of causality at play is inconclusive. Earlier research suggests that a higher frequency of fathers visiting their children may relate to their awareness of their children's economic needs and, therefore be related to increased child support payments. It can also be argued that fathers who pay child support feel more entitled to visit their children, and their children's mothers are more likely to agree (Cheadle et al., 2010). However, with the prevalence of shared physical custody the role of the payment of child support will decrease.

Finally, previous researchers found that non-resident fathers' level of contact decreases over time after the partnership dissolution (Furstenberg et al., 1983, Carlson et al., 2017, Seltzer, 1991) and with greater geographical distance between children's and fathers' households (Furstenberg et al., 1983; Manning & Smock, 1999; Seltzer et al., 1989; Seltzer, 1991; Stephens, 1996). It is due to the additional time and money necessary to maintain frequent involvement is likely to decrease paternal contact.

It is important to note that different forms of involvement are correlated: Fathers who visit their children after separation are more likely to pay child support and be involved in childrearing decisions (Seltzer, 1991). "Fathers who are involved in one aspect of childrearing after separation continue their involvement in other aspects as well" (Seltzer, 1991, p. 92).

Child characteristics

Another stream of research has focused on the characteristics of children according to different fathers tend to have more contact with older than younger children (Lindberg et al., 2017). On the other hand, the intensity of contact declines over time (Régnier-Loilier, 2013; Goldberg & Carlson, 2015) and once there is no or hardly any contact, it is difficult to re-establish. Most parental union dissolutions between parents happen while the child is still relatively young (Goldberg & Carlson, 2015). For example, in the US two thirds of parents who are unmarried at the time of the birth of the child will not be living together on the child's fifth birthday (Carlson et al., 2008; Goldberg & Carlson, 2015). Separations at older ages of the child may be linked to less contact as when children grow up from childhood into early adolescence, they may desire more time with peers and less time with parents in general (Amato & Meyer, 2009). Furthermore, fathers seem to have more contact with sons than daughters (Lundberg, McLanahan, & Rose, 2007). This gender preference may exist because fathers share more

interests with sons than with daughters, mothers encourage fathers to interact more with sons than daughters, or fathers feel obligated to provide male role models for their sons (Cheadle et al., 2010).

Development of non-resident father-child contact over time

Over time, non-resident fathers contact with their children has been reported to decline on average (Goldberg & Carlson, 2015; Carlson et al., 2008; Seltzer, 1991). While earlier work has suggested that this decline is rather monotone, there has recently been a refined understanding of the development of father-child contact over time and four patterns have been identified: high-high, high-low, low-high, and low-low involvement (Cheadle et al., 2010; Ryan et al., 2008; Goldberg & Carlson, 2015).

The long-term implications of growing up with a single parent

Single parenthood is associated with social and economic disadvantage (Kiernan, 2006; McLanahan & Percheski, 2008; Seltzer, 1991) and with a number of negative behaviors and outcomes across children's life course. For example, with lower school achievement (Astone & McLanahan, 1991), more behavioral and emotional problems (Gabel, 1992), higher rates of delinquency and substance abuse (Matsueda & Heimer, 1987; Sampson, 1987), and lower labor force participation (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Newcomer & Udry, 1987). It is important to mention that these negative outcomes are due to the low socio-economic status of single parent households, and not just to single parenthood itself. Experiencing parental separation is also related to individuals' partnership-related outcomes later in life. For example, those who experienced a parental separation have a lower probability of staying married (Feldhaus & Heintz-Martin, 2015). Age effects seem to play a role here: experiencing a parental separation before age seven affects timing of a first cohabitation as well as on the risk of having an own divorce later in life (Feldhaus & Heintz-Martin, 2015).

Individual-level hypotheses

On the basis of previous research findings and the relevant variables of the first wave of Generation and Gender dataset we will test the following hypotheses with respect to non-resident fathers' characteristics.

H1.1. The **socio-demographic background** of non-resident fathers matters: Higher educated and employed fathers are less likely to not have any contact with their children.

H1.2. **Past family status** of the father matters: Non-resident fathers who used to live in marriage with the mother of their children are more likely to keep contact with their children.

H1.3. **Present family status** of the non-resident father matters: A new partner and potentially the co-resident children require time investments making it more difficult to keep contact with their non-resident children, therefore we expect fathers who live in a new partnership to have less contact with their non-resident children.

H1.4. We expect that non-resident fathers who **pay maintenance** for their children are more likely to have contact with them.

H1.5. **Time** since the separation from the mother matters: The longer the non-resident father does not live together with their children, the less likely to have contact with them.

H1.6. **Distance** matters: If fathers need more than one hour to reach their children they are less likely to have contact with them.

Policy characteristics

In order to understand the different patterns between non-resident fathers and their children, the different legal backgrounds of the countries, which can influence the contacts in the examined 14 countries need to be taken into consideration. We take into account that parental leave policy and shared custody can have direct and/or non-direct effects on non-resident fathers and the contact with their children. Parental leave policies can enhance fathers' involvement in childcare by allowing men to stay at home with their small children. With respect to time disposable for childcare, it is important to note that despite the fact that dual earner families are common in all of the 14 countries, the dual carer model is only widespread in Sweden.

Shared custody

Shared physical custody is a more recent phenomenon that so far has hardly been studied. Therefore, we know very little about its effect on divorce, single parent- and stepfamily life. However, some studies shed light on the fact that shared physical custody can mitigate harmful effects of family dissolution by limiting loss of parental resources, both social and financial (Turunen, 2017). By sharing custody and childcare responsibilities children can benefit and have better and more intense relationship with their fathers. Research has also shown that children in shared custody arrangements exhibit better child outcomes (Nielsen, 2011). Moreover, and the risk of a total loss of the relationship between the father and the child is likely to become smaller.

Separation and divorce

First of all, a country's divorce rate is considered an important factor for non-resident fathers' contact with their children since the instability of modern families implies that the proportion of fathers living apart from their biological children is at a historical high (Skevik 2006). There are considerable differences among the countries in our sample. The divorce rate is lowest in

the following countries that are included in our analysis: Georgia, Italy, Bulgaria, Romania and Poland while it is the highest in Czech Republic, Lithuania and Russia.

If parental separation has become a more common experience in a country this is likely to affect the father-child contacts. The *easy-divorce hypothesis* stipulates that higher dissolution rates are associated with tolerance, liberal legislation, and reduced selection on parenting skills (Kreidl et al., 2017). At the same time, lower divorce rates correlate with less tolerance, more restrictive legislative regulations, and divorced fathers might try to maintain contact with their children in order to avoid the stigmatization of being not enough good parents.

Gender roles

In addition to increasing family instability there have been some shifts in family gender roles and the division of household labor and market work. Although providing economic support remains important, fathering today also often includes providing direct care. In order to reveal the country differences in this field we compared the countries how many percent of their populations disagree with the following statement: *When jobs are scarce, men have more right to jobs than women.* We found various patterns in this field among them (see Figure 2 in appendix). While only 20% of the respondent disagreed with it in Georgia more than three fourth of the respondents disagreed with it in Sweden and Australia.

Fathers' paid leave entitlements

National legislative backgrounds which can urge men's role in child care are important to consider because they differ a lot across countries. One of these legislative backgrounds when fathers have an individual entitlement to paid leave upon child birth, to be taken while the mother is not on leave. Amongst the countries considered, such paternity leave schemes are available in Austria, Belgium, Italy and Sweden. We expect that if men have the opportunity to participate in child care activities they are more likely to keep participate in their children lives when they do not live together with them.

Policy-level hypotheses

On the basis of previous research findings and the relevant variables of the first wave of Generation and Gender dataset we will test the following hypotheses with respect to country and policy level characteristics.

Policy-level hypotheses

H2.1. We expect that in policy-contexts in which a **paid leave entitlement** exists non-resident fathers are less engaged with their children than in societies in which such entitlements do not exist.

H2.2. We expect that in societies less **traditional gender views** non-resident fathers are more likely to have more contact with their children because for them not only the financial provider is the main father role, but the emotional role is important as well.

H2.3. We expect that in countries where **shared custody** is an option, non-resident fathers are more involved with their children.

Method

Data and sample

With a growing understanding of the importance of fathers' presence in children's lives, recently, more attention is paid to non-resident fathers in data collections. However, often it is problematic to collect data on non-resident fathers and, so far, only few studies were able to elaborate on the topic of non-residential fatherhood (e.g. Goldberg & Carlson, 2015; Kiernan 2006, Skevik 2006; Swiss & Le Bourdais, 2009) and even fewer we able to take the fathers' perspective. One of the explanations is that, particularly outside the US, non-residential fatherhood is a new phenomenon. A major difficulty is that reaching these fathers, even more, longitudinally, and most samples focus on the mother as she lives with the child. Another challenge in research on non-resident fathers is that they tend to not report their non-resident children (Garfinkel et al., 1998).

For the analysis we have designed a unique dataset. It is primarily based on individual level data taken from the Generations and Gender Survey (GGS) that have been merged with data obtained from the OECD family database as well as from experts on family policies from the different countries[2]. The GGS is a set of comparative surveys that deal with topics related to children and childbearing, partners, parents, work, and everyday life. A major innovation of the survey lies in its focus on non-resident children. In contrast with others surveys that collect information only from mothers we have information about non-resident children from the fathers. Nevertheless, it is possible that men under-report their non-resident children, especially if they do not have contact with them anymore. With the data at hand we are able to make comparisons over policy context, however, we cannot make any statements about causalities and long-term developments.

[2] The first step for obtaining the country-level data was to collect it from international datasets. However, for some countries it was not possible to find all the information on all the policy-indicators and therefore, experts from those countries have been enquired. These experts include researchers and the Ministries of social affairs.

Table 1: GGS surveys by country

Country	Nr of respondents	Year of data collection	Response rate
Australia	12,759	2005-2006	
Austria	5,000	2008-2009	61.3%
Belgium	7,163	2008-2009	41.8%
Czech Republic	10,006		49.1%
Bulgaria	12,914	2004-2005	74.8%
France	10,079	2005-2008	
Estonia	7,855	2004-2005	70.2%
Georgia	10,000	2006-2009	
Italy	9,570	2003-2004	35.6%
Lithuania	10,036	2006-2009	83.9%
Romania	11,986	2005	54.7%
Sweden	10,000	2006	71.5%
Russia	11,261	2004	44.8%

Note: The data has been provided by NIDI for all countries. Data on Poland missing in this table.

In order to investigate the factors that influence non-resident father's contact with their children, we restrict the sample for our analysis to men with at least one non-resident child in the age range 0-18. Biological and adopted children are considered. In all countries, respondents are aged 18-79.

Measures

Father-child contact. Our dependent variable is based on fathers' self-reports of the frequency of contact with the child. If a respondent has more than one non-resident child we focus on the contact with youngest one. This is because previous research showed that child-parent contact is more important in younger ages because later children may desire more time with peers (Amato & Meyer, 2009). To avoid harmonization problems that may arise from the different questions in the countries, we recoded the answer options across the surveys into three ordered categories describing contact during the previous year: never (less than once per year), rarely or regular contact (at least once per year but less than once per week), and often (more than 4 times per month).

Independent variables. First, we include information on non-resident fathers' socio-economic status such as educational level (we distinguish three levels: low (ISCED 0-2), medium (ISCED 3-4) and high (ISCED 5-6)) and employment status (employed, unemployed or other). We also consider whether the non-resident father was married to the child's mother, they lived in

cohabitation or never lived together. Each national survey also contains information about fathers' present family status (no partner without co-resident children, non-resident partner, without co-resident children, non-resident partner, with co-resident children, co-resident partner without co-resident children, co-resident partner with co-resident children). We also account for the number of non-resident children (1, 2 and 3 or more). Dummy variables indicating if the non-resident father pays child maintenance or not and if it takes him more than an hour to travel to the child are also included. Finally, we account for the gender and age of the non-resident child.

Country level variables. In order to better understand the contextual and policy-related predictors that may affect contact between non-resident fathers and their children, we include three country level variables. First, we consider if in a country a traditional gender view prevails. According to this view, men are supposed be the breadwinner of the family and women are responsible for housework and childcare. The second country level variable is whether fathers have an individual entitlement to paid leave upon childbirth. Finally, we involve whether shared physical custody is an option in the country or not.

Analytic strategy

We first present descriptive statistics on the involvement variable, by country. Then we show the results from results from multivariate analyses. Since the dependent variable is of an ordered scale, ordered logistic regression is used to study the determinants of father child contacts. We adjust the standard error estimates for clustering; that is, we take into account that individuals within the countries cannot be treated as independent observations. This will be achieved with the cluster-adjusted robust standard error estimator which is a standard feature of the statistical software Stata. Estimation of robust standard errors is an attractive alternative of multilevel modelling since random-effects estimators are computationally demanding (Takács et al., 2016).

We estimate six models. The first model includes socio-demographic characteristics of the fathers such as their age, educational background, employment situation and total number of non-resident children. The second model adds present and past family status to the previous models while the third model involves some characteristic of the non-resident children such as their age, gender, how long they live separated and the distance. Model 4, 5, and 6 include country level variables step by step.

Descriptive statistics

Individual level descriptives

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics for the independent individual-level variables of our sample. The socio-demographic characteristics show that almost half are between 35 and 45 years old and more than half have medium educational attainment. More than two thirds are employed (this group includes the self-employed). Around half only has one child and around 17 percent have 3 or more children. Here, we count only the fathers' non-co-resident children. Regarding fathers current family status multiple patterns appear. The largest group (around a third) has a new co-resident partner with children[3]. The second largest group does not have a new partner. With regard to parents' relationship history we observe that only 14 percent were married. The break-up happened on average almost seven years before the survey. The focal children are on average between 12 and 13 years old.

[3] A child is co-resident with the respondent if he listed the child as a member if his household. According to the questionnaire manual, "[a] household consists of persons who live in the same dwelling-unit for at least four days in a normal week over a period of at least three months.

Table 2: Descriptives of individual-level variables (N = 4,193)

	M or % (SD)
Fathers' socio-demographic characteristics	
Age	
<35	23.8
35-45	47.5
>45	28.7
Education	
ISCED 0-2	23.6
ISCED 3-4	56
ISCED 5-6	20.4
Employment status	
Employed	72
Unemployed	11.9
Other	16.1
Present family status	
No partner/no children	30.55
No partner/children	4.21
Non-resident partner/no children	12.31
Non-resident partner/no children	1.56
Co-resident partner/no children	16.76
Co-resident partner/children	34.62
Nr of children	
1	52.9
2	30.4
3 or more	16.7
Parents' relationship history	
Married	
No	86
Yes	14
Years since separation (M)	6.9 (5.4)
Child characteristics	
Gender	
Boy	49.2
Girl	50.8
Age (*M*)	12.7 (5.1)
Father-child relationship	
Maintenance	
Yes	29.4
No	19.8
No information	50.7

Source: Generations and Gender Survey (GGS, 2004-2009).
SD: standard deviation

Country level descriptives

Table 3 presents the descriptives for the country-level measures we include in our analysis. Less than half of the countries have a paid leave scheme for fathers. For those countries that do, the length of the leave differs considerably.

Table 3: *Descriptives of country-level variables*

		M or % (SD)		
	n	Paid leave	Traditional	Care activities
Austria	213	Yes	47.9	2.5
Australia	479	No	65.66	2.5
Belgium	165	Yes	64.42	2.4
Bulgaria	208	No	34.3	2.4
Czech Republic	266	No	49.1	2.5
Estonia	259	No	53.97	2.5
France	363	Yes	62.26	2.4
Georgia	136	No	20.59	2.5
Italy	121	Yes	0	2.4
Lithuania	194	No	29.84	2.5
Poland	305	No	46.6	2.5
Romania	197	No	0	2.5
Russia	455	No	39.34	2.5
Sweden	156	Yes	76.92	2.2

Source: Generations and Gender Survey (GGS, 2004-2009).
SD: standard deviation
$N_{countries}$=14

Non-resident fathers' contact with their children by country

Table 4: Non-resident fathers' involvement with their children by countries (*n*; *%* in italics)

	Never	Rarely/regularly	Often	Total
Australia	76	160	28	264
	28.79	*60.61*	*22555*	*100*
Austria	29	59	35	123
	23.58	*47.97*	*28.46*	*100*
Belgium	27	62	75	164
	16.46	*37.8*	*45.73*	*100*
Bulgaria	45	72	45	162
	27.78	*44.44*	*27.78*	*100*
Czech Republic	29	103	43	175
	16.57	*58.86*	*24.57*	*100*
Estonia	61	135	55	251
	24.31	*53.78*	*21.91*	*100*
France	86	181	96	363
	23.69	*49.86*	*26.45*	*100*
Georgia	34	57	40	131
	25.95	*43.51*	*30.53*	*100*
Italy	11	46	60	117
	9.4	*39.32*	*51.28*	*100*
Lithuania	59	88	33	180
	32.78	*48.89*	*18.33*	*100*
Poland	79	119	96	294
	26.87	*40.48*	*32.65*	*100*
Romania	31	25	9	65
	47.69	*38.46*	*13.85*	*100*
Russia	185	159	90	434
	42.63	*36.64*	*20.74*	*100*
Sweden	40	70	19	129
	42766	*54.26*	*14.73*	*100*
Total	790	1337	724	2851
	27.71	*46.9*	*25.39*	*100*

Sources: Own calculations from GGS data – first wave.

Table 4 shows the frequency of contact for each country. A large variation across countries appears. More than one quarter of the non-resident fathers do not have any contact with their children. However, this number differs significantly across countries with the shares varying from 48% in Romania to 9% in Italy. While the average percentage of those fathers who keep intensive contact with their children – they visit them more than four times a week – is around one fourth. This share also differs across countries: the highest number is found in Italy (51%) and lowest number in Australia (11%). Overall, we observe a strong cross-country variation in father-child contact.

Preliminary results

Table 5 shows the estimates of the ordered logistic regressions. In the first model, we consider only fathers' individual-level variables. The first column shows the coefficients of not having seen the child in the last year. The second column shows the coefficients of seeing the child more than four times a month. Our reference category is having contact with children regularly, namely, at least once a month but not more often than once a week. It seems that somewhat similar factors hinder contact that facilitate frequent contact: fathers' age, number of years since non-resident fathers are not living together with their children, time to reach the non-resident child and paying child support matter in both cases.

Table 5: Ordered logistic regressions of frequency of contact

Frequency of contacts	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
			Individual characteristics			
Child characteristics						
Gender (ref: girl)			0.14			
Age (ref: 6-12)						
0-5			0.05			
13-18			0.16			
Fathers' socio-dem. characteristics						
Age (ref: 18-35)						
35-45	0.11	0.11	030***	0.34***	0.33**	0.34**
45 and over	0.20**	0.17	0.42***	0.48***	0.44***	0.45***
Marital status: cohabitation		Ref.	Ref	Ref.	Ref	Ref.
Not in relationship		-0.22	0.57**	0.50***	0.39***	0.47***
Married		-0.04	0.14	0.06	0.01	0.12
Years not living together			-0.08***	-0.09***	-0.09***	-0.09***
Educational level (ref: low)	Ref.	Ref	Ref.	Ref	Ref.	Ref
Medium	0.12	0.10	0.02	0.01	0.03	0.1
High	0.20	0.16	0.12	0.24*	0.19	0.28*
Employment status (ref: employed)	Ref.	Ref	Ref.	Ref	Ref.	Ref
Unemployed	-0.24*	-0.28*	-0.30**	-0.25**	0.23*	-0.21*
Other	-0.32**	-0.30**	-0.35***	-0.32***	0.3***	-0.31***
Fathers' interpersonal characteristics						
Present family status (ref: no partner no children)						
No partner no children		0.11	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.16
Non-resident partner no children		0.35*	0.21	0.21	0.24	0.23
Non-resident partner children		-0.08	-0.23	-0.23	-0.19	-0.14
Co-resident partner no children		-0.18	-0.17	-0.17	-0.14	-0.11
Co-resident partner with children		-0.38*	-0.30*	-0.30*	-0.27*	-0.17
Maintenance (ref: no)		Ref.	Ref	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Yes		0.16	0.16	0.16	0.07	0.11
No information		0.36	0.56*	0.56*	0.59*	0.49*
Years not together			0.11***	0.11***	0.10***	
Time (> hour)			-1.45***	-1.45***	-1.42***	-1.32***
Nr non-resident children (ref: 1)						

2	0.14*	0.14*	0.09		0.05	0.1
3+	-0.11	-0.12	-0.23*	-0.23*	-0.31*	-0.24*
Policy-level characteristics						
Fathers' leave entitlement				0.45***		
Traditional values					0.01*	
Shared custody						0.16
Cut1	-0.79	-0.74	-1.82	-1.83	-1.35	-1.75
Cut2	1.25	1.32	0.56	0.55	1.03	0.69

Source: Generations and Gender Survey, Wave 1.

The results of the empirical analysis confirm some of our hypotheses. Hypothesis 1.1 regarding the socio-demographic background of the non-resident fathers was confirmed: the highest educated men are the least likely to never visit their non-resident children while those who are not employed are the more likely to never visit their non-resident children than their employed counterparts. However, we have to refuse Hypothesis 1.2 regarding non-resident fathers past family status, it is not significant. This corresponds to previous research findings that have shown over time it became less and less relevant since increasing proportions of fathers are involved in their children lives without having romantic ties to their children's mother (Amato et al., 2009).

Hypothesis 1.3 concerning the present family status of the non-resident fathers is confirmed: Both the co-resident partner and the co-resident children hinder the father to keep an intensive contact (more than 4 times a month) with their non-resident children.

As for hypothesis 1.4 we confirm that fathers who pay maintenance for their children are more likely to have contact with them but perhaps somewhat surprisingly we also found that they are less likely to to keep an intensive contact (more than 4 times a month) with their non-resident children. One plausible explanation may be that those fathers who meet their children very often might have joint custody with their non-resident children and they do not have to pay maintenance for children.

We found a strong negative association between the number of years since the non-resident fathers have not lived together with their children and the frequency of the contact (Hypothesis 1.5.). We confirm our last individual level hypothesis regarding the distance (Hypothesis 1.6.): if fathers need more than one hour to reach their children they are less likely to have contact with them.

Additionally, we tested some control level variables which do not have significant effects such as the age of the non-resident child, and the total number of non-resident children, but the

gender of the non-resident child matters: Non-resident father are less likely to never visit their sons than their daughters.

With respect to the policy-level variables, the results show that policy contexts which entitle fathers to take paid leave upon the birth of their child, are more involved with their children when they do no longer cohabit. A potential explanation is that such leave allows fathers to bond with their children from an early age which is beneficial for their relationship in the long run. Hypothesis 2.1 is confirmed. In traditional policy-contexts ongoing contact is more likely than in modern ones. Therefore, Hypothesis 2.2 is rejected (it is important to note that the coefficient is small and hardly significant). Finally, we do not find support for hypothesis 2.3 as the coefficient for shared custody is not significant. This result may be explained by the fact that shared custody may have an effect even before separation: if fathers are aware that they can have a strong relationship with their children due to the shared custody they might invest more time and energy in their children. Overall, the individual level characteristics seem more important for the contact between the non-resident father and the child.

Discussion

This study has considered a topic that is important for an increasing number of children and families, namely, father-child contact after parental union dissolution. Also after union dissolution it is important for children's wellbeing and development to be involved with both parents (Goldberg & Carlson, 2015).

With the above analysis, we have shed light on the question to what extent individual and policy-factors matter for defining the intensity of contact between non-resident fathers and their children. Overall, fathers' individual characteristics both in socio-demographic and interpersonal terms seem considerably more important than policy-relevant factors.

Most of the literature is based on data obtained from mothers and, therefore, the presents study is a contrasting case as it is built on information obtained from non-residential fathers. Moreover, it considers countries and social indicators that have not yet been analyzed in this context before, but that can make an important contribution to the research in this field. The results can contribute to the development and improvement of policy and programs d for families experiencing union dissolution. From the previous literature, much was already known on individual characteristics but not on all countries and not country characteristics.

Our results confirm previous studies showing that non-residential fathers' involvement with their children is highly heterogeneous (see e.g. Goldberg & Carlson, 2015). For policymakers

it is important to take this heterogeneity in account. We also strike that it is critical to take macro-level factors into account.

with the present study we add to the literature on non-residential fatherhood and father-child contact by examining the extent to which fathers are in touch with their biological or adopted non-residential children. Non-resident fathers' involvement is not characterized by a single population with a monotonic pattern. The majority of non-resident fathers did not see their children every week in any of the fourteen national samples. Indeed, 27% of children did not see their nonresident father at all. A variety of variables differentiated between these groups, including their own characteristics but also characteristics related to the previous relationship with the mother. It is important to note that these differences hold across countries and policy contexts, suggesting that decisions about involvement and contact are mostly taken at the individual level. Consequently, policies and interventions aimed at facilitating positive paternal and particularly fathers' involvement should be further developed.

Several limitations of the present research should be noted. One involves the limited assessment of contact available in the data. Due to harmonization problems across countries, we had to reduce this information to three ordered categories. Moreover, some variations in contact patterns might be important to document, such as regular contact by telephone or e-mail but the surveys do not provide these kind of information. The same holds for whether non-resident fathers go on vacation with their children. We also do not know how long they see each other during their face-to-face meetings. While the GGS database contains rich information about the respondent's non-resident children we lack of information about shared custody. There may also be some underreporting of having non-residential children - especially if they do not have contact with them anymore - so that our analysis may over-estimate the true involvement of non-resident fathers in their children's lives.

Another limitation is the lack of data about the quality of the relationship between biological mothers and fathers, which can be important in the field of non-resident father and children contact as mothers sometimes, serve as gatekeepers of children (see: Sano et al. 2008). So, also qualitative research is needed to understand better the non-resident fatherhood (Skevik 2006). Finally, it would be very interesting to have both mothers' and fathers' reports on the intensity of contact between non-resident fathers and their children, as they may differ. In addition, nonresident fathers' reports about their involvement with children may be less accurate, overestimating their contributions to childrearing, compared to resident mothers' reports about how fathers behave (Seltzer, 1991).

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